

MAILER
565 COMMERCIAL ST
PROVINCETOWN, MASS.

~~LETTER~~

AIR MAIL

PAUL CARROLL
450 W. SURF ST.
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

AIR MAIL - FIRST CLASS



AIR MAIL

AN INTERVIEW WITH NORMAN MAILER

(1)

PLAYBOY: How do you feel about being interviewed?

MAILER: I start with a general sense of woe, depression, and mental fatigue.

PLAYBOY: Why?

MAILER: Because the nature of the modern interview requests that the interviewer ^(deliver) ~~1%~~ 1% of himself and the man $\frac{1}{2}$ who answers to give over 99% of himself. Like all stingy people, I feel a sense of being extraordinarily exploited ~~#####~~ the moment I step into an interview. A real interview is an interview which exists in the communion between the man who interviews and the man who is being interviewed; and that has a life--the life is in the mood. ^{The} ~~A~~ only trouble with that is that now the only way it is technically ^{feasible} ~~feasible~~ to conduct an interview is with a tape recorder which eats up half the mood. It isn't the interview I really loathe so much as it's the tape recorder.

PLAYBOY: When you say the mood what do you mean? Do you mean ^{the whole kind of feeling of the} ~~the~~ the/gestures, the man in action, the man in his own skin?

MAILER: A mood is something which lives between two people; it's a separate creation, a psychic creation, it's a spirit with character and logical edges, it's something you can think of as almost recognizable: you can say, "Oh, he or she or we are in that same mood again," or "We're back to that $\frac{1}{2}$ mood again." It's a presence. It's like something living.

PLAYBOY: What's the best way to capture this mood in an interview that's limited by a tape recorder?

MAILER: There's no best way. It's just a matter of hard, professional technique. It's like professional football in that you've got to contemplate the problem that every third or fourth play you've got to gain some yards through the center of the line, and you've got four very tough linemen there opposing you and there's not very much you can do because they've all been around for six or seven years, so it's just a matter of grinding through--that's all. ~~(Editor's note: This last was said with irony and wit)~~

PLAYBOY: If you feel so lousy about being interviewed then why did you consent to ~~XX~~ this one? Do you feel you learn anything from them?

MAILER: Well, I consented on several counts. ~~First~~ of all, because you're conducting the interview and I have personal respect for you. And I also consented because ^(about) once every two or three years I feel I have to have a psychic housecleaning and go through my ideas in a general, even a brutal form--the brutal form of the interview--to see about where I stand because most of the time I spend my time thinking privately down various private alleys--and I mean by that nothing salacious--and without this general psychic housecleaning I might ~~get too infatuated with some ideas~~ get too infatuated with some ideas. It's a way, I suppose, of exposing those ideas which are weakest at the moment. After that, you can either discard them or ^(really) start thinking about them a little harder. It's like an examination.

PLAYBOY: As you talk about housecleaning your ideas--disgarding, changing or improving them--we're reminded of your sentence in The Deer Park about growth: "There was that law of life, so cruel and so just, that one must ^Grow or else pay more for remaining the same." Would you comment on your feelings about growth--particularly in the light of the change^R levelled against you by many critics who claim that you've dissipated and continue to dissipate a potentially major talent in American fiction by wearing so many other hats--there's Mailer the politician who once serious^Lly considered running for mayor of New York City; there's Mailer the journalist who writes about the maladies in American life and about the political brutalities; there's Mailer the celebrity who grabs headlines by booze brawls and other acts of public violence. These critics claim you do not grow. How do you feel about this--your several hats and the sense of growth of you as a novelist and a man?

MAILER: I once had a wife--a couple of wives back--who said in response to a query from my mother as to whether she wasn't taking on too much, that she was going to be a great actress and a great painter, a great mother and a great wife. Whether she succeeded in that venture is moot. But at the time I remember thinking: "Yeah, that's the only way to be." It seems to me that the artist who lies behind the particular art in which he's engaged is that artist who's an artist at life. If you're really an artist at life then you can do three, four, six ¹/₄ things and do them all equally well--not equally

well in ~~the~~ the sense that you get the same marks in each as
a great writer, a great journalist, and so forth, but that
you do equally well in the sense that you get as much back
from each of them, ^{and} ~~and~~ therefore you do not exhaust yourself
unduly, or if you do exhaust yourself, then off you go to
something else and drop that. To me, this ~~seems like the only~~
^{IT MAY BE THAT THE ONLY} way left for a man living in a highly over-developed technological
world is to learn a little bit about the shape of the whole
thing because, after all, this is a time of experts ^{altogether} ~~a little bit~~
beyond belief or comprehension. The only way to learn ^{about}
the whole thing is to really know a ^{few} sweet, little bit about
a great many things. You don't have to know the whole subject
but you do have some fine piece of the whole in many different
kinds of inquiry. Then you have that necessary test of
character which is indispensable when you're confronting an
expert because there are two kinds of experts: experts who
are good ^G ~~A~~ guys and experts who are bad guys, and unless you
make that elementary distinction, you can't decide whether
you want to listen to the expert or not.

HOW DO
YOU DECIDE
WHICH IS
WHICH?

PLAYBOY: Are you suggesting that a writer must have
a broad experience--not simply as a novel^List but as a man
in life?

MAILER: No. What I'm saying, I ~~do~~ suppose, is that in moving

PLAYBOY: Is this what you meant when you said that your success at 25 was like a lobotomy?

MAILER: Lobotomy would not be the right word because it didn't stun my brain: it cut me off ^{EXISTENTIALLY} ~~mentally~~ from my past. I really felt like someone who had been dropped onto earth--not earth, but let's say Mars.

PLAYBOY: Did you dig your sudden fame?

MAILER: Of course I ~~dig~~ dug it. Yeah, I had to dig it. I mean, to be brutally frank for all our dear PLAYBOY readers: it enabled me to get girls I would not otherwise have gotten.

PLAYBOY: (Merry, loud laugh)

MAILER: I will not ^(here, say.) ~~hesitate~~ call a spade a spade.

(Laughter)

PLAYBOY: /You make a distinction between the legendary Mailer ~~and~~ who when he left a party it became a great moral judgment and the Norman Mailer who wanted to grow in his own, sweet time and in his own way. ⁶ Could you contrast those two Mailers for us?

MAILER: I could contrast them but we ^I would get into more and more ^M complications which would have nothing to do with anything but feedback: it would end up being tedious and tiresome. These sort of things have value in a novel and they have ironies--you know, ^{They're} ~~those~~ tragic and pathetic and uproarious and epic--but just to talk about it I think I'd end up being endlessly tiresome: I'd have to go into some tiny little occasion and split it apart, and split it apart further, and split it apart

DIDN'T IT
BOOTHER YOU
TO GET THEM
BECAUSE OF
YOUR FAME
& YOUR
LEGEND
RATHER
THAN ON
YOUR OWN
INTRINSIC
MERITS
AS A
MALE?

further. Such scenes belong more in a novel than in an interview. The {only} point I want to make is: having some instinctive sense--right or wrong--that the way to grow was not to keep at ~~the~~ the same activity but to move from activity to activity, ~~which~~ which, after all, all ^{proportions} ~~proportions~~ kept, was a notion which began with Renaissance Man: it's not my idea. My personal celebrity was an obstacle to this natural ability to move quickly and easily. For years, it was a tremendous obstacle; and I had a personality which wrestled with it, because I ended up having a ~~very~~ very dull, dogged personality which sought to wrestle with the legend, which tried to say, "Look, fellows, I'm really not like that: I'm this, I'm simple, honest, hard working: you know, I'm Abe," when everybody wanted me to be ~~A~~ Zack. Now, the teariness of this confession is not to enlist sympathy for me but to prepare the ground for my boast: I learned how to live with this; and I learned finally that the only thing you can do is to accept the legend, and the legend becomes something like your beard: you're a front man, a pimp, a procurer of new situations; and that you live in an existential situation with a ghost, who is more real to people than yourself, and every single action you take in life with another person is part of a triangle. Every girl you talk to is not only in love with you ^{or} ~~but~~ disappointed with you but also bearing relation to your legend. There are times therefore when

you beef up your legend, and times when you draw a credit (?) back from your legend, but you don't pretend--as I did for years--that the legend ain't there: he is. By the same token, when you're dealing with a man, there were two of you--you're two linemen having to take out one ~~other~~ guy; so while it's very disadvantageous because the ~~amplifier's~~ ^{amplifier's} always working, and the ~~amplifier~~ ^{amplifier} being the other guy, always goes off and exaggerates what you said or did, you might just as well take advantage of that. If you got an ~~amplifier~~ ^{amplifier}, blast his ear drums, burn him out.

WHY SO COMBATIVE & COMPETITIVE?

PLAYBOY: In other words, if you got drunk at a party, there'd be three men fighting instead of two?

MAILER: Yeah. Of course, that doesn't always work to your advantage; because sometimes a guy who is fighting two guys is braver than when he's fighting one. So I've gotten licked by guys who I think could not have licked me if I hadn't had the other guy next to me.

BUT WHY HAVE YOU GOTTEN INTO SO MANY FIGHTS? WHAT DOES IT PROVE?

PLAYBOY: ~~going back to your involvement with drugs, was that part of the legendary Mailer or how or why did you get addicted to alcohol and smoke pot?~~

PLAY BOY: One of your family celebrated experiences with growth was your experience with drugs — you were on sleeping pills for a few years and were addicted to Seconal. Later you said that a man on drugs will pay for it by a burnt-out, gutted nervous system. How do you feel about drugs today? — particularly about the LSD^{psychedelic} movement led by Timothy Leary? Do you see drugs as an example of potential or of false growth?

(13)

MAILER: Drugs are exactly equivalent, I think, to gambling:
~~They're~~ they're a spiritual form of gambling. This is ⁴ figure
of speech--no, this is a poetic equation which can be carried
right down to the end because you're even bucking the house
percentage, which for a drug like ^{Marijuana} ~~marijuana~~ is probably something
like 30% or 32%.

PLAYBOY: Would you expand the metaphor?

MAILER: ^{Marijuana} ~~Marijuana~~ does something with the sense of time: it
accelerates one, it opens one to one's unconscious, and opens
the conduits of, to use a glorious word, one's being. To be
practical about it, ^(and very American,) it's as if you're calling on the next three
days. And all the sweets, all the crystals, all the little
decisions, all the unconscious work of the next ^{Three} ~~three~~ days--
or in a more general sense, of the next thirty days or the
next thirty years--are called forward--but particularly the
next two or three days, which means that relative to yourself
you are Superman during the period in which you've taken the
pot. So that for a half hour or ~~two~~ two hours--whatever the
good period of the ^{pot} ~~pot~~ is--while you're high on it, you're
better than you are normally, and you get into ~~xxx~~ situations
you ^w ~~wouldn't~~ get into normally, and ~~xxx~~ generally more happens
to you: you make love better, you talk better, you think better,
you dig people better: you're in. The point is: ^{you've} ~~you're~~ got to
get in pretty far because you're using up three days in an hour--
or whatever the particular ^m ~~mathematics~~ is for any particular
man or woman. So unless you come back with--if the ratio is

is 36:1, if you're using up 36 hours in one hour, then ~~you've~~ you've got to come back with somewhere between 36 and 50 ^e times as much as you would normally because you've fallen out, you have to recover for the next two or three days. So you might ask: What happens to the guy who is smoking pot all the time? Well, I don't really know, but I do know that something is being mortgaged, something is being drawn out of the future, and if his own future has been ~~ex~~ completely used up in some deep sense, then if he's a good guy maybe he's drawing it out of the very substance of God because I suspect that God very often ^f feeds drug addicts the way a healthy body feeds parasites.

PLAYBOY: How do you mean ^{That} God feeds addicts?

NORMAN: Well, if God is being who has great ~~xxx~~ compassion, he may not be willing to cut the drug addict off; ~~xx~~ but when the addict has some of his most intense and divine experiences it's because he is literally ~~x~~ imbibing the ~~xx~~ very marrow and nutrient ^e of God.

PLAYBOY: Do you think this happens in the LSD experience?

MAILER: Oh, yeah, ^{I'm convinced of that.} of course, because I don't think you get something for nothing. ^o You don't have a divine ^N experience without having paid your wages which ~~xx~~ enable you to approach ^O ~~divinity to in effect to~~ ^{Otherwise, you} live the life of a parasite: it's to draw upon sweets you have not earned.

PLAYBOY: How does one earn the ^{RIGHT} ~~right~~ to participate in the divine under LSD? Do you think the LSD experience can be a shortcut?

MAILER: Yeah, ^{obviously} I will say that ~~obviously~~ it's not that simple: I am not going ^{to} say that LSD is bad in every way for everyone; but I'm convinced it's bad if you keep taking it. Any drug is finally bad ~~in~~ in the same way that being a confirmed gambler is bad. ^{He} ~~He~~ ends up losing all his friends because he blows ^w all their money and blows ^s all the trust so that nobody believes ~~see~~ him any longer. It's like being a heroin junkie--finally you'll ~~kill~~ kill your own mother to get another fix. ^{The way} ~~a~~ a gambler will tell any lie just to get back into the action. By the same token, if you stay on any drug for too long, then you're a creature of habit, you're a victim ~~and~~ and to anticipate something, you're a totalitarian. ^{Let me put it this way} ~~Let me put it this way~~: LSD is marvelous for experts, but they get too frozen in their expertise, and ~~what~~ what happens is that they've driven deep into something ^{impenetrable} ~~impenetrable~~ in the nature of their expertise. In other words, although ~~they~~ they work and work and work ~~manfully~~ ^a manfully as experts, they're like soldiers who've pushed far into enemy territory but now they're up against this absolutely steel fortress they cannot get through, and the only action is to retreat but they don't know how because ^{They have no habits of retreat because} ~~they're experts~~ and ~~don't~~ ^{don't} know how to retreat but only know how to move forward,

amassing more knowledge and more concentration upon a point. When the point is not penetrated the expert is in great trouble--psychically--and begins to live in increasing depression. Therefore, what happens next is that he has to retreat and doesn't know how to retreat: he wasn't built to retreat.

My guess is that on LSD you begin to die a little. That's why you get this extraordinary, even divine sense of revelation. Perhaps one tastes the odor and essence of one's own death on a drug. Therefore, what's given to the expert is a broader vision; in dying a little he begins to retreat from his expertise and begins to rejoin all of mankind. So that LSD taken a few times, I would imagine, could ~~be~~ be very good. But an expert in LSD is as bad as an expert in anything else.

HAVEN'T YOU
EVER TAKEN
IT? WHY NOT?
OR IF SO, HOW
WAS IT?

PLAYBOY: Booze seems to be another way by which you've tried to grow or "move forward." One of the characters in your stage version of The Deer Park says: "A man must drink until he locates the truth." Could you expand a bit on that?

MAILER: I think that I'm going to offer to a large segment of the magazine readers of America one fundamental, Mallerean equation: A man who drinks is attempting to dissolve an obsession.

PLAYBOY: What's the obsession?

MAILER: ^RFirst you have to talk about what an obsession is. ~~*****~~ Although I've thought about it a great deal I don't know if I know what an obsession is. Everybody talks about obsessions but nobody's ever really defined it--we don't know what we're talking about. An obsession is a point of magnetism--a point toward which everything turns. An obsession is a psychic field of forces, isn't it? An obsession is created, I ^(I) think, when some event has occurred which has altered our life profoundly or we pass through some relation with someone else which has altered our life profoundly, but we don't know whether it's altered it for good or for bad: it's the most fundamental sort of event or relation; it's morally ^(I) ~~ambitious.~~ ambiguous.

PLAYBOY: Would you give an example here?

MAILER: Well, for instance, when a marriage ^bbreaks up, one doesn't know if it was your fault or the wife's fault or God's fault or the Devil's fault: that's four uncertainties. Let's reduce them to two: a man and wife.

PLAYBOY: ~~You sound Hasidic~~ ^{Had} Hasidic...

Hasidic:

MAILER: No, that's not ~~Hasidic~~ that's Mailerian. Let me put it this way: I believe that people move forward into the future on the basis of their comprehension of the past; in other words, I believe that every man and woman ~~is~~ alive is a little bit like an army--I don't want to go too far with this notion because we'll get bogged down in all of those muddy roads which have to do ^wwith the movements of large numbers of men and great tonages of supplies, and ~~what~~ what does that have to do with alcohol's carbohydrates--I don't want to get caught on that. But I do think that we do move forward to attack the future and I think that most people alive--certainly most Americans--see the future as something you attack, something ^cfrom which you wrest gains. We move forward to attack the future on the basis of our comprehension of ^tthe past; and wherever we don't comprehend something in the past we are crippled. ^aTo use the metaphor of the army here, it's ^aas if someone moves forward to attack a town and the center of this attack depends

upon a road which ^(will feed) ~~leads~~ your attack, and this road passes through a town and yet you don't know if your people hold that town or someone else holds it. Obviously, if you were a general you'd be pretty obsessive about that town; you'd keep getting on the line, saying, "Will somebody please find out who owns that town?" You'd send out ^(RECONNAISSANCE) ~~reconnaissance~~ parties to locate that town, enter it and patrol through it; and if all sorts of mysterious things occurred--the ~~reconnaissance~~ ^{RECONNAISSANCE} parties didn't return--until finally you get so paralyzed you couldn't move forward to attack that town and you had to fall back on an earlier town. Kafka is built upon this notion: that ~~the~~ the obsession is the ambiguity. What finally ~~did~~ ^{is} occur? What is real?

PLAYBOY: How does a man explore his obsessions through drink?

MAILER: If his drink returns him to an earlier state of sensitivity it takes him to a point back behind the point where he originally ^L got into the situation which created the obsession. Drink renders him infantile and obviously you are younger than you were when you were in ¹ this marriage in which these various events occurred; and you can say to yourself, "What really did happen? Who was right? Who was wrong?" So a man must drink until he locates the truth. I think that's why it's so hard for people to give up booze. There's ^a ~~an~~ art work which goes on with most serious drinkers. Usually, it's defeated art work. Again, one's playing against the house

against the house percentage: when one drinks one wrecks
one's liver, dings ^{VISION} ~~vision~~ burns out memory. Drinking is
a serious activity--a serious moral and spiritual activity.
It's no accident that part of small town common sense is:
"I don't trust a man who never takes a drink" because that
man either has no obsessions or has obsessions so prevalent
that he has buried them and there are live bodies screaming
under the ground.

PLAYBOY: When drink takes you back to the point before the
obsession began, how can a man understand ^(the truth of) that point?

MAILER: There we get into something much more mysterious. There
I'd rather quit the field because I don't think this ~~land~~ lends
itself to neat formulas. But I do feel that everyone who's
a serious drinker has had those moments when they've had
revelations on drink. Drink in a way is the active man's
drug addiction. That's a dull way to put it but, in other
words, when you take a drug generally speaking--well, let's
say, symbolically speaking, the way to take a drug is to
lie on your back, whereas the way to drink is standing up.
Serious drinkers who take themselves seriously like to
stand up at a bar rather than sit down. There's all that
etiquette and protocol and snobbery about men who drink
standing up instead of sitting at a bar stool. We all know
that sleeky, weak feeling we get when we're really tired
and want a drink to pick us up and we go to a ^{(good) Irish} bar and
sit down on a stool and get stared at to the point
where you've got to stand up, no matter how tired you are.

Bless the Irish!

PLAYBOY: Do you feel that you've got to moments of truth through drink?

MAILER: Extraordinary ~~moments~~ moments of truth. The only thing that had ~~me~~ me ready to weep was that I was so close to the truth but I knew I was too drunk to do anything about it.

PLAYBOY: What was that truth?

MAILER: Whatever the truth was. The kind of truths you find in moments like that are like discovering that someone you thought really loved you, hated you, or someone you always thought ~~loved~~ ^{hated} you, really loved you. All I'm getting at is that one gets a sense of certainty: moments of crystal ambiguity--if that's not a total contradiction in terms--are resolved. The ambiguity sinks into the earth; the crystal remains, and you say: "Yes, there's the truth. Yes, this is what did happen." A whole relationship suddenly becomes not a wave but a crystal.

PLAYBOY: In ~~by~~ terms of your ~~xxx~~ concept of growth, you've made in An American Dream and other writings a brilliant, dazzling, and rather puzzling remark concerning the possibility that God himself may be involved in a process of growth. You've said that he may be an existential God whose final nature is not yet comprehended, even by himself. Could you comment on this?

MAILER: Sometimes I think that metaphysics is a matter of approaching large subjects about ^u which you know nothing--approaching them from the outside. The logical positivists detest ~~xx~~ this kind of intellectual activity: but I'm fond of it; I think it's one of the most stimulating, valid ways to think, and also one of the most biological: animals think that way. If you're confronted with a mystery and then with another mystery, you may never be able to tell anything about the mysteries^e: you can only see them from the outside; but you can tell a lot about the relationships between the mysteries. We don't know the nature of God nor the nature of man but we may be able to divine ^o something of the relation between man and God by such preciousities of form as history or the secret histories of our own lives. Going after the relation between ~~these~~ these mysteries in that fashion, I think that what one decides is that if there is a God he has to be either all powerful or imperfect. If he's all powerful, ~~then~~ then

it's not a terribly agreeable ballgame. And it's possible that this all powerful God is somewhat absurd or at least his relation to us is absurd because all we see in our human condition is thundering, monumental ~~disproportions~~ ^{disproportions}, injustices of such dimensions and ~~disproportion~~ ^{proportion} that even a conservative notion of existence that man is not here on earth to ~~complain~~ complain but to receive his just deserts and that the man who acts piggishly on earth will be repaid in heaven or hell, regardless of whether he was rich or poor. This notion depends on a divine economy: it depends on a God ^{who is} ~~whose~~ able to run a world of reasonable proportions. But the world we have is one of such abysmal, idiotic ~~disproportions~~ that it becomes--at least for me--impossible to conceive of an ^a all powerful God as a tenable philosophical proposition. It is far easier to conceive of a God who died or who is dying or ^{who is} ~~an~~ imperfect God. When one thinks of an imperfect God one thinks of a being far greater than ourselves but who nevertheless shares his logic with us: even as we as men seek to grow, so he seeks to grow; even as we as men have a conception of being ^{which} which is in each case our own and we often war with one another, so that my conception of being may triumph over yours or yours over mine ^{so} ~~so~~ this God may be engaged in a similar war in the universe with other gods: and we are the embodiment of his vision; if we fail he fails too. He is imperfect ^e in the sense that we are imperfect. He is not always as brave or extraordinary or indeed as graceful as he might care to be. This is my notion of God and growth.

WHAT REASON DO YOU HAVE FOR
BELIEVING IN GOD AT ALL -
EXISTENTIAL OR OTHERWISE?

24

And I think the thing about it which gives me some ^{sustenance} ~~substance~~
is that it enables me to love God, if you will, rather than
to hate him because I can see him as someone who is like
other men and myself expect that he's more noble and more
tortured; and more desirous of a good ~~thing~~ which he wishes
to receive and give others ~~an~~ an ethical activity at which
he may fail. If he fails it will be tragic.

PLAYBOY: Could you talk a bit more about the relationship
between a man and this existential God who is ^(still) involved in
discovering his own nature?

MAILER: The relationship is the one one finds between
brothers. Instead of being our father, God is our older
brother. There are times when he has to exploit us; there
are times when we have to exploit him; there are times
when he has to drive us beyond our own natural breadth
because he needs us--those of us at least who are working
for him: we have yet to talk of the Devil. On the other
hand, there are times when we call on him. The image
I used earlier of the drug addict would apply to this:
in other words, a man who is on drugs may very often
be draining God's substance. God is not one to desert
the addict because he loves that addict much more than
a more mediocre man. The drug ~~addict~~ addict in his
particular greed until the point comes when God cuts
him off which is usually the point when the junkie
decides to kick his habit.

PLAYBOY: What is the relationship between a writer and this God?

MAILER: The relation of any artist, I suppose. I don't really know: I've never been able to decide for myself how much of it comes from being in a graceful relation with that God and therefore being illuminated ~~xxx~~--in other words, how much of ~~it~~ your own creativity comes from something other than yourself and how much comes from just keeping your nose clean.

PLAYBOY: What would you say in this context about Blake's famous remark: "Milton wrote in fetters when he wrote of heaven & angels and like a God when he wrote of hell and the Devil because he was a True Poet and of the Devil's ~~xxx~~ company without knowing it"?

MAILER: I suspect that every artist is a devil's helper. Every artist is engaged in the worst sense in a perverted activity because there must be two opposite things at once: there must be the heart, upon which emotions are engraved, and there must be the eye which observes its own heart.

PLAYBOY: In what sense does that make the artist a devil's helper?

DO YOU BELIEVE IN
THE DEVIL? NO
WHAT SENSE?

MAILER: The Devil's classic pose is to stand on tiptoe, fingers reaching for the heavess, and put his nose in the pit of his own arm and smell it... I'm running out...

PLAYBOY: Is there any final thing you want to say?

MAILER: Yeah. Up the Irish/Down the Feds/We sad Irish/Anarchists and Reds.

PLAYBOY: What is the relationship ^W between a writer and this existential God?

MAILER: That's like courage: you can't talk about it.

^{(beyond a certain point is}
~~to~~ A man who talks about his own religion ~~that~~
^{to} be trusted ~~for an instant~~ for an instant. I think: one of the reasons why people don't trust me too much--and maybe for very good cause--is that I should² be talking about these damn things: I may be working for the devil by talking this way; I may be hippping all the devil workers on the way the real scene goes.

PLAYBOY: You've talked about the Devil in An American Dream and elsewhere and said once that maybe the Devil is really God in exile. What did you mean?

MAILER: I don't know what ^{The} Devil is. What I mean is: I don't know if the Devil is finally the evil principle of God--a fallen ^Rangel, a prince of darkness, Lucifer--in other words, when all is said, a vital, brilliant, somewhat doomed creature of the first dimension engaged in a tragic, brilliant war with God, or whether the Devil is a species of non-existence. I don't know if plastic, if you will, is a second principle of evil as opposed to the Devil as it is opposed to God. I don't know if this technological ~~society~~ ^{SOCIETY} which is strangling us is the work of the Devil or the work of some principle alien to both God and the Devil--a visitor from a small ^{Planet} ~~planet~~ if you will. So when I talk about the Devil these days I really don't know what I'm talking about.

I don't know who or where the enemy is.
 I don't ~~have~~ have the remotest notion of
 who or what I'm working for, I tell you that.

BAD
 TRANSITION

PLAYBOY: Speaking of good and evil in this country, you've written extensively about John F. Kennedy and his impact on our times. What do you think of the current myth of Kennedy as it has developed since you published The Presidential Papers a few weeks after he ~~was~~ was assassinated?

MAILER: I don't know if it's a myth. I think Kennedy was a great guy--I really do. Now that he's gone I think much more of him than I did when he was alive--naturally, ~~inevitably~~ ^{inevitably}. But it's not a myth. We may never live to see another president like that one. He was an extraordinary man, an incredible hero. He really did heroic things in World War II. It wasn't just swimming three miles with a back that was half-broken, carrying a guy by his ~~teeth~~ teeth through the water, and then going out the next day, trying to get to another island, swimming across and being rescued by head hunters. Guys like you and me--sure, we could have gotten it up that one time--maybe--and then we would have retired and gone home and lived in clover for quite a few years. Instead, this guy went out and started running the most insane PT boat in the Solomons, going up the neck of canals and bayous and still waters that no one had ever dared explore--which may have stood him in good stead in later years, if you know what I mean.

PLAYBOY: In your celebrated essay written during JFK's campaign in 1960-- "Superman Comes to the Supermart"-- you suggested that he was an existential politician. Could you elaborate a bit on that?

MAILER: He was a man who could define and understand himself only by his actions. He had such an extraordinary ambition that if he had not succeeded in being president, he might have ended up a very bad piece of work. There is such a thing as a man starting as a very bad piece of work because he has a nature which is extraordinarily disharmonious--he lives with ~~unendurable~~ ^{disproportions} ~~disproportions~~ in ~~himself~~ himself--but if he succeeds in what the psychoanalysts call "living it out"-- with some scorn they say that, but the fact remains that if you have a huge ^e ambition and wish to live it out, that means you have to have huge courage and huge wit and huge imagination--and I think Kennedy succeeded in becoming the one man who could save himself: the President of the United ~~United~~ States. That's what I mean when I call him an existential politician: Kennedy had no nature other than that nature which was defined by the act of living. Some people are born--they are getting fewer and fewer--in such magnificent psychic vaults that they spend their whole lives moving ^a ~~around~~ inside the vault, not having to change a bit. The archetype of the 19th century Boston banker comes to mind instantly: the rock-ribbed Yankee.

PLAYBOY: Do you see any politician on the scene today who might be an existential¹ politician in the sense in which you've just talked about JFK?

MAILER: I think Bobby Kennedy is that way. The interest people have ^Con him comes from the fact that ^{one cannot} ~~begin to know what direction that man will take. I don't mean by that that his directions are cheap or ~~that~~ contradictory but ^{That} he has a nature which finally is resistant ^ato analysis--one of those natures I like because at least you've got something ~~XXXXX~~ riding for your money.~~

PLAYBOY: In Cannibals and Christians, you said that Bobby Kennedy has taken "a pilgrims progress" since the murder of his brother. Could you say something more ^Cabout that phrase?

MAILER: I think he's become more interesting than he used to be: and that's a pilgrim's progress. How many people could that be said about?

PLAYBOY: What do you think his chances are in 1968?

MAILER: I don't have any idea at all. And I ~~x~~ think my opinion here is worthless because ~~XXXXXX~~ my approach to politics is deliberately from the outside. In other words, I don't like being filled with all the inside stories ^{becau} because there was a period in my life when I knew people who

Stories
knew all the inside ~~stories~~ and I found out that they know
nothing. All you knew ^{at} ~~at~~ that time was what the gossip was.
Gossip is ^{so} ~~mag~~vellous and fascinating but it's a dead end.
Besides that, so many things could happen.

PLAYBOY: In terms of Bobby Kennedy, you wrote in The
Presidential Papers extensively about the tone or "climate" or style
of the country under John Kennedy's administration. What
would you predict the ⁽¹⁾ nation would be like under a Bobby
Kennedy administration?

MAILER: It would depend completely on what ^(kind of country) ~~he~~ ~~inherit~~
would inherit in 1968 or '72 or '76 or ~~whenever~~.

It would be a country which, I fear, has been damaged almost
^{irreparably} ~~irreparably~~ by the horrors, pulsinities, and the ^{hypocrisies} ~~hypocrisies~~
of ^{The} ~~the~~ Johnson administration--and the Viet Nam war. This war
has done more ^d ~~damage~~ to American than anyone would have ever
believed.

PLAYBOY: Do you still feel the same way about the Viet Nam
war as you did when you delivered your controversial address
during Peace Day last May at the University of California
at Berkeley when you said that ^{The} ~~the~~ reasons given by the
Johnson administration explaining why we are fighting in
Viet Nam are patently phony--the explanation that claims we
are there because we are fighting communism--and you suggested
very strongly that the reason Johnson escalated in Viet Nam
was to prepare the American people ^(SUBTLY) ~~subtly~~ but very strongly
for the possibility of a third World War with Red China?

MAILER

MAILER: I'm not sure so much about that. [reference seems to be to the WW III theory] ^(finally). I think ~~that~~ we went to war in Viet Nam because we had to because ~~the~~ America was profoundly afraid of the Negro Revolution and we'd do anything to stop it. War in Viet Nam was the best way to stop it. An another enormous reason is almost mystical: there was a potential for violence in American life which was accelerating every year ^(and) the social fabric was beginning to break down, and I think that in some deep, instinctive way Johnson reasoned that if he had a war he could control the country better. America was getting out of his control; and I think that nothing inspires profound anxiety in a man like that more than losing control over every last little button. Viet Nam was an instrum^{NT} Johnson could use to manipulate public opinion and to apply leverage to the ~~the~~ economy and to ~~stand~~ up against the Civil Rights movement. I think he saw Viet Nam that way: it was the fatal error of his life. This brilliant, talented, wily, and seasoned politician made an error of Shakespearean proportions when he decided to embark on that war in Viet Nam. It was the incredible error of his life. The smartest president in America's history became the stupid^ast.

IS THE COUNTRY ANY LESS VIOLENT SINCE THE WAR BEGAN THAN BEFORE? HOW ABOUT WHITMAN, SPECK, THE MURDER WITH SHOOTING, WATTS, ETC.?

33

PLAYBOY: In the Viet Nam speech, you said that Johnson is the smartest politician America has ever seen but that "nobody in this country believes that he's good, and if he's evil, God hepp us all, because he's insufferably vain. Do you still feel this? Has anything happened to alter or strenghtened your opinion?

MAILER: No, I suppose my feeling about Johnson is about the way it was when I said it at Berkeley.

PLAYBOY: Do you think Johnson stands a ~~4~~/ chance for ~~1968~~/ reelection in 1968?

MAILER: If Richard Nixon runs Johnson has a chance.

PLAYBOY: Of all the major political figures abott whom you've written extensively, you've never written about Nixon. Why?

MAILER: One of the reasons is that Nixon is the only politician in American life who'd been written about very well before I came along. He was the one guy who was a natural target for everyone, and it felt like kicking a cat to go to work on Nixon. I'm not fond of the man, but I didn't see any reason to duplicate a job which had been done so many times. If he starts to become powerful again, that'll be another matter. I've never heard Richard Nixon say anything interesting in all the years he's invaded my life. Nixon is resolute in his refusal to become more interesting.

PLAYBOY: In terms of ~~that~~ how you see your role as political commentator, you have written a great deal which has had some considerable influence ~~in~~ ^{actually} in the political climate, and you addressed The Presidential Papers to John F Kennedy. Did you expect him to answer?

MAILER: If you remember that book came out something like three weeks before the assassination. If he had lived I doubt if he'd ^{necessarily} have read it--after all, how much time does a president have to read? But I know that the people around him would have read it sooner or later; and there would have been some discussion, and in terms of what was happening in the country at the time, there would have been some interest in the ideas in my book or very little interest. The liberal establishment at that time was extraordinarily snug: Icky-Ivy ~~League~~ Brain Trusters terribly pleased with themselves in what was a closed circle. ~~At that point,~~ At that point, there was very little dialogue between them and me. Mention of my name was always good for the first round of laughs at a cocktail party (in Washington?)

PLAYBOY: In terms of your own ambition for political office, you once planned to run for mayor of New York City, although recently you wrote ~~that~~ that you've decided to devote your time to writing instead of direct political activities. Do you still feel that way?

LIKE WHAT?

MAILER: I think I disqualified myself forever from ~~NY~~ being in political office: you can't stab your wife and get away with it. It's as simple as that.

PLAYBOY: That happened right around the time you announced your candidacy, didn't it?

MAILER: Three weeks after.

PLAYBOY: In ~~NY~~ terms of ~~NY~~ ^{America} the/political scene in general, do you feel we are going to make it ~~NY~~ ~~NY~~--really way down?

MAILER: I'm very gloomy. I don't say I don't think we're going to make it; but I am ~~X~~ gloomy because beyond politics and all these discussions of courage, honor, love, beauty and so forth, is this technological society which sits upon us like an incubus. It's impossible, for instance, to have any contact with existence which is not metamorphosed by this technological society. I can't take a pat of butter in the morning at breakfast which doesn't have some additive in it which deadens the taste of the butter a little bit, deadens my taste buds and ~~MA~~ therefore deadens me. If you could eat a truly fresh piece of butter for breakfast, then certain messages deep into the secret lines and turns of one's nerves that enrich you and you live a little better. The technological society gets between us and existence.

WHY DID YOU DO IT?

IF YOU HAD BEEN ELECTED, WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN YOUR PROGRAM? IF YOU WERE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. - WHAT PROGRAM, FOREIGN & DOMESTIC?

SURVIVE?
PROSPER?
WHAT?

PLAYBOY: What could be done about it?

ATOMIC
WAR?

MAILER: Well, I don't know. My feeling is that there is going to be some extraordinary holocaust. Or it may come in another way: we may all sicken of the plague and die off in some mysterious fashion. About the time we ~~we~~ discover some cure for cancer, for instance, some new disease will come along which will make cancer look like everybody's ~~zizzzzzz~~ ^{Saturday-night} gang-bang / orey.

PLAYBOY: You've often connected what you call the plague with the modern technological society. How did the plague begin?

MAILER: I think it began somewhere back in primitive times when the first medicerity discovered he could get power over men stronger than himself by employing magic in a way which was not spiritual. Eluad in his book The Technological Society speaks of the beginning of all technique (?) as magic. At the very beginning of magic there ~~was~~ was a sense of communion--a spirit that permeated every moment of one's life. And it was the divorce from that spirit--against which one could be rebellous, animate, sardonic, terrified, whatever--but it was essentially a relation of love in the sense ^{of} sensuous love: love that is rosy and tender, fearful and full of dread, tasty.

PLAYBOY: About love, you've written that one aspect of totalitarianism is fear of the orgasm, particularly for the liberal mentality because the orgasm is the existential moment. Would you tell us more about that?

MAILER: Orgasm is the moment when you can't cheat life. Yourself is talking back to you then and it's no use kidding yourself: if the orgasm is no good you know that something in you was no good at that moment. The American liberal is pragmatic about sex. He believes--I don't think there are many liberals left who believe in chastity--but ~~he~~ today he believes in promiscuity which he thinks is good. I think that's ~~the~~ silly. Promiscuity is good if you've got the muscular nature of a swinger and very little else. Promiscuity is good for certain people at certain times. At other times it's dreadful. When sex becomes pragmatic in walks the totalitarian.

PLAYBOY: Is that ~~the~~ what you meant when you wrote that most Americans sooner or later fall into a profound sexual apathy--because sex becomes pragmatic?

MAILER: Yeah, yeah, I guess so.

PLAYBOY: What do you think in this context about the flood of sex manuals--the do-it-yourself texts which claim to teach you how to have intercourse?

PLAYBOY: In what sense?

MAILER: I find it harder and harder to come up with value judgments which are simple, cohesive, and can be used from one day into the next. And I prefer it this way--having fewer and fewer answers about sex as the years go on.

How important
is sex to
you? Why?

XXXXXX

PLAYBOY: One of your ideas which has outraged many liberals is that you claim that birth control is evil--you argue that birth control is a kind of murder of what may have been a man's best son? Do you still feel that way?

In fact,
MAILER: Yes./ Not too long ago I was reading a very generous review of Cannibals and Christians in a Catholic magazine called The Critic and at one point the critic said: "Of course, Mailer's ideas are almost absurdly sentimental about birth control." I am now to the ~~left~~ ^{right} of the Catholic Church. (Laughs.)

PLAYBOY: One of the attacks levelled against regarding your ideas on birth control ~~is~~ ^{isn't} argues: Isn't Mailer cognizant of the fact of the world population explosion? And there's the liberal moral charge: What about the morality of bringing another child into a family which hasn't enough food and clothes for the children they already have?

MAILER: The problem of birth control is the same as all of the other problems (in our technological society?). They're all ~~part~~ part of the same damn problem: that which comes between us and ~~our~~ our existence. What happens is this, I believe: my guess is that in primitive times it was much more difficult to conceive and much more natural. Since man lived in a relation to his life which was much more biological--he felt everything around him with his own body; he was more physically intelligent than he is today, even though he might have been 5'2" or what have you. Each man was more an animal. It was less easy to conceive in the same way that we notice that animals don't conceive all that easily: they conceive when they can conceive, they don't just conceive automatically. The problems of breeding are enormous with animals/ because they don't take unless they really want it to take. In our modern life, on the other hand, the body is so deadened at its sexual center--at the live pit of all things--that we no longer can afford to be as selective as we used to be. This adds a little more desperation in making sure you conceive. So men put it into the hole (whole?) of love on many a woman whom they would not choose in the real callings of their ~~yo~~ blood; and many a woman accepts the seed of a man whom she would normally despise or half despise. So what happens is that there's an adulteration of distinctions, a losing of the intimacies of form, which finally results in people conceiving too easily because

PLEASE
EXPLAIN

they're afraid that if they don't conceive easily they
 won't conceive at all. /^{And} So you say, 'What would happen
 if there were no birth control? It's possible that
 what would happen is that it would become much more difficult
 to conceive because then there'd be a real terror in
 conceiving. One thing you can be sure of: people would
 begin start making love a lot less; they'd only make it
 when they really wanted to make it: they'd have to be carried
 away more. You know, one thing I learned in all these years
 is ~~to~~ ^(not) make love when you really don't feel like it; there's
 probably nothing worse you can do to yourself than that.

PLAYBOY: Why?

MAILER: Well, it's like taking your vitals, putting them
 on a stone block, and pounding away on them with a hammer.
 It's bad for the back--that I know. (Laughs)

PLAYBOY: You've been married four times--

MAILER: Hercules, not every one...

PLAYBOY: (Loud, long laughter) How do you feel about
 marriage?

MAILER: I love marriage but I don't think I'd love it unless I were a novelist. I love it because its such a curious relationship and its so artificial ^{as} ~~an~~ intellectual ~~conception~~ ~~Y&Y~~ and yet, on the other hand, it has such primitive roots and territorial rights--one's own land and all that sort of stuff--that the novelist can become absolutely obsessed with marriage. I've never really written about marriage much but I think its a goldmine. To write about marriage, to really write about marriage and what really goes on between a man and/ a woman--the way they kill each other and keep each other alive.

PLAYBOY: Do you think you will write about marriage?

MAILER: I don't ~~Y&Y~~ know; I don't know. It's too deep. ^{at the present moment}
After all, the only marriage you're thinking about/is your present marriage and you can't start writing about ~~Y&Y~~ that. I guess I have written some about marriage--in An American Dream and The Deer Park.

PLAYBOY: A lot of the critics accuse you of a real hostility against women. They point to the classic scene in your story "The Time of Her Time" when the protagonist Sergius O'Shaughnessy calls his ~~Y&Y~~ ^{penis} ~~brick~~ the "Avenger" and finally brings on an orgasm in the shrewd, stubborn Jewish girl by raping her ^{anally} in the ~~ass~~--

Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30

(this, which) ELITE PICA
PLAYBOY: You've often connected ~~what~~ you
call "the plague" with the modern techno-
logical society. How did the plague
begin?
MAILER: I think it began somewhere back
with primitive man when the first mediocrity
discovered he could get power over men
stronger than himself by employing magic
for control over others rather than for
communion with his existence. Jacques
Ellul in his book The Technological
Society suggests that the beginning of
all scientific technique came from a
perversion of primitive magic. At the
very inception of magic there was a sense
of communion--a spirit that permeated
every moment of one's life, a spirit against
which one could be rebellious or sardonic
or terrified, or whatever--but this com-
munion was essentially a relation of
love between man and his sense of the
presence of nature, a love which is tender,
fearful, full of dread, tasty.

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPT.

Title: INTERVIEW:

MAILER

INSERT B

Page: 1

INSERT

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

1 In other words, he's become nearsighted.
 2 Now, I, as a man who's been nearsighted
 3 almost all of his life, know that any-
 4 one who's born nearsighted or becomes
 5 nearsighted early is a man, become an ex-
 6 pert prematurely. That's why kids with
 7 glasses are usually disliked by kids who
 8 don't wear glasses. The kids with good
 9 eyesight sense that the boy with glasses
 10 is an expert who's going to run the
 11 world. The first chronic personal shame
 12 I suppose I ever felt was having to wear
 13 glasses. And I don't wear them today even
 14 though I'm so nearsighted I don't recog-
 15 nize old friends from ten feet away. Hav-
 16 ing been a premature expert myself, I
 17 think I may have reacted against it with
 18 a sense that expertise was the trap for
 19 me; that to get particularly good at any
 20 one thing would leave me a top-heavy
 21 expert.
 22 PLAYBOY: ~~are you referring to The Naked~~
 23 ~~and The Dead~~ and the celebrity ^{that} fol-
 24 lowed in its wake?
 25 MAILER: Yes. Being well-known at 25 cre-
 26 ated a chain of legend for everything I
 27 did. ^(I did) Every little thing was exaggerated.
 28 That worked against my natural impulse,
 29 which was to find my way by moving from
 30 one activity to another at my own rate.

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 5

~~Who's the expert?~~Is all this
related?

If I left a party early,
 it wasn't because I might
 have been sleepy; it
 was because I had
 put down the party.
 This immediately created
 champions for me: "that
 Mailer's too much — put
 down the hostess when
 he ^{More} left the party.
 Others ~~would~~ would say:
 "Dreadful — no manners;
 a barbarian." "

Insert copy 2

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 17

INSERT (A)
FROM PAGE 23

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

1 myth?

2 MAILER: I don't know if it's a myth. I

3 think Kennedy was a great man. He did

4 heroic things in World War ^{Two}. Not just

5 swimming three miles with a back which

6 was half-broken, carrying another man

7 along, and then going out the next day

8 trying to swim to another island. Guys

9 like you and me--sure, we could have got-

10 ten it up that one time--maybe--and then

11 we would have retired and gone home and

12 lived in ease for quite a few years. In-

13 stead, Kennedy went out after saving that

14 sailor's life and being himself rescued

15 by head hunters, and started running the

16 most insane PT boat in the Solomons, go-

17 ing up the neck of creeks and bayous and

18 still waters that no one had ever dared

19 explore--which may have stood him in

20 good stead in later years.

21 PLAYBOY: In your essay "Superman Comes

22 to the Supermarket," written during the

23 Kennedy's 1960 presidential campaign,

24 you suggested that ^(Kennedy) was an "existential"

25 politician. ^(s) Existential is a term ^{that} which

26 crops up frequently in your writing. Ex-

27 actly what do you mean by it?

28 MAILER: Existential ^(F) no precedents, no

29 traditions, no disciplines, no books, no

30 guides sufficiently familiar with the

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 23

(A)
TR. TO PAGE 17Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

1 incisive, tasty, or superb.

2 PLAYBOY: You ~~actually~~ ^{directly} addressed The
3 Presidential Papers to ~~John~~ Kennedy.

4 Did you expect him to answer?

5 MAILER: If you remember, that collection
6 of essays was published in book form some-

7 thing like three weeks before the assas-

8 sination. If Kennedy had lived, I doubt

9 if he'd necessarily have read it ^{it} after

10 all, how much time does a President have

11 to read? But I know that some of the

12 people around him would have read the

13 essays sooner or later; there would have

14 been some discussion; and there might

15 have been some interest in the ideas in

16 my book. Of course, the Liberal establish-

17 ment was at that time extraordinarily

18 smug: Ivy-League Brain Trusters terribly

19 pleased with themselves, holding hands

20 in a closed circle, where Schlesinger

21 spoke only to Galbraith and Galbraith

22 only to God. Certainly at that time there

23 was no dialogue with them. Mention of my

24 name was good for the first round of

25 laughs at a cocktail party in Washington.

26 PLAYBOY: If Kennedy had only been

27 wounded and then had recovered and re-

28 sumed his responsibilities as President,

29 what do you think America would be like

End here

30 today?

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 43

INSERT 13

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

in relation to penicillin). Modern disease and modern technology are inseparably connected.

PLAYBOY: You've written that one aspect of totalitarianism is fear of orgasm, particularly by the liberal mentality, because the orgasm, you claim, is "the existential moment. Every lie we have told, every fear we have indulged, every aggression we have tamed," you say, "arises again at that instant to constrict the turns and possibilities of our becoming." Would you tell us more about that?

MAILER: Orgasm is the moment when you can't cheat life. If the orgasm was no good, something in you was no good. In an existential moment, something bad can happen to you because you can't control it--you don't know how it's going to turn out. Anybody who's ever been in an automobile accident experiences such a moment--three or four of five seconds which seem endless--and you're into something which is brand new.

But the American liberal is programmatic about sex. Yesterday he believed in sex hygiene. Today he believes in promiscuity. He thinks it's good. I think that's innocent. Promiscuity is

More

Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 48

INSERT D
FROM PAGE 52-3

End here

1 they'd only make it when they really
2 wanted to make it; they'd have to be
3 carried away more. On a flood of passion,
4 yeah. How many people ride on a flood
5 today? One thing I've learned in all
6 these years is not to make love when you
7 really don't feel it; there's probably
8 nothing worse you can do to yourself than
9 that.
10 PLAYBOY: Why?
11 MAILER: Well, it's like taking your
12 vitals, putting them on a stone block,
13 and pounding away with a hammer. It's
14 bad for the back--that I know.
15 PLAYBOY: You've been married four times.
16 MAILER: Heroines, every one.
17 PLAYBOY: How do you feel about marriage?
18 MAILER: I love marriage, but I don't
19 think I'd love it unless I were a novel-
20 ist. I love it because its a curious
21 relationship. It's artificial, and yet,
22 on the other hand, it has such primitive
23 roots and territorial right. A novelist
24 can become absolutely obsessed with marri-
25 age. I've never written much about ~~it~~
26 ~~me~~ but I think it's a goldmine: To
27 write about marriage, to really write
28 about marriage and what really goes on
29 between a man and a woman--the way they
30 kill each other and keep each other

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 49

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

alive.

PLAYBOY: Do you think you ^{may} write
about ~~marriage?~~ ^{it someday?}MAILER: I don't know; I don't know. It's
difficult. After all, the marriage you're
usually thinking about at the moment is
your present marriage, and you can't
start writing about that.PLAYBOY: ^{Many} ^{your} lot of the critics accuse
you of ^{harboring a good deal of} hostility against women.They point to the classic scene in your
story "The Time of Her Time" when the
protagonist ~~Scriptus O'Shaugnessy~~ calls
his penis the "Avenger" and ^{raves} finally~~brings on an orgasm in the shrewd, stud-~~
~~born Jewish girl Denise by raping her~~ ^(a girl)
anally.MAILER: Let's get something hotsy-totsy.
Let's say: ^{takes} ~~by taking~~ carnal possession
of her posterior territories.PLAYBOY: ^(All right.) Critics also point to the well-
known scene in An American Dream whenRojack deprives ^a ~~the~~ German maid of
her orgasm by insisting at the last
second on having his orgasm in her rec-
tum instead of her vagina. Critics saythat here again is an example of Mailer's
^(toward and) ^{of} deep hostility, distrust and anger against
women. What do you say about this charge?

MAILER: I think I've got as much anger

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW
MAILERPage: 50

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

1 against women as anyone I know, but I'm
2 perfectly willing to let the defense rest
3 right here--I don't give a damn--and,
4 you know, I sometimes have as much hostility
5 against women as I've got against
6 men. The reason I wrote about those things
7 twice deliberately was something writers
8 will understand but no critic ever will.
9 it was just to say to the critic: "Fuck
10 you. I wrote about it once; I'll write
11 about it again. What are you going to do
12 about it? Say I'm anally oriented? O.K.
13 Say I'm anally oriented. I'll say I'm
14 Cassius Clay. Fuck you."

15 PLAYBOY: Some of the same critics ^{have}
16 ~~taken you to task for a poem in your~~
~~your book, poem in Death to the Ladies~~

and Other Disasters:

18 So long
19 as
20 you
21 use
22 a knife,
23 there's
24 some
25 love
26 left.

27 ^{They say this boastfully exploits}
~~uses shamelessly~~ the episode when you
28 stabbed your second wife back in 1961.

29 How do you feel about this charge?

30 MAILER: I was trying to crystallize a

End here

INSERT C
FROM PAGE 51

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 51

Start here 1 -paradox--the paradox contained in the poem.

Total Pages 2 ~~so long as you use a knife, there's some~~

3 love left. My feeling about writing such

Total Lines 4 things is simple: if you're not ruthless

5 about your work, you can't be an artist

6 of interest. Once something crystalizes,

7 you have to be ruthless about presenting

8 it; it doesn't matter who gets hurt. Your

9 message in the ear of the reader is going

10 to be worth the damage that's done. You've

11 got to be impersonal; you can't look

12 back. If, on the other hand, you go in

13 the other direction, and start thinking,

14 "Will writing about this experience hurt

15 me?"--well, then you're a bad writer--

16 the kind who spends his life humping for

17 The New Yorker. You spend your life hurt-

18 ing other people--not yourself.

19 PLAYBOY: Why?

20 MAILER: A sadist can't bear pain, self-

21 examination, or anything injurious

22 to the ego. His ego, after all, has to

23 give him sanction to do harm to others.

24 PLAYBOY: In other words, are you saying

25 that if the experience and feelings that

26 went into the stabbing ~~in~~ ^(are revealed) in that poem,

27 then so they are--that's the way it has

28 to be?

29 MAILER: I don't want to talk about the

End here 30 stabbing any more. Not any more. Say the

↑

INSERT C
ON PAGE 50

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 52

INSERT C
(CONTINUED)
ON PAGE
50

word 18 times and it loses its force.
I'll just ~~state by saying~~--this could be
hard to believe--that I was not really
thinking about the act or myself at that
moment I wrote the poem; I was really
thinking about a long conversation I had
with a man who stabbed his brother. He
had been telling me about it and he had
such complexity of feeling for his brother
that the poem came: "So long as you use a
knife..."

PLAYBOY: How would you describe a good,
Do you think it's possible for a
swinging sexual relationship between a
couple to have an enduring sexual
relationship?

MAILER: ~~Yes, I do.~~
~~Something to fall back on.~~ Even
after you've been married awhile, it can
(the)
still be thing you wait for.

PLAYBOY: Do you believe, then, in the
old cliché that the early days of marriage
are the great times and after that
the sexual scene gets less interesting?

MAILER: I think a marriage should get
better all the time. By the time they're
80, a couple should die fucking. But I
don't think that happens, because none of
us has the guts for that; none of us are
clean enough; all of us are yellower than
we ought to be. Cowardice kills love.

PLAYBOY: What do you think accounts for
what sense
cowardice in sexual relations?

More

↑
INSERT D
ON PAGE
48

End here

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 53

24
 INSERTD
 (CONTINUED)
 ON PAGE 48

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

1 MAILER: It centers around possession.
 2 A curious thing: if you gamble with your
 3 possession and gamble foolishly and you're
 4 not possessive enough, that's fatal.
 5 There's something in a woman which is
 6 profoundly outraged if you don't want to
 7 make her all your own; women will never
 8 forgive you for that. Permissiveness
 9 to a woman is permissive shit. They
 10 hate it. Everything primitive rebels
 11 in a woman if a man does not want her ab-
 12 solutely for himself. At the same time,
 13 once you claim a woman, you start killing
 14 everything in her. Nothing in love or
 15 sex is ever simple because you're always
 16 walking between two paradoxes.
 17 PLAYBOY: What are they?
 18 MAILER: They go by many names: posses-
 19 sion vs. liberty; protection vs. spontan-
 20 eity; novelty vs. tradition.
 21 PLAYBOY: In Cannibals and Christians,
 22 you spoke of the dangers of the womani-
 23 zation of America. Could you expand on
 24 that point?
 25 MAILER: The gist of what I said is that
 26 women are getting more power because men
 27 want them to. Today, a man wants a wife
 28 who is a military assistant, a woman who
 29 can go out into the world with her hus-
 30 band and help him climb those hills of

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 57

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

1 communion can continue for hours, weeks,
2 years. When the novel is dead, then the
3 technological society will probably be
4 totally upon us. You'll need a scorecard
5 to be able to tell a Communist from a
6 Texan.

7 PLAYBOY: Many critics have said that of
8 all the writers of your generation, you
9 seem best equipped to write the fabled
10 Great American Novel. How do you feel
11 about that?

12 MAILER: Let's assume they're right.

13 PLAYBOY: What ^{would it be about?} kind of novels do you plan
14 to write in the future?

15 MAILER: That's something I want to keep
16 to myself.

17 PLAYBOY: Several times you've compared
18 your generation of writers to the genera-
19 tion of the 1920s--Hemingway, Fitzgerald,
20 Faulkner, and ^(the rest) ~~so on~~--and you argued that
21 the older writers were far superior. Do
22 you still believe this?

23 MAILER: They're doubtless greater; ^(and) they're
24 certainly more fascinating as men.

25 PLAYBOY: ^{you've said} ~~You say~~ that if Hemingway had
26 been a pimply-faced kid instead of the
27 man he was, his books wouldn't have had
28 the audience they commanded. Some critics
29 claim ~~about you~~ that if you were a middle-
30 class, conservative ^{novelist} ~~man who wrote novels~~.

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 58Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

1 instead of the ³public image you culti-
 2 ~~vate--the~~ brawling, pugnacious, hard-
 3 drinking hipster--^{13/}your books would never
 4 have sold as well as they have. What do
 5 you feel about your relation to your
 6 public image?

7 MAILER: My relation to my public person-
 8 ality is more surrealistic than that.
 9 Hemingway had a clear image; ~~if you will~~
 10 the work and the man bore a certain
 11 resemblance to each other. People are
 12 in an incredible state of confusion about
 13 me. At a party, people expect me to grab
 14 the hostess, sound her, yank her, pump
 15 her, and if I don't like her, throw her
 16 out the window; then turn to my host,
 17 say, "Up your buns, guns," and walk over
 18 to sock the nearest guy in the eye. So
 19 when I come in a place and don't behave
 20 like that, the other guests say: "Why, he
 21 has such nice manners."

22 PLAYBOY: Then where do these stories
 23 of your hostility, lechery and pugnacity
 24 start?

25 MAILER: Once or twice a year I get into
 26 a fight; ^(; well, maybe) four times a year, I get into
 27 a fight. ⁼⁼Well, so what? It's not the most
 28 extraordinary thing, after all. But if
 29 I get into a fight--my God! I lost a
 30 fight in a Village party a couple of

More

*completely
 redundant
 2 discussion
 of his "legend"
 on pp. 6-7*

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 59

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

1 years ago and happened to go back to the
2 same place the other day, and the host,
3 whom I hadn't seen in two years, said
4 something on the order of: "I hope you'll
5 be good tonight." All he remembers about
6 me is that I'd gotten into a fight two
7 years ago.

8 PLAYBOY: In addition to your reputation
9 for getting into fights, you've been seri-
10 ously interested in boxing for a number
11 of years. You count José Torres and Roger
12 Donoghue among your good friends. What
13 is it about boxing that interests you?

14 MAILER: If you take a man who's filled
15 with a mindless destroying violence and
16 slowly he begins to shape himself in a
17 profound, serious, solemn and esthetic
18 discipline, well, he might end by making
19 himself into a man more extraordinary
20 than he ever could have been any other
21 way. Good fighters are extraordinary men.

22 A good fighter going into a ring and
23 now knowing whether he's going to win or
24 lose is in one of the most intense exis-
25 tential situations there is, because, ~~as~~
26 ~~you say~~, he can get killed or hurt pretty
27 badly. He is also psychically naked in
28 public.

29 PLAYBOY: What makes a man a loser?

30 MAILER: He can be a loser because he's

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 60

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

1 a coward. Or because he's got a extra-
 2 ordinary personal honor which did not
 3 enable him to use cheap advantages. A lo-
 4 ser is--this is the most Christian notion
 5 I've come up with today--as interesting
 6 and valuable finally as a winner, though
 7 I really like to see the people who win;
 8 I am a Faustian.
 9 PLAYBOY: What's a winner?
 10 MAILER: A man who feels good when he's
 11 done.
 12 PLAYBOY: Do you feel good about the
 13 future of American fiction?
 14 MAILER: I don't want to predict. I can't
 15 often predict my own work.
 16 PLAYBOY: Which of your own works do you
 17 feel closest to?
 18 MAILER: Probably The Deer Park and An
 19 American Dream. One day a month, I really
 20 like Barbary Shore. Whenever I'm de-
 21 pressed, I'm always pleased The Naked
 22 and The Dead is around.
 23 PLAYBOY: Why do you write?
 24 MAILER: Why do I write? You can't beat
 25 the hours.
 26 PLAYBOY: Do you think you'll continue
 27 to write political and cultural essays?
 28 Some of your critics complain that in
 29 An American Dream, for instance, you re-
 30 hash ideas already expressed in your essays

End here

More

going from
pg 8 57
to TRANSITION

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 61

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

and book reviews and columns. How do you
feel about that?

MAILER: Everything I write is a card
out of the same deck. You can reshuffle
them; but in a way I've been working on
one book most of my writing life—¹⁷pro-
bably since I started with Barbary Shore,
certainly with and since The Deer Park.
I've been working on one book.

PLAYBOY: Including the books of essays--
Advertisements For Myself, Presidential
Papers and Cannibals and Christians?

MAILER: Yes.

PLAYBOY: What's the book about?

MAILER: Existentialism. That is to say:
the feel of our human condition, which
by the logic of existentialism is the
truth of the human condition. Of course,
it takes no mean artistry to get the feel.

PLAYBOY: At the beginning of our talk,
you said you like interviews because they
sometimes serve as a housecleaning for
your current ideas. Do you feel you've
accomplished that in this interview?

MAILER: I hope we haven't had a curet-
tage.

PLAYBOY: Is there any final ^{statement you'd like} ~~thing you want~~
^(make) to say?

MAILER: Yes. Up the Irish/Down the Feds/
Say we sad Irish/Anarchists and Reds.

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

7

Total Lines

In a time that encourages and handsomely rewards the specialist ^(the) and technician, Norman Mailer has refused to mine the secure, predictable lode of fame as a best-selling novelist--a lode which seemed his for the asking after his gritty, outspoken "The Naked and the Dead" was hailed ^{by one critic} on its publication in 1948 as "the greatest war novel produced in this century," earned first place on the best-seller list, and its author found himself internationally famous at twenty-five. Instead, Mailer has chosen to lead--both as a writer and as a man--a full-blooded, often dangerous life of trial-and-error and, above all, of growth. His literary output is varied, gargantuan and unpredictable. The author of nine books, he has been a poet, autobiographer, short story writer, theologian, polemicist, essayist, political analyst, science fiction writer, cultural prophet, columnist, book reviewer, dramatist, moralist and architectural critic--while remaining one of the handful of important living novelists; His most recent novel, "An American Dream," despite mixed critical reception, was a 1965 best-seller.

In addition to ^(his multifarious) literary activities, Mailer leads a life as colorful and

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

MAILER

Title: INTERVIEW

INTRO.

Page: 1

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW:INTRO.Page: 2

publicized as any writer since Ernest Hemingway. His current marriage to actress Beverly Bentley is his fourth. (In all, he's fathered six children--four girls and two boys.) His earlier marriages were often stormy, involving public brawls with such former wives as a Spanish-Peruvian painter (number two) and the aristocratic daughter of the Duke of Argyll (number three). In 1961, Mailer made grim headlines when, in the small hours after a turbulent party, he stabbed his second wife in the breast with a penknife, and spent the next three weeks under psychiatric observation at Bellevue. Mailer's fistfights at parties and in taverns are legendary; and he enjoys getting into the ring to spar with his friend, light-heavyweight champion Jose Torres, and thumb-wrestling with Muhammad Ali.

Politically, he's long been active and controversial in print as well as in public. Not content to remain a sideline observer, in 1961 he announced his candidacy for the office of Mayor of New York City (he dropped from the race after the stabbing incident); and he once confessed, half-seriously, that for years he's been "running for President-

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW:INTRO.Page: 3

The transcript of
this most explosive
confrontation was
published in PLAYBOY's
February 1963 issue.

flat

in the privacy of my mind." A few years
ago, he engaged right-wing spokesman
William F. Buckley, Jr., in a series of
blistering barnstorming debates before
large audiences across the country. And
in May 1965, he delivered--before
thousands participating in the Vietnam
Day held in Berkeley, California--what
many informed political observers regard
as the most hard-hitting criticism to
date of President Johnson and his policy
in the Vietnam hostilities.

Perhaps because of the diversity of
his ^{fiery} unpredictable words and ^{crash} deeds, Mailer
~~has remained in the vanguard of the~~
~~— albeit a bit unsavory at times —~~
nation's cultural, political and intel-
lectual ^{ferment} ~~crisis~~. In the words of his
^{friendly} old debating rival William Buckley, he
is "a terribly good measure of the
current disturbances in the air. A sort of
lightening rod." Many also agree with
English novelist John Wain's tribute to
Mailer's persistent courage, intellectual
integrity, and uncanny gift for "trying
to position himself as to stand face to
face with the true identity of our time,
our time in America." He is regarded
by many of his contemporaries as being,
in the words of Sinclair Lewis, "the
greatest writer to come out of his

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWINTRO.Page: 4

generation"; and by leaders of the
current ~~Hip-Love~~ Psychedelic generation
as an elder statesman of the New Left
for such trail-blazing explorations of
the Hip Underground, as his seminal
1957 essay "The White Negro."

Not all observers, however, view with
delight Mailer's restless and relentless
search for new roles to play. Many
accuse him of dissipating what they
regard as a potentially major talent in
American fiction. Novelist John Updike,
for one, while admiring Mailer because
he has "energy and candor, and cares about
what he thinks about as important things,"
laments that he has "quite abandoned
fiction as a form of truth-seeking. He's
become a pamphleteer... He wants to be
a crank surrounded by applauding people."
Mailer the pundit and professional
celebrity comes in for frequent drubbings--
such as critic Raymond Rosenthal's charge
that he is a "self-seeking melodramatist,"
or as journalist Eric ^(Thompson) ~~Thompson~~ wrote:
"Any adult who wants to make his friends
smile need only say 'Norman Mailer.'
People who have never seen Mailer, in person
or in photographs, will regale you with
a description of his Harpo Marx hair.
Plumbers who have never finished the

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: MAILERINTRO.Page: 5

seventh grade will tell you that Mailer has a raw talent, but, man, does he need discipline." Still other critics, while rendering unfavorable judgment on Mailer, admit the authority of the continual interest his works and ^(his charismatic) person command. Reviewing Mailer's latest collection of essays, "Cannibals and Christians," John

Thompson, writing in the influential New York Review of Books, conceded that "The man is there, pugnacious, abusive, battered, out on a razor edge talking a blue incoherent streak, and endearing."

In the teeth of all the criticism ^(this approbation and abuse) leveled both for and against him, Mailer continues to improvise one of the least

boring lives imaginable--both in his everyday activities and in the ^(labyrinth) regions of the mind and imagination. Time and again, he has shown that he will dare and probe to its limits any idea, any literary form, any personal experience in his ^(messianic struggle) restless, energetic search to discover and confront "the true identity of our time in America."

^(this herculean quest) Mailer's search has taken him from the tough Crown Point section of Brooklyn, where he grew up 44 years ago; to Harvard College, from which he was graduated in 1943; into the U. S. Army, where during

More

End here

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW:INTROPage: 6

World War II he saw action as a rifleman in the jungles and mountains of the Philippines; to Hollywood, where he spent a brief, frustrating period working on the film script for the movie of The Naked and The Dead; to suburban Vermont, where for a few years in the early Fifties he cultivated the life of a successful novelist; to Greenwich Village, where he became a leader and spokesman for hipsters, addicts, beats and fellow artists, and where he experimented widely with drugs, alcohol, and what he's called "the psychology of the orgy"; to a country house in Connecticut in 1957 to clear his head of what he described as "an overbrilliance" from marijuana; to Paris; and back to America, where he now divides his time between an apartment in Brooklyn Heights and a summer home in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

The first of two long sessions with PLAYBOY interviewer Paul Carroll took place in Mailer's Brooklyn Heights duplex apartment, which has become something of a celebrity itself: Nautical items abound, from the brass ship's clock over the kitchen and the dismantled engine-room telegraph beside the big bookcases to the glass-and-wood gable forecastle,

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW:INTROPage: 7

which Mailer built above the kitchen and
bedrooms, and which can ~~only~~ be reached
by climbing ~~either~~ ropes, trapezes or
deck ladders. Dressed in his work clothes
in dungarees and Army-surplus shirt, Mailer
sat at the dining room table, occasionally
glancing out of the large bay window at
the panorama of tugboats, ocean liners
and merchant ships ~~checking~~ the East
River, and beyond to the skyline of Lower
Manhattan. As he spoke, Mailer frequently
leaned forward to emphasize a point by
jabbing his fist in the air, like a boxer;
at other times, he'd pause for a long
time, his thoughts sinking deep into the
subject at hand before he'd give an
answer. What was most apparent about
~~him~~ Mailer during the interviewing sessions
was not only the energy, intelligence,
wit and gravity with which Mailer probed the
subjects, but also the bristling, tough
honesty of the man. We began by asking
about his alleged aversion to the inter-
view form itself.

End here

More

set rule,
per style

MAILER

In a time which encourages and handsomely rewards the specialist and technician, Norman Mailer has refused to mine the secure, predictable lode of being a best-selling novelist--a lode which seemed his for the asking after his gritty, outspoken The Naked and the Dead was hailed on its publication in 1948 as "the ^{Produced in} greatest war novel of this century," earned first place on the best-seller list, and its author found himself internationally famous at twenty-five. Instead, Mailer has chosen to lead--both ~~as~~ as a writer and as a man-- a full-blooded, often dangerous life of trial-and-error and, above all, of growth. His literary output is varied, gargantuan, and unpredictable. The author of nine books, he has been ~~in turn~~ a poet, autobiographer, short story writer, theologian, ~~polemical~~ polemicist, essayist, political analyst, science fiction writer, cultural prophet, columnist, literary critic, dramatist, moralist, and architectural critic, while remaining one of the handful of important living novelists--his most recent novel, An American Dream, despite mixed critical reception, was a 1965 best-seller. In addition to literary activities,

(2)

Mailer leads a life as colorful and publicized as any writer since Ernest Hemingway. His current marriage to actress Beverly Bentley is his fourth. Earlier marriages were often stormy, involving scraps in public with such former wives as ~~an English~~ ^{The aristocratic daughter of The Duke of} and a "panish-

which # wife?
RJS
Aug 4 LL

A lady painter?
RJS

Peruvian painter. In 1961, he made grim headlines when, in the small hours after a turbulent party, Mailer stabbed his second wife in the breast with a penknife, and ended up for three weeks of psychiatric observation in Bellevue Hospital. In all, he's fathered six children--four girls and two sons. Mailer's brawls at parties and in taverns are legendary; and he enjoys getting into the ring to spar

with his friend, light-heavyweight champion José Torres, and Thumb-wrestling with Cassius Clay.

Politically, he's long been active and controversial in print and well as in public. Brilliant, muscular essays like his 1960 piece on John F. Kennedy--"Superman Comes to the Supermarket"--and "In the Red Light," his caustic analysis of the Goldwater Convention in San Francisco

in 1964, have had considerable influence in shaping ^b political opinion. ~~Particularly among intellectuals.~~

Many regard him as one of the most astute political commentators in America. Not content to remain an observer on the sidelines, in 1961 he announced his candidacy for the office of Mayor

of New York City (he dropped from the race after the stabbing episode); and he once confessed, half-seriously, that for years he's been "running for President...in the privacy of my mind." A few years ago, he engaged right-wing spokesman William F. Buckley, Jr. in a series of blistering barnstorming debates before large audiences across the country. ^{Land} In May, 1965, he delivered--in front of thousands participating in the Vietnam Day held in Berkeley, California--what many informed political observers regard as the most hard-hitting criticism to date of President ~~Johnson~~ ^h and his policy in the Vietnam hostilities. At the core of his attack was the charge that, beneath all of the official explanations of why we are fighting in Vietnam, "the mystery of Vietnam revolves around the mystery of Lyndon Johnson's personality." While admitting Johnson's high intelligence and complexity, Mailer argued that he possesses an "ego which (has) the voracity of a beast," and that, as a result, the President choose to escalate our efforts in Vietnam in order to divert headlines from the Civil Rights revolution, which was getting out of his control, and draw attention back to himself. In addition, Mailer continued, the President needed the war as a smokescreen to obscure ^(cavities and) the failures of his Great Society--"that great society of computers and pills, of job aptitudes and bad architecture, of psychoanalysis, superhighways,

astronauts, vaccinations, and a Peace Corps, that great society where nothing but frozen corn would be sold in the smallest towns of Iowa, where censorship would disappear but every image would be manipulated from birth ~~to~~ to death," he charged. "Something in the buried animal of modern life grew bestial at the thought of this Great Society--the most advanced technological nation of the civilized world was the one now closest to blood, to shedding the blood and burning the flesh of Asian peasants it had never seen," and he went on to accuse the President of encouraging that blood-letting, adding that ~~there~~ there's the terrifying possibility that Johnson may be "alienated from his own clear sanity, that his mind has become a consortium of monstrous ^Sdisproportions, of pictures of himself in duplicate forty feet high, eighty feet high. Lyndon Johnson is not alienated from power, he is the most powerful man in the United States, but he is alienated from judgment. he is close to an imbalance which at worst could tip the world from orbit."

Perhaps because
~~Throughout~~ of the diversity of his writings, political acts, and private turbulences, Mailer has successfully remained in the vanguard of shifting ^fcultural, political, and intellectual climates. In the words of his old debating rival William Buckley, he is "a terribly good measure of the 

current disturbances in the air. A sort of lighting rod."

~~But~~ Many also share English novelist John Wain's tribute to Mailer's persistent courage, intellectual integrity, and gift for "trying to position himself as to stand face to face with the true identity of our time, our time in America." ~~He could yet become a major writer."~~

On almost every important issue of the day, he has spoken with the authority of a leader. And he is regarded not only by many of his contemporaries as being, what Sinclair Lewis called him, "the greatest writer to come out of his generation," but he is considered an elder statesman of Hip by leaders of the current Hip-Love-Psychedelic generation, who hold as classics Mailer's path-breaking explorations into the world of the American avant-garde and the Underground Hip, such as his seminal 1957 essay "The White Negro."

Not all of his critics, however, view Mailer's ^{vigorous} ~~energetic~~ diversity of writings and activities as good things-- either for his novels or for himself. Some literary men accuse him of dissipating what they regard as a potentially major talent in American fiction. Novelist John Updike, for

one, while admiring Mailer because he has "energy and candor, and cares about what he thinks about as important things," laments that he has "quite abandoned fiction as a form of truth-seeking. He's become a pamphleteer... He cares more about power than words... Mailer wants to be a crank surrounded by applauding people." Mailer the pundit and celebrity comes in for frequent drubbings-- such as ~~the~~ critic Raymond Rosenthal's charge that he is a "self-seeking melodramatist," or the cartoon journalist Eric Thompson created when he wrote recently: "Any adult who wants to make his friends smile need only say 'Norman Mailer.' People who have never seen Mailer, in person or in photographs, will regale you with a description of his Garpo Marx hair. Plumbers who have never finished the seventh grade will tell you that Mailer has a raw talent, but, man, does he need discipline." Still other critics, while giving qualified or often adverse judgment on Mailer, admit the authority of the continual interest his works and person command. Reviewing Mailer's latest collection of essays, Cannibals and Christians, John Thompson, writing in the influential New York Review of Books, concedes that in these essays, "The man is there, pugnacious, abusive, battered, out on a razor's edge talking

a blue incoherent streak, and endearing."

In the teeth of all the criticism levelled both for and against him, Mailer continues to create and explore one of the least boring lives imaginable--both in his everyday activities and in the regions of the mind and imagination. Time and again, he has shown that he will dare and ~~X~~ probe to its limits any idea, any literary form, any personal experience in his restless, energetic search to discover and confront "the true identity of our time in America."

Mailer's search has taken him from the tough Crown Point section of Brooklyn, where he grew up 44 years ago; to Harvard College, from which he was graduated in 1943; into the U.S. Army, where during World War II he saw action as a rifleman in the jungles and mountains of the Philippines; to Hollywood, where he spent a brief, frustrating period working on the film script for the movie of The Naked and Dead; to suburban Vermont, where for a few years in the early 1950s he cultivated the life of a successful novelist; to Greenwich Village, where he became a leader and spokesman for hipsters, addicts, beats, and fellow artists, and where he experiment^{ed} widely with drugs, alcohol, and what he's called "the psychology of the orgy"; to a country house in Connecticut in 1957 to clear his head from what he described as "an overbrilliance" from marijuana; to Paris; and back to America, where he now divides his time between an apartment in Brooklyn Heights and a summer home in Provincetown, Massachusetts.

Although he tries to spend a good part of the day writing or with his family, Mailer leads a vital, varied social life. When he's in New York he can usually be seen at the center of the most hip parties and happenings. His friends range all the way from boxers Roger Donoghue and Torres to the elite of the New York intellectual and artistic worlds. Whenever he goes he generates a kind of expectant, tense excitement. Friends and detractors² never know if at a dinner or party Mailer is going to get into a fist fight or into a rewarding talk or sharp disagreement with men like James Baldwin, Leonard Bernstein, or Dwight McDonald. Generally regarded as one of the most incandescent talkers of the day³, Mailer's ~~conversation~~ conversation is a vivid, odd mixture of hard-mouth New York hip and Harvard Yard formality, ~~XXXX~~ wit, and courtesy.

Last Christmas was a particularly busy time for Mailer. In addition to family obligations--his oldest daughter Suzy was visiting from Mexico City, and two of his younger girls by his second wife were frequent visitors, and last-minute toys and presents had to be bought--he was up to his neck in ^(last-ditch) revisions for the stage version of his novel The Deer Park (which opened in January at Greenwich

⑨ ⑧

Village's Theatre de Lys, and has enjoyed a long run). Still, the holidays were a good time for doing an interview, Mailer told Playboy, because "I'm usually hungover from too many parties, or bitter at too few, and like to talk and talk." The first of two long sessions with Playboy interviewer Paul Carroll took place during Christmas week in Mailer's Brooklyn Heights apartment, which occupies the top two floors of a brownstone he owns. ~~XXX~~ Dressed in his work clothes of dungarees and Army-surplus shirt, Mailer sat ^{at} the dining room table, occasionally glancing out of the large bay window at the panorama of tugboats, ocean liners, and merchant ships checkering the East River, and beyond to the skyline of Lower Manhattan. (The ^(duplex) apartment has become something of a celebrity itself: nautical items abound, from the brass ship's clock over the kitchen and the dismantled engine-room telegraph beside the big bookcases, to the glass-and-wood gable forec^{castle} ^{complete with catwalks, which} ~~Mailer~~ ^{and} built above the kitchen and bedrooms, ^{and} which can only be reached by ~~XXXX~~ climbing either ropes, trapezes, or deck ladders.) As he spoke, Mailer frequently leaned forward to emphasize a point by jabbing his fist in the air, like a boxer; at other times, he'd pause for a long time, his thoughts sinking deep into the subject at hand before he'd give an

answer; still at other times, while talking or listening he doodled haikus on scraps of paper--"'Thought/us/buggers/ never got/through/the shell,'/said/the Jack of/eggs"--or cartoons of his friend Paul Krassner. What was most apparent about Mailer during the interviewing sessions--the second took place in the cheerful Greenwich Village apartment of his sister, editor Barbara Alton--was not only the energy, intelligence, wit, and gravity with which Mailer probed the subjects, ~~at hand~~, but also the bristling, tough honesty of the man. We began by asking about his alleged belligerency to the interview form itself:

INTRODUCTORY NOTE: Play boy interview
with Norman Mailer

SOURCES OF QUOTES:

PAGE	LINE	
1	7-8	<u>Cleveland Press</u> (quoted on cover of <u>The Naked and The Dead</u> (SIGNET Paperback Q2460)
3	3-4	Brock Brower, "Norman Mailer: Always The Champion," <u>LIFE</u> , SEPT. 24, 1965, P. 98c
3-4	13 FF	Mailer, "A Speech at Berkeley on Vietnam Day," <u>Cannibals and Christians</u> (Dial: 1966), pp 68 FF
4-5	LAST-1	quoted in Brower's <u>Life</u> article, OP. CIT., P. 117
5	4-6	John Wain, "Mailer's America," <u>The New Republic</u> , OCT. 1, 1966, p. 19
5	10-11	Sinclair Lewis, quoted on back cover of <u>The Naked and The Dead</u> (SIGNET Q2460)
6	1-6	JOHN UPDIKE, <u>LIFE</u> (date?), p 81
6	9	Raymond Rosenthal, <u>Chicago Sun-Times Book Week</u> , SEPT. 4, 1966, P. 14

(MORE)

PAGE LINE

- 6 11-16 ERIC THOMPSON: "Joe Shaw,
The Writer's Fighter," STATUS
November, 1966, p. 42
- 6-7 22-23; 1 JOHN Thompson, "Catching UP
on Mailer," The New York
Review of Books, APRIL 20,
1967, p. 16
- 9 3-4 Letter by Mailer to Paul
Carroll, OCT. 14, 1966
- 10 3-4 Haiku by Mailer, given to P.C.

Sunday

Dear Nat,

Here's The introductory note for our Mailer interview. I hope IT does The job. If you Think so and IT only needs minor revisions, I'd appreciate getting The remainder of my payment — I Think IT comes to something like \$500.

The wolf, as usual, IS sniffing at The door.

Hope to see you soon,

Paul

Nat---

Re this introductory note: It may merely indicate a lacuna in my own information, but Mailer has always seemed to me to have sprung full-grown into the world at the age of 25 with the publication of The Naked and the Dead. His subsequent life has been pretty well documented, but I'd like to know a little more about those first 25 years: Who were his parents and what were they like? Was his childhood unusual in any way--was he a bookish kid, a stickball player, a delinquent? When and how did he start to become a writer? Isn't it a bit unusual for a kid from Brooklyn to go to Harvard? Did his parents pay for it, or did he go on scholarship? Where did he go to high school? Was he a good student, or was he rebellious? What adumbrations were there in his youth of the man he has become today--or was his youth remarkable for its ordinariness? At Harvard, did he know Kennedy? What was he like there generally? What did he get out of Harvard--did his education have anything to do with making him such a hotshot intellectual? And so forth. I realize the introductory note doesn't allow much space for this sort of thing, but I would like a little more of a picture of the --to me-- invisible kid who turned into N*O*R*M*A*N M*A*I*L*E*R.

Also, the four wives are a bit confusing. I would like to know who each of them were, how long the marriages lasted, and any other interesting bitsandpieces from this aspect of Mailer's life. He seems an odd combination of familial devotion and sexual gallivanting (maybe not so odd, but not in keeping with conventional patterns). Again, there isn't much room, but I, for one, like a sense of knowing an interviewee as a flesh-and-blood person rather than a disembodied voice in a transcribed tape-recording, and I think a little more detail would help.

In fact--could we have a bit more physical description of Mailer at the time of the interview? There is some--how he was dressed, his gestures, etc. Bu5--is he tall or short? In good shape or getting saggy. Energetic or tired-looking? How's his hair these days? Are his fingernails dirty? Etc.

Shea

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR MAILER

- ✓ 1. Discuss the youth culture--teenagers as an oppressed minority; half the population under 25 (implications); don't trust anybody over 30; student protest (free speech, antiwar, sexual freedom, etc.)
2. Opinion of: mod clothes, rock and roll (the new lyricism), mixed-media, total-environment entertainment, pop-op-kinetic art (and its dehumanization), depiction of sex acts on stage as drama, underground films, ~~underground newspapers, black-pink-white-red-white-black~~
3. How to rectify the inequities in the world between the overprivileged and the underprivileged.
4. Does he foresee a ~~black-white~~ conflict between the white world (including the U.S. and Russia) and the dark world (including Africa and China)? Will U.S.-China relations ever be "normalized"? What are the implications of this turmoil for U.S. friendship with Russia--how deep will it go and how long will it last? Will they become more capitalist as we become more socialistic?
5. What are his major ~~black-white~~ ideological differences with LBJ? With Buckley? Personal opinions of each. Opinions of Romney, Percy, Reagan, Rockefeller as Presidential timber.
6. Opinion of Masters and Johnson's ~~black-white~~ research into sexual biology. Legitimacy of ~~filming intercourse for science~~.
7. In pornography, what's wrong with appealing to the prurient interest?
8. Will marriage survive as a viable institution? Should it? ~~black-white~~
9. How would you like to be remembered?
10. Is life worth living?
11. Three final questions: (1) Who are you? (2) Apart from that, who are you? (3) Apart from that, who are you?

~~black-white~~

~~black-white~~

~~black-white~~



BOY

CORRESPONDENCE

5/23

DATE: May 19, 1967

Jack:

A. C. SPECTORSKY

MAY 20 1967

Spec said you and Murray Fisher should be satisfied with this before he reads it.

milly

t way to check my deletions and
terview. The copy enclosed is
a, represents Mailer's own edited
in red, reflect PLAYBOY correc-
Xerox and see what has been done.

Paul
k version. Carroll wants to send
prove as is, or with minor changes,
f you find major problems, I'll
when I return.

on, should you want it. Shea is

PLAYBOY / 919 n. michigan • chicago ill.

1/10/67

✓ Discuss the youth culture. Does he think, as has been asserted, that teenagers are an oppressed minority? Does he see any value in the protests of the new left, the ~~kmpkmax~~ teenyboppers, the love generation, etc.?

✓ What are his opinions of Romney, Percy, Reagan, ~~max~~ Rockefeller as presidential timber? *Humphrey*

✓ Opinion of Masters and Johnson's research? ~~inxxxxxxmb~~

✓ Explain how giving head is a weakness?

✓ How would you like to be remembered?



Do you still think The Deer Park was your best novel?

Why did you start smoking pot?

Do you think it improved your writing?

Some time ago you praised Mark Lane's book, what ~~do~~ your personal feelings concerning the Warren Commission's handling of the Kennedy assassination?

Who do you think killed Kennedy?

Why is your apartment rigged up with climbing nets, planks, ropes, etc.?

Do experiences only have meaning to you when there's a challenge connected with them?

injudicious After you stabbed your wife, you stated you'd rather go to jail than be incarcerated in a mental institution. If you weren't crazy then (according to you) but were in need of psychiatric help, wasn't your request ~~arrogant~~ ~~insulting and dangerous~~ one in that you might be released still mentally unbalanced and return and harm your wife?

Why did you write An American Dream in installments rather than complete and sell it after the finish?

You wrote "Success Was A Lobotomy To My Past," yet even after success, you still maintain the position of a quixotic underdog tilting against the windmill of society. Why?

At one time you worked in a mental hospital. What were the conditions like?

What's your position on the war in Viet Nam?

Sometime ago you commented that "As a politician, I think he's (Johnson) the smartest president we've ever had. But nobody in America can say he's a good man. And if he's an evil man, God help us, because he's insufferably vain." Has anything happened since then that would confirm or alter this opinion?

Do you feel you do your best writing under pressure?

Do you think American politics is about to (or has) entered a period where the Kennedy-type image (as typified by ~~Robert Kennedy~~ Percy, Lindsay and Brooke) will take precedent over a candidate's political views and personal regard for the people's interest?

Do you think Johnson will win in '68?

Now that you're an acknowledged first-rate novelist, why do you still pick and provoke literary and intellectual fights with your peers? Why don't you put the energy to more profitable and prolific use?

If you're so hip, how come you're not cool?

You once commented that if Hemingway had been a pimply-faced kid with no personal magnetism or mystique connected with him, his work would have never sold. Don't you think that the battling, hipster image you present is a subconscious or perhaps even a conscious effort to draw attention to yourself as a means of selling your books. Do you think your work would have sold as well if you were ~~a kid~~ instead of a self-proclaimed hipster?

TO REAL LIFE A fat middle-aged conservative

What characters in your books could be called a self-characterization?

If you were President, what changes would you immediately make? ~~← think~~

Who would you choose for your cabinet and who would you select as personal confidants?

MAILER QUESTIONS -- LINDERMAN

1. Since your first few novels, your work in recent years has been almost exclusively in the realm of social criticism. Do you see yourself continuing in this role?

(Among others,)
2. Norman Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, ~~has~~ has suggested that fiction as a genre is about to die, and that this death has been precipitated by the use of fictive technique in non-fiction work. Do you agree with his analysis?

3. When your own literary career began, most young people who were their generation's pace-setters leaned toward being beatniks. Today, they tend to be political and social activists. Why do you think this change came about, and what is significant about this development?

4. Do you feel that the young radicals -- people like SNCC's Stokely Carmichael and Mario Savio of the Berkeley Free Speech Movement -- have deserved the bad press they've received?

5. Life magazine recently ran an editorial calling for a new investigation of the JFK assassination. What are your thoughts on the subject?

6. Do you think Bobby Kennedy, who undoubtedly will get a chance to run for the presidency, will make a ~~good~~ *good* chief executive? *Compare with other candidates of both parties.*

7. You are good friends with at least two well-known prizefighters -- Roger Donahue who killed Sonny Boy West in New York's (arena -- St. Nicholas?) in 19__, and light-heavyweight champion Jose Torres. In addition, you've been photographed hand-wrestling with Cassius Clay, and you also hold the unique distinction of being the only man ever to be publicly adjudged "a bum" by the usually taciturn former heavyweight champion, Charles (Sonny) Liston. What is it about boxing that draws you to it -- and to its practitioners?

8. There are a number of stories in circulation stating that for months at a time, you'll pick a fight at almost any party you attend? Is this true? (Why?)

9. You once planned to run for mayor of New York, but before your campaign began, circumstances (Norman Mailer stabbed his wife) prevented you from going through with it. Since you indulged in so many ferocious, evocative debates with Conservative William F. Buckley, Jr., were you the least bit tempted to try again last year when Buckley ran for mayor? And if you couldn't outpoll him -- or even out talk him -- don't you think you would have at least been able to out-write him? (Reference to Buckley's recent book on the campaign.)

10. Television, now that it has been re-defined as an advertising medium, consciously seeks to cultivate the bottom of America in its search for a reliable lowest common denominator that will guarantee large viewing audiences. Do you see anyway in the near future that TV can escape the trap it has set for itself?

11. Your last novel, An American Dream, was made into a motion picture that drew scorn from the great majority of America's film critics. Do you think the bad notices were justified?

12. What are your thoughts on the use of psychedelics -- and your experiences with them?

NORMAN MAILER QUESTIONS

1. In THE PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS you wrote much about your hopes and disillusionings regarding the John Kennedy era. A lot of what you said was concerned with the style or tone set for the country by a leader and his administration. How do you imagine the United States in the era of a Bobby Kennedy administration--and what would you foresee as the tenor of those times?
2. You yourself once considered running for Mayor of New York City, and later you wrote a book--THE PRESIDENTIAL PAPERS--largely concerned with the quality of political life. Just as a sort of personal utopian hypothesis, how would you describe the quality of national life under a Norman Mailer presidential administration?
3. At the time you were thinking of running in the New York mayoralty race--before that famous party--there was a widespread rumor that you had tried to enlist the Mafia and other mobsters on your side. Is there anything to this? How did such a rumor get started?
4. What do you think about the general proposition of a writer or artist running for public office? Do you think it wise for such a man to seek actual official responsibility--or is it better for him to express his opinions on public affairs without being part of the establishment?
5. You have become both a well-known writer and a public figure, a celebrity, at the same time. Ilya Ehrenburg once said that a writer begins to cut himself off from ordinary life and reality once he becomes a recognized literary figure. Do you think this is true? What has your own experience been?
6. In one of your essays, "Red Dread," you conjecture about how Goldwater might have acted if he had become President. Do you see any difference between what you described there and what is happening under the present administration?
7. In an interview with Paul Krassner, you said that "America is dominated by a bunch of half-maniacal scientists." You were referring specifically to ideas about sex, but do you think your judgment applies more broadly? To things like the space race, computers, "human engineering?"
8. You wrote what many people consider the war novel of your generation. Few others about World War II were very good; there were no outstanding ones about the Korean War, and thus far there has been none about Vietnam. Why do you think this is so? Is the war novel as a ~~form~~ literary form a thing of the past?
9. How would you describe the war novel--yours and the other good ones--as an imaginative act? Is it an existential thing? Or can it really succeed as a pervasive social and psychological symbol? Excluding The Naked and the Dead, are there other books you'd name as having succeeded in this way?
10. What do you think of the new generation of Russian writers--such people as Voznesensky, Yevtushenko, and Aksenov? Is this the beginning of a good new period in Russian writing?

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: May 19, 1967

TO: A. C. Spectorsky

FROM: Nat Lehman

SUBJECT: NORMAN MAILER INTERVIEW

I think you'll find this the easiest way to check my deletions and corrections on the Norman Mailer Interview. The copy enclosed is a Xerox, which in its original state, represents Mailer's own edited version. All the marks, neatly made in red, reflect PLAYBOY corrections. You can thus go through this Xerox and see what has been done.

Enclosed also is the typed four-book version. Carroll wants to send a copy of that to Mailer. If you approve as is, or with minor changes, you can send a carbon to Carroll. If you find major problems, I'll take care of sending the interview when I return.

Pat Basiliko has the original version, should you want it. Shea is handling the project in my absence.

NL/pb
enc.

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: May 19, 1967

TO: A. C. Spector

A. C. SPECTORSKY

FROM: Nat Lehman

MAY 20 1967

SUBJECT: NORMAN MAILER INTERVIEW

I think you'll find this the easiest way to check my deletions and corrections on the Norman Mailer Interview. The copy enclosed is a Xerox, which in its original state, represents Mailer's own edited version. All the marks, neatly made in red, reflect PLAYBOY corrections. You can thus go through this Xerox and see what has been done.

Enclosed also is the typed four-book version. ^{Paul} Carroll wants to send a copy of that to Mailer. If you approve as is, or with minor changes, you can send a carbon to Carroll. If you find major problems, I'll take care of sending the interview when I return.

Pat Basiliko has the original version, should you want it. Shea is handling the project in my absence.

NL/pb
enc.

1 Nat

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: 11/21/66

TO: Murray Fisher

FROM: David Butler

SUBJECT: Suggested questions for Norman Mailer interview

How do you answer the criticism that your fiction is suffering under the burden of your ideas -- that An American Dream was dull because so much of it was a mechanical fictionalization of the ideas developed in The Presidential Papers and elsewhere?

Are you still predicting -- or working on -- a major novel?

Isn't it possible that the tension it takes to write good fiction is dissipated in your incidental writing, some of which, ~~even you must admit~~ is self-indulgent and slack?

According to critics,

^{as}
Were you surprised as we were when Cassius Clay beat Liston twice? Did Liston take a dive in the Maine fight? How do you rate Clay, as a boxer and meta-physically?

Especially in The Presidential Papers, and throughout your incidental writing of the last ten years, you have constructed a political and spiritual philosophy whose one great sin is totalitarianism, a quality you have claimed to see in the mass media, in most modern architecture, in conventional liberalism and elsewhere. Where does the totalitarian impulse reside in America today?

Where is the defect in the argument that we should be in South Vietnam to save that country from the undeniable totalitarianism of Red China?

Are there any writers under 30 whom you're impressed by?

What sort of accomodation have you made to Hemingway's suicide?

In The Presidential Papers you condemn both masturbation and birth control, arguing in part from the possibility that the best possible child in a man might be wasted in either practice. Do you still feel this way?

Do you look forward to the day when Bobby Kennedy will be President?

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: _____

TO: _____

FROM: _____

SUBJECT: _____

- 2 -

You're constructing a morality in which the great sin is totalitarian death and dullness and the arena of salvation is danger. ~~But it seems to some~~ But it seems to *some* that such a morality might call for a writer, like yourself, to seek danger in his work, rather than by running for political office, forcing confrontations with heavyweight fighters, and so forth. How do you answer the criticism that your personal search for dangerous situations in external life is an escape from the hazards of the novels you haven't been writing?

In this connection, wasn't there something artificial about the danger you created by writing An American Dream for serialization on deadline? Or was that device simply necessary to get you back to fiction?

Do you still think that you really had anything to do with Kennedy getting elected or Patterson getting knocked out by Liston?

Getting back to sex, do you think the undeniable popularity of PLAYBOY's nude pictorials bodes ill or well for the American soul?

In your first article on Jack Kennedy in The Village Voice -- the article which you think changed the city's vote for him -- you make much of his youth and handsomeness. Is it possible that Ronald Reagan too is an existential politician *in the same sense?*

You've had your own flirtation -- or serious affair -- with drugs, and have come out of it, apparently, with the feeling that they destroy the best in one, starting with his sex. Do you feel the same about LSD?

Some critics have been confused by your apparent *skillfully* contempt for J. D. Salinger. His work -- though admittedly small - undeniably is ~~perfectly~~ perfectly crafted, catching exactly the reality of the appearances and voices and feelings of his characters. More to the point, it does concern God, betrayal of personality, right and wrong. Why do you classify him as a literary weakling whom Jackie Kennedy would have loved to have in the White House and yourself as an unruly and dangerous literary tiger?

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: _____

TO: _____

FROM: _____

SUBJECT: _____

- 3 -

How is one to go about combatting the fantastic nausea of contemporary American architecture?

How would you answer the criticism that you are an intellectual camp-follower, starting with the social realism of The Naked and the Dead, and continuing through the Fifties with your concerns with Zen, the world of Hip, drugs, embroilment in the Negro problem, etc.?

You've always claimed a sympathy with each of the men in The Naked and the Dead, saying that you liked Sgt. Croft best. That seems like a pose. Weren't you really spiritually closest to Lt. Hearn, the middle-class Harvard graduate, officer and intellectual?

You've lined up with the people demanding a new investigation of the assassination of President Kennedy, arguing that a panel of poets and intellectuals should do the job next time. Name a really good panel.

On the same topic, what difference does it make? Kennedy is dead, everyone knows that the FBI and the CIA and oil millionaires and communists are involved, if not in the assassination, then in plots of various maliciousness throughout the world. What spiritual difference does it make if one of these groups was behind the events in Dallas?

What would you say to someone who argued that Lyndon Johnson may in fact be a great man? Isn't there something shallow and manufactured about Lindsay and Percy and Romney -- these men who ~~will~~ ^{probably} follow Johnson in the White House? At least Johnson is human and real -- vulgar, manly, sentimental.

At various points -- in your ^(celebrated) debate with William Buckley, ~~which we carried early~~ ~~in~~, for example -- you've stated that the Mob or the Mafia controls much of American life and its political parties in particular. This thesis has always struck ~~me~~ as about as sophisticated ~~and indicative of mental health in its~~

your critics

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: _____

TO: _____

FROM: _____

SUBJECT: _____

- 4 -

~~as the~~ as the Right Wing idea that Communists run the government. Do you still think the Mob is more important than anyone dares say? If so, what documentation do you have?

u Tracing cancer back to the conformity of modern American architecture is a metaphor, right?

DB/jz

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: November 21, 1966

TO: Murray Fisher

FROM: Bob Wilson

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS FOR MAILER INTERVIEW

1. As a novelist, how much do you work by intuition (or what Faulkner called "the demon") and how much by conscious planning?
2. Psychiatric studies show that murderers often attempt suicide before they commit murder. Were you using this knowledge consciously in plotting the first chapter of AN AMERICAN DREAM, or did you just follow "the demon" in leading Rojack from attempted suicide to murder?
3. Did you have Marion Faye's satanism-and-Catholicism clear in your head when you began THE DEER PARK--for instance, when you introduced him as a little boy telling his mother not to cry because she was so beautiful--or did he just "grow" that way as you were writing about him?
4. Many people regard Marion Faye as your major (but most puzzling) creation. Why have you had so much trouble with your long-promised and often-postponed "big novel" about his Cape Cod party? Do you have particular difficulty in keeping Marion Faye in focus yourself?
5. Is Marion Faye ultimately good or evil in your opinion? Or is it the problem of the big novel to find out whether he is good or evil?
6. When Antonin Artaud was in the mental hospital, he wrote that the Wall Street stock market is manipulated by witchcraft. You echo that theory in AN AMERICAN DREAM. Do you really believe it?
7. In the play version of THE DEER PARK--after Marion Faye drives Elena to attempted suicide, he suffers remorse at the last moment and lets her live. Suppose he had been stronger and had allowed her to die. Do you think he would have achieved the "enlightenment" he was aiming for--the "going further out in the mind" than anyone before?
8. Isn't there a deliberate echo of the Abraham and Isaac story in the Marion and Elena story? How much were you influenced by your grandfather's Talmudic studies in your childhood?
9. Doesn't Barney Oswald Kelly in AN AMERICAN DREAM echo the character of General Cummings in THE NAKED AND THE DEAD? Is the fact that Cummings defeats Lt. Hearn, while Kelly doesn't defeat Rojack, connected in your mind with the idea that Hearn was a sentimental liberal whereas Rojack has enough evil in himself to understand the enemy better and to fight it on its own terms? Or, in other words, aren't your heroes--Hearn, Lovett, O'Shaugnessy and Rojack--progressively less "good-hearted" and progressively more like your villains--Cummings, the FBI man in BARBARY SHORE, Teppis in THE DEER PARK, and Barney Oswald Kelly?

-more-

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: November 21, 1966

TO: Murray Fisher

FROM: Bob Wilson

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS FOR MAILER INTERVIEW Page 2

10. The prologue to the big novel--published in ADVERTISEMENTS FOR MYSELF--deliberately echoes DeSade's opening in THE 120 DAYS OF SODOM. How much have you been influenced by DeSade's thinking? How much is Marion Faye based on DeSade's own personality?
11. In THE DEER PARK and BARBARY SHORE your heroes both suffer from disturbances of potency, and both are orphans. Both also have partial or total amnesia. Later, the heroes of "The Time of Her Time" and AN AMERICAN DREAM are conspicuously virile. Does all of this have some autobiographical bearing? What did you mean when you said that your sudden success at 25 was like "a lobotomy"?
12. Cummings was clearly identified with fascism in THE NAKED AND THE DEAD, Hearn with left-wing liberalism. How much were Cummings' sarcastic Socratic attacks on liberalism a reflection of your own doubts? Many have said that your later philosophy, in spite of still being left-wing, is more like Cummings' thinking than like Hearn's. Do you agree?
13. You have called yourself a Marxist-anarchist. Which side of that combination is predominant lately?
14. One year ago, you started a campaign to have all opponents of the Vietnamese war hang pictures of Lyndon Johnson upside-down. Was that connected in your mind with the Italian partisans' hanging Mussolini upside-down?
15. Do you still have political ambitions? Might you run for office again some day?
16. Eric Bentley has asserted that Bernard Shaw (1), the serious writer, created a second Bernard Shaw (2), the gadfly and clown, to draw public attention--a gambit by which a radical writer can make himself a financial success without compromising his (unpopular) opinions. To what extent have you consciously created a fake Norman Mailer(2) for the same purpose? Or do you really believe all the outrageous things you say?
17. You said once that the hardest thing for a writer to do is to create characters bigger and braver than he is; that the writer has to grow himself in creating such characters. You have criticized other American writers for specializing in characters weaker than themselves. Do you feel that you have grown in creating your progressively bigger and braver heroes (and villains)?

-more-

PLAYBOY

FOR INTEROFFICE CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: November 21, 1966

TO: Murray Fisher

FROM: Bob Wilson

SUBJECT: QUESTIONS FOR MAILER INTERVIEW Page 3

18. How much of your personal problems--your drunken brawlings, the psychic upsets at the end of your second marriage, the deflection of your talent away from the novel toward journalism, poetry and philosophy--have stemmed from the metaphysical struggles attendant upon creating these progressively bigger and braver characters?
19. You have said that whatever a man gains from drugs he has to pay for later in a gutted and burned-out nervous system. What do you think of Timothy Leary and the new psychedelic religions?
20. How much is Cherry in AN AMERICAN DREAM based on Marilyn Monroe? How well did you know Marilyn personally?
21. There's a long passage in CANNIBALS AND CHRISTIANS about the soul of a drowned sailor entering a piece of driftwood. Do you really believe in that, or were you just toying with ideas?
22. Your latest books have more references to God and the Devil than any contemporary writer (except Fulton Sheen). Were there any personal experiences that led you to this preoccupation with the supernatural?

RAW/pb



5/23

Jack:

Spec said you and Murray Fisher should be satisfied with this before he reads it.

milly



FOLLETT PUBLISHING COMPANY 1010 West Washington Boulevard, Chicago, Illinois 60607 - Phone 312-666-5858

Monday

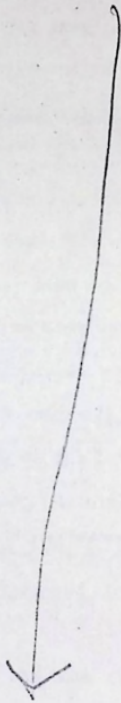
Dear Nat:

The interview reads well and moves sharply and with energy, I feel. I only wish we could work together on The Ginsberg interview too. Hope to see you soon.

Best, Paul

The final clause of The Interviewer Release Form isn't accurate, as you know. Do you plan to change it?

depends exactly on a God who is able to run ^{only} a world of reasonable proportions. If the world we have is one of ^{too difficult} abysmal, idiotic disproportions, then it becomes ~~impossible~~ to conceive of an all-powerful God →



Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 58

depressed, I'm always pleased The Naked
 and The Dead is around.
 PLAYBOY: Why do you write?
 MAILER: Why do I write? You can't beat
 the hours.
 PLAYBOY: Do you think you'll continue to
 write political and cultural essays?
 Some of your critics complain that in An
American Dream, for instance, you rehash
 ideas already expressed in your essays
 and book reviews and columns. How do you
 feel about that?
 MAILER: Everything I write is a card
 out of the same deck. You can reshuffle
 them; but in a way I've been working on
 one book most of my writing life. Pro-
 bably since I started with Barbary Shore,
 certainly with and since The Deer Park,
 I've been working on one book.
 PLAYBOY: Including the books of essays--
Advertisements For Myself, Presidential
Papers and Cannibals and Christians?
 MAILER: Yes.
 PLAYBOY: What's the book about?
 MAILER: Existentialism. That is to say
 the feel of our human condition, which
 by the logic of existentialism is the
 truth of the human condition. Of course,
 it takes no mean artistry to get the
 feel.

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 24

Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

MAILER: It might still be in serious trouble. Kennedy was a fine man, maybe even a magical man, and he changed the style of America; he opened it up. Something racy came back into American life. The country was saltier; it swung more. Still, you would have had technological society eroding most of his efforts; in addition, terrible problems with Congress and Civil Rights. I have a hunch, however, that Kennedy wouldn't have been such a fool as to get us into Vietnam the way Lyndon Johnson got us in; I think Kennedy would have kept the war going about the way it was going, and he might have looked for a way to write it off. Kennedy might even have come to pay attention to the idea which doesn't have enough attention paid to it, that the way to fight communism is not by warring against it, but by letting communists fight each other. There's something in the nature of communism which makes it attack itself. Communism is profoundly cannibalistic.

PLAYBOY: Isn't that one of the reasons you gave why we should get out of Vietnam-- in the controversial talk you delivered during Peace Day at the University of California at Berkeley?

MAILER: Yes. Except it's next to

End here

More

← INSERT c cont

18

I used earlier of the drug addict would apply: a man who is on drugs may very often be draining God's substance. God is not one to desert the addict because He may love him much more than a mediocre man. The drug addict in his particular greed ~~///~~ might illumine some dead ambition of the Lord Himself—who knows this is not so? Still, the point must come when God cuts him off. This is usually the point when the junkie decides to kick his habit.

PLAYBOY: What is the relationship between a writer and this ~~existential~~ God?

MAILER: ~~The relation of any artist, I suppose. I don't really know: I've never been able to decide how much creativity comes from something other than yourself, and how much comes from keeping your nose clean.~~ But a man who talks about his ~~own~~

~~private religion is not necessarily to be trusted. Maybe one of the reasons people don't trust me too much—maybe for good cause—is that I shouldn't talk about these things.~~ Who knows?—

I may be working for the Devil. In fact,

PLAYBOY: ~~(when you say this)~~ A writer may be working for the Devil, you seem to agree with Blake's famous remark: "The reason Milton wrote in fetters, when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils and Hell, is because he was a true Poet and of the Devil's party without knowing it."

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 21Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

possible out

End here

1 other's agents. So, they play games
 2 with each other's agents. They develop
 3 the same attraction ^{toward} to each other's agents
 4 that buddies work up for the same girl.
 5 Two guys in love with the same girl get
 6 great play back and forth. So, yes, once
 7 in awhile, a poor guy like Oswald gets
 8 caught in a situation--becomes an agent
 9 for two countries, and two or three other
 10 secret services or ^(s)espionage services
 11 will get in on it. It's possible Oswald
 12 may have been an agent or on the working
 13 list of a dozen different secret services
 14 ^(throughout) in the world.

15 When the ass^(a)assination occurred, I
 16 think a tremendous panic erupted. An
 17 enormous effort was made to begin des-
 18 troying all evidence in sight. Every
 19 possible way. To top that, you had the
 20 Dallas police department--which I don't
 21 know anything about--but give or take a
 22 few points, it has to be as corrupt as the
 23 next big-city police force. Moreover, a
 24 cop under a searchlight is not the most
 25 resourceful of creatures; he tends to
 26 stampede. ^(a)According to Lane, the Dallas
 27 police force destroyed evidence all over,
 28 heaped up false evidence by the pitch-
 29 fork, terrorized witnesses.

PLAYBOY: Why?

g--
(He's not called
a ball for
nothing!)

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 2

gain some yards through the center of the
line; and when he's got four very tough
linemen opposing him, there's not much he
can do that's surprising, so it's just a
matter of grinding through--that's all.
PLAYBOY: If you feel so negative about
being interviewed, why did you consent to
this one?

MAILER: About every two or three years
I feel I have to have a psychic house-
cleaning, go through my ideas in general,
even brutal form--the brutal form of the
interview--just to see about where I
stand. Because mostly I spend my time
thinking privately. Without this ^{kind of} ~~general~~
psychic housecleaning I might get too in-
fatuated with some ideas. It's a way, I
suppose, of exposing ideas which are weak.
After that, you can either discard them
or think about them a little harder.

PLAYBOY: As you talk about housecleaning
your ideas--disregarding, changing or im-
proving them--we're reminded of your sen-
tence in The Deer Park about growth:
"There was that law of life, so cruel and
so just, that one must grow or else pay
more for remaining the same." Now, the
charge has been levelled against you by
many critics that you've dissipated the
potential growth of a major talent in

most of the time

Yet you've been
charged by many
critics with
dissipating

More

End here

Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

13

Page:

not unlike

in the wake
of some event

perhaps

stet-punctuation

End here

1 obsession is. I've thought about obsession
2 a great deal, but ~~I don't know~~ ^{I'm not sure} if I know
3 the answer. Everybody talks about obses-
4 sions; nobody's ever ^{really} explained
5 them ^{we} can define them, but we don't
6 really know what we're talking about. An
7 obsession, I'd suggest, is a pole of mag-
8 netism, a psychic field of force. An
9 obsession is created, I think, ~~when some~~
10 ~~event has occurred~~ which has altered our
11 life profoundly or we have passed through
12 some relation with someone else which has
13 altered our life ^{drastically} profoundly, yet we don't
14 know whether we were changed for good or
15 for bad: it's the most fundamental sort
16 of event or relation ^{it} has marked us;
17 yet it's morally ambiguous.
18 PLAYBOY: What kind of event?
19 MAILER: Suppose a marriage breaks up.
20 You don't know if it was finally your
21 fault or your wife's fault or God's fault
22 or the Devil's fault ^{four} four uncertainties.
23 Let's reduce them to two: a man, or his
24 wife.
25 ^{MAK} Put it this way: people move forward
26 into the future out of the way they com-
27 prehend the past. When we don't understand
28 something in our past, we are therefore
29 crippled. Use the metaphor of the army
30 here: If you move forward to attack a

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 56

It's also
dangerous
because
it gives
the Devil
introduction
into the
Vagina

PLAYBOY: The
devil? How
so?

MAILER: Oh,
the mind's a
devil. Didn't
you know?

End here

weakness. ^{1/2} it's also a ^(good) way to ^{get rid of} ~~pass on~~ some
of your weakness. ^(D)

PLAYBOY: You've said that D. H. Lawrence
was the first novelist who gave you the
idea "that sex could have beauty." Do
you continue to admire Lawrence?

MAILER: My objection to Lawrence is that
he's sentimental about sex. Sex is not
only a divine and beautiful activity; it's
also a murderous activity. People kill
each other in bed. Some of the greatest
crimes ever committed have been committed
in bed. And no weapons were used.

PLAYBOY: About the art of fiction in
general, do you agree with critics like
Norman Podhoretz who claim the novel as
an imaginative art is dead because of the
recent incorporation of reportage tech-
niques into fiction?

MAILER: Obviously I don't agree with them.
I believe the novel has its own particular
resource, which is almost magical. ^{Fiction}

~~isn't dead in the same way that poetry~~

~~will never be dead.~~ If you write purely
and your style's good enough, you can es-
tablish a communion between yourself and
the reader which can be found in no other
art: ~~as sensitive as the emotions one~~

~~feels looking at fine painting or having~~
~~one's ear on the edge of good music. This~~

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

Cut entire page

End here

1 myth *which is almost God-like*

2 MAILER: ~~I don't know if it's a myth~~ I

3 think Kennedy was a great man. He did

4 heroic things in World War Two. Not just

5 swimming three miles with a back which

6 was half-broken, carrying another man along,

7 and then going out the next day trying

8 to swim to another island. ~~Guys~~ *Soldiers* like you

9 and me--sure, we could have gotten it up

10 that one time--maybe--and then we would

11 have retired and gone home and lived in

12 ease for quite a few years. Instead, Ken-

13 nedy went out after saving that sailor's

14 life and being himself rescued by head

15 hunters, and started running the most

16 insane PT boat in the Solomons, going up

17 the neck of creeks and bayous and still

18 waters that no one had ever dared explore--

19 which may have stood him in good stead in

20 later years.

21 PLAYBOY: You addressed The Presidential

22 Papers directly to Kennedy. ~~did~~ did you expect

23 him to answer?

24 MAILER: ~~If you remember~~ that collection

25 of essays was published in book form some-

26 thing like three weeks before the assas-

27 sination. If Kennedy had lived, I doubt

28 if he'd necessarily have read it; after

29 all, how much time does a President have to

30 read? But I know that some of the people

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 17Possible
cut.The book came
out

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 14

town, and the center of this attack depends upon a road which will feed your attack, and this road passes through a town, yet you don't know if your people hold that town or someone else holds it, then, obviously, if you are a general you'd be pretty obsessive about that town. You'd keep asking, "Will you please find out who owns that town?" You'd send out reconnaissance parties to locate the town, enter it, patrol through it ^(.) if all sorts of mysterious things occurred--if, for example, your reconnaissance platoon didn't return--you'd feel so uncertain you might not move forward to attack. The obsession is a search for a useful reality. What finally did occur? What is real?

PLAYBOY: ~~and drink helps a man go back~~
~~and take another look?~~

MAILER: Well, if his drink takes him ^(younger) back to an earlier state of sensitivity, it is then taking him ~~back~~ to a place ^(2d) being the place where he originally got into the impasse which created the obsession. If you can return to a state just preceding the one you were in when these various events occurred, you can say to yourself, "Now, I'm approaching the event again. What really did happen? Who was right? Who was wrong? Let me not miss it

You haven't told us
yet how drink helps
to dissolve an
obsession.

a man's

back of

ambiguous

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 29

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

MAILER: I think Bobby Kennedy might be
You can't begin to know what direction
the man will take. I don't mean his direc-
tions are cheap or contradictory, but he
has a nature which finally is resistant
to analysis--so at least he gives you
a ride for your money. Bill Buckley, re-
plete with all his vices and virtues,
is certainly an existential politician.

PLAYBOY: In Cannibals and Christians
you said that Bobby Kennedy has ^{made} ~~taken~~
"a pilgrim's progress" since the murder
of his brother. What did you mean?

MAILER: He's become more interesting
than he used to be; that's a pilgrim's
progress. How many people can that be
said about?

PLAYBOY: What do you think his chances
are in 1968?

MAILER: I don't have any idea. My approach
to politics ^{is} ~~is~~ from outside.

I don't like being filled with inside
stories. There was a period in my life
when I knew people who knew every inside
story. It took me awhile to find out
they know nothing. For instance, they
knew in 1963 that Bill Scranton was go-
ing to be the Republican candidate in
1964.

PLAYBOY: A few minutes ago, you praised

PLAYBOY: What
~~is your opinion of~~
Romney, Percy, Regan
and Rockefeller as
presidential timber?

MAILER: They
are the tragedy of
the Republican Party.
They are the
embodiment, the
present-day focus
of the mediocrity
of -- nay, let us
say they are the
tragedy of the
Republican Party.

(If Nixon is
is out, then
More
his name should
be added to the
above list

End here

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 50Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

1 I've never written much about it, but I
2 think it's a goldmine: To write about marriage,
3 age, to really write about marriage and
4 what really goes on between a man and a
5 woman--the way they kill each other and
6 keep each other alive.

7 PLAYBOY: Do you think you may write about
8 it someday?

9 MAILER: I don't know; I don't know. It's
10 difficult. After all, the marriage you're
11 usually thinking about at the moment is
12 your present marriage, and you can't
13 start writing about that.

14 PLAYBOY: ^{LOV} May of your critics accuse you
15 of harboring a good deal of hostility
16 against women. They point to the classic
17 scene in your story "The Time of Her Time"
18 when the protagonist calls her penis the
19 "Avenger" and rapes a girl anally.

20 MAILER: Let's get something hotsy-totsy.
21 Let's say: takes carnal possession of her
22 posterior territories.

23 PLAYBOY: All right. Critics also point to
24 the well-known scene in An American Dream
25 when Rojack deprives a German maid of her
26 orgasm by insisting at the last second on
27 having his orgasm in her rectum instead
28 of her vagina. Critics say that here
29 again is an example of Mailer's deep hostility
30 toward and distrust of women. What

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 6

INSERT B
next page

*may have enabled me
to get girls I would
not otherwise have
gotten, but it*

Lo! There was a feedback which had little
to do with me. It was as if--if you will--
every one of my actions was tuned to an
amplifier.

Not I had some instinctive sense--
right or wrong--that the best way to grow
was not to write one novel after another
but to move from activity to activity, a
notion which began with ^eRenaissance Man,
it's not my idea, after all. My personal
celebrity [^]was an obstacle to any natural
ability to move quickly and easily. For
years, it was a tremendous obstacle; and
I ended up having a very dull, dogged per-
sonality which sought to wrestle with the
legend, and which tried to say, "Look,
fellows, I'm really simple, honest, hard-
working; I'm as close to Abe Lincoln as
Arthur Miller is."

The hoarseness of this confession is
not to enlist sympathy but to prepare
the ground for my boast: I learned how
to accept and live with my legend. The
legend becomes your friend, the beard,
a front man, a pimp, a procurer of new
situations. You live with a ghost who is
more real to people than yourself; every
single action you ~~not~~ take ~~in life~~ with
another person is part of a triangle. Every
girl you talk to is not only in love with

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 25

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

End here

impossible for us to get out of Vietnam,
 Psychologically impossible. ^g (Militarily,
 of course, the war is next to meaning-
 less.) But America, more than any other
 country on earth, has an image of itself
 as a fighting nation. Americans really
 want to fight; they really want a war.
 It's good for them, healthy for them.
 Fine. Have war games every year. I offered
 this suggestion in a satirical piece, but
 I've ^{since} ^(a little more) become serious about it. Buy some
 place--some desert or jungle--^(and) invite any
 countries we have eyes for to come to
 fight. If they don't accept, they're
 conceivably too yellow to show up. Or at
 least ^(so) we can tell the world. But if they
 do, ^g They have 50,000 men, we have 50,000
 men; we get 200 or 400 airplanes--name
 it--they get the same; all ordnance sim-
 lar in category, the same count of wea-
 pons. Then you have the biggest profes-
 sional war game in the history of the
 world. Let it go on for two or three
 months, or to ^u conclusion, ^(c) covered by color
 television, radio, interviews with some
 of the stars who come out of this engage-
 ment. Some will call it musical comedy,
 barbaric, but, in ^{point} ~~matter~~ of fact, the
 one difference between this war game and
 Vietnam is that we won't be burning kids

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 3

American fiction by wearing so many other hats. They point out that there's Mailer the politician who once seriously considered running for Mayor of New York City; there's Mailer the journalist who writes about the maladies in American life and about the political brutalities; there's Mailer the celebrity who grabs headlines by booze brawls and other acts of public violence. *How do you answer that criticism?*

MAILER: Moving from one activity to another makes sense if you do it with a hint of wit or a touch of grace--which I don't say I've always done; far from it--but I think *(can give)* you can get momentum from the turn when moving from one activity to another. If you do it well, you can increase the energy you bring to the next piece of work. Growth, in some curious way, I ~~think~~ *expect*, depends on being always in motion just a little bit, one way or another. Growth is not simply just going forward; it's going forward until you have to make a delicate decision either to continue in a difficult situation or retreat and look for another way to go forward. The pattern that this creates--no, pattern is a poor word--the line of the movement reveals the nature of form. A breast is beautiful because it decides

journalist, debater, part-time politician, professional celebrity. How do you answer that criticism?

I think this change is not wise, for the original question tells more about me to readers who are unfamiliar and also prepares the length of my reply.

End here

More

Possible cut

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 41

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

the act--won't be able to exist anymore.

PLAYBOY: In terms of the possibility of
you becoming an existential political

figure yourself, you once planned to run

for Mayor of New York City, although

recently you said that you've decided to

devote your time to writing instead of

~~devote~~ political activities. Do you still

feel that way?

MAILER: I disqualified myself from being

in political office; you can't stab your

wife and get away with it. It's as simple

as that.

PLAYBOY: That happened ~~right~~ around the
time you announced your candidacy, didn't
it?

MAILER: Three weeks after.

PLAYBOY: Do you have any prognostica-
tions about the American political and
social scene in general?MAILER: I'm gloomy. I won't say I don't
think we're going to make it; but I am
gloomy because quite beyond politicsand any related or unrelated discussions
of courage, honor, love, beauty, ~~and~~ soforth, rests this technological society
which sits upon us like an incubus. It'simpossible, for instance, to have any
contact with anything in your existence

which is not encapsulized by this

End here

More

Yourself
apart,

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 35

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

1 him money is nothing but a fool. With such
 2 handouts, honor for the Negro becomes
 3 his ability to lie, cheat^g and exploit
 4 the white man. Whereas a few thousand
 5 dollars given bit by bit to a man working
 6 very hard on his ^(own) apartment over a few
 7 years would obviously do much more for
 8 that apartment than \$20,000 spent to reno-
 9 vate it by outside methods.

10 PLAYBOY: Recently you said that civil
 11 war will erupt soon in this country. Do
 12 you see it as happening between Negroes
 13 and whites?

14 MAILER: I think there's a tendency toward
 15 civil war--not a war in the sense of
 16 people shooting it out over the hills and
 17 on battle lines; ~~But~~ certain kinds of
 18 functions might cease to exist in this
 19 society--technological functions. It may
 20 ^(that) be people will lose the habit of depend-
 21 ing on the subway to get to work, or people
 22 might lose the real possibility of driving
 23 into certain cities at certain hours of
 24 the day ^(or night.) What might happen would be
 25 scattered outbreaks of violence: people,
 26 for example, who've gotten fed up with
 27 the Long Island Expressway and so start
 28 overturning cars in traffic jams. All
 29 sorts of things ^(←) products getting worse and
 30 worse; shoddiness at the center of

End here

More

→ INSERT D

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 12

broader vision^(:) dying a little, he begins
to retreat from his expertise and begins
to rejoin his backward brothers. Halle-
lujah! So that LSD taken a few times
could be very good, I would imagine. But
before very long, if the expert keeps
taking LSD, he can become nothing but an
expert on LSD.

PLAYBOY: What do you think ^{(N) of} about Timothy
Leary?

MAILER: Well, I wondered who we ^{were} just
talking about.

PLAYBOY: More of an answer, please.

MAILER: I never met him. Perhaps I ^(d)
like him if I did. Many of my friends do.
But I have heard him speak, and he is
then naught but simple shit.

PLAYBOY: Alcohol seems to be another way
by which you've tried to grow or "move
forward." One of the characters in your
stage version of The Deer Park declares:
"A man must drink until he locates the
truth." How does alcohol help a man do
that?

MAILER: I'm going to offer the hardwork-
ing magazine readers of America one funda-
mental equation: A man who drinks is at-
tempting to dissolve an obsession.

PLAYBOY: What's the obsession?

MAILER: Talk first about what an

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

8

Page:

1 said that a man on drugs will pay for it
2 by "a gutted and burnt-out nervous sys-
3 tem." How do you feel about ~~that topic~~ ~~drugs~~ today?

4 Do you see them as an example of poten-
5 tial or of false growth?

6 MAILER: Drugs I think are a spiritual
7 form way of gambling. This is a poetic equa-
8 tion which can be carried right down to
9 the end of its metaphor, because on drugs
10 you're even bucking the house percentage
11 which for a drug like marijuana is prob-
12 ably something like 30 percent or 40 per-
13 cent.

14 PLAYBOY: Would you expand the metaphor?

15 MAILER: Marijuana does something with
16 the sense of time: it accelerates you;
17 it opens you to your unconscious. But
18 it's as if you're calling on the reserves
19 of the next three days. All the sweets,
20 all the crystals, all the little decisions,
21 all the unconscious work of the next
22 three days--or if the experience is deep,
23 part of the next thirty days, or the next
24 thirty years--is called forward. For a
25 half hour or two hours--whatever is the
26 high of the pot--you're better than you
27 are normally, and you get into situations
28 you wouldn't get into normally, and gener-
29 ally more happens to you: you make love
30 better, you talk better, you think better,

End here

More

Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

ELITE PICA

Possible cut
PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 23

1 incisive, tasty or superb.

2 PLAYBOY: If Kennedy had only been

3 wounded and then had recovered and re-

4 sumed his responsibilities as President,

5 what do you think America would be like

6 today?

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 52

1 How do you feel about this charge?

2 MAILER: I don't want to talk about the

3 stabbing any more. Not any more. Say the

4 word 18 times and it loses its force.

5 I'll just say--this could be hard to be-

6 lieve--that I was not really thinking about

7 the act or myself at that moment I wrote

8 the poem; I was really thinking about a

9 long conversation I had with a man who

10 stabbed his brother. He had been telling

11 me about it and he had such complexity of

12 feeling for his brother that the poem came:

13 "So long as you use a knife..." My

14 feeling about writing such things is simple:

15 If you're not ruthless about your work,

16 you can't be an artist of interest. Once

17 something crystallizes, you have to be

18 ruthless about presenting it; it doesn't

19 matter who gets hurt. Your message in the

20 ear of the reader is going to be worth

21 the damage that's done. You've got to be

22 impersonal; you can't look back. If, on

23 the other hand, you go in the other direc-

24 tion and start thinking, "Will writing

25 about this experience hurt me?"--well,

26 then, you're a bad writer--the kind who

27 spends his life humping for The New Yorker.

28 You spend your life hurting other people--

29 not yourself.

End here

30 PLAYBOY: Why?

starting with
yourself

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINE

Issue: SEPTEMBER

Title: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 37

us is certainly not our ability to fight
 (Note) Communism. The more we wage a religious
 war against Communism, the more we create
 the real social equivalent of Communism
 in America. (S) Which will be the total tech-
 nological society. You can look forward
 into a future where Communism's techno-
 logical society grows near to identical
 with ours; the differences will be of the
 mildest local color. For the natural ten-
 dency of the technological society is to
 try to clean up all sorts of social ex-
 cesses and (to) root out random oppression be-
 cause these activities are illogical. (S)
 they interfere with the smooth working
 of the machine. You never want a piston
 to drive with more force than is necessary
 to direct the action of the machine; you
 never put a part in the machine that is
 heavier than it needs to be. So the natur-
 al desire of the technological society
 is to create a smooth totalitarian society
 free from the ranker forms of injustice.
 Its long-term tendency in Russia is to
 make a totalitarian environment which is
 relatively civilized and pleasant. Both
 countries may well end by (S) serving up
 a life to their citizens about as any-
 mous and vitiated and pill-ridden and dull
 as some of our new office buildings.

End here

More

INSERT E

44

One of the ironies of our century is that the technological society creates an atmosphere of such passivity ~~in~~ⁱⁿ people that they are now prepared to entertain Oriental notions precisely because they have lost much of the real power to shape their own lives. The citizens of a technological society are as existentially powerless as an Oriental peasant. Their living standard may be vastly superior but their essential social impotence is similar: they command less and less; they are manipulated more and more. ~~For that reason, they~~ ^{They may think they are picking their channels,} the real mission of the West ~~if we are to speak in these by now vintage Spenglerian terms--must be to call to everything in man which is most extraordinary.~~ ^{but TV channels theme} (Here, let's take a long parenthesis.) I believe what is most extraordinary in us is certainly not our ability to fight communism. ~~The more~~ ^{the more} we wage a religious war against communism, the more we create the real social equivalent of communism in America which will be the total technological society. You can look forward into a future where communism's technological society grows near to identical with ours; the differences will be of the mildest local color. For the natural tendency of the technological society is to try to clean up all sorts of social excesses and root out random oppression because these activities are illogical--they interfere with the smooth working of the machine. You never want a piston to drive with more force than is necessary to direct the action of the machine; you never put a part ^{IN} ~~in~~ the machine that is heavier than it needs to be. So the natural desire of the technological ^{cul} society is to →

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: X 44Start here
Total Pages

Total Lines

good at given times. Other times, dread-
ful. When sex becomes programmatic; in
walks the totalitarian. Because a pro-
gram does not permit of surprises. some
times, existence can only reveal itself
by its surprises.

PLAYBOY: Do you think the abundance of
sex manuals available today contributes
to the programming of sex?

MAILER: Taking them at their best, the
psychological sex manuals, I'd still say
I'm not a champion of Albert Ellis' opin-
ions. Although there's one thing in Ellis'
ideas which isn't so bad: the notion he
has of sex as will. For instance, I remem-
ber he once told me a story about one of
his patients who was terribly timid and
nervous about women. After they'd worked
for awhile in the analytical relationship,
Ellis finally said one day (to his patient) "Look, you
like this girl; you find her attractive.
neck with her tonight; take her to the
movies and neck with her." Ellis said the
patient went to the movies with the
girl and suffered and sweated and died
but finally made a pass; he did neck
with her. Ellis said the real reason was
that the patient was more afraid of Ellis
than he was of the girl. There's some-
thing in that. A healthier reflex can

End here

More

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 19

psyche in a vault and probably would have
died young and schizophrenic.

PLAYBOY: Speaking of his death, you wrote
an enthusiastic review of Mark Lane's
Rush to Judgment, which severely criti-
cized the Warren Commission Report, when
the book appeared in August of 1966. In

your review, you stated: "Lane's book
proves once and forever that the assassin-
ation of President Kennedy is more of a
mystery today than when it occurred." Do
you still feel that way about Lane's ar-
gument?

MAILER: Well, I'm not an authority on
it. When I reviewed Rush to Judgment I
wrote that if one-tenth of the things
Lane said were true, then the work of
the Warren Commission is a scandal greater
than Teapot Dome. Here and there I did
check up later on a few points Lane made
(like every other amateur detective in
America, I have the volumes of the Warren
Commission Report, and wherever he'd
claim the Commission was weak, indeed the
Commission was weak.

PLAYBOY: When you claim that the Warren
Commission Report might be a bigger scan-
dal than Teapot Dome, what exactly did
you mean?

MAILER: A disgraceful, shoddy,

"you wrote,"

possible
cut

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 33

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

to recognize one particular complexity
in life, which is that not only can
their own people be bad but that police
brutality might be something which comes
out of being a policeman. And they ^(h)
have to face the fact that Whitey ^(h) ain't
the only devil in town. That might be
good.

Take schooling in Harlem. All these
educational programs which come from
the outside are absurd. I've never met
a stupid Negro in my life; I've met many
Negroes I couldn't talk to, but I never
had the feeling of a stupid man ^(h) behind the
face. ^g I have met stupid whites.

PLAYBOY: Are you serious?

MAILER: Yes. The point is: the Negro
has a life-experience which prevents him
from being stupid. As a result, he has
a culture which is thus different from
our own, and his school education should
begin with his culture before it is asked
to move over to ours. So, again, let the
city allocate Board of Education funds
to let the Negro administer his own
schools and evolve his own curriculum.
There might be chaos for a time. Could
it be any worse than the daily chaos in
Harlem schools now? Why should Negroes
be forced to learn to read by methods

End here

More

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 10

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

by bleeding Him.

PLAYBOY: Do you think this happens on LSD?

MAILER: I don't think you have a mystical experience on chemicals without taking the risk of exploiting something in the creation. If you haven't paid the real wages of love or courage or abstention or discipline or sacrifice or wit in the eye of danger, then taking a psychedelic drug is living the life of a parasite ^{13/} it's drawing on sweets you have not earned. ^(by the way) (Please do not say that LBJ is the biggest cornball in America ^{15/} with the above, I have just presented my credentials.)

PLAYBOY: What is the danger of this parasitical ^(self-) exploitation ^{on LSD?} on LSD?

MAILER: I'm not going to say that LSD is bad in every way for everyone; but I'm convinced it's bad if you keep taking it. Any drug is bad finally in the same way that being a confirmed gambler is bad. A confirmed gambler ends up losing all his friends because he blows their money and blows their trust. A gambler will tell any lie to get back into the action. By the same token, if you stay on any drug for too long, then you have a habit; you're a victim; you're--to anticipate something ^{stet} you're a totalitarian.

End here

More

INSERT C concluded 20 20

corrupter of the soul or a deadening influence. I don't know who or where the enemy is. In fact, I don't have the remotest notion of who or what I'm working for. ~~Let tell you that~~

Sometimes I think I'm unemployed. That's despair, son.

Let's change the subject by reading the passage of the Presidential Papers published by the New York Times
PLAYBOY: Speaking of good and evil in a political context, you've written extensively about John F. Kennedy and his impact on our times. What do you think of the current myth of Kennedy as it has developed since you published *that since the assassination of Kennedy has given rise to the myth of myth*
~~The Presidential Papers~~ a few weeks after he was assassinated?

MAILER: I don't know if it's a myth. I think Kennedy was ~~a great guy, maybe even~~ a great man. ~~Now that he's gone,~~
highly
I think more of him than I did when he was alive. ~~Naturally,~~
~~inevitably. But the man was more than a myth. He was an extraordinary man. He really did heroic things in World War II. Not just swimming three miles with a back that was half-broken, carrying another man along, and then going out the next day trying to swim to another island, almost drowning half-way across and being rescued by head hunters. Guys like you and me--sure, we could have gotten it up that one time--maybe--and then we would have retired and gone home and lived in ease for quite a few years. Instead, this guy went out after saving that sailor's life and being himself rescued by head hunters and started running the most insane PT boat in the Solomons, going up the neck of creeks and bayous and still waters that no one had ever dared explore--which may have stood him in good stead in later years. Definition of a hero--he thrives in dikes, you know.~~

Insert A
Crom page 28

INSERT C

15

-15-

quit the field because this don't lend itself to neat formulas.

But everyone who's a serious drinker has had ~~those moments~~ ^{experienced} has.

~~And~~ revelations on drink. Drink is the active man's drug. addiction. Madison Avenue, please copy. But note: you take a drug lying on your back, whereas the way to drink is standing up.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel that you've got ^{experienced} to moments of truth through drink?

MAILER: Extraordinary moments of truth. The thing that had me ready to weep was that I was very close to the truth but too drunk to do anything about it.

PLAYBOY: What was ^{sort of thing did you discover?} that truth?

MAILER: Whatever the truth was. The kind of truths you find in moments like that. Discovering that somebody you thought loved you, hated you; or vice and versa. All I'm getting at is that sense of certainty; past moments of ambiguity are resolved. The ambiguity sinks into the earth; a crystal remains; you say:

"Yes, there's the truth. Yes, this is what did happen." A

~~relationship suddenly becomes not morass but a crystal.~~ ^{evolves in one's mind from a morass to a crystal of recollection.}

PLAYBOY: In terms of your concept of growth, you've made in

An American Dream and other writings a brilliant, dazzling, and rather puzzling remark concerning the possibility that God himself may be involved in a process of growth. You've said that ^{you have an} He may be ^a ~~an~~ existential God whose final nature is not yet comprehended, even by himself. Could you comment on this?

"Obsession with how God exists" and you've suggested argued for the possibility that

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEW

MAILER

Page: 16

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

lying on your back, whereas the way to
drink is standing up.

PLAYBOY: Do you feel that you've ^(experienced) ~~gotten to~~
moments of truth through drink?

MAILER: Extraordinary moments of truth.
The thing that had me ready to ~~sleep~~ was
that I was ~~very~~ close to the truth but
too drunk to do anything about it.

PLAYBOY: What sort of thing did you dis-
cover?

MAILER: Whatever the truth was. The kind
of truths you find in moments like that.
Discovering that somebody you thought
loved you, hated you; or vice and versa. ^(a)
All I'm ^(underlining) ~~getting at~~ is that sense of cer-
tainly past moments of ambiguity are
resolved. The ambiguity sinks into the
earth; a crystal remains; you say: "Yes,
there's the truth. Yes, this is what did
happen." A relationship ^{alters} ~~involved~~ in one's
memory ^{cut} ~~from~~ a morass to a crystal of
recollection.

PLAYBOY: ~~Let's change the subject by~~
~~recollecting some of your previously~~
~~published truths. You've written exten-~~
~~sively about John F. Kennedy and his~~
~~impact on our times. Particularly in The~~
~~Presidential Papers.~~ Do you think that
since the assassination, the truth about
Kennedy has given way to ^a ~~some~~ kind of

we all know when

stet

Let's discuss
another kind
of truth.

Let's get
into something
which may
have a tangential
relation to this
despair. It's quite
More a jump
but think of this.

INSERT
Cgo to
page 17a

End here

Start here

Total Pages

Total Lines

PLAYBOY
MAGAZINEIssue: SEPTEMBERTitle: INTERVIEWMAILERPage: 43A

1 moment. Every lie we have told, every fear
2 we have indulged, every aggression we have
3 tamed," you say, "arises again at that in-
4 stant to constrict the turns and possibil-
5 ities of our becoming." Would you tell
6 us more about that?

7 MAILER: Orgasm is the moment when you
8 can't cheat life. If the orgasm was no
9 good, something in you was no good. In an
10 existential moment, something bad can hap-
11 pen to you because you can't control it;
12 you don't know how it's going to turn out.
13 Anybody who's ever been in an automobile
14 accident experiences such a moment--three
15 or four of five ~~seconds~~ ^{moments} which seem end-
16 less--and you're into something which is
17 brand new.

18 But the American liberal is programme-
19 tic about sex. Yesterday he believed in
20 sex hygiene. Today he believes in promis-
21 cuity. He thinks it's good. I think that's
22 innocent. Promiscuity is

(or in your
mate, but
probably in you)

fragments
of time

End here

More