

TIMES



**Glastonbury
goes back to
its roots**

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**Why gold
is the
new silver**

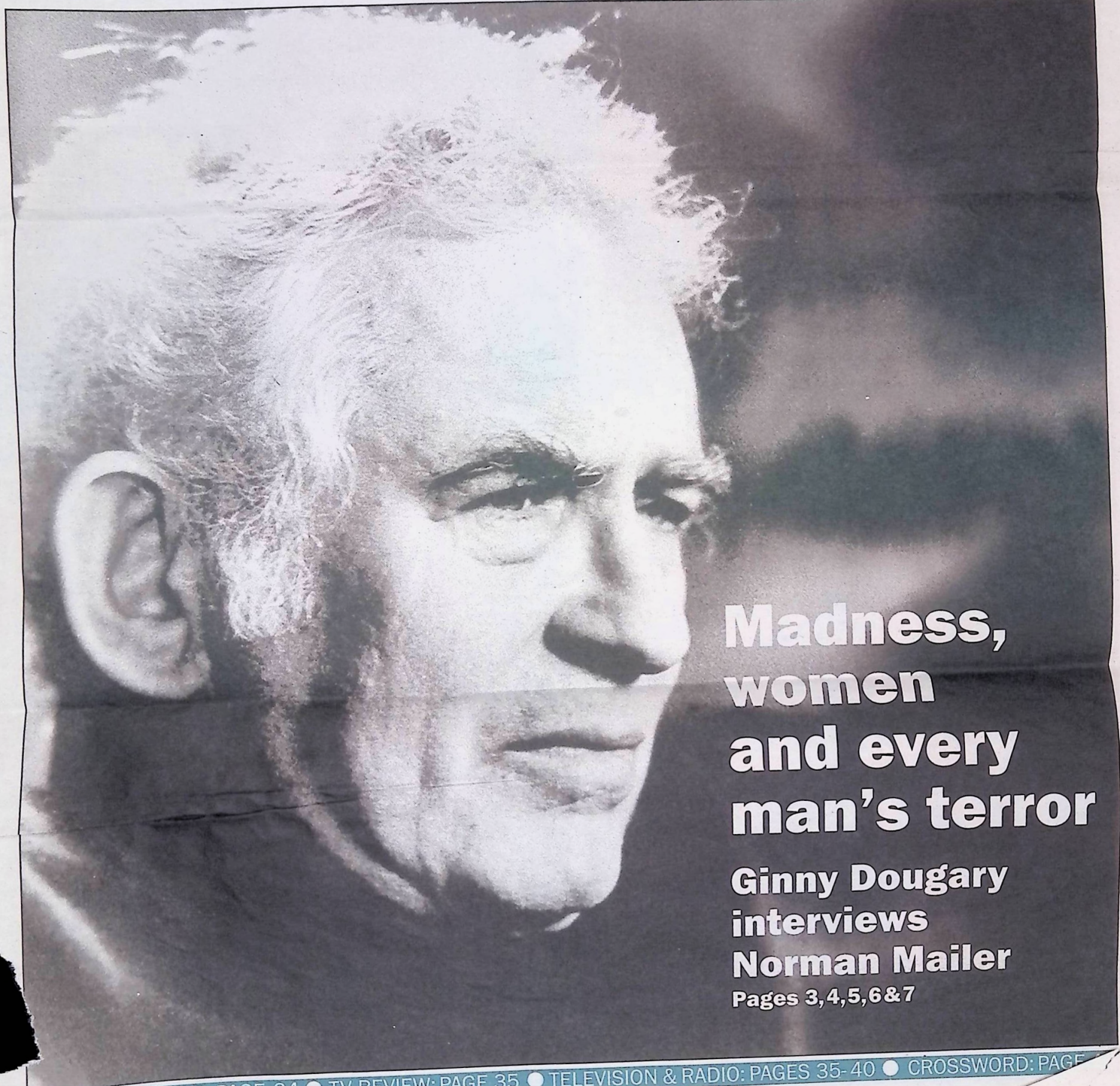
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**Hardy times
come to
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**Madness,
women
and every
man's terror**

**Ginny Dougary
interviews**

Norman Mailer

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One helluva guy



tinny
bougary

reviewer of the year

Norman Mailer,
sterling, prolific
six-times
married, reveals
men and
men have
fered from
nism, and why
mosexuality is
ery man's
cret terror

What strikes you most forcefully as you head west along the three-strip of Commercial Street, the Mayflower Pilgrims landed, is the number of sauntering by hand in pairs of shaven-headed preppie-looking men, mid-aged men and young men, orously-maned women, large, homely women with boy-girls. This is the main of Provincetown, the tip of beckoning finger of Cape a resort that, in the past dec- or so, has become Chris- r Street-on-Sea, Fire Island Lesbos, an East Coast San isco. It is not the obvious g in which to find Norman r. America's most macho writer, Hemingway's heir, in a solid red-brick house, ly one in a town full of washed weatherboard cot- at the easternmost end of nercial Street.

day before our interview I d along the beach, past the hed decks of some of the bier waterside homes that g to the hetero old-timers emerging on to the street, confronted by the sight of ighty man himself. I had ht him, bent over, leaning ly on a stick and fumbling ear keys. It felt like an am- est, perhaps, to walk on as I hesitated, hot- and flustered, he looked d it seemed only right to duce myself.

approaching him, I could e been a fan — or a foe — e was none of that haunted

Salinger-esque recoil of the reluc- tantly famous. Quite the contra- ry. The impression was of a gen- tle man, relaxed and quite un- guarded. Only later, when he drove me back to my guesthouse after our official meeting, did he apologise for seeming nervous the previous day. Oh, I say, you certainly didn't appear that way. Well, you know what they say about appearances, he said, and broke into his gravelly laugh.

Everyone in P-town, as the locals call it, knows Norman. Beverly Bentley, his fourth wife, from whom he had a particularly long and acrimonious divorce, still lives here. They are not friends but there wouldn't be an incident, he says, if they bumped into one another in the street. His first visit was in 1942, when it al- ready had a reputation for being free and easy and bohemian. It has never had the toney cachet of its neighbours along the coast, of Martha's Vineyard, say, or Nan- tucket, where presidents and film stars have holiday homes. But O'Neill and Dos Passos hung out here, and Tennessee Williams wrote *The Glass Me- nagerie* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the Atlantic Bar, which is still a magnet for cruising men. Provincetown has also held an enduring appeal for painters, drawn by the special quality of the light as much as by its unbut- toned atmosphere: Hans Hoff- man, Franz Kline and Robert Motherwell took up residence for a time. After them the biker gangs came and went.

But Mailer has remained faith- ful to the place, if not to his wives, and has written part — or most — of all his books here. As I ar- rived, a friendly woman at the tiny airport offered me a lift into town. I told her I was here to in- terview Mailer, and she said: "Oh yeah, he's an ex of one of my neighbours." When I ventured that he was probably the ex of quite a number of women there, she gave me a sidelong look and grinned.

Mailer told me about a Satur- day night tradition, in the late Fifties or Sixties, I would guess, when everyone who liked to get drunk would take a bottle, those who could afford it, and head up to the hills at the back of the town, where there would be *bacchanals that would go on until daylight*. Er, or, gosh? I asked, knowing there was a peri- od in his life when he swung with the best of them. "Nooo. Not quite," he said crisply. "But mar- riages would be made and lost on those hills on a given night." Sometimes, he said, you would find a woman walking up the hill with her children, unable to find a babysitter but unwilling to re- sist the lure of the scene, My God! I exclaim. "But there was also this marvellous free spirit of the whole thing," he insisted. "No one really cared what you did. It was just taken for granted that life was daaaanung difficult and let's have some fun."

He lives here all the year round now; three of his nine chil- dren from an assortment of his

six wives have taken over his Brooklyn apartment, with its lordly views of the Manhattan skyline. The Provincetown house is handsome, set back from the street, a hedge on either side of the path that leads up to the door- way, framed by hostas and azale- as, the roof hidden under drifts of white wistaria.

Inside you are blasted by the brightness of the light that fills the room, through a wall of glass, which leads on to a great deck, the size of a ballroom, and on to the blue dazzle of the sea be- yond. There are several colourful paintings, a couple of them by local artists, an impression of cream and white furnishings, a table with biblical quantities of

family photographs (Mailer has attended 27 graduation ceremo- nies), and an expensive-looking chess set. It is not the kind of home, one feels, in which one would be encouraged to light up a cigarette, unexotic or other- wise, or, indeed, in which to be- come drunk and disorderly.

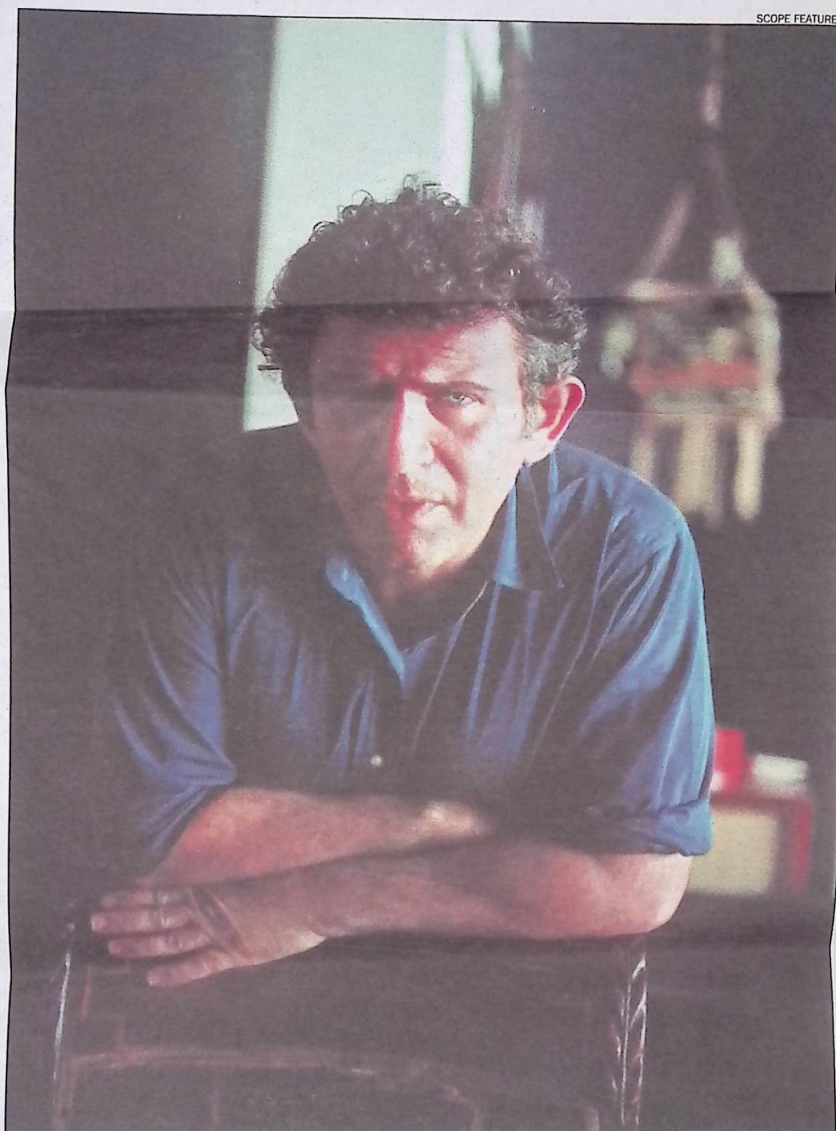
I am greeted by Barbara, as her husband calls her, or Norris, as she called herself when she took up modelling at a time when an unusual sobriquet was considered helpful. She is number six, the longest-serving — if it is not too unfair to put it that way — of Mailer's wives, having been married to him for a quarter of a century. At 50 she is still a fresh and lovely-looking

woman, tall and slim in simple beige trousers and top, with a swing of auburn hair and the sweet smile and gracious man- ners of a southern gal. A few years ago she discovered that Mailer had been unfaithful to her, when his mistress spilt the juice of their nine-year affair. Norris returned to Arkansas and agreed to return only, one gets the feeling from a couple of casu- al remarks dropped by her hus- band, after exacting a certain price. Not to make too big a deal of it, it would not be surprising if the fall-out had resulted in a sub- tle shift of power in the Mailer household.

For one thing, she has burst into print herself with a first auto-

biographical novel, *Windchill Summer*, published by Random House, also Mailer's publisher in America, and *Fourth Estate* in Britain. So now when the couple arrive in England to promote the book, Mr Mailer will find himself in the unusual position of playing Denis Thatcher, as he lampoons himself, lurking in the shadows while Mrs Mailer, his author wife, basks in the limelight. That's the theory, anyway. It's the sharp, emas- culating revenge one might find in the kind of women's novel that Mailer would not feel com- fortable reading. Mind you, there was a time when, old enough not to have the excuse of

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Norman Mailer: "Boxing and writing have one similarity: to get good at them, you have to use your body in a way that's not good for your body"

Good marriages are built on

Continued from page 3

youth, he made it clear that he considered there was no women's fiction of any value. Nothing, at any rate, that could stand alongside the men. And, boy, does he regret saying that now.

He appears — taller than yesterday — bearing a high-backed chair for me to sit on. He manoeuvres himself into a white wicker affair, with his back to the sun, explaining that his eyes have got bad, and he'll get grumpy if he has to squint. Before we start he puts in his hearing aid and Norman and Norris indulge in a bout of verbal fisticuffs. If she suspects her husband is putting her down or playing the grand seigneur, she will hit right back — which he seems to like. Certainly he is not attracted to doormats — "Oh no," he says when I ask him, "that would bring out the worst in me."

The Naked and the Dead, Mailer's first novel, published in 1948, drew on his experiences as a rifleman in the Philippines, and was an instant bestseller, loved by the critics and the public alike. *The Sunday Times* in England, however, although emphasising Mailer's exceptional gifts as a writer, urged that the book be withdrawn from publication immediately because of the "foul and beastly" men's talk. Indeed, "no decent man could leave it lying about the house, or know without shame that his womenfolk were reading it".

I read the book before meeting Mailer (it was a first edition that belonged to my father) and I think I may have escaped with my sensibilities intact, although the men do indeed say "fug" to each other (which, you have to admit, reads better than "f**") a great deal of the fugging time, when they are not reminiscing about the great fugs they have had. Actually, I thought it was a tremendous book, and compulsory reading for any woman who wants to understand how men of a certain generation were with one another. It is viscerally vivid about the terror and moral shiftiness of men in combat, but also about the strange kind of humility, almost doggedness, that can accompany acts of heroism. Mailer was only 24 when he wrote *The Naked and the Dead*, and as I read it I kept thinking, how could he have known so much, and conjured it so well?

At one point, when Mailer is railing against "the technological shit — the pipelines, the excrement" of oil, the corporations, high-rise architecture, super-highways, advertising, the deterioration of language — I say that he doesn't appear to be bitter about it. In fact, he looks remarkably jolly, considering. "May I quote myself?" he asks, sensible that it might be considered bad form to do so. "He felt the kind of merriment that men know when events have ended in utter disaster." That's from *The Naked and the Dead*, by the way. It was one of the few good sentences in the book. I protest, and find myself in the curious position of defending an author's work while he attacks it.

"The book is very, very good,

but it's not well-written," he says. "It's got an immediacy and a simplicity and a directness and it's very comfortable with its characters. It's a very good novel written by an amateur who hasn't learnt his métier yet." I mention an extraordinary scene, choked with the nuance of possibility, between the general and his chosen second-in-command, in which one man's momentary betrayal of himself leads directly to the other man's death.

"Yeah, I wrote that last," he says. "The wonderful thing about writing novels is that you discover you know things that you didn't realise you knew. Very often when I look at an old book — which I don't do very much — I come across something and I think 'How did I know that then?' It's the most amazing thing. It's as though there's part of the unconscious that's 20 years ahead of yourself, and that's the part that does the sense it's very exciting being a writer. I love that part of it."

I ask if he will inscribe my book, partly thinking how much it would have tickled my father, and he says better to do it now

Does he think he is America's greatest living author? 'Yes,' he says

than later. He bends his head and deliberates, whispering the words out loud as he writes. It's an optimistically friendly sentiment, signed "Norman Mailer (a.k.a. The Jury Suborner)". "It's outrageous what I just did," he growls. "Trying to corrupt the girl, that's all." I tell him, knowing he will be flattered, that my husband had warned me to watch out for him. "Well, he could get together with my wife," he says. Oh, come on, Norman, I say, you don't still swing, surely? "No, no. Surely not," he laughs, sounding like a bear with a cold. "I wouldn't dare! She's getting tougher and tougher."

Having been shot out of the cannon, as he puts it, had its ups and downs. His second novel — *Barbary Shore*, written under the influence of a French political/intellectual buddy, Jean Malaquais, to whom it is dedicated — was, one reads with a certain sense of inevitability, great tradition of William Faulkner et al. he took off to Hollywood to try his hand at script-writing. This was doomed, too, as was his third novel, *The Deer Park*, inspired by his adventures in Tinseltown. He sent the book to his hero, Hemingway, who did not respond. And then to Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly and a dozen other literary notables, but the only writer who acknowledged the book was Alberto Moravia, who already knew him, and that was only after Mailer had assured him that his comments would not be used for a plug.

I came across this humiliating episode in *The Time of our Time*, the 1,281-page, much-reduced col-

lection of his various writings, which was published two years ago on his 75th birthday. It is under the heading "Literary Pain and Shame", written in the late Fifties, and its conclusion seems to have even more resonance from this distance: "... it occurs to me now that I must have carried the memory as a silent shame which helped to push me further and deeper into the next half year of bold assertions, half-done work, unbalanced heroics and an odd notoriety of my own choice. I was on the edge of many things and I had more than a bit of violence in me." In 1960 he stabbed Adele Morales, his third wife, with a dirty penknife — a nice detail that — at one of their wild parties, narrowly missing her heart.

Repetition kills the soul, as Mailer is fond of repeating. Although he has written two books on Marilyn, there is a sense in which he has striven to reach his big novels: into the dark heart of the CIA in *Harlot's Ghost*, scatological Egypt in *Ancient Evenings*, Mailer as Jesus Christ, no less, in his last novel, *The Gospel According to the Son*. All whoppers, and chewy, too. Maybe he has promoted himself to God in the new one: he won't tell me what it's about, partly because he's afraid he might not be up to delivering the goods, but says it's his most ambitious yet. Contrary to the myth — commentators invariably mention size in the same breath as Mailer — he has written small novels, too. In every sense, sadly: alimony-spinners, you might call them. *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, a pointlessly nasty little

thriller set in Provincetown, comes to mind.

A new Norman Mailer is never not an event, but if his books always command a lot of attention, they don't always get the equivalent acclaim. He was awarded his two Pulitzers for works of non-fiction: *The Armies of the Night*, an insider's view of the anti-Vietnam march on the Pentagon, with Mailer's schtick of creating a character of himself in the third person, and *The Executioner's Song*, a dramatic creation of the life of the multiple murderer Gary Gilmore. Mailer calls the latter a novel, although it would surely be more accurate to call it fiction, albeit of a very high order, in much the same vein as Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*.

These literary distinctions

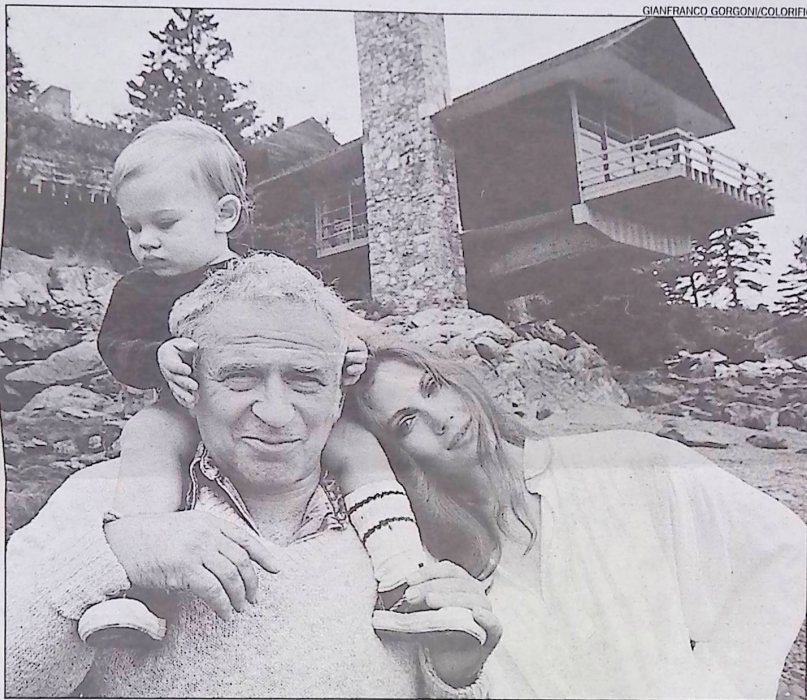
would hardly matter, were it not so important to Mailer for his greatness to reside in his reputation as a novelist.

So I ask him outright whether he thinks it would bother him in the afterlife if he were remembered for his non-fiction rather than his novels. "No. It bothers me much more while I'm living," he parries cheerfully. "You know, a lotta people say, particularly in America, 'Oh well, Mailer's a very good writer, but he really isn't much good at fiction and he's essentially a non-fiction writer'. It's just not true. I mean, look at the novels I've written!"

Does he think he is America's greatest living writer, I ask, and there is no other country in the world where you could ask that question of a writer without blushing. It helps, of course, that for many years Mailer went around claiming that he was the literary champ, although there were times when his behaviour was so erratic that even his friends must have been tempted to change the vowel. "Yes," he says. "And I add immediately that there are 20 other guys in America who feel the same way about themselves." Does that mean you feel that you have succeeded in delivering your early promise? "Well, you never reach the mark that you set for yourself," he says. "The question is, do you get near enough to the mark not to wince when you figure out what you've done with your life? And I would answer affirmatively. Yes, I think I got near enough. But did I do it all? No. I made more promises than I kept."

Mailer gets very playful when I try to tease out some clues about the new novel. He will admit this much: he has spent a year-and-a-half on research alone, he will probably start writing at the end of the summer, and it will take him a couple of years, at least, to complete. He says the odds that he can do it are, at best, 50-50. "I'm ready to write it now with one half of my mind — the part that's acquired a bit of wisdom — but there's another half of me that is getting older every day and, you know, the talent isn't necessarily the same as it was."

He says that he knows enough about journalists, having



Norman Mailer with his present wife — No 6 — Barbara (aka Norris) and her son John Buffalo



With his wife Adele, whom he stabbed with a dirty penknife

imited honesty

FRANK SPOONER PICTURES



Mailer in Provincetown: his first visit was in 1942, when the town already had a reputation for being free and easy and bohemian

been married to one — Jeannie, as he calls her (wife No 3, Lady Jeannie Campbell, the daughter of the Duke of Argyll, the granddaughter of Lord Beaverbrook), who worked for the *Evening Standard* — to gauge how much his reticence is going to pain me. "When our marriage was going badly, as it often did, I knew how to torture her," he says, making no attempt to conceal his glee. "I would say to her 'You know, I heard a wonderful story today.' And she'd say [Brooklynite approximation of an upper-class English woman] 'Whhhhat is it?' and I'd say 'I can't tell you. I simply can't tell you.'"

Tom Wolfe, Mailer's longtime paring partner in New York's literary pages, suffers physically or his art. Heart attacks, slipped discs and, at the very least, exhaustion seem to plague his forays into fiction. Does fiction have the same effect on Mailer, I wonder.

"It wears you out terribly. Oh yeah. You've got to get into wonderful shape before you start a novel. And, of course, being arthritic now and having had this hip operation, which turned out well, but my knees are still crummy so I can't get into the kind of shape I want to get into because I can't walk that far. You wear out as you write and if you don't start in a good place, you get ill very quickly."

"That's why I was always fascinated by boxing because it's so different from writing and yet there's one similarity — which is that to get good at it, you've really got to use your body in a way that's not good for your body."

He was a notoriously prodigious drinker, dope-head and

dame-chaser, well into his fifties and sixties, so I ask him how he gets his kicks these days, and he says he draws cartoons. Drinking Scotch is one of his hobbies but he cannot consume as much as he used to: "The bones won't permit it." Dope? "I've probably had marijuana about three times in the past ten years. I used to smoke it a lot, and I loved it. But marijuana is a deadly bitch of a passion because it's wonderful, absolutely wonderful, like a fabulous bitch [this sounds a bit more like the old Mailer], but the payments get heavier and heavier. For me, it was immensely dramatic — like LSD, which I never took — and if I had a wonderful trip, I couldn't work for a day or two afterwards. I'd be used up." Libido? "How can I put it? When it's there, it's absolutely there. It isn't there quite so often, but it's there. It's good, yes, oh yeah."

Do you think you would never stray again? "How can I answer that question, and have it in print, and have my wife saying 'Why did you hesitate on the answer?'" A big laugh. Isn't honesty a good policy? "Oh yes. But not in marriage. Come on. Limited honesty is what good marriages are built upon. Oh, now we're getting into the nit-teeece-grit-teeece. Heheheheh."

In print, Mailer probably sounds less vigorous than he appears in person, particularly with his lack of coyness about the creaky vicissitudes of old age. But in the flesh he is vital and alert, and like a lot of mental athletes his allure has not deserted him, even if his body has let him down. Part of the appeal is that he is still recognisably himself: the fighter's face, the wiry hair,

"I thought 'if I go to prison, it won't be all bad. I'll be able to write about it'"

curious, pale blue eyes and teeth-baring grin. His clear voice and rat-a-tat-tat delivery could be that of a street-smart New Yorker in his forties. You feel charged by his energy. But when he stands up with his low-slung gait, there's a poignancy, too — which has you hoping that maybe that's the boxer in him rather than the arthritis. You sense that he still longs to run and romance and play havoc, if he could. Perhaps decrepitude is easier to take for those who have lived a life less full.

At 77, there's a lot to precede him, much of which has already been well-documented: the gambling father who looked as anonymously well-turned-out as a banker, the doting momma, Harvard, the war years, the volatile marriages and screwing around, the political protests, the New York mayoral bid, with the columnist Jimmy Breslin as his sidekick, on a platform of what could only have been dope-fuelled policies, training with Muhammad Ali, Saturday mornings in the ring of the Gramercy Gym, head-butting Gore Vidal in a TV station dressing-room minutes before they went

on air, punching a hostile literary critic who made the mistake of smiling at him in Provincetown, and that was when he was in his seventies.

There are some chapters that are less well-known than others and, happily, Mailer is in a good enough mood to discuss them. Adele Morales wrote a book about the stabbing a couple of years ago, but her former husband has always been reluctant to be drawn on the incident. For now, at least, he is prepared to talk about his three-week incarceration in Bellevue mental hospital. It wasn't such a terrible place, he says: "I was in the so-called violent ward, but it wasn't that violent. There were about 50 of us living in a very large room, and it was a very interesting period."

"But I'm very susceptible to my surroundings, as many writers are, and if you're around crazy people all the time... well, I knew that if I had to stay there, there was a real serious chance that I'd never leave. So it was very important to get out and face my medicine, whatever it would be. Also, and this is how incredibly insay-eeenee and egoman-iiii-a-cal writers are, I thought 'If I go to prison, it won't be all bad. It may be very painful, but I'll be able to write about it.'"

"So the psychiatrists were all facing a terrible problem. Here I was, a successful, middle-class young writer in New York, and if he [interesting switch here to third person] committed a violent crime, then he has to be crazy. You see, it couldn't possibly be sociological or whatever. And

Continued on page 6

THE TEST

Fabien Barthez



Public image

Bald. French. Brilliant. Cool. That pretty much sums it up for the man — yes, still just a man, though legend cannot be far behind — who this week signed a contract with Manchester United worth £1.6 million a year. V. popular back home: *Paris Match* says that only Diana, Princess of Wales, and the death of President François Mitterrand attracted more readers. **8/10**

Intelligence

Smart about stopping the ball. (Claims it is all due to Zen-like concentration.) Smart about money. (His first official day with United was yesterday so, by the time you've read this, he's already made £6,400.) Not so smart about other things: has tested positive for cannabis, accused of throwing a match by his coach at Monaco, a claim he denies. **6/10**

Compassion

Borderline soppy. Admits to liking Phil Collins — "Take a look at me now" ad nauseam — plus lists swimming with dolphins as a hobby. Says he wants to be as great as Cantona. Can poetry be far behind? Can the seagulls stand the pace? **7/10**

Sex appeal

Interesting. Men like kissing his head. Women dream of other things. Relationship with supermodel Linda Evangelista famously on-off. French papers say that Linda agreed to move to London but stamped Gucci-clad foot at the very idea of Manchester, so now it is all off (again). But surely that cannot last. The tabloids will see to it. Posh and Linda must be seen in the same grandstand. Or, as *The Mirror* put it yesterday, "Posh v Linda: Battle of the two Man Utd beauties". **8/10**

Humour

French, if you know what I mean. Sponsored by a razor company for the World Cup two years ago. Predictably. **4/10**

Family values

Unknown. Never been seen in a sarong or in women's underwear but that could change. **5/10**

Antecedents

Sporty. Born in Anège region of southwest France on June 28, 1971. Family played rugby. Father was a provincial half-back, his grandfather a local 15-a-side legend (allegedly). World Cup and Champions League winner. **10/10**

Durability

Worrying, especially to the people who write the cheques at Man United. Has had injuries to his back, groin and thigh. **5/10**

Ambition

"I would like to become a legend here like Eric Cantona and Peter Schmeichel but the most important thing is to fit into the side and help the club win trophies," he said. Obviously. **10/10**

Future prospects

Brilliant if he can get a grip on his attitude. Cash-wise, still room for improvement. He's only the second most expensive 'keeper in the world behind Inter's Angelo Peruzzi, who cost £10.5m. **7/10**

Examiner:
Ann Treneman

Score
70%

he might be gay'

MAGNUM

Norman Mailer: "It was taken for granted that life was difficult, so let's have fun!"

The author Tom Wolfe: "He probably dreams of killing me," says Mailer



JIM COOPER/AP



Arthur Miller: early neighbour

way or another, and they just squashed us even further." Oh please, Norman, you cannot be serious, is what you want to say, but you can't because he's in such deadly earnest.

Actually, he speaks more in sorrow than in anger, because he thinks that the women's revolution — and he does, at least, give it credit for being that — has turned women into the kind of men who used to make him feel sad growing up: "Those poor guys who hadda work from nine to five, dull work, their lives never their own. You know, to work for the corporation, we used to think, was a slow death. And now the women work just like those men — maybe harder — on the plane in their white shirts and black tailored suits, with their laptop computers, and they're absolutely working for the corporation. That's where the women's revolution went. You know, it was a power grab, but I always thought that the power men have in most cases is desperately empty."

If he sees women and men locked into some kind of ceaseless struggle for ascendancy, that is even truer of the way he views relations between men. Writers are as competitive as good athletes, he says, with a nod to Hemingway: "When one good athlete is watching another play he's not only admiring the other athlete's skill, but there's also always this inner question — the dark, strong inner question: 'Can I better what he's doing here?' " Even back in the days when he and Arthur Miller were living in the same brownstone in Brooklyn, Miller writing *Death of a Salesman* on one floor, Mailer writing *The Naked and the Dead* on another, he says they would pass each other in the hall to pick up their mail, and each man would walk away thinking: "Gee, that other guy isn't gonna amount to anything."

He says that Tom Wolfe was

probably ready to kill him after the review he gave his last novel: "He probably dreams of killing me. Fine. Good." Mailer insists that his piece was full of pluses as well as minuses, but it got coupled with John Updike's, which was more critical, and then Wolfe came back at them both in print, saying they were a bag of old bones and jealous to boot, and so — naturally — he had to land another punch: "It's true that I'm a bag of old bones, but if I'm gonna be jealous, it will be of Tolstoy."

Well, what a scrappy lot America's men of letters seem to be.

'It's hard to be a man now without setting out various rules'

Homosexuality is a subject that has exercised him, one way or another, over the years, so I wonder, finally, how he feels about living in a place that is so flamboyantly gay. "My sense of how important it was to be a man was much more vivid in the old days," he says. "But now my feeling is that it's hard enough to be any kinda man at all without setting out various rules and regulations on what it is to be a man."

"A lot of my male attitudes came directly from Hemingway, and over the course of ten or 20 years I've digested them, and let's say I'm much more tolerant today."

Tell me, I say, did you ever feel afraid that you might be gay? Quick as a flash he answers: "Well, I don't know a man who hasn't. That's the secret terror in all men." Which leads him into Clinton's stance on gays in the US Army. "If Clinton had been

in the army for a week, he would have known enough to know that you don't go in that direction because it won't work. And the reason it won't work is that there are any number of men who need male bonding because the warmest things they got from life were from other men, and those are the men who tend to gravitate towards the army."

"You see, the army enables them to live in such a way that they don't have to think about being homosexual. They have a successful male bonding that is not homosexuality. It's a different, forcefully separated, stage."

But aren't those sexual feelings lurking around the edges? "They are, but they're highly taboo for precisely the reason that this is male bonding that is not homosexual, and if you cross the line, it's dreadful. And there is no place where homosexuals are hated more, as a result, than in a male-bonding society." And so we're back where we started, with *The Naked and the Dead*, which draws us to a close.

The Jury Suborned? It's hard to say. If I'd met him in a bar in Provincetown in his hard-drinking years, the verdict might well be different. But I think I'm with the lady cab driver: he's a helluva guy, as he himself would say, with more than a little mischief still left in him. On our way out, I ask him whether it was true that he'd been at a dinner party with the Duchess of York, and that when she'd asked him what his latest book was about, he'd said "pussy". "Yeah, it's true," he said. "And she loved it. And the hostess has never spoken to me again. Hahahahaha."

Norman Mailer will be appearing at The Sunday Times Hay Festival, sponsored by BOL.com on Saturday at 8pm. To book tickets for this event, please call the Orange Festival hotlines on 07973 100900/1/2.

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