

February 19, 1976

Dear Norman,

I hope this letter finds you back at work on your novel and happy with the way it is emerging. And I hope it is going well enough that you no longer think of yourself as the Ezzard Charles of American letters, as you state in the enclosed interview--which I send along in case you do not have a copy. Bob Lucid's description of you as "the Lon Chaney of American letters" is, in a way, more apt, but it does not signify, or try to, ^{to give a sense of} your influence or your achievement. You are right about the lack of good contenders though. There is Pyncheon, who has some good moves but fights in the new scholarly division. Doctorow could be good too, but, like yourself, I have not read him--except for a tantalizing fragment in the New American Review. Enough said. This metaphor is not mine and I'd better drop it here.

Lucid or Laura Adams might have told you about the Mailer seminar at MLA in San Francisco. It went well enough, ~~although~~ although the early starting time kept the numbers down. The high point was Lucid's paper, which was delivered in a sharp, staccato manner, the ideas coming so fast that I could not absorb them. He has an octopus-like intelligence, tentacles whipping out to seize the multiple meanings of your artistic development within and beyond the avant-garde tradition. I'll want to read it again closely when he publishes it. I only got to speak to him for a short time at our organizational meeting the evening before the seminar. He and John Aldridge know each other and Laura as well and it was good to watch them all, with their enormously different styles, interact. I'd like to spend some time with Lucid again.

I have just finished revising and expanding my talk and am ready to send it out to the jury journals. Included in the paper are two quotes from your letters, which I hope you will allow me to use. I've xeroxed copies of these two letters and marked the passages in question. This business of publishing in scholarly journals is time-consuming, but necessary if one is to have any mobility. Getting my dissertation published would do it, of course, and Meredith is, it seems, working hard at it. Little, Brown and Yale have said no, nicely, and he is moving to other presses. I wrote to him to thank him for listening to your recommendation on me and told him that I understood my limited chances for success, and he answered by saying, "No, there is a good chance of acceptance." We'll see.

Dwight Macdonald was out here for our Intersession in January and we gave him the triple crown for his contributions as gadfly, presence and reveler. He was on with Fiedler discussing "Pop Culture and Elite Culture" and I think Dwight got the best of it. He is a hot shit, out drinking till 3 a.m., heckling the other speakers and keeping everyone chuckling for three days. I had several chances to talk to him about you and your books, about Meredith, who is his agent now, and about the affairs of the universe generally. Your portrait of him in Armies, which I read to my Intersession

class, was right on the nose—"the operative definition of the gregarious," and "the very beans of that old-time Wasp integrity." He is intrinsically incredible, what huge energy and aptitude for festive debate. Fiedler was good too, pacing about the stage, celebrating the soaps as an art form, sweating to shift the consciousness of the audience. One wag said he was not the old Leslie though; he used to give these talks when he was drunk.

What would you think of a collection consisting of several of the best of your interviews, your self-interviews and an interview on the form itself? Some of your best prose is tucked away in journals like Anteaus, and getting it together would be a good project for someone like me. What do you think?

I appreciate your kind words on my father's death. This past year, with the death, the completion of my study and two visits with you has been something. Best of luck on your work and give my regards to your wife.

Best,

P.S. I mentioned this to you once before but we have never discussed it in any detail

May 13, 1976

Dear Mike,

I've been getting back to my novel all through the winter and spring and so closing out everything else, which leaves me pretty dumb, or is it numb?, as a letter writer. At any rate, going through The Pile I discovered a good long letter from you with a query in it, and while it's of no burning moment, no part of the mind that raises a query should have to wait on tiptoe too long. Since your letter was dated February 9th, and this is like three months later, yes, I'll remind you of your proposition, which was "a collection consisting of several of the best of your interviews, your self-interviews, and an interview on the form itself. Some of your best prose is tucked away in journals like Antaeus and getting it together would be a good project for someone like me. What do you think?"

I don't know if your remark put the idea in my head and I forgot the source, but over the last few weeks I've been thinking of doing something like that on the side for a possible paperback. The motive, I confess, is no nobler than the usual. But at present I asked Mary Oliver to go through the interviews and arrange them by topic, so that I could see whether it would be worth bringing some kind of editorial order to them. I suspect--because there is nothing I find more difficult to reread than my own interviews--that the good is rather uncomfortably mixed with the bad

in most of them, and the job of weeding is probably not going to be to my taste. I don't feel easy, however, at the thought of letting anyone else do it, mainly because these things are almost as personal as letters. Let's leave it like this. After Mary gets done with her preliminary work on it, I'll see what I feel about a book, and I'll also try to find out from my agent whether a book is likely and feasible, and can make anything. If, after all of that, it still seems favorable, and I don't want to do it, I can't imagine anyone I'd rather have as the editor than yourself. So, let's see.

The novel moves slowly but fairly well, I think. I write somewhere between one-third and one-half as many pages a day as I do when working on journalism--on the other hand I enjoy it more, and feel sorry for myself somewhat less, though I'm getting a little old to still be putting words down on paper. Somehow the life of a writer is ridiculous from beginning to end. There's never a moment when he said, "I am real, I am a man of prime muscle meat and a character of substance."

Glad you met Dwight. That experience is a liberal education in itself.

Will write more when the heat is off, although when is that?

Cheers,

Norman

June 8, 1976

Dear Norman,

Thanks for thinking of me, however provisionally, as an editor of your interviews. Having worried them for years, I probably know as much about them as anyone, although Molly mentioned at least one I had not heard of when I spoke to her the other day on the phone. I have been working up a list for Laura Adams of omissions and corrections to her bibliography, including some interviews she missed. A copy is enclosed for whatever help it may give Molly. Some other snippets and reviews and a handout on you and Hemingway I gave to my class are also enclosed.

Molly said you only wanted to go back five years, or thereabouts, for the interviews. I can see this might be wise if you want the book to sell-- topicality grabbing the old paperback reader more than scholarship--but a chronicle of interviews, chunks of opinion, utterances on myriad topics through the years has more than scholarly appeal. I think your whole progress as an artist can be charted by using your candid and studied remarks to journalists and academics over the last twenty-five years. Obviously the best way for readers to get your meaning, to see how your ideas have developed, is to read your books, but some, many, of the things you have said in various journals and newspapers over the years are tantalizing. A book of interviews could stimulate people to go out and read Barbary Shore or Armies. I have run into several individuals who have been prompted to go to a bookstore after seeing you on a talk show or reading an interview with a local journalist. Enough said.

I enjoyed the Miller piece enormously; it came out just at the right time for my course and your remarks on Hemingway are echoed in the class handout I gave out--obliquely. The contrast between Miller cavorting in the fuck and crud of the sewers of the wasteland and Hemingway polishing his persona is brilliant; the shit beneath the hat is monstrously funny, and true. As E.M. Forster once said of James, "Most of human life has to disappear before he can do us a novel." The whole exploration of Miller's psychic split interest me enormously, as do your comments on the relations between ~~so~~ other authors and their work. I would like to write a review of the whole book--I know some people on the Chicago papers and the ST. Louis Post-Dispatch--if I can get an advance copy. If you could arrange this I'd ~~appreciate~~ appreciate it.

Donna and I and the boys will be coming East in August and if a visit is possible when you are in P-Town we'll be there. I'll check with Molly before we leave

Glad to hear your writing is going well,

Best for now,

Mike

Mike Lennon

No August 23, 1977

Dear Norman:

I am trying to get all my projects here firing right so that I can get to work on the interviews. It should take me a week or two. Meanwhile, my unconscious will be doing some sorting out. The job will be enormously satisfying and I appreciate the chance. I also understand that, as you put it, there will be a certain amount of speculation involved in editing the interviews. Prima facie, it would seem that putting them into some coherent form should be fairly easy. But cutting out the ~~gross~~ ^{the best possible} will not be the most difficult part; finding the contours of a good book among your utterances over twenty-five years will be the challenge.

Enclosed are the two pieces on Capote you asked for. If you would like the book the Tomkins essay is from I would be glad to send it. Some of Tomkins' points may give your thinking on Gilmore a turn.

Donna and I had a hell of a good day with you and your family. I felt cold sober when I left and then all but collapsed two miles down the road--the metabolics of Maine air, rum and intense conversation. So thanks again for your hospitality and give our regards to Barbara and the rest of your family. Hope you find a way to make all kinds of currency from your interviews without too great an investment in time.

Best,

Mike
Mike Lennon
341 W. Main
Rochester, Ill 62563

9/2/77

Dear Norman,

Here is that piece I promised describing (after a fashion) that TV program you appeared on with Capote and Dorothy Parker in 1959.

I've been studying some of the cuts you made in the interviews you published in Cannibals, Errands, etc. for clues which might help in my task. There is some real meat in the interviews, the old Madamoissele piece for example. Now to work.

Best,

September 12, 1977

Dear Mike,

Once again, thanks for sending the extracts. The Capote piece will be fun to read. As I think I told you, I've come to the miserable conclusion that he is one hell of a liar.

I'm a little concerned that you'll end up working an immense amount on the interviews, before we're sure we've got a book or not. I'd hate to see that happen. Scott seemed confident that a paperback could be done, and he's usually accurate as hell on money, so the figures I gave you ought to prevail. Nonetheless, a dozen things can go wrong--they often do. And I hate to see you doing a lot of work for no return. Is it possible to make some fundamental decisions first? So that we could have the materials available to show a publisher--be able to say, here is the stuff from which we will draw the interviews. If, in the course of reading them, you see whole stretches that need weeding, they could perhaps be kept out for this showing. I've always found it hard to go through my old interviews, and so find it hard to make the point here, but rather fumble toward the notion that there may be some quick way to find out if all or less-than-all is possible.

We're back in P-town for a couple of days on the way home from Maine. I really liked this summer, I can see where I'll end up living in Maine year round. Can you imagine being 65 or 70 and thinking of nothing but death, pleasure, and getting the work out. Well, Mike, we enjoyed yours and Donna's visit. Before we're done, we'll institutionalize it.

Cheers,

Norman

September 16, 1977

Dear Norman,

I'm glad you wrote. It was my intention not to pester you with questions about the shape of the book, acting on the principle that ^{this} is just the thing editors are supposed to grapple with, and knowing that the Gilmore project and your novel and I can imagine how many other things would be keeping you up to your armpits in exertions. I wanted to send you the whole thing, cut, ordered and introduced and make it good enough to be irresistible to you, Scott and the publisher. BUT, as I say, I'm glad you wrote because there are a few large questions that should have your attention and it would be assuring to have the approval of the publisher before I go any further.

Before I get to these "large" questions, let me describe what is enclosed. You have before you 21 interviews, the 21 major interviews you have done between 1955 and 1976. The 21 are here in their entirety and they are listed ^{chronological} in ~~chronological~~ order on the first sheet, entitled, "Major Interviews with Norman Mailer." The word count (estimated closely), the interviewer, the place of initial publication, date of this publication and reprint status are also given. The full citation for each of these 21 and for 27 other, minor, interviews (some are really profiles, capsule biographies with quotes from you) are listed on the next five pages. I am not sending xeroxes of the 27 minor interviews because I don't think they should be used to any great extent. If there is to be a book at all, it will be comprised largely of the big 21. As you can see, we are talking about 121,000 words. Cutting out the dross, the repetitions, etc., would bring this down to 90,000 to 100,000 words or

~~about~~

a book, with a preface and an introduction, about the size of St. George and the Godfather, perhaps twenty pages longer, say 250 pages. Which brings me to the larger questions.

Should any or all of your four self-interviews be included? Right now I would say that "The First Day's Interview" and "An Imaginary Interview" (on Vietnam) ought to be included, but not "The Metaphysics of the Belly" or "The Political Economy of Time." You have reprinted "Belly" twice and "Political Economy" is linked to and perhaps indispensable for understanding "Belly" and vice versa. Including the two shorter self-interviews would not add too many pages to the book, and it may be that the 21 can and should be cut to less than 90,000 words. My thinking on this is tentative right now, and obviously depends on how you would feel about reprinting any of the self-interviews.

The second question is this: should either your interview with Carter or your interview with Erlichman be included. My tentative answer is no, simply because you are the interviewer and not the interviewee in these two. But this is another question you will have to answer.

The next question is whether you think the book should include snippets from the minor interviews--a sort of "Scraps of Conversation" section running about five or ten pages. I know it is hard to answer this one because you are not necessarily familiar with all of these "short hairs." I would incline toward including something like this, and would be willing to put it together for your consideration if the project itself goes forward. There are some very fine, nutty (concentrated) morsels in these short interviews, the Vincent Canby piece, "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling It's Norman Mailer," for example.

Another question is whether we should (you and I) do another interview which would be the only new one in the book - unless, that is, you intend to publish the

long-scheduled marijuana interview in this book for the first time. As you know, I would like to do an interview with you and have for a long time, but the drain on your time might not offset the advantage of having a new interview in the book. I would like to get into some of the ideas we talked about in Maine: the absence of history in the seventies, your ideas on non-fiction, politics, Carter, the literary wars--I have a host of questions.

That sums up my questions. I did start thinking, much too early of course, about a title. "One on One" (or "Mano y Mano") came to mind, as did some title which played around with the number 21. I should say right now that I feel two or three of the 21 ought to be cut entirely--the ^{Kent,} Fallaci, the ~~Scamman~~, the Wollheim, for example. But I want to read them all over again and again before making this kind of recommendation. I also came up with a title about 1 AM while lying in bed: Mailer A La Carte. A late night idea, but not without merit (every book reviewer would want to review ~~the~~ book with such a title and would be mentally parsing lead sentences as soon as they heard of it; God knows whether this would be good or bad for the book though).

The packet of interviews I'm sending should be plenty enough for a publisher to make a decision on I believe. We could be a shade more selective if we did not send the Fallaci, ^{Kent} ~~Scamman~~ or Wollheim interviews. If you want to be even more selective I've checked the ones that I think are prime. Just cull the others out.

Well, I hope this will be of some help. I'll be looking forward to hearing what you, Scott and the publishers say. Give my regards to Barbara, Donna sends her regards. Damn it, that was a good visit we had.

Best,

Mike (341 W. Main
Rochester, Ill 62563)

MAJOR INTERVIEWS WITH NORMAN MAILER

<u>Interviewer</u>		<u>Words</u>	<u>Pub. Date</u>	<u>Publication (reprinted)</u>
Stuart	-	2,527	(1955)	*Expose' (<u>Advertisements</u>)
✓ Stern	-	3,375	(1959)	*Western Review (<u>Advertisements</u>)
Auchincloss/Lynch	-	4,755	(1961)	Mademoiselle
Wollheim	-	2,061	(1961)	New Statesman
✓ Krassner	-	11,099	(1962)	**The Realist (<u>Pres. Papers</u>)
Weatherby	-	2,090	(1964)	Twentieth Century
✓ Marcus	-	9,850	(1964)	**Paris Review (<u>Cannibals</u>)
✓ Carroll	-	13,753	(1968)	**Playboy (<u>Errands</u>)
Fallaci	-	5,532	(1969)	*Writer's Digest (<u>The Egoists</u>)
Gelmis	-	8,621	(1970)	<u>The Film Director as Superstar</u>
Kent	-	1,386	(1971)	Vogue
✓ Bragg	-	6,450	(1973)	Listener
✓ Farbar	-	6,821	(1973)	Viva
✓ New Orleans Review	-	5,980	(1973)	New Orleans Review
Ellison	-	1,500	(1973)	Book-of-the-Month Club News
✓ Young	-	4,998	(1974)	Antaeus
✓ Stratton I	-	9,656	(1975)	Rolling Stone
✓ Stratton II	-	9,634	(1975)	Rolling Stone
✓ Isaacs	-	4,599	(1975)	Miami Herald
✓ Adams	-	8,534	(1975)	Partisan Review
✓ Cosmopolitan	-	4,900	(1976)	Cosmopolitan
21 Interviews		128,021		

*Reprinted in its entirety

**Partially reprinted

✓ = PRIME

NOTE: Full citations for above interviews are on the following pages.

Interviews with Norman Mailer

1. "Nightmare on Anopopei." Review-Interview by Maxwell Geismar. Saturday Review, 31 (May 8, 1948), 10-11.
2. "Rugged Times." Interviewer unidentified New Yorker staffer. New Yorker, 24 (October 23, 1948), 25.
3. "Talk with Norman Mailer." Interviewer Harvey Breit. New York Times (June 3, 1951), Sec. 7, 3. Reprinted in The Writer Observed. Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Co., 1956, pp. 199-201.
4. "Novels Are Easy." Interviewer unidentified Esquire staffer. Esquire, 39 (April, 1953), 15-16.
5. "An Intimate Interview with Norman Mailer." Interviewer Lyle Stuart. Expose (Dec., 1955), 1, 4. Reprinted in Advertisements for Myself under the title, "Sixty-Nine Questions and Answers."
6. "Norman Mailer." Interviewer Mike Wallace. Mike Wallace Asks, ed. by Charles Preston and Edward A Hamilton. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1958, pp. 26-27.
7. "Hip, Hell and the Navigator." Interviewer Richard G. Stern. Western Review, No. 23 (Winter, 1959), 101-109. Reprinted in Advertisements for Myself.
8. "An Interview with Norman Mailer." Interviewer Eve Achincloss and Nancy Lynch. Mademoiselle, 52 (February, 1961), 76, 160-63.
9. "Angry Young Rebel With a Cause." Interviewer Bruce Cook. Rogue (April, 1961), 16-18, 76.

10. "Living Like Heroes." Interviewer Richard Wollheim. New Statesman, 52 (September 29, 1961), 443-45.
11. "TV Violence? It's a Sedative." Interviewer David Griffiths. TV Times (London) (November, 1961), 18.
12. "Young American Rebel." Interviewer W. G. S. Books and Bookmen, 7 (November, 1961), 28.
13. "An Impolite Interview." Interviewer Paul Krassner. The Realist. No. 40 (December, 1962), 1, 13-16, 18-23, 10. Reprinted in an abridged form in The Presidential Papers.
14. "The Act of Fiction." Interviewer Steven Marcus. Paris Review, 8 (Winter-Spring, 1964), 28-58. Reprinted in Cannibals and Christians (abridged); Writers at Work: The Paris Review Interviews, Third Series, ed. George Plimpton, New York: The Viking Press, 1967; and in Norman Mailer: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Leo Braudy. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972.
15. "Talking of Violence." Interviewer W. J. Weatherby. Twentieth Century, 173 (Winter, 1964-65), 109-114.
16. "PPA Press Conference; Summary." Interviewer unidentified staffer, Publisher's Weekly, 187 (March 22, 1965) 42, 44-45.
17. "Always the Challenger." Profile-Interview by Brock Brower. Life (September 24, 1965), 96-98, 100, 102, 105-06, 109-112, 115, 117.

18. "Playboy Interview: Norman Mailer." Interviewer Paul Carroll. Playboy, 15 (January, 1968), 69-72, 74, 76, 78, 80, 82-84. Reprinted in Norman Mailer: The Man and His Work, ed. by Robert Lucid, Boston: Little, Brown, 1971 and in an abridged form in Existential Errands.
19. "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling, It's Norman Mailer." Interviewer Vincent Canby. New York Times (October 27, 1968), Sec. 2, 15.
20. "Flying High With Mailer." Essay-Interview by Raymond A. Sokolov. Newsweek (December 9, 1968), 84, 86-88.
21. "The Norman Conquest." Interviewer Betsy Dirnberger. Other Voices (Elmira College) (June, 1969), 36-43.
22. "A Candid Talk with Norman Mailer." Interviewer Joe Walker. Muhammad Speaks, (June 20, 1969), 11-12.
23. "Interview with Norman Mailer." Interviewer Oriano Fallaci. Writer's Digest, 49 (December, 1969), 40-47, 81. Interview apparently took place in 1967. Reprinted in The Egotists, ed. by Oriano Fallaci, Chicago: The Henry Regnry Co., 1969.
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26. "With Atheists Like Him Who Needs Believers?" Interviewer J. F. Stone. Christian Century (November 4, 1970), 1313-17.

27. "Norman Mailer." Interviewer Trudy Owitt. New York (January 7 or February 5, 1971), .
28. "The Siege of Mailer: Hero to Historian." Essay-Interview by Ron Rosenbaum. Village Voice (January 21, 1971), 1, 38, 40-42, 48.
29. "Authors and Editors." Interviewer Barbara A. Bannon. Publisher's Weekly, 199 (January 25, 1971), 177-179.
30. "Shoot for the Moon Mailer." Interviewer Leticia Kent. Vogue, 157 (February 1, 1971), 134-35.
31. "Light on Orwell." The Listener (February 4, 1971), 144-45 (Quotes Mailer--200-300 words--on Orwell).
32. "Films vs. Plays." Interviewer Leticia Kent. Vogue (September 1, 1972), 200+.
33. "Norman Mailer in Illinois." Interviewer Mike Lennon. Sunrise (Macomb, Illinois) No. 4 (November, 1972), 24-26.
34. "Two Myths Converge: NM Discovers MM." Interviewer Marsh Clark and Stephen Kamfer. Time, 102 (July 16, 1973), 60-64, 69-70.
35. "The Author on Norman Mailer: Style is as Good as It Ever Was." Essay-Interview by Tom Fitzpatrick, Chicago Sun-Times (August 5, 1973), 66.
36. "A Conversation with Norman Mailer." Interviewer James Whitfield Ellison. Book-of-the-Month-Club News (August, 1973), 4, 14.

37. "Mailer on Marriage and Women." Interviewer Buzz Farbar. Viva, 1 (Oct., 1973), 75-76, 144-145, 149, 150-151.
38. "Mailer on Mailer: An Interview." Interviewer unidentified staffer. New Orleans Review, 3(1973), 222-234.
39. "Mailer and the Siege of Chicago." Interviewer Clifford Terry, Chicago Tribune Magazine (September 30, 1973), 32, 34, 37, 39-42.
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41. "Is He Writing the Big One?" Essay-Interview by Roger Ebert, Peoria Journal Star (May 18, 1974), C-10.
42. "Mailer: I'm Sorry about the 'Marilyn' book." Essay-Interview by Sandra Pesman, Chicago Daily News (May 21, 1974), 13, 15.
43. "Norman Mailer on Science and Art." Interviewer David Young. Antaeus (Spring/Summer, 1974), 335-344. This interview took place in 1970.
(TWO PARTS)
44. "The Rolling Stone Interview: Norman Mailer." Interviewer Rick Stratton. Rolling Stone (January 2, 1975), 40-47, 71; and (January 16, 1975), 42-47, 54, 56-7.
45. "Before He's Naked or Dead, Norman Mailer Goes for Broke: The Biggest Novel of All." Interviewer Mark Goodman. People (November 10, 1975), 47-50. Essay-Interview.
46. "Norman Mailer." Interviewer Stan Isaacs. Miami Herald Magazine (November 30, 1975), 30-34, 36.
47. "Existential Aesthetics." Interviewer Laura Adams. Partisan Review (Fall, 1975), 197-214.
48. "Norman Mailer on Women, Love, Sex, Politics, and all that." Interviewer unidentified. Cosmopolitan (May, 1976), 182-85, 235.

. October 11, 1977

Dear Mike,

Just a line to let you know I sent the interviews you collected on to Meredith and asked him again for his opinion on the marketability of our little idea, and of course will let you hear as soon as they get back to me on it, which ought to be soon.

I sent them the thirteen interviews you considered prime, plus the Weatherby one, although I can't quite say why I picked on that other than that my eye lit on the subject and it seemed to me I hadn't spoken as clearly about violence in other places. At any rate, this causes no great editorial problem and can be worked out one way or the other.

If the minor interviews have good snippets, I agree it would be good to include them in a special section. I'm also for trimming the major interviews where they don't hold up.

Cheers.

Norman

P.S. Just heard from Meredith. He thinks the interviews read well as put together, and doesn't expect trouble in publishing. He would cut out the Bragg interview and substitute the Galmis and the Lyle Stuart, but of course that's up to us.

December 22, 1977

Dear Mike,

I think an apology is in order for taking so long to answer you. But as you may have gathered by now if you've been in touch with Molly, my secretarial bride and I have split after 6 years. I won't go into the details but it was a bloody rupture, and Molly ain't talking to me. So I didn't receive any message that you called, if you did call her. At any rate I'm squared away now and in New York. You can reach me here

142 Columbia Heights
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11201
858-0892

As for the rest I'm so far behind in mail once again that I'm coming back with one liners to long letters but did want to tell you that I enjoyed your last, with its reference to the Vidal fight- I butted him, threw the gin and tonic in his face, and bounced the glass of his head. It was just enough to prime you or me for a half hour war but Vidal must have thought it was the second battle of Stalingrad for he never made a move when I invited him downstairs. 24 hours later he was telling everybody he had pushed me across the room. Mike, I'm beginning to think I'm innocent. I simply don't understand whole-hearted liars who gain strength by the distance they put between themselves and the truth.

Now for other stuff. To my embarrassment I have not yet read "Mailer's Sarcophagus" and may not get to it for quite awhile. I think I better confess to you that there are long periods particularly when I'm writing when I don't like to read essays that have a great deal to do with myself. It's as if I beware of the result which can often be an added self-consciousness in one's writing. As I'm one of the most self-conscious writers I know it may be I'm looking to avoid even more of that. All I can tell you is that I almost never go near essays about myself these days and now whisper to you that I never did read all of Poirier's book when it finally came out. Not because I thought it was beneath attention, certainly not that, merely because I didn't want to argue with someone else in my mind about my own idea of myself. It jams the reflexes somehow. It may be awhile therefore before we talk about that piece.

As for the interviews, I thought I'd send along one to you that's new. It may do no more than cover all the old ground but I gave it in Corpus Christi to a kid* from the local paper. I was in an expansive mood that day and there might be a little of value. I have no particular love for it in

4 Lloyd Graves

preference to any other interview but thought that since you're
~~is~~ closer to the stuff than I am by now doubtless you ought
to decide. Ergo it's enclosed, the raw, unabridged, unedited
interview that is, and if I can find the newspaper ~~clipping~~ *boil-down*
that Lyod Graves did I'll send it along as well. ‡

I must say I feel better now that communication
is reestablished. Here's to a Merry Christmas to you and
Donna and the kids.

Cheers

Norman
Norman

‡ P.S. I can't find it! The paper is called
something like the Corpus Christi Times
so a letter to him ought to produce a copy or
two. First see if you like the unedited
transcript for anything. If not, hell,
forget it. Graves did a good job on
smoothing it for publication, ~~so far~~
but I think you'll get an idea of the basic
stuff in what I gave you now.

‡ The boil-down is what I read, and it's nothing.

March 16, 1978

Dear Norman,

This is just a note to say hello, pass along some snippets and wish you well on the homestretch with the Gilmore book. I can imagine that you will be savoring your respite when it is done.

I was surprised to see the University of Chicago Press publishing a book on living American authors--they're pretty stuffy--but now I know why they rejected my book despite a strong positive recommendation from their reader. The other two snippets are sent along for chuckles.

I'm still collecting interviews. A friend at the Library of Congress, after a year of searching, found your 1961 interview with Bruce Cook. It originally appeared, as you may remember, in Rolls. Someone else gave me one that just came out in Writer's Digest. I must have 55 now. Well, best to you as you finish up the book.

Regards,

Mike

Mike Lennon

February 7, 1979

Dear Norman:

My Eastern relatives and friends have sent me news clips ten times in the last few months and I have commiserated quietly with your legal problems with Beverly. I usually send you the snippets I have garnered but figured you would have little patience with these press replays. It looks as if there has been some pretty vicious reporting, although some of your courtroom comments were good enough to compensate. As you have said, the press munches nuances like peanuts, grinding them up into fodder for "the damp dull wad of the electorate." I can imagine the kind of woe the whole thing has brought you and how much time has been lost and energy dissipated.

Scott Meredith wrote to me the other day and asked how the book was coming along. I have been out of touch and apologized to him, as the enclosed letter indicates. It looks as if I will finally get A Radical Bridge through the publication mills. I want to get started on the interview book, on a sort of speculative basis, and will unless you tell me otherwise.

When is the Gilmore book coming out? I would very much like to get a copy as soon as possible to do a review. Will it be published by Little, Brown? If so, I will write to them and ask for a review copy.

I have accumulated quite a few articles on you and will send them along soon for your delectation. I know you like to browse and nibble in the scholarly fields once in a while. I would estimate that there have been at least 25 dissertations written on you so far. The output makes me remember comments you made twenty years ago about providing grist for the dissertation mills. The ones I have read aren't all that bad. I think your dislike of labored and pedantic treatises has affected your explicators. No Mailer scholar, or few, wants to be turgid. They couldn't bear the scorn of the best Mailer critics: Lucid, in particular.

Well, Norman, I wanted to touch bases and wish you well. The letter to Meredith gives the status at Wisconsin. Donna sends her best to you and Barbara.

Cheers,

Mike
Mike Lennon

June 16, 1979

Dear Norman:

School's out, papers are graded, grades are in and A Radical Bridge is in to Wisconsin. Finally. I began it in 1971. Passages in it (and in your books) seem like family lore to me now--I can recall some of the happy insights, the cruises, the rough spots, at will. I've dreamt about it. And I used to have another dream that you were passing through Illinois and came to a party at my house but we never got to talk because the booze kept running out and I was required to shuttle to the liquor store while someone bent your ear in my kitchen about your real feelings about Blacks or drugs or Hemingway.

The general editor at Wisconsin is getting one more reading of the manuscript, but tells me he is confident. I am supposed to get final word in a couple of weeks. When I do I will write to Scott Meredith and tell him and thank him again for his persistent support. I also plan to get busy on the interviews, tomorrow in fact. I will work on them until the beginning of August when Donna and I and the boys will go East. If we can get together then in Maine (are you going there?), maybe I can drop off the body of the collection. I am still publishing the University's magazine of public affairs, but when the state legislature goes home at the end of June things will slow down. But I want to work on it a bit every day, reading all the interviews over again and then cutting and sorting. I have all the interviews but two: the one you did for the New York Star and the one you did for the guy in Texas. I will write to him and Solotdruff has promised to send me the other one. I talked to him over the phone a few weeks ago; he sounds nothing like his prose. He and I are involved in a conference on nonfiction coming up this fall. We are pretty far apart in how we see your work, but I admire (at least) the way he reads your work through the lens of European existentialism. Melville's provides a better gloss, I think, and the rest of the American Romantics and James are a help too. Did you see one of the latest N.Y. Reviews in which you are compared to Poe? Some day you ought to look at Poe's Eureka, just the last ten or fifteen pages would be enough, I guess. Not many people take it seriously, although Dwight Macdonald is an exception. Do you ever see him any more? His visit out here still reverberates. Forced to go to a buffet at the president's home, Dwight was spotted chugging from a bottle of Beefeater's gin. Fortification.

Anyway, I am getting going on the interviews and hope the final product can encourage more interest in The Executioner's Song. But I want to repeat again that you and Scott may find the timing or the whole project less than useful. I know that but want to give it a try. I still believe there is original meat in the interviews.

You asked about "that incredible fellow" and his WWII narrative about the Polish front and the concentration camps. Well, he is of the old school and although Molly Cook got him a few readings at some good publishing houses, he became very upset, shocked even, that

she would not return some of his phone calls and insisted on the return of his manuscript. He is going it alone, despite my many defenses of agents and their ways. His belief in his story will sustain his efforts to see it in print, although he may die before succeeding. The major complaint of the readers, according to Mollie, is that Kasimir was never moved to anything close to revelation, epiphany, by his huge sufferings, hairbreadth escapes. He just endured, cursed the Germans, and found odd ways to keep going. But what a story! Romance and torture and night flight and Baltic Sea matronning and work in a factory of the sort Micky Lovett labored in (or thought he did) in Barbary Shore. Hadney is a trunenny, a crusty-genteel Polack who reads Tolstoy and Solzhenitsen and knows what he knows. I hope he makes it.

Regarding formidable Fetterly: you are so right: she can't be just. She feels, aches with the knowledge that she must be loyal to the sisterhood, especially since she is a comer, the first woman, in fact, to write something original about Huck Finn. Flushed with this success (her article anthologized in the Norton Huck Finn used by literally every one of the 10,000 English profs who teach the book) she is now going to rewrite American literary criticism from her feminist perspective. And yet, as you say, she is penetrating, brilliant even, and could do good things. She is something of a role model (odious phrase) for all the women assistant professors who have been stifled by the old farts who occupy the best jobs at the English departments in the land. They do stifle, too. I've seen them.

Saw the story on Barbara, reprinted in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. It seemed fair, as far as Donna and I could see. How is her book coming? And we have followed the sale of your house in P-town in the papers. I always wanted to see that house, Marion Fay's house is how I have always thought of it. Since you have said that you wrote well there, I'm sure the loss was great. Sorry to hear about it. The ire of the IRS, as you once said.

Well, Norman, I wait impatiently to see the Gilmore book--for the sheer pleasure of reading this Dreiserian narrative and to see in what ways it fits and does not fit with how I see you growing as a storyteller. My boys would like to come up to Maine with us this year--if we can come at all (we can). You suggested it last year and they are getting old enough to appreciate such a visit. They will be 10, 11 and 12 this summer. Three Leos, God help me. Donna sends her regards. Best to Barbara and the rest of your family.

Best,

Mike Lennon

August 24, 1979

Dear Norman:

My sons, now journeymen (junior) mountain climbers, are regaling their prattis chums with a tale about the scaling of a peak with a famous writer who wrote a book about "dead, naked people in WWII." They had a good day, and so did Donna and I. Thanks for everything.

I'm glad we had a chance to talk about the interviews. As you can see, I was not heavyhanded in my editing. I didn't want to rupture the flow of the dialogue in the twenty interviews you have--not unnecessarily. It will be easier to cut out three or four of the interviews to get the whole package down to approximately 80,000 words. The Cosmo, the Issacs, the New Orleans Review, the Fallaci are all candidates, in my mind, for rejection. And since the collection will consist of conversations with you after "The White Negro," I would cut the Lyle interview from 1955. If more cuts are needed (to make room for the new Bragg interview and Aldridge's), I would recommend cutting the Weatherby and the Calmis (with the knowledge that some of your comments on filmmaking are already in print, and that sections on films cut from others could be put back in). Finally, all of those interviews that are cut could be mined for a "Short Takes" section.

I am ready to get back to work on the project in whatever way will be helpful--on short notice. Classes are just starting here, but I will be on top of things by the time you get back to New York. Judith called and said that Scott Meredith still believes the book is worth doing and she asked if I wanted the interviews back. I'm sure she has told you that I have no pressing need to have them in my hands. Keep them until you want me to work on them again.

Enclosed are the Bragg interview and the latest number of Fling containing your Hollywood tale. I have made copies of both. I have also collected some more critical articles and will send them along later. I hope you can make Fling pay--especially since I think the head pictured in the art may be intended to depict you.

Well, again let me say that my family and I had a fine day. Please give our regards to Barbara and the kids, and your mother. And thanks for arranging for a copy of the new book to be sent. I'm ready for a good read.

Best Regards,

Mike
Mike Lennon

February 6, 1980

Dear Norman:

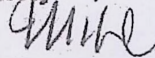
A belated happy birthday. I was rummaging through some old papers and found the enclosed on Thomas Merton--a Catholic closer to my heart than our new leader. And I noticed his birthdate and remembered yours. I don't guess that you ever ran into him. But you have so often described your own labors as monastic that I thought you might want to ponder the coincidences.

Carrie told me of her visit and regaled her friends with tales of your generosity. She also said that you were back at work again after your brief respite. I hope the energy of new success has fortified you for work on the novel. Will Song be in paper by the fall? I would like to use it in my nonfiction course. It will be sweet to really make In Cold Blood pale by comparison. Donna is almost done with it and likes it better than anything else you have written. I don't, but it is in the top three (with Dream and Armies). Carrie is still paralyzed in her effort to complete her article and her paper for me. I could only recommend what you did in your letter to her: "Stay loose." Zen is what she needs but she is handling the problem like a Panzer officer might construct a battle plan.

I just learned that my application for a sabbatical has been approved. It won't begin for almost a year, but I will have almost six months off. Between now and then I am going to try and write an introduction to "After the White Negro." If your interest in the collection has slipped, the intro might revive it; if not, I will have to write it anyway.

Hope all is going well. Regards to Barbara and best from Donna.

Best,



Mike Lennon

P.S. Thanks for inscribing the copy of Song for the Springers. They loved it.

NORMAN MAILER

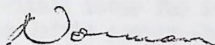
29 April 1980

Dear Mike,

Thanks for the good wishes on the Pulitzer. Carrie tried to reach me for an interview that day, so when you talk to her, tell her that I called back and the darn line was busy. I tried again, it was still busy, and I figured "Carrie, it ain't your luck today." Anyway, let her know.

I look forward to seeing you in May.

Cheers,



PS: Mike, I haven't forgotten about the interview book. It's just been more a matter of trying to decide if Little, Brown is the proper house for it, so I've held off making a push. This summer I think we can settle in definitely on whether we should go ahead with it or not.

38 Lawrenceville Lane
Narragansett, R.I. 02882

December 27, 1980

Dear Norman:

That week in Munich resounded through my head at all odd and even hours, is still resounding, with amazing persistence. Coming at the end of a busy semester while Donna and I were packing and planning for my sabbatical here in Rhode Island, and while my magazine was moving to new offices and Donna finishing her M.A. in Legal Studies, and while we were anticipating our first Xmas with our families for nine years, it could not be ruminated on in waking hours, just recalled in flashes and replayed in dreams. Apart from a few quick "treatments" (note how I am picking up the jargon of cineasts) for friends and relatives, a quick letter to Jeff giving our new address and one newspaper interview (see below), I have not had the time nor, strangely, the inclination to talk about it too much. This disinclination to dissect the week reminds me of the time I went to Rome when my ship was calling in Naples in that I and my two buddies weren't about to sully the days there by replaying them for our shipmates.

The root of it is that I want to save the time in Munich for the months of writing ahead. I want to keep all that energy for my book. And for whatever further contribution I will make to the film. I did intend to write to you sooner to thank you for speculating some of your valuable time on the project, and for the gift of your new book, but all the work of moving got in the way of writing a decent letter and I decided to wait until we were here and all the aunts and grandmothers and cousins had been visited and the heaviest part of the holiday season was over. So, thanks for the book and the days in Deutschland and cheers for the new year coming!

Jeff was at least as exhilarated as I by the opening work on the film and your visit, but it hit us differently. I talked to he and Carol briefly on the phone and he said that he had collapsed in bed with a fever for four days after you left. Which surprised me at first—knowing Jeff's energy—but then the obvious fact that a great part of my contribution to the film had been made while the real work of editing still faced him came to me. Jeff will be ready for this job in January, which is when he said he will begin it. He also told me that your innkeeper was at the gate with a cop to try to gouge you for the phone calls. What a shit. I see now why the Germans are so organized. Of necessity they must be! If you are unaware of one of the million rules by which they keep things so orderly they will sting the crap out of you. Well, I hope you do not pay the fuckers. (By the way, let me know if they charged you anything for the collect call I made to Donna. I wouldn't be surprised if they did.)

I'm enclosing a copy of the piece on you and I and the film that appeared in the local paper. Some of it is flattering, some of it sloppy and a number of nuances are munched. The author is an old student of mine and he captured some of my excitement, but he still fell into some of the same old ruts in the parts about your marriages and about money. And he really botched up the quotes about writing history, which he interpreted to mean historical novel. I apologize for the errors. The maddening thing is that Slack took my course a couple of years ago, fancies himself a new journalist, and knows all the pitfalls of the old journalism.

Petra sent me the picture and she got a credit line and \$25 for the picture. She sent me a few more and will be sending you some also. I am enclosing one that came out well—from the session at Nymphenburg after we were done shooting. She said that she had shot several hundred.

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Jeff said that the rushes were fine; all the film developed well and that the sound track was good also. He is going to transfer the sound track to cassettes and send them to me very soon. I will get them transcribed and, if it is all right with you and Scott, will try to shape the interviews into some kind of decent shape. Then I will send it to you and if you and Scott can seal it in the States, fine. And I guess that Jeff might be able to sell it in Europe. I'm sure that you and Scott and Jeff will work out all these details. I'll just get busy transcribing and editing as soon as the cassettes arrive. You made some marvelous runs on them.

I am also going to get back to the interview book, ~~also~~. As you will remember, we talked briefly about recasting the interviews. Some should be kept whole and intact, others chopped up and realigned under topical headings and perhaps others should be published in part. I will get busy on this project also and will pruning and shuffling with more vigor. Do you think that Scott could send me back one of the two sets of edited interviews that I sent him previously? I don't want to work from the originals and am trying to save a bit of xeroxing money. If they cannot be sent for whatever reason, that's okay too. I will contact him directly about this if you would prefer.

Jeff said that you would be amenable to some more filming if necessary. In Munich or in New York. This is generous of you but I don't think it will be necessary and there is something to be said for maintaining the atmosphere, the fingerprint, of the four days in Munich throughout. But I am vastly ignorant of film and I suppose that there is something to be said for a stark break, shift in setting. But we did cover quite a bit of ground and a 90-minute film cannot be oneylopadis--although it would be fine to give this illusion.

Donna and I would like to come down to New York for a couple of days and take you and Barbara out to dinner or visit, whatever you prefer. We have nothing but free time, so let us know if and when we could come. Donna is teaching a law course at the University of Rhode Island on Wednesday mornings, but that is our only scheduled obligation. I would like to hear about the second part of your work in "Ragtime." The picture in Time makes you out to be a pretty nice WASP, God bless us.

We will be looking forward to hearing from you. Thanks again for the good talk in Munich and the new book--which I am now ready to turn to. And sorry for the half of the enclosed interview which is half-assed. You will note that I did not give away any of the meat of Munich in it. Best to Barbara and the kids.

Best Regards,

Mike

P.S. Temporarily, we can be reached any phone only through Donna's folks (the Bidnos) at 401-846-3365, or through my mother at 617-672-0907. I will have a plan up in a week or ten days and will send the number to you.

February 23, 1961

Dear Norman:

As the enclosed letter to Scott Meredith states, I called Roger Donald this morning, as you suggested. I wrote to Scott to bring him up to date on the interview collection, which he asked me to do when he sent me one of the sets of interviews. I thought you should have my letter to him to make sure I didn't futz anything up. I also have sent a copy of the interview proposal to Scott and Roger and enclose one here for you.

Roger said that the collection could be published next February, assuming he has final copy by June. I told him that I would get busy right away and have the edited interviews to you sometime around mid-April. After you have made your changes the whole batch would have to be retyped. I know that you want to discuss the project again with Roger, and probably Scott, before committing yourself entirely to publishing before "Little Egypt," but there is no reason why I should not begin work and I will, immediately.

Roger will send me the permission forms and I will send them out as soon as I get them and the addresses. If there is anything else for me to sign, please send it on to me. Whatever arrangements you and Scott and Roger make will, of course, be fine with me.

I woke up Saturday morning feeling good about everything except my back, which I seem to have strained or twisted. What a backache; a spasm of compensation, no doubt, to keep my other satisfactions from becoming too unruly. It got worse the next day, and then better and has all but entirely subsided now. So I'm ready for work.

Dona and I enjoyed the hell out of the weekend. Thanks to you and Morris for everything--especially the dinner at Elaine's. I am going to be able to go for awhile on the energies thus gained, not that I needed much of a boost to work on the interviews.

We leave for Munich next Sunday. I will give you a report on the film as soon as we return. I will also study the rough cut for intellectual coherence, as you asked me to. Thanks again for the good times. Best to Morris.

All Best,

W.H.

P.S. Also enclosing some sci-fi bibliographies I asked a friend of mine for. You said in Munich that you intended to do some reading in the area after "Little Egypt" and I thought they might be of use.

39 Davisville Lane
Maragansett, R.I. 02882
(401) 733-9369

April 3, 1981

Dear Norman:

One part of me--the part that shares your fondness for order--would like to see you declare a one-year moratorium on interviews. But the rest of me says, "Shit no, not if it means losing interviews like the one he just did in Boston Phoenix." I just read it and it is a beauty. All or most of it has to be in the interview book. I went back and read chunks of the Munich interview to compare and my initial inclination is to recommend that we use the second two columns of page one (beginning with the question which you answer by referring to Elana's letter), and all of page two except the last question and answer. You cover the Reagan administration, plastics tax, corporate greed and the vanity of the left better in "The longest Ball: At Sat Norman Mailer." But I want to think about it some more. I will be ready to make a recommendation when you come up in a few weeks.

The stuff on Faulkner and Hemingway is very, very good. I particularly like the distinctions you make between them--the first I've seen since the 1965 ML4 talk, and you did it almost in passing there. And the stuff on the new journalism and Tom Wolfe is also excellent. Fine interview.

Your mother was very helpful. She offered to give me pictures right off the wall and pulled out the family album. I took seven pictures from the album, shots of you in your Army uniform, football togs and of you and your children. Also one of you and your mother. I mailed these and the ones you lent me to Jeff by registered airmail this morning. They will be a big help. We have shots of you at every five-year period of your life.

I began composing a brief to you on my way home--made it in three-and-a-half hours; your directions were fine. The brief was titled, "Three Arguments for the Chronological Organization of a book of Mailer's Interviews entitled "The Mad Butler." It was a help, this exercise, in helping me clarify my own reasons for recommending the chronological method, but there is no sense being quite so formal. My reasons are these:

- (1) The mad butler has his own excellent logic, but is unpredictable. If readers are to grasp his logic and his status as changeling, they need to see him move through one mood from start to finish. What better way to grasp his ability to frustrate expectations than see him shape 12 different moods out of encounters with 12 different interlocutors at 12 different periods in his career?
- (2) Each of the 12 "prime" interviews has its own different fingerprint. Some are more distinct, palpable than others, of course, but they are nevertheless distinct. The three interviews that range about most topically are the three that I have cut the most: the Playboy with Carroll, the one with Stratton and the one with Legs Dickell. Ditto for the one with me. In retrospect, I see why I cut these four the most. I was trying to pare away everything that clouded the essential mood of each.

- 4-3-81
- (3) Organizing the book topically will be almost impossible. Your ideas do not separate neatly. The red Butler is at his best when he is mangleling unresolvable, pressing home unforeseen correspondences. The red Butler is the latter half of the literary-intellectual world. His strange hybrids are productive. Why make his ideas read like a symposium? Half, or a third at least, of the pleasure attending the interview is watching you scuffling from subject to subject. And doing it on the cuff. It may be that the "short takes" could be organized in some loose topical way, but I'm not sure even they can.

- (4) Laura Adams' collection of essays, Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up was organized, perhaps not in a topical way, but in a sociological way. To make the scheme work, she had to include some second and third rate stuff and leave out some essays that are excellent but did not fit her scheme. One of the reasons I do not like the Redbird Vogue interview is those little subheads: "On Lorraine," "On his work-in-progress," "On the critics," etc. I don't care for the 1976 interview in Cosmopolitan for the same reason.

- (5) You have told me several times that you feel the language in the interviews is "inelegant." It is, compared to the language of your other books. But when it is compared to the interviews of your contemporaries, it shines. A bit of redundancy, inelegance is expected and unavoidable. I say all this because I have wondered if one of the reasons you have considered the topical approach is that you feel it might be a way to eliminate some of the inelegant language.

The decision on how the book should be organized will not, cannot, be made until you browse through the stuff I left you yesterday. But I figured I would be remiss if I did not make my case as well as I could. My hunch is that the interview book is going to have a long, long life. The Egyptian novel is going to make readers go back to it (or follow up with it, depending on when it comes out), and when you get the Nobel Prize, it will be the one book outside of your major works that college instructors will want to supplement their reading lists with.

I just spoke to Bob Lund and we are going to go ahead with a request for a special session at MLA in New York to show the Davis film. Jeff is all for it. The film ought to get some more Mailer classes going at colleges. And if it is good, it won't do the book any harm either. Or the Egyptian novel.

Well, it was good to see you and Morris. Hope her Dad continues to mend. Donna sends her regards and looks forward to having you for lunch. Will you bring Jose Torres? A map is enclosed.

all Best,
/s/ J. B. S.

Mike

P.S. I will send the Boston Phoenix interview along in a day or two.

4-3-81

-3-

the last two days reediting the documentary transcript, reducing it from 45,000 words to 21,000 words, and tightening and filing it into shape. I have noted several places where I think your eye will be needed and have marked them. I have done a preliminary edit on all the other "prime" interviews and reduced them (including the Munich interview) from 145,000 to 98,000 words. So it is going well, I think. I will bring the lot down to you sometime in April, hopefully when Jeff is also there.

Carol and Jeff send their regards, as does Donna. Best to Morris too.

ERIN

~~Erin~~ Go Bragh,

Wade

P.S. Please give me a call if you would like me to expand on anything(217) 733-9389

37 DEWEEVILLE LANE
Narragansett, R.I. 02882
(401) 783-9389
April 8, 1981

Dear Norman:

Just a note to return the Boston Phoenix interview. I have been testing it against the other interviews and it has not been found wanting. Except for the ending where you go over ground covered before. Judith will send me the Puritan interview. She called yesterday. She is also trying to locate the negatives of your films and "Town Bloody Hall?" The latter seems to be in hand. She has been extremely helpful and the film will be in her debt.

I just mailed off a narrative for the film to Jeff. It was a strange experience cramming your life and works into 5,000 words. Norman Mailer from A to Z, Long Branch to ancient Egypt in 5,000 words or less. And Jeff will be able to use no more than one-third of it. I included the titles and dates of almost all your books and summaries and short critical comments on all the novels and three or four of the others. I relied heavily on Advertisements and the prefaces to your other books. I also threw in some good general comments from Kazin, Lucid, Aldridge, John Wain, Podhoretz and a few others. I almost included the names of all your children, but finally didn't. But I will send their names and ages to Jeff in case he wants them. The only wife I named was Norris.

Jeff has decided to keep the film to 60 minutes. This will mean that only the very best of your comments will be used. And it will mean that the film can all go on one reel, an advantage. He has begun discussing the editing with his editor, his schneider, and will begin the actual cutting on Monday. They estimate that they can cut it in four weeks of almost daily work. A lot will depend on whether they get the footage from other sources. Jeff is prepared to do do without the supplementary footage if he has to. He is amassing a pile of stills and can get a lot of mileage out of them. He didn't get his grant from PBS, but apparently no one else did either. Because of budget cuts, 300 applications were turned down, Jeff said. He will reapply, but has sufficient resources to make the film without a grant.

Hope you are still cranking out pages of the novel. Looking forward to seeing you soon. Regards from Donna to you and Norris.

Best,

Mike

April 14, 1981

Dear Norman:

It was great to hear that you have decided to go ahead with the book. I think we first started talking about the book in early 1976. Considering the several good interviews you have given since then, it was good that we waited.

At one point the plan was for me to write some sort of an introduction, and you a preface. I have made some notes for one, but can see that it might not be a good idea now that the volume will be double-barreled. As you prefer.

I can see why you are unsure about the mad butler title. It loses some of its force out of context. On the other hand, it has zip and I can't believe that your detractors, or even friends, could use it as a constant appellation for you. Then they would be forced to explain its referent. It's not like Aquarius and it is damnably accurate.

After we talked I went back to the Munich interview. It does cover a lot of ground. But your comments on writing and literature are pre-eminent. If all the non-literary talk is cut (and perhaps appended to other interviews, although I wouldn't recommend doing this), there are about 11,500 words left. I think they constitute the marrow of worth in the interview. If you can bear it, would you read through the pages listed below and see if you agree with me?

- pp. 1-13 beginning with first question and ending on 13
with your line: "early nineteenth-century picaresque novel"
- pp. 35-38 beginning with my first question on 35, ending
with the end of your first answer on 38
- pp. 40-48 beginning with my question: "Norman, you have said
many times" on 40, ending with your line on 48:
"trunks growing out of a common root"
- pp. 50-56 beginning with my first question on 50, ending
with the end of your only answer on 56
- pp. 58-61 beginning with my question: on 58: "You've compared
yourself with Spinks," ending with the end of your
first answer on 61: "There were a thousand gods
but there was only one sun"
- pp. 99-100 beginning in the middle of the first line on 99:
"I think it was John Fowles," ending with your
line in the middle of 100: "think to himself,
'well-dragged!'"
- pp. 102-111 beginning with last question on 102, ending with
your next-to-last answer on 111: "No, a thousand is
too many. Three or four maybe"

- pp.120-121 beginning with my first question on 120, ending with the end of your answer to it on 121
- pp.128-133 beginning with my first question on 128, ending with your line on 133: "history of the workings of one man's imagination and so are true history"
- pp.134-137 beginning with first question on 134: "In your recent self-interview in New York," ending with end of your first answer on 137: "this idea of Hannah Arendt"
- pp.142-146 beginning with my question on 142: "Bob Lucid, your friend," ending with the end of your question on 146

There is good continuity between these sections, no abrupt caesuras. A majority of the questions are mine, but not all of them. Jeff asks one, Gebhard one and pages 99-100 and 102-111 are exchanges with students.

Some good material would be lost, but not that much. The two best sections I've dropped are the exchange on women's lib on pages 85-88 and the question on mass man and the past on pages 125-28. This latter might even be retained; I may have been too ruthless on this one. It is one of your most cogent answers. Other good sections are as follows:

On politics, plastic, welfare, etc. 14-29
 On Gilmore and Song 70-72, 137-140
 On the Media 75-77
 On existentialism 80-81
 On filmmaking 81-84, 92-98

Now that the "short takes" are gone, the material on filmmaking in the Munich interview is unique; you do not discuss it in any of the others. But I don't think this is necessarily bad. You covered the topic quite well in Existential Errands. The other topics are discussed in other interviews.

Note: I'm not suggesting that any of the material I cut out on the first go-round be reinstated.

I tried to shave the Munich interview down to these essentials before and got nowhere. But when you told me that it might be best to break the Munich interview up into pieces and append them to others, I got to work. The knowledge that you are to be hung in the morning concentrates the mind wonderfully, says Samuel Johnson.

If McNeil is dropped and the Munich interview used as I have suggested, the word count is 83,000. Which means there would be room for Puritan, Boston Phoenix, Medwick (enclosed) and the one at Columbia. This would make 14 interviews and less than 100,000 words. Medwick and Phoenix are both under 3,000.¹⁵

I hope this all makes sense; I think it does. Looking forward to seeing you soon. Regards to Norris.

Best,

My 21, 1981

Dear Norman:

This is just a quick note to thank you for your hospitality. Even my crude Irish taste buds were quickened by that fine meal. They are now educated enough to discern the relative merits of Elaine's pasta and that provided by your innkeeper buddy.

Enjoyed the talk also. Lucid has a nice wit and listening to you two compiling names for the biography was a treat. We thought of a few more the next day: Milton and Amy Greeno, for example. And I have a better sense of what to do on the next round of editing; your confidence in me is fortifying. I am going to rest a bit today and get busy tomorrow.

As Bob probably told you, we took about 15-20 boxes to the vault. We found some amazing stuff. A journal from the mid-fifties, a huge amount of correspondence, wads of page proofs and galley's, a multitude of reviews and even a copy of a dissertation ("A Radical Bridge: Mailer's Narrative Art," by yours truly). We also found another interview, the one you did out in Reno which was published in a student literary journal, Brushfire. I took it and will check it out and return it. Hope this was all right.

After we left the vault we went to Little, Brown to pick up the interviews. No luck, as Bob probably told you. Donald's assistant said she would forward them when she located them (Donald may have them at home). Bob said he would check on them today and make sure they are sent posthaste. I also saw the list of articles for Spooks and noted several omissions. We then went to Scott Meredith's office where Jack Scovil gave me the agreement to sign. The fee is very generous and the residuals are great too. I mentioned the agent's fee but nothing was concluded. I asked Bob to tell you this: if they send me a straight \$2,500, and do not deduct 10%, I will send you \$250, so that it is not unfairly deducted from your advance.

As far as the expenses I have run up go, they are small. I have spent about \$68 for duplicating. Considering the munificent fee, why don't we just forget this sum rather than go through a lot of bookkeeping hassles. If a statement is needed, let me know and I'll send it.

Scovil gave me a list of your unpublished articles. His list was more complete than the one that Little, Brown had, but there were still a few omissions. The Paris Review piece, for example. I will send him a complete list and copies of everything I have that he doesn't. I will send you a copy of my letter to him.

My intention is to get everything done in the next ten days and bring back a penultimate draft before I leave at the beginning of June. I told Bob that I would be glad to take more stuff from the basement to the vault if he wanted to come up again. I will check with Judith on a good date. If I (or we) can see Roger Donald when I am there, perhaps he can tell me which interviews have to be retyped. Donna will be glad to do the job. I told her she would be paid a buck a page. We may have to rent a portable electric typewriter, but only if we can do it cheaply. Does all this sound okay?

Thanks again for the great talk and cheer. You got a lot to digest. Please tell Norris I'm sorry to have crossed her.
Best, W.L.

May 22, 1981

Dear Norman:

After writing to Jack Scovil yesterday to give him the items of fugitive prose missing from his list(I assume you have received a copy of my letter to him), I started going through all the uncollected material again. I found that I was in error in listing the review of "Last Tango" as an omission, but also found another omission: the preface to A Transit to Narcissus, first published in the N.Y. Times Book Review(December 4, 1977). I have written to Jack explaining all this(and a copy of my letter is herewith enclosed).

In shuffling through and reading everything, something else occurred to me. Three pieces which were not on the list at Little, Brown are related topically to two pieces that are on the list and could be included. I recommend that you consider reprinting the following five pieces under the rubric of "Conspiracy" (or some other title):

- "The Morning After"
(N.Y. Times Book Review, March 11, 1973)
- "Two Letters from Frank Crowther"
(Paris Review, Fall, 1976)
- "A Harlot High and Low"
(New York, August 16, 1976)
- "A Conversation between N. Mailer and J. Ehrlichman"
(Best of Chic, 1978)
- "Of a Small and Modest Malignancy..."
(Esquire, November, 1977)

These pieces are related the way members of a family are, to wit, each of them shares one or more characteristics, topical characteristics, with one or more of the other pieces. And they all share one general trait: reference to governmental conspiracy. "The Morning After" and the Crowther piece both refer to the 50th birthday party and your speech on the "Fifth Estate;" the Ehrlichman conversation, "Modest Malignancy" and "The Morning After" examine the Fourth Estate; Watergate is the subject of both the Ehrlichman piece and "Harlot." And so on. Space requirements may make it impossible to include the Ehrlichman conversation(or even part of it), but it should not be too difficult to include "The Morning After" and the Crowther piece, which are both short.

The only other piece I would definitely recommend is the preface to A Transit to Narcissus. The Berkeley prefaces, the contribution to the Vietnam symposium in the N.Y. Review of Books, and the Capote letter could be left out. The other items on my list sent to Scovil are of less importance. I am assuming that your review of "Last Tango" will be in the book.

I thought I would be remiss in my editorial role if I did not make these recommendations. Hope they are clear. I'll be in touch about delivering the interviews. Thanks again for a fine visit.

Best Regards,

Mike

P.S. I would be glad to suggest cuts in the Ehrlichman piece, if you wish.

June 21, 1981

Dear Norman:

Thanks for calling back the other day. I am happy to know that you want to use so much of the Munich interview. I am curious to know just how you split it and what you left out, but that can wait. If you have a copy when we see you in Provincetown, maybe I can take a look.

Donna has ten interviews to type, she said. All but Stern, Marcus, Young and Adams, which I assume are all right. And Judith has done the five parts of the Munich interview. That means there are 19 different interviews. Correct me if I am wrong because I want to mention the number in the introduction.

If it is possible to give Jeff Davis a footnote in the sections that Scott is sending out I would suggest something like this: "This interview is part of a soundtrack transcript of a documentary film on Norman Mailer entitled "The Longest Ball: At Bat Norman Mailer," produced by Jeffrey Van Davis." Or something like that. If it won't hurt publication chances to include it, Jeff would appreciate it.

Bob Lucid called the other day and told me that MLA has approved a showing of the film as a special event at the convention to be held in New York after Christmas. It will be a good way to herald the film; about 25,000 English pros attend the convention each year.

I am almost done with the introduction. If I get it finished in time I am going to let Bob look at it. It won't be any longer than 2,500 words. I hope you will like it.

I will write or call Roger Donald and ask him to send me the permission forms. I don't think we will have to contact any of the interviewers. According to Jack Scovil, the publications where the interviews were first published hold the rights. And they are to be offered no \$\$, right?

What with work on the novel, the movie, "Strawhead," and the interview/essay collection, you must be ready for a vacation. Looking forward to seeing you on the weekend of July 11th. Regards to Norris.

Best,

Mike

after
Jack
Dell's
visit

July 1, 1981

Dear Norman:

Here is the introduction. It was a difficult birth for such a small piece. Hope you like it. It is just under 2,200 words.

Looking forward to seeing you and Norris soon.

Best till then,

Mike

July 3, 1981

Dear Norman and Norris:

Just a note to say that we are looking forward to seeing you on Saturday, the 11th. I forgot to ask if it would be all right to bring the boys--I know you have a housefull. Please let us know if it will be a hassle. Donna's number in Newport is (401) 8463365 and her folks can take a message if we are not there.

If we don't hear from you all the Lennons will be there after lunch.

Norm, I am enclosing a new page 7 of the introduction--there were two typos on the version I sent. Also, "prediotichs" is spelled wrong on the first page--nine lines from bottom.

I had conversations with Roger Donald's assistant and the copyrights and contracts editor at Little, Brown this past week about the permissions. Also spoke with Jack Scovil. Everything is straightened out now.

See you soon,

Mike

Mike Lennon

NORMAN MAILER

Wednesday July 29
1951

Dear Mike and Donna,

I hope your trip was relatively cool, and Rochester keeping its nose clean. I've been in a state of shock ~~from~~ Black Friday, i.e. July 3 Saturday A.M. I still can hardly believe Jack did it. Your relative V.I. Lenin once said "Whom?" as a test to ask "Who benefits?" when you can't figure out something, I reckon it was the devil. Or maybe the Reagan administration.

Donna, I find your work papers, and the adjusted amount is \$44.17 check enclosed. You estimated too little for the postage on the work papers. Thanks again, it was a really job.

Mike, I like the shorter in two letters, but will send both to Roger Donald,

Say hello to the boys. My girls were taken with them

Cheers

August 4, 1981

Dear Norman:

Received your letter. Thanks (from Donna) for the recomputations and the check. I'm glad you liked the shorter introduction; I think it builds better. And commiserations again on Abbott. Maybe that's the wrong word. I wrote you a note the day after I got word but sent it, unaccountably, to Brooklyn. I wonder if he was corked at the time, and if that partially accounts for the unaccountable. I guess we might have known since he is still at large.

I'm enclosing several things. First, a copy of the picture Petra liked so much, and you did. I would recommend you consider it for use on the jacket of the book. Jeff Davis (just arrived, more on him in a minute) gave it to me. Her name is on the back. This print is better than the one that you have on your wall in Brooklyn; Jeff said she brought out more detail, increased the definition more, on this one. He suggested that you consider it.

Second, I'm sending copies of the letters requesting the assignment of interview copyrights. I'll also send them to Little, Brown--when I have all the responses. There are nine letters here. Letters still must be sent to five more addresses: Columbia (I just got the address); The Realist (out of business); Viva (out of business); Furitan (trying to reach Michelson by phone, his address has changed); and Twentieth Century (out of business). I don't know what to do about the mags that have folded, but will check with Ginny Creeden at Little, Brown. Permission has already been received from Antaeus (Young Interview), Partisan Review (Adams) and Boston Phoenix (Attanasio). All this may not be of immediate interest to you, but thought I should keep you posted. Finally, I guess Jeff Davis should assign the copyright from the film transcript to you. I will have him do so and also get permission from Anita Eicholz (the Munich exchange on women's liberation) to use her name. I also wrote to Medwick and sent her the revised Vogue interview.

Third, I'm sending an article I wrote on your cosmology. It has been sent out to a journal but they have not accepted it (or rejected it) yet and I can make changes, if necessary. I would appreciate it if you browsed through it. It is drawn from my dissertation, but has been changed a lot, and updated. If you can't bear to read it, I will certainly understand. My claim is that it is the best discussion of the topic. You will note that I quote from two old letters you wrote to me--I asked permission to quote from them years ago.

Saw the film on a Movisola the day after Jeff arrived. I liked it, but don't want to say much more. Jeff will be sending you a cassette very soon--in Maine--and you can make your own judgment. Jeff and Carol send their regards, as does Donna. Jeff will also send a cassette to Scott Meredith. Hope you are thriving and resting in Maine. Wish we could visit; it is miserable here this time of year. *Best to Norris and the kids.*

All Best,

P.S. You may have heard from a fellow named Pete Capelotti, who is writing an article on me for the URI Alumni mag. He is one of your new generation of fans.



September 21, 1981

Dear Norman:

Received your letter about the film. Thanks. I will be looking forward to hearing your estimate. About Scott representing the film: I guess it is your decision. I do remember talking about it with you--in Germany maybe--and you saying that Scott would get 10% if he represented the film. Jeff understands it this way also. I think we have both been assuming that because he is your agent and you are to receive 50% of the profits that he will be handling U.S. sales. If not, then I guess Jeff will handle it, with whatever help I can give him. Jeff is working on a sale in Germany and will see the TV officials there next week I think.

I would like to get it straightened out because when we show it at MLA there may be inquiries on ordering it. It was our hope that it could be shown on PBS and then put on the college film circuit. If you would like me to talk to Scott, I will. I think your estimate will drive any decisions. I have some comments to make, but as I have told you, I would rather wait until you have seen it. Jeff seems ready to make changes, if necessary. (I don't mean this to sound ominous)

Barbara Solomon's interview is enclosed, with comments and suggested changes. The best material is on pp. 12-27. What comes before is not as good. You restate material from "Superman" and talk about "observing the observer" in ways you have before. But your comments on European culture, the Egyptian language, the novel and America's "cultureless culture" are very fine. The Henry Adams stuff is good also. I also liked your explanation of the way your work on the novel (excuse this) interfaced with work on other books during the seventies, your biographical period, as I have been calling it. The remarks on the existential nature of the Egyptian language are fascinating and go well with your comments to me on Latin. Consider yourself now a theorist on dead languages. The material on the last-gasp renaissance in Europe is another attraction.

Including about a dozen pages of Solomon's interview, or about 3,500 words, would improve the collection. The comments on the Egyptian novel would make the collection even more of a prelude to the novel. I think room must be made.

I know that the collection may already be too long. If something has to go to make room for Solomon, I see three possibilities: (1) drop that portion of the Munich interview called "Writers and Boxers." It is the least original of the five Munich segments, although the parallels do illumine your career. But you have written about boxing before and nothing's

now
cut to
3,000
words

9-21-81

better

on your early career than Advertisements; (2) if you don't want to drop "Writers and Boxers," collapse the other three interviews with me into two and trim them by 25%, or about 3,500 words. I will take a shot at this, if you wish; (3) if you are not eager to shorten the Munich interviews, drop the the 1964 Weatherby interview on violence. It is the most abstract, formal of all the interviews, although this might be in its favor. At about 2,000 words, it is the shortest except for the Elchholz conversation (the fifth Munich interview). The Weatherby interview has one more thing to recommend it: it reveals the breadth of your thinking on violence. After reading the lead piece in the Times Book Review today, there is more reason than before to see the Weatherby piece in print. I have a feeling you might be more than a little pissed off about the Times piece, your thick skin notwithstanding. The same old shit is trotted out; it seems the writer has learned all she knows about you from humpty-beaters like Brower, Hicks and Atlas. Very shabby and lacking all sense of the moral algebra you were engaging in when you weighed your decision to help Abbott.

Barbara Solomon called me about a week ago; I think I mentioned this to you on the phone. I told her I would be sending you my recommendation on the interview very soon. I don't want to tell her anything, though, until you have passed on the enclosed. If you are in agreement, I will contact her, or you can, as you prefer. Please advise.

I still have not heard from all the magazines holding copyrights to your interviews, but have sent second, follow-up letters out. I'll send you everything, or copies of everything, as soon as I have all responses in hand. The originals I will send to Virginia Creeden, copyright editor at Little, Brown.

What did you think of the picture Jeff suggested for the jacket? The one Petra took of you sitting on the stairs at Nymphenburg?

Thanks for writing to Pete Capelotti. I'll send you a copy of his piece.

Donna and I are planning to come up to Chicago to see you-- however briefly--on October 24th. I'll get details from Judith.

I hope the shooting of Song goes well in Utah. If I can help in any way, let me know.

I have Jeff's address and phone number, if you need them.

no card is enclosed.

All Best,

Mike

P.S. Received your subsequent letter about my cosmology article. Another copy enclosed - no sweat.

November 17, 1981

Dear Norman:

Just a note to let you know that I am still on the case--still tracking down permissions. I am having no luck with Saturday Review, although I have written twice. I remember you saying that Hilary Mills was planning a biography of you; could this be the reason why they have not answered me?

Also having trouble locating Stratton. Judith said his phone number was unlisted and could only give me his town (Phillips, Maine). I have written him care of general delivery--no word yet. If you hear from him or know how to contact him, I'd appreciate knowing. Except for these two, everything seems to be in order. Barbara Solomon's agent asked how much we were paying and I told him. I guess it was a nothing-gained-gambit. He has not written back.

Talked to Jeff on the phone the other day. He really appreciated your call. He is making some more changes and seems quite confident about making some sales. I mentioned the possibility of making a second version of the film built around the final night's interview, but he isn't ready to talk about it yet. So I guess we'll have to see how the Europeans like it as is, and the Americans also. He has been in touch with NBC. Bob Lucid is trying to raise the dough to get him (Jeff) over here for MLA. I can help some; I'm sure we'll find a way.

Donna and I had a good time in Chicago, despite the corporate-industrial crowds. The molecules of the air did carry some venal charge, but I was hungry for ingesting them that night. It was just good to see you and talk a bit. And hear from the novel. Many evocations, Proustian ones. Thanks again for getting us in.

How did Morris' show go? Please give her our best. Looking forward to seeing you in late December when I am in the City for MLA.

All Best,

Mike Lennon

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

December 19, 1991

Dear Norman:

Enclosed is a review of "Ragtime" from yesterday's Tribune. Thought it might bring a bit of cheer. It just opened in Springfield and Donna and I are going to take the kids next week. We'll get there early.

I spoke to the folks at Little, Brown a couple of days ago. Everything seems to be cinched up and the advance should now be forthcoming, I assume. Never did get a reply from Rick Stratton, but he won't have any objection to the inclusion of his interviews -- right?-- and Rolling Stone told me that they will give their permission. I haven't spoken to Donald directly in months, although I have written to him. Is it necessary or advisable for me or you to call him to see if there are any loose ends?

Jeff will arrive in New York on the 27th with a new version of the film. We are going to try and set up a private screening for Lucid. Let me know if you want to come. We show the film on the 28th at MLA. Jeff and I and my brother Peter are all staying at the Sheraton City Squire (581-3300). Bob thought we might all be able to get together sometime during our visit. We will all be there from the afternoon of the 27th to the afternoon of the 30th. I will call Judith to see what your schedule looks like.

I spent yesterday morning in Chicago with Gene Kennedy. We had a good talk about the Cardinal Cody affair and the distinctions (small) between ecclesiastical and political corruptions. Cody's wit is small and his arrogance unleavened by any courtliness. He is drowning in self-pity, I think. If he weren't so dull, he might survive. But as Gene pointed out, Polish popes are in no hurry to do anything, certainly not to replace Irish cardinals in Chicago--not with 600,000 Poles living there. Gene is going to write a long essay for Illinois Issues on the Cody affair and the passing of the immigrant Church. It looks as if I have lined up a grant to pay Gene and three others \$1,000 apiece for "humanistic" essays. I would love to sign you up for one of the slots, but I know that one thou is not nearly enough for 3,000 of your words. But I want to make the offer: \$1,000 of grant money and \$500 of other money for an essay on some mutually agreeable topic. It need not be on an Illinois issue.

Hope you and Norris and the kids have a fine holiday. Donna sends her best.

Regards,

Mr. Le

P.S. I caught the Cromie interview the other day--more good comment on Song.

NORMAN MAILER

30 December 1981

Dear Mike,

Just a line to wish you and Donna and the kids a Happy New Year. We'll talk on the phone, I'm sure, but wanted to get this down. It was real fun seeing the two of you in Chicago. I don't know if I told you or wrote you that.

Incidentally, I'm getting more and more inclined to call the collection "Pieces and Pontifications" rather than "After the White Negro." I'm certain I'm going to make it the subtitle. What I like about "Pontifications" is that the self-mockery takes some of the curse off a man standing there and talking about his ideas for several hundred pages. Also, the title has a ring. If you hate the idea, give me a call on it. I hope you agree that lese majesty is the way to go with this.

Cheers

Norman

As you see Mike, this was dictated a while ago.

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

January 6, 1982

Dear Norman:

way
Pieces and Pontifications is a wonderful title. French and Latin, one syllable and five, Montaigne and Cicero. And I see your point about how you speak in a sort of ex cathedra, in the interviews, at least in regard to your own mental landscape, furniture. Some reviewers, no doubt, will feel compelled to use "pope" or "papal" in their leads and titles, but your title effectively disarms them. There is another plus: all the Catholic magazines, the Jesuits, will want to review it.

I have been thinking about the subtitle and the titles of the two separate paperback volumes. Will the subtitle be something like "Interviews and Other Fugitive Prose, 1958-81?" You said, I think, that you wanted to use "After the White Negro" in the title of the interview book. Will there be confusion if the titles of the two paperbacks do not seem to grow cleanly out of the bole, Pieces and Pontifications?

I called Roger Donald the day after I saw you but he was out of town. I left a message that you'd like a set of galleys sent to me, but if you have a chance please remind him. I have a list of things to check, errors to correct. And I would like to look again for duplications in the interviews.

We all enjoyed the evening. Jeff was quite pleased with your response and intends to make the change you suggested. He had meetings with a guy from cable the next day and things went well. The guy thinks the film could bring a total of 30 grand from cable--eventually. The PBS station in New York City offered him \$3,000 for three or four showings over a one-year period. He has to see if this will interfere with cable rights. We need a good novel about the tangled corruptions of the world of cable TV, a good Stendhalian novel. Jeff is proceeding with care.

Peter called me yesterday. He is doing some checking on Gilmore through his friends in Marion. He says it will take a little time, but he will follow through. He sends his regards.

Thanks for the loan of the script for The Executioner's Song. I will return it soon. I had my students rank the 12 nonfiction books we read this past semester. Song came in first, followed by Orwell's Homage to Catalonia, Michael Herr's Dispatches, Capote's In Cold Blood, and Wolfe's The Right Stuff and Didion's The White Album. Most of the students are in their early twenties and think about the Vietnam War the way I think of the Korean War.

Donna sends her best. Regards to Norris and thanks again for a good evening.

Best,

Mike

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217. 786-6084

January 22, 1982

Dear Norm:

I thought you sounded especially good (if especially tired) on the "Today" show this morning. Thank God it's over, or almost over. I was going to give you a call, but figured your ear must be sore enough.

Enclosed is that article on me by Pete Capelotti. It's a flattering piece and Pete is mainly accurate. He does munch a few nuances though and notes incorrectly that you have been working on the Egyptian novel for a quarter of a century, although I suppose in a way you have. Since he quotes you, I thought I would send it along. Thanks for the words of praise. I think Donna's comments on me (Pete interviewed her over the phone) surprised me more than anything in it. I always thought it was my Irish charm, and not my enthusiasm, that she married me for. There are still surprises in a marriage after fifteen years.

Jeff called from Germany yesterday. He says he has some sort of an offer from a cable outfit for \$30 thou for the film. And a couple more at a smaller price. He has made still more changes and is very happy with the responses he is getting. So it may be on the tube soon.

Looking forward to seeing the galleys. I assume they will be arriving soon. As I said in my last letter, I think Pieces and Pontifications is a great title. But I am not sure about After the White Negro. Is it really necessary for you to point out that all the interviews follow it? Wouldn't this point be better made in your preface? The rationale for beginning with the Stern interview is not so much that it follows "The White Negro," but that you so brilliantly enunciate your cosmology. ^{unit} it is as if Stern stumbles into an unknown passageway and then opens the door on an idea awakened by his knock. In short, the interview could be undervalued if it is assumed that it is included because it follows something else. I'm being unclear perhaps--I just have this intuition that After the White Negro is not right for the title. I think this is why I have been so enthusiastic about every other title you have mentioned--even The Mad Butler. I have been so muddle-headed about titles from the start that you will have no trouble discounting the above if I am wrong, but I don't think I am. Finally, using "The White Negro" will mean that every conversation or review will be obliged to provide a footnote. And I don't think titles should require a footnote.

orm, I hope you will be able to get back to work now. Donna sends her best to you and Morris.

Regards,

Mike

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

January 26, 1982

Dear Norm:

Here is the editorial from the Tribune. Their interpretation is tortured and malicious, but not libelous. Perhaps it might be used to show just how far a paper can go without being libelous --like the Post.

It was good to hear from you. Your call energized some literary nerve; I went downstairs after we hung up and sorted through all the interviews over a drink. A couple of things occurred to me that may be of use when you write the preface. Six of the twenty interviews will be completely new to all American readers (the five Munich interviews and Barbara Solomon's). Another half dozen were first published in relatively obscure publications, and so will also be unknown to all but a few philomaths and literateurs (for example, Young's in Antaeus, ^{in 20th Century} Attanasio's in Boston Phoenix, McElroy's in Columbia, Farbar's in Viva, Michelson's in Puritan). The remainder have already had fairly wide audiences, either because they appeared in large circulation publications (Stratton in Rolling Stone, Mills in Saturday Review, Medwick in Vogue, Carroll in Playboy), or because they have been reprinted (Stern in Advertisements, Krassner in Pres. Papers, Marcus in Writers at Work and Cannibals, Carroll in Errands and the Lucid collection--Marcus also appeared in the Braudy collection). There is some overlap, but the interviews nevertheless break down into these three categories: unpublished in the U.S., obscure and relatively well known.

The second point that occurred to me is that we first started discussing the idea of an interview collection in 1976. Eleven of the twenty interviews in the collection come after this date, but the idea goes back six years.

These notes may not generate comment, but I thought you might like to have them. One last point: four of the periodicals are now defunct: Western Review, Viva, The Realist and Twentieth Century.

I will get hot on the galleys as soon as they arrive. Hope you can get some rest.

All Best,

Mike
Mike Lennon

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708 217 786-6081

February 4, 1982

Dear Norman:

Writing this in a great hurry so that Donna can bring it to Federal Express. Enclosed are all the galley sheets (or copies of them) on which I found errors or had questions. Most are minor and can be disposed of quickly.

I have noted a few possible cuts in the interviews and suggested that a new title be used for the Solomon interview. My assumption is that you did not have time to come up with a new title and so the old one is still there.

I will write a letter to Roger today giving the dates that the interviews took place (not the dates they were published), and tell him you want this date at the end of each interview in parentheses.

What else? Sometimes numerals are used, sometimes the numbers are written out. There is no consistency. You may not care, but I thought I'd mention it.

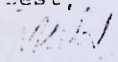
I loved the job you did excerpting the Miller pieces, despite initial concern. And you were wise, I think, to leave out the conversation between you and Ehrlichman, and go with just the intro to it. You did not include the new preface to Pres. Papers, and I assume you had a reason, but thought I would mention it. I really think the review of "Last Tango" should be in, even if something has to go to make room. It was done in '73, so fits chronologically.

Can some note be made somewhere (jacket, preface, title page) of my work as editor of Pontifications? If not, fine; if yes, it will do me some good.

I will give you a call in a few days to see if you want to talk about any of the changes, errors, questions suggested or noted in the enclosed.

That's about it, I think. Hope you can wrap all this up soon and get back to the novel. Donna says hello. Best to Morris.

All Best,


Mike Lennon

February 4, 1982

Mr. Roger Donald
Little, Brown and Co.
New York, N.Y.

Dear Roger:

I spoke with Norman on the phone a few days ago about Pieces and Pontifications. He has decided that he would like to note the dates on which the interviews took place at the end of each. He asked me to write to you and give this information. Here it is:

Stern - (1958)
Krassner - (1962)
Marcus - (1963)
Weatherby - (1964)
Carroll - (1967)
Young - (1970)
Stratton - (1974)
Adams - (1975)
Farbar - (1973)
Hedwick - (1980)
Michelson
and Stone - (1981)
Attansio - (1980)
Eichholz - (1980)
Lennon (all four) - (1980)
McElroy - (1981)
Solomon - (1981)
Mills - (1980)

I finished reading the galley sheets today and sent off my corrections and suggestions to Norman by Federal Express. He should have enough time to go over them and return everything to you by the deadline. They were fairly clean and the book reads quite well. Let's hope everyone else agrees.

Please let me know if there is anything else I can do.

Sincerely,

Mike Lennon

✓ xc: Norman Mailer

*Norman,
One more correction.
Farbar is spelled Farbar
in 1980 table of contents
page for Pontifications.
Mike*

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

February 8, 1982

Dear Norm:

Enclosed is the sentence explaining the date situation (on a copy of the appropriate galley sheet), and my letter to Roger Donald.

As you can see, I mention that I am looking forward to seeing the page proofs. I assume that they will be coming as a matter of course. If they are not will you have them sent? If it is unnecessary for me to check them -- well, I'll leave that to you.

I've been mulling over our conversation. I agree about dropping Ehrlichman and putting the Harvard piece first. And the cuts in the interviews sound fine, as long as all of the wham-bam-thank-you-maam stuff has not been excised from Krassner. One thing still bothers me though: how will "The Faith of Graffiti" go over without the photos? I remember being much more impressed with the book than the piece as it appeared in Esquire. Since it has been published twice, is it necessary to include it? Without the photos?

Thanks for the consideration on mentioning me as editor. And for the dough. It will make a sweet deal even sweeter.

Give me a call if you want to talk any of the above over.

Best,

Mike

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708-2177 786-6084
February 8, 1982

Mr. Roger Donald
Little, Brown and Company
747 Third Avenue
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Roger:

I spoke to Norman yesterday about Pieces and Pontifications. Specifically, we talked about including a sentence in my introduction to note that the dates mentioned in the introduction and at the end of each interview refer to the dates the interviews were conducted, not the dates of original publication. I have written such a sentence and pencilled it in on the appropriate galley sheet, which is enclosed. I think this should do it.

Norman also asked about the identification of the publications where the interviews, and the essays, appeared. I told him that I had gone over the publications where the interviews appeared with Mary Hoffman of Little, Brown, who is handling the acknowledgements. Russel Galen called me about one of the essays, so I assume he is handling acknowledgements for Pieces. In short, place of publication will be handled in the acknowledgements.

Looking forward to seeing the page proofs. Please let me know if I can do anything else.

Sincerely,

Mike Lennon

xc: Norman Mailer

March 13, 1982

Dear Norm:

Here are copies of the proof pages on which I found errors, made suggestions, comments. I did not read the entire book, but I did go through "Tango, Last Tango" and the prefaces carefully. And the acknowledgments. I am happy to see "Tango" in; it has a kick and it has a good swiveling argument which reflects your six-sided response to the film. There are a lot of esthetics in P & P, and they resonate nicely. "Tango" has some of the best. A lot of your principles are there in embryo, no in shadow, crisp shadow, umbra and penumbra that clip the mind's eye.

I am feeling a little wiggy right now (to borrow a word from "Tango"); Been doing a lot of work and getting too little sleep. I have decided to indulge myself and am going to Florida with a buddy for four days to take in Spring training next week. A lark financed by the royalty check. Donna is being real nice about this lark.

The prefaces were a pleasure. Nice to hear your final word on the interviews after almost six years of discussion with you on the subject. Thanks for the kind comments and (especially) the big credit line on the Pontifications title page. I liked all the metaphors (especially the street debater and the pack horses) and laughed aloud when I read the "roads to Burlington" bit. It connects to the final relay race metaphor well.

Norris told me that you had an infected cuticle, which gave me pause since I do too. And that you have a variety of other minor (we hope) ailments. I have a small troop of them also, all too minor to be mentioned. Three days in the sun watching the ball players aching and sweating out the winter's booze will fix everything.

I realize now that I shouldn't be going on about my vacation when you are humping it on the conclusion to Egyptian Nights. I hope you are depressed enough to get the work out, but not so down as to be miserable. You have a good vacation coming. Take it.

All Best,



Mike L.

P.S. I will read through as much of the book as I can tonight and tomorrow and will call Judith if I find anything else that needs fixing. But I want to get this off by Federal Express today.



March 29, 1982

Dear Norman:

Enclosed are pages 20-22 of the pre-penultimate draft of "Literary Ambitions." Page 21 was completely dropped from the galley sheets and page proof. I dictated the entire page to Ellen Panarese at Little, Brown and told her where to insert it--on page 170 of the proof, where indicated. But I thought you might want to check it over, especially since you may have changed it before it was turned in to Little, Brown. This may seem confusing(it is to me); all that is needed is for you to see if you do indeed want all of page 21 inserted.

I mentioned to Ellen that copies of the book should go to all those who provided interviews, copyrights, etc., and will send her a copy of the names with addresses. I'll send you a copy of my letter to her so you can look for omissions. I would also like to get some copies, 30 or 40, and will pay for them at whatever rate is usual. If you have no advice to give me on this, I will talk to Ellen about it sometime just before publication.

So you are in the homestretch of the eleven-year Egyptian Marathon. Godspeed!

More later.

All Best,

April 11, 1982 p. 2, 2 - Tom
April 15. 1982

Dear Norman:

Just a note to send along a Royko column in which you are quoted. Or rather, Carl Sandburg is quoted quoting you. You will appreciate the sentiments.

I asked the people at Little, Brown for a copy of the bound page proof, and one for Lucid, but they are scarce and needed for something else so I will have to wait for the genuine article. Which is probably better. I gather that advance copies will be ready and sent out six weeks before the actual publication date which is sometime in June. So I am assuming that I will have a copy in my hand by the end of this month.

Judith said you would try to get me 20 copies for publicity. Thanks for that; I would like to pass a few out and will indeed get them into the hands of midwest reviewers. A friend of mine, Bob McClory, wants to review it for either Chicago or The Reader (a free weekly with a circulation of about a half a million), and I know the editor of Christian Century and various people at the Post-Dispatch, Trib, etc. If I need more, I'll buy them from Little, Brown at the 60% rate.

If all this will be a pain in the ass for you, just tell me who to call and how to proceed. I know that you need little distractions like like this now like you need a second asshole (actually a second asshole might come in handy sometimes).

Will you be doing any publicity for Pieces and Pontifications Going on the read? If you will be in Chicago, let me know; I make about two trips there a month and can easily meet you. I wouldn't mind coming to New York either, but I remember that you said that there will be little hoopla for P&P. But I would not need much of an excuse.

Did you read that piece I sent you by Pete Capelotti? The one titled "Norman Mailer is my father." Pete is a character and not without wit. Well, I'll let you go. All Best,

Regards to Morris.

Mike

NORMAN MAILER

3 May 1982

Dear Mike,

Just a line to let you know I've finished the Egyptian novel and am now going to spend the next three months polishing it. So I'm done but I'm not done, although I can tell you so much of the load is off. Part of me always wondered if I'd finish the damned thing.

I've asked Judith to take care of getting those twenty copies to you, and I think that should happen without difficulty. For Christ's sake whatever you do, don't buy any copies. I've never heard of anything so crazy. We'll get you what you need.

As for publicity on P&P, I don't think there'll be much. Probably just a little in New York. I'm certain there's no budget for it, since they expect to sell between 5 and 10,000 copies, which sounds right to me, and for that, they don't usually send you out. Besides, I don't want to; I really need the three months to myself now for the Egyptian novel, which, incidentally, I'm thinking of calling Ancient Evenings. How does the title strike you?

Give my regards to Pete Capelotti. He's really a pretty good writer.

Give my best to Donna and the soon-to-be-famous Lennon brothers and think of visiting us this summer. We'll be in Provincetown for June and July, then off to Greece. For now, cheers,

Norman

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

July 1, 1982

Dear Norman:

Yes, the Time review was nasty. Nasty and incoherent. The one in the Chicago Tribune pissed me off more though. I don't know if I have seen it so am enclosing it. Susan Brownmiller--hardly a neutral choice. The Tribune has, if I remember, done a number on all of your recent books. I was going to write, but thought better of it, P&P being your book, etc.

Also enclosed is the Playboy review. Just a squib, but a favorable one. Chicago magazine will review it in their August issue. A friend of mine named Bob McClory will do it and it will be favorable, I understand. Reviews are also due in the St. Louis papers. I think Pete Capelotti will do one, and I have sent it to a friend at Christian Century. I assume that the N.Y. Review of Books will review it also. I will be interested to see who they choose.

I received a copy of the paperback from Ellen Panarese the other day. Thanks for putting my name on the cover--and on the title page. Norm, you have treated me like a prince. Organizing a 60th birthday party for you would be one way I could repay you. I know you are unenthusiastic, right know, about such an event, but you might feel differently after Bob and I give you more detail. It is an important day in American literary history. But I'll stop there before I blow it.

Donna just landed a job, after a year of searching, so she won't be making the trip back. She is very excited; it is exactly what she wanted, the dream job. She will be doing legal research for the state. But the boys and I will be down to see you. I will call when we hit Newport, around the 25th of July. Regards to the family.

Best,

W. H. W.

Illinois Issues

Sangamon State University
Springfield, Illinois 62708/217/786-6084

September 14, 1982

Dear Norman:

The enclosed is a present. I picked it up in Chicago and leafed rapidly through the first section of photos, all of which picture Hemingway alone. I was taken by the extraordinary changes in his expression, posture, attitude, changes that seem to reflect more than just the normal wear and tear. It then occurred to me that a marvelous biographical essay might be written just on the pictures themselves. Not a lot of detail on what address in Key West he was residing on, nor the weight of the marlin, or the length of the antelope's horns (all of which Hemingway would hasten to inform us of), but of the "sorrows of his changing face" (to *paraphrase* quote Yeats).

Now I know that this may not be the kind of biography you have thought of writing, but then again it might. And if the idea is a good one, you will judge it as such. What a book this could be! And wouldn't Little, Brown go for such a book--coming hard on the heels of Ancient Evenings? I have a hunch that you may even know Peter Buckley, the author (his prose is bad Hemingway) and collector of the photos. His name sounds familiar: a friend of Plimpton's no doubt. Did I see it on the masthead of Paris Review? No matter.

If you are interested in the book, and need a hand gathering materials, yours truly will be glad to pitch in. You can worry about this later. What do you think?

A friend gave me a page from the current Sports Illustrated (September 13, 1982 issue) today. It contains an ad for P&P. Does this mean that a second printing is contemplated? The first printing must be gone; ten people from all over the country have told me that they can't get the book nowhere, no how. Kroch's in Chicago says it is out of print, as does the bookstore here in Springfield. Can you shed any light?

Saw you on Cavett. Damn good, I thought; the second half better than the first though. I took some notes and sent them to Bob. He may be able to use them. And "60 Minutes" re-broadcast the Abbott show on this past Sunday. I thought it was reasonably fair, if not tremendously comprehensive. You came across well.

How was the film festival? Did the audience like it? When will it be in my local theater?

Sorry to lay all these questions on your brain. Hope all is well. Write when you can. Regards to Norris.

Best,

Mike Lennon