

decision on the novel's fate was postponed until Rinehart saw how Mailer had handled his objections. Mailer figured it would take him about two weeks. Then he would leave on his long-planned vacation in Mexico. By May 28 he had starting typing, about the same time he learned that he had "a lousy liver," an after-effect of his wartime yellow jaundice. The doctor said no alcohol—he had been drinking too much anyway—or fried foods for 30 days. No prohibition against marijuana was mentioned, and it became his substitute for scotch. It would soon become his drug of choice and, within two years, his secret weapon in his war against "the shits" running the country. V3P

As the struggle with Rinehart was unfolding, Mailer heard from Lois Wilson. She would be passing through New York in early June. Could he suggest places and methods for "fancy indiscretions"? She was eager to see him again because "when I think of quality I think of Norman," adding that among her colleagues "there's not a decent piece of ass." He wrote back immediately to say that he was borrowing a friend's apartment for their reunion. Bring along the Polaroid photos you took last time, he said, because "as the years go by, I just get dirtier and dirtier." At loggerheads with his publisher, weakened by a bad liver, and preparing for a four-month trip to Mexico with his bride of a month, Mailer was nevertheless eager to "put both my arms around your big white moon." As he had foreseen, marriage would not interfere with the desires of this "gallant bucko."

Around June 10, Mailer placed the novel in the hands of Amussen. It had taken him 13 consecutive days to type, and was the last time he would type a long manuscript. The fellatio scene remained intact but, as he explained to Lindner, "I took the descriptive edge off it so

the reader will have no more than a sense that something perverted happened." Even a few years later, certainly by 1960, the ~~scene~~ ^(taken from the Rinehart proofs) would hardly arch an eyebrow.

^{description}
Tentatively, she reached out a hand to caress his hair, and at that moment Herman Teppis opened his legs and let Bobby slip to the floor. At the expression of surprise on her face, he began to laugh. 'Just like ~~that~~ ^{this} sweetie,' he said, and down he looked at that frightened female mouth, facsimile of all those smiling lips he had seen so ready to be nourished at the fount of power and with a shudder he started to talk. 'That's a good girlie, that's a good girlie, that's a good girlie,' he said in a mild little voice, 'you're just an angel darling, and I like you, and you understand, you're my darling darling, oh, that's the ticket,' said Teppis.

Mailer had his reunion with Lois Wilson on June 13, and four days later left for Mexico. "Things at Rinehart turned out beautifully," as he wrote to Lindner in mid-July. All the young editors had given enthusiastic reports on the manuscript, and there was no showdown with Stan, who apparently did not want to buck the entire editorial department. Instead, he "retired into sulky silence." *The Deer Park* was accepted as submitted. A publication date of February 1955 was set. Except for reading galleys, nothing remained to do on the novel, and he again asked Lindner about helping him get a prison job. He was looking ahead and feeling good enough to have a few drinks and relax the strict diet he had been on for six weeks. He was smoking "tea," as he referred to it, almost every day. ^{In Mexico he and Adele} ~~They~~ settled in a fortress-like colonial house surrounded by 300-year old trees. There was an interior garden with orchards and a large patio. He wrote his Japanese translator, Eiichi Yamanishi, that Adele painted and he studied Spanish and read books

about crime and prison. Bea dropped ~~(Susan off)~~ regularly to visit and she was "a bright spot" in his day, although he worried that his anxieties might make her neurotic.

Stan Rinehart's distaste for the novel was mildly unsettling, but the silence of friends was painful. He had yet to receive any response from Adeline, Malaquais, Styron, Jones or Devlin, all of whom had been sent copies, nor from his publishers in England, Germany or Japan. In an anxious mid-July letter to Styron and his new wife, Rose, he said he had "an uneasy feeling" that they had not commented because they surmised that doing so "would alter our friendship." A few days later, a four-page, handwritten letter from Styron arrived. After stating straightaway that the novel was "honest and brilliant," and agreeing with ^{Robert}~~Bob~~ Loomis, his ^{own} editor, that it had "a deep sense of morality," Styron shifted gears and worked his way painstakingly through a run of qualifications and small ^{but} praise, noting, for example, that the novel was "depressing in its magnificent candor," and that it was brimming with "unalleviated and leaden anxiety." He concluded: "I don't like the book, but I admire the hell out of it." Styron also thought that O'Shaughnessy didn't come off well as a narrator.

When Mailer replied, he said that he "truly appreciated" the critique, and that his own reaction would probably be the same "if hypothetically someone else had written it." His tone in a number of letters during this period was muted and agreeable; he would raise no passionate defense of the novel. I was attempting to write a great novel, he said to Styron, one that had the same kind of dry irony found in ^{Standhalls}~~The Red and the Black~~, but "my imagination and my daring and my day to day improvisation dried up." Nevertheless, he said, my vocation as a writer has been confirmed by surviving the "progressively more depressing" process of writing his second and third novels over the previous five years.

who?

OK?
How
did
Loomis
have
a copy
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Besides his parents and sister, his main supports were Lindner, Wolf and Adele. The Gwaltneys read ^{the manuscript} it when the Mailers stopped on the way to Mexico, and were enthusiastic in their praise. Wolf was a staunch admirer. Lindner—the first person outside the family to read it—offered to write a preface and later wrote a glowing review in the *Village Voice*. Until his untimely death, ^{in 1944 at age 41 of congestive heart disease} he maintained a rich dialogue with Mailer and deeply influenced his emerging conception of the rebel hipster Mailer would call “the white negro.” Adele, Mailer recalled, read everything that he wrote. “Because I loved him,” she wrote in her memoir, “I handed everything over, my heart, my body, and my talent.” He said that she was a sensitive reader and he always valued her opinion. “She had instinctive good taste and she could spot all that was phony in a novel as fast as I could.” The novel is dedicated to ^{her} Adele and Dan Wolf.

In August, ^{more} reports appeared noting that *Naked* had been sold to Paul Gregory’s film company, and that filming would begin in July 1955. Robert Mitchum was slated for a starring role, the articles stated. In fact, the contract for the sale was not signed for another three months, and when the film was finally made in 1958, Mitchum was committed elsewhere. Mailer communicated with Cy Rembar about the contract while he was in Mexico, but with scant enthusiasm. His hunch was that the film would be much less powerful than the magnificent film version of *From Here to Eternity*, and he was right. Nevertheless, he wanted the sale to go through because his income from *Naked* was noticeably diminishing and, if Stan Rinehart’s gorge rose again, he might be forced to pay for the private printing of *The Deer Park*. A part of him almost hoped this would be the case.

One of the things he had put off for the previous two years was reading the work of his contemporaries. So, in addition to reading crime books and going to bullfights, he began reading

if you say
a writer
you have
to say
why

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Say more
about the
film? No
a success
etc

this is
a fear
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books "by the cartload." He found little to admire. He began with *The Gallery* (1944), John Horn Burns' novel about the American occupation of Naples, and deemed it "minor," saying he couldn't finish it. James Gould Cozzens' novel of the stateside Army Air Force, *Guard of Honor*, which beat out *Naked* for the Pulitzer Prize in 1948, he found to be "essentially slick and worse than dull as compared to say *The Caine Mutiny*." He read *The Ballad of the Sad Café* (1951) and said, "I can't understand how people got so wild about Carson McCullers." The only book that he liked was Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), which had just won the National Book Award. "I found it impressive but somehow unexciting. Really the damndest book—I have to admire his courage, his ambition, his 'openness' to try anything and everything, but the pieces are more exciting than the whole, and nothing in it really disturbs one." For the next thirty years, Mailer had good and bad things to say about Bellow. The negative comments usually echoed ^{what he said} the one voiced here, namely, that Bellow did not make his readers itch, and was too easily pleased by his ability to elegantly repeat the pieties and paradoxes of high culture figures such as Freud, Proust and Henry James.



He did some writing in Mexico, namely a short piece he had agreed to write for *One: The Homosexual Magazine*, after a telephone conversation with the New York secretary for the sponsoring organization. He turned him down at first, and the man countered by asking if Mr. Mailer would prefer to write anonymously, shielding his reputation, but still showing support for the aims of the magazine. Mailer wrote, "[M]y pride was that I would say in print anything that I believed, but I was not ready to say a word in public defense of homosexuals." He feared that his article would not be read widely, he said in a letter to the secretary, and that gossip-columnist

"maggots like [Walter] Winchell and [Lee] Mortimer will print a line—'Norman Mailer writing articles for the limp-wrist set magazine *One*?' It would then be taken for granted that he was homosexual, a disagreeable prospect. But he agreed to write the essay. The secretary clinched his approval by saying that if he did, perhaps he could be the movement's first congressman. The man knew "the way to me," Mailer wrote in a preface to the piece when he reprinted it: "[M]ate the absurd with the apocalyptic, and I was a captive." In mid-September, after approving the galleys of *The Deer Park* with only a few minor corrections, he sat down to write the essay.

The turning point in his views on gays ^{had come} ~~came~~ after he read Toby Schneebaum's copy of *The Homosexual in America: A Subjective Approach* (1954) by Donald Webster Cory. He resisted it as he read, but could not escape the recognition of his bias it provided. In the essay, which he titled "The Homosexual Villain," he wrote, "I had been acting ^{as} a bigot in this matter." As a libertarian socialist, he had always insisted that "sexual relations, above everything else, demand their liberty." But he had been unwilling to grant this freedom to homosexuals. Wilhelm Reich in *The Sexual Revolution: Toward a Self-Governing Character Structure* (1945) had first shown him the link, he said, between political and sexual repression, and now he was "properly ashamed." He explained that he had consciously attributed "unpleasant, ridiculous, or sinister connotations" to gay or bi-sexual characters in his novels, most notably, Gen. Cummings in *Naked* and Leroy Hollingsworth in *Barbary Shore*. "I had no conscious homosexual desires," Mailer wrote, but he was suspicious about his dislike of gays, wondering if it might be an unconscious cover for such feelings. Once he had admitted, and corrected, his bias, and begun to enjoy his friendships with men like Schneebaum, he found he was no longer worried about latent homosexuality. Lindner's assurances also played a role.

Dotson Rader, the writer and anti-war activist, met Mailer in 1967 and became a close friend. ^{They} He had many conversations ^{Rader} with him about homosexuality over the years, and said Mailer was deeply curious about the ~~mechanics of gay sex~~, "the moist specifics," as Rader put it. When Rader first came to New York, older gay men such as Andy Warhol and Tennessee Williams (with whom Rader had a long affair) warned him about Mailer. Capote thought Mailer was a latent homosexual, and told Rader, with fingers crossed, that he was afraid Mailer would rape him. "So when I was first with Norman," Rader recalled,

I would sort of bait him. And he never responded in a way that was negative. He always responded with humor. By baiting him, I mean, I'd lean over and say to him, "Did anyone ever tell you that you have beautiful blue eyes." That kind of stuff; I would tease him as if I was coming on to him. Most homophobes would say, "Keep your hands to yourself," which was kind of funny because bigots, when they react instinctively, in a bigoted way, usually get angry, but they're really angry at themselves because they reveal their cards. Norman was never that way.

A little over a week after he sent off the essay to *One*, Mailer heard from Amussen: The ~~galleys were in hand and~~ production was about to begin. There was nothing to fret about, he said, everything was "under control." Mailer wrote to Styron the same day to congratulate him on buying a house in Connecticut and thank him for the invitation to visit. In all of his correspondence during his last few weeks in Mexico, he recites his uncertainty about selling *Naked* to Hollywood. Being poor and having new experience foisted on him was his preference, yet the prospect of cashing his biggest paycheck since *Naked* was published—\$110,000 plus a

Didn't Mailer just read galleys?

cut of the profits—had obvious appeal; he thought he could write three or four more books on the proceeds. Nothing was said about *The Deer Park*. It was finished, Mailer thought, and time to move on.

he and Adele
 Before ~~they~~ left Mexico, he had an extraordinary experience on marijuana. He told the story more than once in his later years.

When the marijuana really hit, I went to the bathroom—I remember this—and vomited. Some of the most incredible vomiting I ever had. It was like an apocalyptic purge, the most unbelievable orgasm of your life except it wasn't agreeable because it was vomiting. But it had the power of an apocalyptic orgasm. And when I came out of it, I was on pot for the first time of my life, really on. Up to that point, I just had intimations of what was on. Now I was on. Light deepened, things changed. I remember lying down, getting dizzy, looking at Adele who was sleeping off her pot on another couch; there were two parallel couches, and I could seem to make her face whoever I wanted her to be, just lying there. Her face would change from this person to that person. Probably could change her into an animal if I wished. And that was just the beginning. After that every night for a few weeks, I went down to the car, turned on the radio, listened to it, smoked pot, breathed it in in the car and got into jazz for the first time. For the first time in my life, I could really understand jazz.

He began buying bags of marijuana at a dollar apiece and carefully removing the twigs and seeds. Anticipating his luggage being searched when he and Adele and Susan reached the border, he ^{hid} his cache ^{with} Adele's Kotex tampons, which were then put in condoms.

I had the feeling that this was the way to get it through customs. And sure enough, when the time came and we were crossing the border—I remember Susie, by then, was about five and turned to me and said, 'Daddy,'—she had a wonderful sort of Spanish accent—'Why are you so nervous?' I was ready to clout the kid—anyway, the customs guy sort of went through our bags very carefully and when he got to Adele's bag and he opened it, I had put some black lace panties on top of the Kotex box. He lifted them very gingerly, saw the Kotex box, slapped back the panties, closed her bag and that was it.

Mailer had the supplies he needed for his upcoming campaign.

Chapter 6

General Marijuana and the Navigator

"Calculation never made a hero." John Henry Cardinal Newman

The sale of *Naked* to Gregory and Laughton went through in November 1954. Feeling financially secure ^{from} and perhaps weary of looking out their bathroom window on a cemetery, the Mailers decided to move ^{They} and rented a duplex in a four-story brownstone at 320 East 55th Street,

out of the railroad flat in First Avenue
downtown

not far from Sutton Place, one of the wealthiest enclaves in New York, where they would remain for the next two years. Susan, who was spending the fall with them, had her own bedroom. Speaking of the move, Mailer told Vance and Tina Bourjaily that he wanted his gravestone to read, "He wished to live only at the bottom or the top." Adele bought new modern furniture and hung her paintings on the wall; he busied himself catching up on his correspondence and trying to place "The Man Who Studied Yoga." He purchased hi-fi equipment, but felt guilty about the expense. "When the revolution comes," he wrote to the Bourjailys, "the workers will put me on a spit." He wrote to Gregory to say that Robert Mitchum was too big physically to play Sgt. Croft in the film version of *Naked*. He wanted Brando, whose recent performance in *The Wild One* (1953) as the leader of a motorcycle gang impressed him for its subtle combination of repressed violence and "a certain spirituality." In several letters to friends, he cited continental writers who had influenced *The Deer Park*: Stendhal, Gide, Proust and Moravia. Writing to his uncle Louis in South Africa on November 17, he said that "it meant something to me to get off the floor" after the failure of *Barbary Shore*. A day or two later, with a *Publishers' Weekly* advertisement for the novel already in print, Stan Rinehart insisted on deletion of the fellatio scene. Mailer refused; Rinehart ~~broke the contract and~~ halted production. *The Deer Park* was adrift, and although Mailer didn't know it, unfinished.

The story of what happened over the next two months, as the novel moved from publisher to publisher, picking up rejection slips like barnacles, is told in a long essay, "The Mind of an Outlaw," published in *Esquire* four years later. It is, Mailer ^{has said} ~~told Manso~~, "the most accurate account I've ever written of myself," as well his declaration of independence from the New York literary world of "cliques, fashions, vogues, snobs, snots, and fools, not to mention a dozen

This was discussed a while ago

bureaucracies of criticism." The era of magisterial editors and publishers like Maxwell Perkins, Robert Linscott and Charles Scribner was gone, he lamented, and "there was no room for the old literary idea of oneself as a major writer, a figure in the landscape." From November 1954 to January 1955 *The Deer Park* was considered by Random House, Knopf, Simon and Schuster, Harper's, Scribner's and Harcourt Brace. Styron was enlisted to help at Random House, although he told Hiram Haydn, the top editor there, that he had mixed feelings about it, something Mailer already knew. Haydn also didn't like it, finding it to be "gray and dreary." Mailer was always urging his friends who had reservations about the novel to read it a second time, and when Haydn did, he reversed himself and saw a "convincing strain of compassion for his unlovely and unhappy characters." But this ^{was} came too late to help him at Random House. Jones may have tried to help at Scribner's, his (and Hemingway's) publisher, but the editors there detested it. Mailer soon learned that Jones felt the same way. He wrote to Mailer that the novel was "a pretty bad book," and compared it unfavorably to *Barbary Shore*. He added, "I still believe there are great books in you. Great books. If you can ever get them out." On some days, Mailer thought that *The Deer Park* was, if not great, close to it, and Jones' dismissal of it, on top of Styron's lukewarm praise, dealt a blow to the esprit of the trio.

The novel got the lengthiest consideration from the firm of Alfred A. Knopf, and Mailer would have been elated to see its elegant Borzoi wolfhound logo on its title page, given the firm's commitment to high literary endeavor, and several of his literary heroes—Spengler, Mann, Maugham, and Pound—on its rolls. Working with the firm's lawyers for three weeks, he said, "I took out sentence after sentence which might be construed as sexually gratuitous," agreeing to these excisions because they were willing to leave the fellatio scene intact. But when

the lawyers pressed for ^{skill} more cuts, he bridled and negotiations ceased. He blamed Blanche Knopf, the founder's wife, for being "almost irrationally terrified" about the book being prosecuted. But he was wrong; she was "eager" for the firm to take it, as her husband explained in his memoirs. It was Knopf himself, and his top lawyer, Harry Buchman, who were opposed. Shortly after it was turned down, the Knopfs invited the Mailers to a cocktail party. When they were leaving, Alfred went to the door with them. Mailer, he recalled, "immediately offered to bet me that the book would sell over a hundred thousand copies." Mailer repeated the offer a day or two later in a letter, saying he would wager "hard cash" on his instinct, and that if Knopf did not reply, "the impression I obtained of your character when we exchanged 40 words at Blanche's party will be confirmed." Knopf wrote back a terse note, declining the bet and saying he had "no reason to care one whit whether your book sells 250 or 250,000 copies."

Adele remembers that during this period he would "just sit staring at nothing," all the while drinking scotch and chewing the ice cubes. "Sometimes in the middle of a conversation, he would seem to be distracted. It was as if he was out of his body. He would smile to himself, as if I weren't there, his lips moving soundlessly, having a dialogue with himself." As the rejections piled up, he stayed as close to the manuscript "as a stage-struck mother pushing her child forward at every producer's office. I was amateur agent for it, messenger boy, editorial consultant, Machiavelli of the luncheon table, fool of the five o'clock drinks, I was learning the publishing business in a hurry, and I made a hundred mistakes and paid for each one by wasting a new bout of energy." His exposure to the manners and mores of the publishing world was the kind of experience, he said, that "was likely to return some day as good work."

"The Mind of an Outlaw" is that good work. It can be compared, with some justice, to F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1926 essay "The Crack-Up," an anguished account of his descent from renown to obscurity. Arresting as it is, Fitzgerald's piece (also published in *Esquire*) reeks of self-pity. Mailer's essay is not without it, but he is considerably feistier, funnier, caustic in some places, self-lacerating in others, and captures perfectly his jangled mood after Rinehart's rejection. Exaggerated descriptions of his novel's obscenity were sloshing around publishers row in New York, and each new rumor, Mailer believed, narrowed the novel's chances at the next house it was sent. To get the ~~\$5,000~~ ^{payment from Rinehart for accepting the manuscript} due him upon submission, he had to mount a costly legal effort. The novel he had started about a concentration camp, "The City of God," was another casualty, he said. Given his sea of troubles, beginning a new novel was inconceivable. Finally, the sum of his frustrations "drove a spike into my cast-iron mind," forcing the recognition that he had become "the sort of comic figure I would have cooked to a turn in one of my books, a radical who had the nineteenth-century naïveté to believe that the people with whom he did business were 1) gentlemen, 2) fond of him, and 3) respectful of his ideas even if in disagreement with them." The man who ultimately took the novel, Walter Minton, the new president of Putnam's, was more to Mailer's liking; he reminded him of a general. ^{Minton} He paid Mailer \$10,000, the highest advance in the history of Putnam's. Minton would live up to his reputation a few years later when he would publish another controversial novel, Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* (1958). Ted Purdy, editor-in-chief, was also high on the novel, and Minton later told ^{said that The Deer Park} Mills that it was "the best novel that's ever been written about Hollywood." Minton asked for no changes, yet Mailer was still unhappy, savoring his anger and half-disappointed that he would not be self-publishing *The Deer Park*.

His use of marijuana had accelerated in Mexico; he was also drinking again, his liver having recovered, but "tea" was his drug of choice, opening his senses and his passion for jazz, "intricate music that spoke of the complexity of life," as he later described it. The Mailers went to clubs in Harlem and the Village where they heard Dizzy Gillespie and Sonny Rollins, and ~~another great jazz musician of the era,~~ ^{continued his} Miles Davis. He ~~was also engaged in~~ regular, energetic discussions with Lindner, ~~discussing matters such as the heroic character of the psychopaths of the Wild West and the id as a healthy animal, not a monster to be chained.~~ The combined effects of this stimulation—~~his colloquies with Lindner, jazz, marijuana (and the liquor and sleeping pills with which he tempered it), the raucous, disenthralled culture of Harlem, and the adrenalin~~ that Rinehart's betrayal pumped into his system—led to something bursting within his deepest self.

I do not know if it was so much a loving heart, as a cyst of the weak, the unreal and the needy, and I was finally open to my anger. I turned within my psyche I can almost believe, for I felt something shift to murder in me. I finally had the simple sense to understand that if I wanted my work to travel further than others, the life of my talent depended on fighting a little more, and looking for help a little less. But I deny the sequence in putting it this way, for it took me years to come to this fine point. All I felt then was that I was an outlaw, a psychic outlaw, and I liked it, I liked it a good night better than trying to be a gentleman.

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On December 1, 1954, Mailer began setting down the ideas that came in wake of the Rinehart rupture. He called it "Lipton's Journal," a not-so-veiled reference to the "tea" he smoked before he sat at his typewriter. He wrote fast, in bursts of ten or more pages every few days, and over the course of three months, until March 4, 1955, typed 248 pages containing approximately 110,000 words. The entries are numbered, 1 to 689; each is a stand-alone pensée.

As he proceeded, he entertained the possibility that his insights could challenge some of the ~~major~~ ^{dominant} ideas of Western thought, specifically, Freud's theories on the merits of sublimation and repression.

But at a dozen points he faltered, questioning the wisdom of naked soul bearing, much as Whitman did in "Song of Myself."

As was evident in the notes yesterday, I was moving toward a depression, and it came on me during the evening. I felt very tired, and rather disgusted with myself. It seemed to me as if I'd been indulging in mental masturbation for quite a few days, playing word games, playing at being a genius, playing at being at the edge of psychotic . . .

Last night taking my seconals I thought—'A pill for the swill.' And I was flat (stunned) by the recognition. How I hate this journal, hate myself, hate Adele, hate my wild kick, hate the garbage I release, how I cling to society to knock me out, to stun my rebellion. If I ever go insane I'll not be a schizo. I'll be manic depressive.

His recoveries are just as fervent; he sometimes sounds like Kerouac:

I am manic, alive, filled every day with the excitement and revelation of everything I see.

I'm a synthesizer, just as a crook is. I cannot make the original discovery, but I can add the fabulous jewel to it at my best. So I dip into other books and other men's styles, take the ideas I wish, throw away the others, understand one facet of a person to the exclusion of the rest because what I want is the jewel in the suitcase—fuck the rest, fuck the furs and the bonds.

My mind is like a tiger.

The journal jumps over a wide arc of heterogeneous material, making it hard at times to find a filament of continuity, yet it hangs together. One reason is that "Lipton's" is a psychoanalytic act. Lindner wouldn't analyze him, so he does the job himself. He looks at his childhood, his wives, his family and friends, his ambitions and his failures, his writings, all with an eye to clarifying the basic lineaments and conflicts of his psyche so that he can move forward and claim his genius, which he boldly asserts. Another claim to coherence is that the journal is a dictionary of dualisms. The indubitable doubleness of all nature, all phenomena, is the centrifugal belief that supports every exploration in the journal. All the antinomies that he had pondered since his youth come tumbling out. He works through a range of commonplace oppositions such as sun-moon, conscious-unconscious, heaven-hell, as well as bodily functions—orgasms and vomiting, weeping and laughter, intercourse as giving and taking—and dozens of others: choice-habit, antacid-analgesic (which he proposes as the title of a one thousand-page novel), and energetic repetitions of the saint-psychopath dualism. He considers

Nathaniel

his sexuality, his addictions, and like Hawthorne's Rev. Dimmesdale, practices vigils of self-examination.

Looking at myself in the mirror, high on Lipton's, I saw myself as follows: The left side of my face is comparatively heavy, sensual, possessor of hard masculine knowledge, strong, proud, and vain. Seen front-face I appear nervous, irresolute, tender, anxious, vulnerable, earnest, and Jewish middle-class. The right side of my face is boyish, saintly, bisexual, psychopathic, and suggests the victim.

For Mailer it was incontestable that two people—not two halves of one—lived inside every human. As he put it, "Every man is a marriage within himself." The two people inhabiting him, referred to over and over as the saint and the psychopath, are linked by "the apparently silly compromise of an over-friendly anxious boyish Jewish intellectual, 'seductive' and inhibited by turns." This front-face construct, a "social image," is close to being a "despised image," he says, but one necessary for fruitful relations with those he is too much in awe of to disclose his real self, or selves. He names as authority figures Amussen, Stan Rinehart and John Aldridge, but says there are many others. Lindner is not one of them. He is Mailer's audience of one, a source of psychoanalytic practice and insight and, in a real way, his collaborator on the journal. They are utterly candid.

The inter-fecundation is starting. A letter from Bob says, 'Occasionally, . . . I find myself leaping ahead in my mind—or arguing fiercely as if you were present.' It has to be. So many of my ideas are expansions of Bob's ideas—in turn many of mine will be expanded by Bob. Yet, I'm ashamed to say that I was not entirely

pleased when I read the above. There's a part of me which is such a holder. I really hate to give with a part of me, and I usually give best when I will not be totally accepted. (Bob was right about this.) I'm so afraid things will be stolen—which of course is the way of saying things will be improved. What causes the rich man so much anguish when his joint is looted is that deep in him he suspects that the thief will enjoy his property more than he did. There is one other fear about Bob which is justifiable perhaps. I'm not at all sure he's the revolutionary—he is so capable of turning back to be the mere reformer.

When Mailer became rampant and arrogant during a December visit to Baltimore, Lindner called him "a pint-sized Hitler." "It's so true," Mailer acknowledged in the journal. He could be just as frank: "Lindner gave me a pain in the ass last weekend," he wrote. "He acted like a shy sexy teasing society bitch who gave you the sexual come-on when you'd given up, and threw her manners at you when you advanced." When Lindner said that Mailer was "blindly paranoid," Mailer countered with a list of his friend's lacks: "his shlumperness, his sly (but heavy) manipulations, his hang-dogness, his fear of authority, his half-works, his games with Johnny, his guilt about it, his guilt about every fucking thing." Yet they were close enough for Mailer to compare their relationship to that of Marx and Engels, and concluded, "If I didn't like him so much, if I didn't feel so psychically [sic] close, as if we were the two talented Jewish sons of the same family, the older brother I never had, I really would be tempted to slug that sly stealing cocksucker." As he completed portions of the journal, he would mail the carbon to Lindner, who responded with long letters.

Mailer knew the writings of Marx better than he did those of Freud; the converse was true of Lindner, but both felt the ideas of the two great thinkers needed irrigation. He laid it out:

So, modestly, I see my mission. It is to put Freud into Marx, and Marx into Freud. Put Tolstoy into Dostoyevsky and Dostoyevsky into Tolstoy. Open anarchism with its soul-sense to the understanding of complexity, and infuse complex gloom with the radiance of anarchism. As Jenny Silverman said of me once, 'The little pisherke with the big ideas.' Pint-sized Hitler. Yes.

In another entry, he fleshed out the reciprocal, developing nature of their missions.

I who was one of the worst soldiers ever to go into an Army, one of the people who had the least feeling for Army life, nonetheless was the one who had to capture the psychology inside and out of the Army. I, who am timid, cowardly, and wish only friendship and security, am the one who must take on the whole world. I, whose sexual nature is to cling to one woman like a child embracing the universe, am driven by my destiny to be the orgiast, or at least the intellectual mentor of orgiasm. I, who find it essentially easier to love than to hate; I who could probably find more people to love in the world than anyone I know, am destined to write about characters who are conventionally 'unlovable.'

Mailer's Marxist mentor, Malaquais, receives a few comments and it is clear that their friendship will continue, although slightly altered. Mailer is grateful to Malaquais, but no longer stands in complete awe of him. This can be seen in an early entry, a reflection on the "square blunt building-brick quality" that Mailer found to characterize most socialist analyses. His

emerging style can be seen in the extended metaphor with which he reveals the evolution of their relationship.

His thought of course has the nobility of a cathedral, but he's filled every square inch of the cathedral with a tile, and so his new thought can consist merely of improving the total design. He can replace one tile by another. But he will never build a cathedral which dissolves into light. For all the beauty of his conceptions, a dank oppressive gloom breathes out of the doors and no one wants to enter Malaquais' cathedral. He is left the gloomy caretaker of it. One reason he cannot chase me away entirely is that I'm the village boy who wandered in one evening and stayed to admire the cathedral for many years, asking the caretaker every day, "Don Malaquais, tell me about the saints, and why this stone is this color?" I was a naughty boy and I was forever quitting his lessons to throw stones at the bats, but what he cannot bear, dear Malaquais, is the silence now that I am gone. Timidly, terrified, like a shy old miser, he is making endless preparations necessary to go out and buy a new hat. He has no real hope he'll be detained in the village and find a place to build a new cathedral, he knows he'll go back to the old one and watch the bats multiply.

If there is any doubt about the shift in his feelings, his list of desired literary executors in the journal makes it clear. He names his sister, Cy Rembar, Dan Wolf and, as chief executor, Lindner. Malaquais is not on the list. Barney is.

1955

In late January, M^xailer spent most of day with his father. It was, he wrote, the first real talk they had ever had, and he told his father that he loved him, "instead of hitting him with all kinds of shit and making him feel like a piece of dirt." For the first time, he had the conviction that he understood Barney from Barney's perspective. He saw that his father's gambling was not just a neurotic condition, but also "an expression of his artistry," not only an aberration but also a source of deep pleasure for Barney, however much it aggrieved the conventional sensibilities of his mother. He repeated that Barney understood him better than his mother, and what appeared to be his father's pompousness was really a burlesque of Fan's bourgeois sentiments.

He overdid it. Unconsciously, he made her sound ridiculous. It was his private way of encouraging me to be a rebel. Her dictums made a certain practical common-sense. To rebel against them would have made me feel too guilty. But there was my father, repeating what she said, exaggerating it, multiplying it, until the sheer human nonsense of bourgeois human values rang in my head From deep within him, he was warning me, he was saying, 'Go out, son, be a rebel, because if you're not a rebel you'll end up a pompous fool, ignored, and the subject of people's contempt.' So I loved him today.

He would soon enough overtop his father's transgressions, although he would never cut himself off from his mother's family values. If Fan was a bourgeois "saint," Barney, as Mailer's sister put it, "was probably a bit psychopathic."

On his thirty-second birthday, Mailer wrote over 10,000 words in "Lipton's," a record. He was preparing himself, anointing himself. In his thirty-third, Christological year, he would

Journal

Is this
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begin his public mission as prophet and culture hero. The journal's ruminations and meditations, the postscripts to his first three novels, the brutally honest self-analysis, and the candid portraits of family members and friends comprise a web of carefully considered calibrations of his relationships with people, events and ideas, set down in preparation for this mission. We can in fairness call the journal an examination of conscience and consciousness, but perhaps more than anything else it is an urgent summoning of his powers. He termed it a "great adventure," adding "I don't think I have ever been so frightened in my life."

*(reminiscent of that practiced by William James)
called his introspection*

He wrote long passages in the journal exploring the relations between the saint and the psychopath, often sounding like D.H. Lawrence, whose continuing influence on Mailer cannot be gainsaid. Here is Lawrence, commenting on Tolstoy's espousal of Christianity in his late works, followed by Mailer.

And this is Tolstoi, the philosopher with a very nauseating Christian-brotherhood idea of himself. Why limit man to a Christian brotherhood? I myself, I could belong to the sweetest Christian-brotherhood one day, and ride after Attila with a raw beefsteak for my saddle-cloth, to see the red cock crow in flame over all Christendom, next day.

One must love disorder and love order, hate order and hate disorder. Yet, here is where I disagree with the Greeks and all the other Golden Meaners—there is no such thing as a Golden Mean in Life. It is only by welcoming the extremes of one's personality, tempering those extremes only—assuming of which I'm not certain that life here is better than life-after-death—tempering those extremes only

add rule

by the knowledge that one must not be destroyed by them, that one goes on, one grows, one finds creative-destroying fulfillment.

The journal is also a testament of his love for Adele.

Cesposito, w/ The Dear Park

Adele's qualities. She hated the portrait of Elena, it hurt her terribly, she felt it was the way I saw her, yet she accepted it, she loves the book. Part of it of course is her despised image of herself, but more important still is the terrific woman in her who accepts my work no matter how painful it is to her, who is even capable of wishing only the best for it.

Near the end of the journal, he states explicitly what until then he had held back: "[T]oday I can know that I love her because the thought of losing her, through death, through the army [he feared being recalled if war with the Soviet Union broke out], through jail, through whatever, is unbearable to me. A void opens. I know that without her I would be a cripple." Their relationship was far from settled; there was rough ground ahead. But they had reached a plateau.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

Adele recalled his mood swings in early 1955, and the extremes of his personality. At parties, she said, he took pains to include her in conversations, while holding her hand and smiling. "I never felt pushed into the background," she said, "because I was essentially not competitive with him. If anything, I was proud of my darling when he was at his sober, intelligent, funny, best in public." But when he was drinking heavily, he flirted with other women, and got into arguments. Adele says she began to find telephone numbers written down

on matchbooks, and wondered why he had to prove to himself that women liked him. Once, she wrote, when they had an argument in the presence of Dan Wolf, he slapped her. She often drank heavily at parties, trying to drown the "nagging voice in my head that whispered, 'You're an imposter. You're not this cool, beautiful wife of a famous writer.'" The booze freed her, she said to play opposite Mailer's repertoire of roles, including "Rocky Marciano, Jesse James, Miles Davis the Cool and Scott Fitzgerald the Drunk."

His experimentation with personas in "Lipton's" contains extended characterological theories and ruminations arising from his new identity as saint-psychopath. He planned to deploy his ideas in at least three novels: the recently aborted concentration camp novel, "The City of God"; "Antacid-Analgesic," a mammoth novel about sex; a third is a continuation of the stories of Marion Faye and Sergius O'Shaughnessy. None of these came to pass, but their themes would be examined in the essay that established Mailer's reputation as a philosopher of Hip, "The White Negro." The first idea came to him on December 31, 1954: "Wild thought. The atom bomb may naturally have kicked off hipsterism." The link persisted in memory and in the early spring of 1957, he wrote the first sentence of the essay: "Probably, we will never be able to determine the psychic havoc of the concentration camps and the atom bomb upon the unconscious mind of almost everyone alive in these years." The hipster, the American existentialist, he wrote, appeared on "this bleak scene," determined to live in the "enormous present" under the overhang of past totalitarian liquidation and potential nuclear destruction. The prime model for the hipster, Mailer avers, is the urban Negro (Black or African-American were ^{was} not the accepted terms until the mid-1960s). ^{is recorded in his entry to} He may have been the first writer to link the restless ^{and "African-American" until even later} energies and suffering of American Blacks, the atom bomb and the German crematoria.

On January 27, 1955, he introduced a new topic in the journal: the sexual potency of Blacks. He says that "Southern rage" at Negro progress is due to the "unconscious belief in the myth—which may well be right—that the nigger has a happy sex life, happier than the white, and the Negro is recompensed for his low state in society by his high state in the fuck. The scales are balanced." Two years later, he told his idea to a journalist, Lyle Stuart, and Stuart sent it to William Faulkner, Eleanor Roosevelt and several others for comment. The mainly negative responses that came back, and Faulkner's curt dismissal, prompted Mailer to begin "The White Negro." "Lipton's" ^{Journal} would be his source book for the essay, and many passages have their origin there. The idea of the existential "enormous present," for example, is found in the journal, and the following passage, written on February 1, undergirds the entire essay.

Generally speaking we have come to the point in history—in this country anyway—where the middle class and upper middle class is composed primarily of the neurotic-conformists, and the saint-psychos are found in some of the activities of the workingclass (as opposed to the workingclass itself), in the Negro people, in Bohemians, in the illiterates, among the reactionaries, a few of the radicals, some of the prison population, and of course in the mass communication media.

When he realized that he would have to immerse himself in the Putnam's galley^s, he ^{of The Deer Park} ~~realized~~ ^{knew} that he would have to end the journal, and this led to several final recognitions. The regular use of marijuana, followed by sleeping pills and/or scotch and then a lot of coffee would have to stop. If he wanted to write another long work—the journal being "quite unpublishable in its present form"—he would have to plod along without drugs. "Now," he wrote, "I have to take an enormous step, and my capacities may not be equal to it. Still, I don't regret the too-quick

opening, the great take of these past few months. I had to, for my health, and besides one should also try for more, not for less. That's the only real health."

Although he was still focused on the novel, for the first time he began to see that he wanted to try other genres and forms. "I must desert my old obsession" about only writing one thing at a time and take on a variety of projects, "and whenever I feel bored or worn out with one, I must leave it for the next." For the remainder of his career, he would move with little strain from the novel to the essay, newspaper and magazine columns to poetry, plays to biographies, and also glide effortlessly from private labor to public activity—rotating his crops, as he once put it.

Toward the end of the journal, Mailer reflects on several of his salient mental faculties, which, as they developed, resembled Emerson's.

My capacity to do something exceptional comes from the peculiar combination of powerful instincts face to face with my exceptional detachment. I am one of the few people I know who can feel a genuinely powerful emotion, and yet be able to observe it. That is what I must depend on, instead of violating my capacities by trying to make the rational scholarly effort to illumine my understanding of other men's jargons. Instead of poring (pouring) over all the relevant books, and there are five hundred I "ought" to start studying tomorrow, I do better to "waste" time and discover things for myself. The only things I've ever learned have been the things I've discovered for myself.

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An exception to his rule of self-discovery ^{happened} ~~came~~ one night in June 1953 when he was at the Handy Colony in Illinois. Jones had just given him a brief tutorial in Eastern religions, karma and reincarnation. Mailer, then a hard-shell atheist, was somewhat incredulous. "You *believe* in that?" Mailer asked. Jones answered, "Oh, sure. That's the only thing that makes sense." Jones' answer, he said, "rang in my head for years." It opened a shaft to deep waters, and may have been the foundation for what happened on February 25, ¹⁹⁵⁰ In a long entry at the very end of ~~Journa~~ "Lipton's," he describes how on that night he smoked marijuana when he was "already in a state of super-excitation."

I had nothing less than a vision of the universe which it would take me forever to explain. I also knew I was smack on the edge of insanity, that I was wandering through all the mountain craters of schizophrenia. I knew I could come back, I was like an explorer who still had a life-line out of the caverns, but I understood also that it would not be all that difficult to cut the life line. Insanity comes from obeying a hunch—it is a premature freezing of perceptions—one takes off into cloud seven before one has properly prepared the ground, and one gives all to an 'unrealistic' appreciation of one's genius.

This was Mailer's road-to-Damascus experience. His atheism withered and belief took hold, belief in a God who was not all-powerful, an existential God. Writing in 1970, he remembered being "terrified" in that hour when he "first encountered the thought around one of the bends of marijuana fifteen years ago." All of his later ideas had their roots in that moment, he said, although it would be three years before he was able to fully articulate his beliefs.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

Putnam's
 The galley ~~had~~ arrived in early February, but the novel had a June publication date and Mailer doesn't seem to have looked at them except in a cursory way. Accompanying the galley was Ted Purdy's letter with some suggestions for improving the novel, but ruling out a major rewrite. The new deadline for turning in the corrected galley was April 15, but Mailer had given one of his sets with marginal notes to Charles Laughton with the hope of interesting him in a film version of *Naked*. *of The Deer Park* Laughton had been in New York in connection with his film *The Night of the Hunter*, and from February 23 to March 2, 1955 they met daily at the Saint Moritz Hotel to discuss *Naked*. *which Laughton was* He remembered the experience fondly in a 1968 letter to Laughton's widow, Elsa Lanchester. He told her that he had never met a more intelligent or learned actor. "He gave me a marvelous brief education in the problems of a movie director," he said, "as he would explain to me, sometimes patiently, sometimes at the edge of his monumental impatience, how certain scenes which worked in the book just weren't feasible for the movie." When Laughton was having trouble visualizing the characters, he asked *Mailed* him to draw pictures of them. Mailer protested that he lacked the skill, whereupon Laughton said, "Nonsense, Mailer, anybody can draw. You go ahead and do it and that will give me some idea of what you have in your mind that you can't express." Laughton was correct, and Mailer got many new insights about his characters. After a week of work, Laughton said, "'Mailer, let's get the hell out of here, I feel like seeing some art.' And we went over to the Oriental Room of the Metropolitan where he was, of course, well-known, and I was introduced that day to [the Japanese artists] Hiroshige and Hokusai, a pleasure for which I'm still in debt."

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Mailer wrote to Laughton at the end of March asking for the return of the galleys.

Laughton replied by telephone and promised that they would be sent shortly. When the galleys arrived nearly three weeks later, ^{Mailer} he went to work, assuming he would have them done in a few weeks. He dearly wanted to put *The Deer Park* behind him. But what he discovered as he began was that the voice of his narrator, Sergius O'Shaugnessy, did not match his experience. He sounded more like Fitzgerald's Nick Carraway, a Princeton graduate, than a young man who had been brought up in an orphan asylum, scuffled through adolescence and early manhood, and earned his first lieutenant's silver bars flying a score of combat missions over Korea. The only course was to begin "ripping up the silk of the original syntax" and give O'Shaugnessy a more aggressive tone, a more colloquial voice, one that matched his hardscrabble background.

When planning *The Deer Park* four years earlier, Mailer ^{had been} was a different person. At that time, before suffering through the reviews of *Barbary Shore* and the ensuing doubts about his vocation; before meeting Adele and Lindner; before beginning to seriously smoke marijuana while conducting a self-analysis in "Lipton's"; before jettisoning lingering pieties about the literary establishment and catching a glimpse of a vertiginous universe; before identifying more closely with his father's rebellious ways; prior, in short, to his rebirth as a psychic outlaw, Mailer resembled in more ways than one a sensitive young man. Now he was stronger, more cynical and belligerent, and his new narrator, as he came into focus, was not only a shrewder, more credible observer of Elena's love affair with Eitel and his slow, tragic corruption by Hollywood, he was, Mailer recognized, "an implicit portrait of myself as well." He didn't like the notion of using his own divided psyche as the armature for O'Shaugnessy's. Doing so, he wrote, "was a

psychological violation." But there was no alternative. His editors were getting anxious. They were not happy when he asked that his ^{delivery for the gallery proofs} submission date be pushed back to June 1.

Without drugs, he couldn't write; he needed more than in the past. Along with marijuana, Seconal, booze, coffee and two packs of cigarettes a day, he began taking a tranquilizer, Miltown, and a type of amphetamine with the trade name of Benzedrine. Bennies, long used by long-haul truckers and pilots, were a favorite of various Beat Generation figures, Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, most notably. The trick was to find the point at which the drugs balanced out and he could write for an hour or two. "[B]ombed and sapped and charged and stoned," he lurched forward through May, feeling as tired as he had when on patrols in Luzon. He missed the June submission date and negotiated a final, drop-dead date of August 1, which pushed publication to mid-October. He knew that further delay would destroy any chance of good fall sales. ^Q Somehow ^Q working through a very hot summer in New York, he managed to meet the deadline. Then he drove up to Provincetown with Adele to unwind. There he slept, swam and shed some of the drugs while waiting for ^{further} page proofs. He also began reading Thomas Mann's multi-layered, symbolic novel, *The Magic Mountain* (1924) which, he said, "lowered *The Deer Park* down to modest size in my brain." He finished ^{final} revisions and sent them off on August 15. A week later, back in New York, he took one more look and decided on one more change. With the addition of still another drug—mescaline—to his pharmacopeia, he re-wrote the last page of the novel, the conclusion of O'Shaugnessy's imagined conversation with God about the relationship of sex and time. The cryptic lines continue to puzzle readers: God tells him to "think of Sex as Time, and Time as the connection of new circuits." He wrote to Lindner about the mystical effects of using mescaline. "Truly Bob," he said, "it was a little like entering paradise." In "The

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Mind of an Outlaw," Mailer says that the novel's ending is the only good writing he had ever done while stoned, although it has bewildered readers for 50 years.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

In a pattern that he would follow for the rest of his life, Mailer wrote to almost no one during the final sprint. But as soon as the novel was finished, he sent out a stream of letters to family and friends. Writing to Uncle Dave and Aunt Anne, he announced that ^{the book} it would be published on October 14. He added that ^{he and Adele} ~~they~~ had purchased two standard poodles, Tibo (who "looks like the black sheep") and Zsa Zsa (who would be the mother of their 34 pups). He became inordinately fond of Tibo's intelligence and verve. He once said that the variety of intelligent sounds made by Tibo convinced him that the dog was close to speaking. He included one more piece of information: he was a silent partner in a new weekly newspaper in Greenwich Village, the *Village Voice*. Ed Fancher was to be the publisher and Dan Wolf the editor.

It became clear by the end of August that Laughton had lost interest in the film version of *Naked*, and Paul Gregory would now be the lead producer. Mailer suspected that the script was already written. With time on his hands, and feeling somewhat rested, he began dropping in at the *Voice*'s offices on Greenwich Avenue. Because of the sale of *Naked*, he was comparatively wealthy at the time. According to the 1955 financial statement prepared by Barney (the *Voice*'s first accountant), Mailer's net worth at the end of 1955 was \$108,270, most of it invested in stocks and bonds. He had put \$5,000 into the paper for a 30 percent share. Wolf and Fancher also had 30 percent shares; the remaining 10 percent was owned by ^{Cy Rimbarr} ~~Mailer's cousin Cy~~, who drew up

the corporation papers. Mailer took credit for inventing the name, although others remembered that he had selected it from a list of proposed titles.

His focus in the early fall of that year was not the ^{*The Village*} ~~the~~ *Voice*, however. Advancing the fortunes of *The Deer Park* was his first priority. Around the beginning of September he began sending out inscribed copies in the hope of reaping some responses that could be used, if not for the jacket, then for advertisements. He mailed off copies to Philip Rahv and Alberto Moravia, who he knew fairly well, and to Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly and Ernest Hemingway, who he didn't know at all. Brando got a copy and a note saying ^{*Mailer*} ~~he~~ had learned from his work and thought Brando could learn from the novel. Others went to friends: Malaquais, Jones and Styron, Dan and Rhoda (née Lazare) Wolf and Fancher, Howe, Hellman, Lillian Ross, Harvey Breit, Dwight Macdonald, ^{*Vance*} ~~Bourjaily~~, and perhaps Vidal. He asked ^{*Mickey*} ~~Knox~~, pointedly, to give his best wishes to Vidal in Hollywood.

He pinned his highest hopes on Hemingway, as he later wrote: "I could not keep myself from thinking that twenty good words from Ernest Hemingway would make the difference between half-success and a breakthrough. He would like the book, he would have to—it would be impossible for him not to see how much there was in it." But Mailer was angry at himself for begging, "for stealing a trick from the Hollywood I knew so well," and undercut himself with the inscription on the copy he mailed to Hemingway in Cuba. In *Advertisements*, he gives the disastrously qualified inscription.

To Ernest Hemingway

—because finally after all these years I am deeply curious to know what you think of this. ~~But~~ ^{El-60+} if you do not answer, or if you answer with the kind of crap you use to answer unprofessional writers, sycophants, brown-nosers, etc., then fuck you, and I will never attempt to communicate with you again.

—and since I suspect that you're even more vain than I am, I might as well warn you that there is a reference to you on page 353 which you may or may not like.

Norman Mailer

The reference concerns a bullfighting novel that O'Shaugnessy, having left California and now teaching bullfighting in the Village, is trying to write. It wasn't very good, he admits, because it "was inevitably imitative of that excellently exiguous mathematician, Mr. Ernest Hemingway." The book came back ten days later, unopened. He pondered the various possibilities: that it was a bad address; that all unsolicited books were returned; ^{apparently} that Mary Hemingway interceded; that Hemingway read the novel but was uncertain what to say and punted; or that he had read the inscription and said to himself, "If you want to come on that hard, Buster, don't write words like 'deeply curious'," mailed it back ^{Hemingway's letter} "and started to drink fifteen minutes early that day." Four years later, probably at the urging of George Plimpton, Hemingway sent a hand-written letter to Mailer, thanking him for sending the novel. He said he ^{later bought a copy and} had read it while laid up from an illness or injury and had liked it, even though it had "shitty reviews." He went on to encourage Mailer and gave him this advice on reviews: "Try for Christ sake not to worry about it so much. All that is poison. Remember only suckers worry. You can't write, fuck or fight if you worry. That doesn't mean not to think. This [is] all that I can tell you

that might be any use." Hemingway's encouragement would have been welcome in 1955; Mailer was indeed worried. His effort to gain encomia from established novelists and critics, and from Brando, "ended in fiasco," he said.

The only one who answered him was Moravia, who said that it had Mailer's "usual qualities of vitality, aggressiveness, sincerity and naiveness," but it was too long. O'Shaugnessy, he said "has no function (I mean dramatic function) and therefore one feels that he is not necessary." The novel, he says, would have been much improved if he had written the book in the third person and focused on the affair of Elena and Eitel. Mailer's narrator—"a duplicate of yourself," he correctly ~~concludes~~ ^{concludes} ~~surmises~~ ⁱⁿ, could be cut out entirely.



Mailer was not the first American writer ^{to} to be interviewed on the occasion of a book's publication. But few sought or embraced such publicity with the ^{his} same avidity. Over the course of his career, he was interviewed over 700 times, surely a record ^{for a writer}. In 1955, however, interviews with writers were far less common than in the years following the revamping, by the editors of the *Paris Review*, of the form into a well-edited collaboration, rather than a confrontation, or a search for authorial gaffes. For *The Deer Park*, he appears to have set up interviews with Martha MacGregor, the book editor of the *New York Post*, and with Lyle Stuart, editor of the muckraking monthly ^Q *Exposé* (later called *The Independent*). He struck back at Stan Rinehart in the MacGregor interview, telling the story of how he responded when the publisher said he didn't feel he could put his name on *The Deer Park*. "I said, 'Why Stanley, I'm deeply shocked. How dare you say something like that after publishing *A House Is Not a Home*,'" a reference to

Polly Adler's bestselling 1953 memoir about her career running Mafia-connected brothels in Manhattan and elsewhere. The Stuart interview, which Mailer gave "with a couple of drinks in me and a good drag or two of pot," appeared in late November when *The Deer Park* had climbed to number six on the bestseller list, is his first major interview, and his first conscious attempt to shape his public image. He states that he believes in God, but it is "a very personal faith," and he wants no connection with religious institutions; he defines himself as a "Marxian anarchist, a contradiction in terms," but one which gives breathing space to both extremes of his personality; he says he thinks "once in a while of becoming the president," but says that "politics as politics interests me less today than politics as part of everything else." He is also blunt about his ambition to be "a really great writer," an artist whose role is "to be as disturbing, as adventurous, as penetrating as his energy and courage make possible," a line which will be quoted many times over the decades. Mailer qualifies, but never backs away from any of these aspirations, except running for president. He settles for mayor of New York.

By publication day, the novel was in its third printing. Mailer began sending advertising copy to Putnam's, quoting from the MacGregor interview and the early reviews. He suggests the same technique used for *Barbary Shore*: alternating positive reviews with negative ones, raves with stink bombs. The *New York Times*' Orville Prescott called it "a thoroughly nasty book," but Malcolm Cowley, a friend of Hemingway and chronicler of the "Lost Generation" said it was "the serious and reckless novel on the movie colony that we have been waiting for since Scott Fitzgerald failed to finish *The Last Tycoon*." Several newspaper ads and bookstore flyers quoted this comment, and the novel went into its fourth and fifth printings. As expected, *Time* panned it, comparing it to the sleazy scandal magazine, *Confidential*. Putnam's spent \$10,000 on

advertising, a very high sum for the period. Overall, the reviews leaned toward the negative, especially outside of the biggest cities.

The most important advertisement for the novel, however, was not paid out of this budget. Appearing in the fourth weekly issue of the *Village Voice* on November 16 was a half-page ad designed and paid for (\$127.50) by Mailer. Under the headline: "All over America 'THE DEER PARK' is getting nothing but RAVES," he arrayed 15 negative blasts, all attributed. A sample: "The year's worst snake pit in fiction," "sordid and crummy," "moronic mindlessness," "nasty," "unsavory," "dull," and in large letters at the bottom: "A BUNCH OF BUMS." It was my way of announcing, he said, "that I no longer gave a dog's drop for the wisdom, the reliability, and the authority of the public's literary mind, those creeps and old ladies of vested reviewing." He thought the ad might sell some books, and it may have, as the novel remained in sixth place through the end of November. In the end, however, he would have lost his bet with Alfred Knopf. When all the returns were in, the novel had sold just under 50,000 copies, an estimable number, but an order of magnitude less than the number *Naked* sold.

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In his memoir *New York in the Fifties*, Dan Wakefield recalled the mood of the Village during the mid-fifties. "Our generation," he said,

that decade

needed the Village and all it stood for as much as the artists, writers, and rebels of preceding generations—maybe even more. If the mood of the country was to force everyone to conform, to look and dress like the man in the gray flannel suit, surely it was all the more important to have at least one haven where people were

not only allowed but expected to dress, speak, and behave differently from the herd. This was a time when a beard might be regarded as a sign of subversion.

When he saw that *The Deer Park* was not going to have extraordinary sales, ^{Mailer} he began "to feel the empty winds of a post-partum gloom." He was in no condition for the kind of monastic seclusion needed to write a thousand-page novel. His self-analysis was still underway and the ideas of his journal were still percolating. He wanted to vent, preach and howl. "At heart," he said, [✓] "I wanted a war." The members of the generation described by Wakefield would be the recruits for his army. Mailer gave himself a new name: "General Marijuana," and for the first time, began referring to himself in the third person:

Drawing upon hash, lush, Harlem, Spanish wife, Marxist culture, three novels, victory, defeat, and draw, the General looked over his terrain and found it a fair one, the Village a seed-ground for the opinions of America, a [✓] cross-roads between the small town and the mass-media. Since the General was nothing if not Hip (in the self-estimation of his brain) he was of course aware that the mind of the Village was a tight sphincter, ringed with snobbery, failure, hatred and spleen.

He made many suggestions about how the ^{✓ voice} paper should develop, but Fancher and Wolf rejected them. In a late interview, Mailer drew quick portraits of his partners. He had met Wolf first, through Malaquais, in 1948.

He was everybody's guru. We'd all go to him with our problems, our thoughts and so forth. One of his best friends [Ed Fancher] was a psychoanalyst, and I had a hunch that the psychoanalyst even listened to Dan because he had a huge

knowledge of psychoanalysis, and a huge sense of people and could have been a psychoanalyst, but hated the profession and considered himself in a funny way superior to it [. . .] he was very private; he was very dissatisfied with his life. He wanted power; he had none. He was this quiet man with this wise sad smile, who was an absolute intensity of unsatisfied desires within. It had to do with prominence and prestige. He knew that he was brighter than anyone around and he wasn't getting enough for it.

Fancher, who ^m~~X~~ Mailer met through Wolf, had one quality that was "extraordinary."

He was like a lineman in football who could take fifty hits in a game and still be standing at the end of the game, still ready to tackle anybody who was trying to come ~~X~~ though his hole. And so he had that kind of strength. Dan had the wiliness of a great quarterback who never wanted to be intercepted, never wanted to hand the ball off to anyone wrong, who never wanted to call a play that wasn't going to work. Very cautious, but occasionally daring. So the two of them had skills that complemented one another.

Wolf and Fancher had much to learn about running a newspaper, although they recognized that for it to succeed they needed advertising, and to get that, the paper had to appeal to several publics. For the old-time Irish and Italian residents of the Village, there had to be copy about church, social and political organizations. For the younger crowd, stories were needed about the cultural scene—poetry readings, foreign films, jazz and folk music. And there had to be some hard news. The headline of the lead story of the first issue on October 26 was "Village

Trucker Sues Columbia;" there was little in the early issues to distinguish the *Voice* from its competitor, the *Villager*. In its first four months, the paper was quite bland. It was also hemorrhaging money, \$1,000 a week. At the end of the year, Mailer loaned the paper \$10,000.

Fancher and Wolf could hardly refuse Mailer when he proposed himself as a weekly columnist. They expected his column, "Quickly: A Column for Slow Readers," to be "radical and abrasive," Fancher said, and generate a bit of controversy. They had no inkling of how deliberately abusive it would be. Writing to Chester Aaron shortly after starting the column, Mailer said that he should have lived in the previous century, "what with épater le bourgeois being the dominant passion of my life." In his notes for *Advertisements*, written in 1958, he recalled his motives for the column: "I really had the notion that the Village was going to dig what I did—that the results would be apocalyptic—we would see that a hero had appeared in the breach, any one of us (myself of course), but that the swindle was finally to be made apparent." The first column, ~~written in the second person plural, and containing~~ ^{accompanied by} his photograph in the kind of lumberjack shirt that Kerouac would later wear in public, with tousled hair and a surly look, appeared on January 11, 1956.

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He begins by stating baldly that the column will not be well written. To do so would require the expenditure of too much effort on a lost cause: trying to please the snobs and critics that abound in the Village, ambitious people whose lack of fulfillment only makes them "more venomous. Quite rightly. If I found myself in your position, I would not be charitable either. Nevertheless, given your general animus to those more talented than yourselves, the only way I see myself becoming one of the more cherished positions of the Village is to be actively disliked each week." The column, he notes, took him an "unprofitable fifty-two minutes" to write.

His maiden effort brought a handful of irritated letters, including a sarcastic one from Joe Jensen of Banks Street stating his hope that "Quickly" would keep Mailer from writing another novel. Mailer now recognized his task was to divert the anger onto "more deserving subjects." In the next column, he attacked the hypocrisy of the mass media. Much of the column was a redaction of reflections in "Lipton's" on these topics. He called himself a "dialectical idealist," one who sought to improve society by attacking shibboleths like the abhorrence of obscenity. "For what are obscenities finally," he asked, "but our poor debased gutturals for the magical parts of the human body." The column might have gone down fairly smoothly, but he undercut it by adding a preface telling slow readers to skip the column and urging those who did read it to "have the courtesy to concentrate. The art of careful writing is beginning to disappear before the mental impotence of such lazy audiences as the present one."

After this column, the number of angry and dismissive letters from readers increased. Jensen attacked Mailer for imitating Dos Passos in "your ONE & ONLY BOOK," and comparing the column to "the very overworked, tired, boring, creaky, mimeographed Henry Miller." The tone of the rest of the letters is captured in one from Phyllis Lind: "This guy Mailer. He's a hostile, narcissistic pest. Lose him." He's the kind of character, she said, "who moves into a nice neighborhood and can't stand the warmth and harmony, so he does all in his power to disrupt it." Reading this, Mailer must have said, "Exactly!" It was, as he said later in *Advertisements*, "blitzkrieg."

The column went on for 17 weeks. Mailer tried everything. He parodied the major gossip columnists and turned the column over to a Village wag for a parody of "Quickly" titled "Burp: A Column for People Who Can Read by Normal Failure." He celebrated three iconoclastic

comedians—Steve Allen, George Gobel and Ernie Kovacs—and debated the merits of psychoanalysis with a practitioner. About halfway through the run, Mailer began including letters from readers and his responses. When someone complained about his egotism, he replied: "Let others profit by my unseemly absorption, and so look to improve their own characters." He ran a contest, offering \$20 to anyone who could guess his candidate ~~Hemingway~~ ^{Hemingway} for President in the 1956 election (one reader did). In his next column, he elaborated on Hemingway's credentials: physical courage, a good war record and the charm of appearing to have had "a good time now and again." He also replied at length to another nasty letter from his

Village bête noir, Jensen, who had complained about his "congenital or rigged up ostentation."

In late February, Robert Lindner died of congestive heart disease. He was 41. Mailer lauded his boldness and intelligence in his March 7 column, and also called him "one of the warmest people I have ever known." But he said that Lindner would have hated a "facile eulogy," and so devoted the rest of the column to quotations from his work, including one from Lindner's final book, *Must You Conform?*, published a few weeks before his death. Lindner's study reflects his collaboration with Mailer on "Lipton's," as well as his own longstanding belief that current psychology practice falsely held that "human development is linked to human passivity." He ends the column with his own comment on Lindner's legacy: "Because of the instinct of rebellion, man has never been content, finally, with the limits of his life: it has caused him to deny death and to war with mortality. Man is a rebel. He is committed by his biology *not* to conform, and herein lies the paramount reason for the awful tension he experiences today in relation to Society."

Mailer was obviously saddened by Lindner's death. But he felt something else, as he explained when he neared his own death.

I talked to him on the phone one day and he said 'There's nothing they can do; I'm going to die.' And he burst into tears. And I was so cold and so full of anger at where we'd gotten, and when I look back, it was one of the most unpleasant moments in my life. I didn't feel a fucking thing for him. I felt contempt that he was weakened. You see, my feeling was: 'We're soldiers and if we die, we die.' I have that feeling now; it's a lot easier now, I can assure you. But I remember not being sympathetic. Going through the dull motions of being sympathetic, the way one does when one's not there with a friend, but not really giving him what he needed. And I didn't believe he was going to die. And then, some weeks later, he died. And that was one of the great blows of my life because I couldn't believe it. And then I felt woe, and then I felt contrition. And then I remember at his funeral, his memorial service, I remember speaking and talking about him, and creating a sensation at the memorial service because I was talking about all his many wonderful qualities, and I said, 'And on top of all that, he was a rogue.' 'Whohooohoo' went through the audience at the memorial service. There's his wife, his widow and all. But it was true.

A line from "The White Negro" may help us to understand what prompted him to blurt out what he did at the memorial: "[T]he psychopath knows instinctively that to express a hidden impulse actively is far more beneficial to him than to confess the desire in the safety of a doctor's room."

Truth telling would always be paramount for Mailer, whatever the cost. By his logic, he was honoring Lindner with his candor.

He changed the title of his column to "The Hip and the Square" not long after Lindner's death. The passing of his friend drove him back to his journal where he found the materials to begin creating a philosophy of Hip. He was also seriously reading Sartre for the first time, and exploring in his column what he felt were the profound differences between European and American existentialism. Both were the products of alienation from the conditions of twentieth century existence. Both were premised on the inalienable freedom of the self and rejected tradition and authority. Both had leftist inclinations. Both were concerned with decoding the involutions of consciousness—sensory perceptions, intuitions, motives and *frissons*. As Mailer put it a few years later, Sartre "had a dialectical mind good as a machine for cybernetics, immense in its way, he could peel a nuance like an onion." But Sartre and his followers were "alienated beyond alienation from their unconscious" and "its enormous teleological sense." Hip, he wrote in his penultimate "Quickly" column, "is based on a mysticism of the flesh." According to Mailer, Hip had faith in the possibility of personal spiritual transcendence, as yet undefined; most continental existentialists dismissed the idea of an afterlife.

Throughout his ~~entire~~ tenure as a columnist, Mailer's relations with the staff were tense at best. He berated them for a lack of boldness and for missing opportunities. For example, he wanted to run interviews with criminals, a murderer, perhaps. He was particularly incensed at proofreading and typesetting errors in his column, and when ^{an editor} Tallmer substituted "nuisance" for "nuance" in a column that he, as usual, had turned in late, Mailer screamed at him over the telephone: "WHY DON'T YOU GET YOUR FINGER OUT OF YOUR ASS?" At one point,

Wolf, who was usually quiet and detached, yelled back at him: "For a socialist, you're acting like the worst capitalist in the world." ~~Palmer~~ ^{agreed saying,} "He was like a cartoon boss, beating the

slaves."

The shouting matches intensified and Mailer resigned. The final straw, he said in his farewell, were the typos in all but two of his columns. But the deeper cause, he argued, was that Wolf and Fancher wanted the *Voice* to be "more conservative, more Square," and he wanted it to be more Hip. Wolf and Fancher were working long days just to get the paper out, and had no ^{desire} ~~inclination~~ to revamp it. Mailer thought the ^{newspaper} ~~Voice~~ "should be very radical, full of sex and drugs," Wolf recalled. ⁶¹² He didn't think the paper would make it, Wolf said, "so it should go out in a blaze of glory like a firecracker." Wolf and Fancher believed that there was room for two community newspapers in the Village, while Mailer scorned the idea. He thought the *Voice* should distinguish itself from the *Villager* by publishing sharp critiques of a society that was smothering creativity, ⁶¹³ instead of civilized commentary on New York politics, cheery neighborhood vignettes and listings for French films. He noted, however, that his column had never been edited or censored. He retained a minority shareholder stake in the *Voice* for over a decade, and after a three-year hiatus, began writing occasional pieces for it.

^{when Mailer resigned,}
Letters of regret poured in. The *Voice* printed eight of them. Seven were positive. The negative letter said the *Voice* was "richer for the loss of the castrated bellow of N. Mailer." The final letter was from a reader who had changed his mind:

To Mr. Mailer:

Let me say that I am extremely sorry your May 2 column is your final one. In all your columns, while some were damned aggravating (and why shouldn't they have been), what you did say, in essence, when the decorations were dismissed, and when the chips were down, was true and truly strong and original to read.

Sincerely,

Joe Jensen, Banks Street

A half century later, reflecting on his first stint as a columnist, Mailer said that once Wolf realized that the Village was on the edge of social change,

that it was open and angry and wanted stuff, once he saw that my notion of it had not been incorrect, he went with it, and probably proceeded with vastly more wisdom than I would have. I would have wrecked it all over again in a few months because I was a wild man. I wanted the revolution to come; I wanted blood in the streets; I wanted the whole thing to start, and of course Dan would have been opposed and we would have been fighting all over again.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

As his active involvement with the *Voice* began to wind down, Mailer took the advice he had given himself in his journal, and cast about for new projects. "I had mad ideas," he said later, and became "very curious" about the next stage of his own development. "You start making all sorts of experiments. I put myself in a laboratory." There ^{were} ~~are~~ times, he wrote to Knox, ^{Mick} "when I have to crack up a little or else I'll crack up big." He and Adele had discussed a trip to Europe

for some time, and he wrote to Malaquais to make arrangements for what would be a ten-week trip that summer.

Although he was dismayed by the idea of starting a novel before he had recovered from the strains of *The Deer Park*, he began thinking about a short story that would eventually become part of "the big novel," as he would soon refer to it. Sergius O'Shaugnessy was by now a comfortable avatar, and "The Time of Her Time" is an account of his orgasmic struggles with a young woman, Denise Gondelman, set in the Village loft where he runs a bullfighting school by day and offers sexual therapy by night. He planned to include the story in a paperback collection consisting of his *Dissent* essays, *Voice* columns plus some new material. His most momentous idea is first noted in a letter to Irving Howe. He asked if *Dissent* might be interested in an essay "on the philosophy of the hipster, because I think there are certain things in the ambiance of hipsters which should be interesting to radicals since the hipster, after all, is a new kind of underground proletariat and one which does cut across classes." He said that the idea was "most provisional," but given the conscientious probing of his psyche over the previous 18 months, his heroic aspirations, and the coalescing of his new theology, writing "The White Negro" in this season of his life now seems to have been inevitable.

Just before they left for Paris on May 15, he and Adele went to see the acclaimed Broadway production of Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot*. In his May 2 column where he announced he was leaving the paper, he had dismissed the play, while admitting that he had neither read nor seen it. The reviews of *Godot* had led him to conclude that Beckett, unlike his friend and countryman James Joyce, saw humanity as hapless, powerless. "So I doubt if I will like it," Mailer had written, "because finally not everyone is impotent, nor is our final fate, our

human condition, necessarily doomed to impotence, as old Joyce knew, and Beckett I suspect does not." Then he read the play, and then he and Adele went to see it. The power of Beckett's vision was clear. On the ride home from the theater, he was depressed and made more so when Adele said, "Baby, you fucked up." He got up the next morning, and "finally putting together what he had learned in seventeen weeks," wrote a three-thousand-word *mea culpa*, and paid the *Voice* to publish it.

His essay, "A Public Notice on Waiting for Godot," printed partially in tiny agate font, and taking up one full page of the *Voice*'s May 9 issue, is more than just an apology, however. He gives a very competent summary and analysis of the play, and then, toward the end, amplifies the theological ideas he had been mulling since encountering them "in the bends of marijuana" a year earlier. Either "consciously or unconsciously," Mailer says, Beckett is saying that "God's destiny is flesh and blood with ours," that the Deity is not a distant, all-powerful Jehovah, but a God who is "determined by man's efforts, man who has free will and can no longer exercise it and God therefore in bondage to the result of man's efforts." Mailer wished to recruit and lead an army that would storm the redoubts of liberal caution and bourgeois prudishness to free God.

From the time Mailer began "Lipton's," he had been dipping into Martin Buber's *Tales of the Hasidim* (1947), reading snippets as he was "riding the electric rail of long nights on marijuana." In the two-volume collection, Buber (1878-1965), an internationally known philosopher, scholar and religious existentialist, clarified and organized the oral teachings of the Hasidic movement, beginning with the founder Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer (1700-60). The Hasidim, it will be remembered, were opposed by a more scholarly sect, the *Misnagdim*, children of the *Haskalah*, the Jewish Enlightenment, favored by Mailer's grandfather. Buber "hulled" the most

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telling anecdotes of the Hasidic masters "from the mass of the irrelevant" for his collection. The Rabbi ben Eliezer, known as the Baal Shem Tov, or Master of the Good Name (for his knowledge of how to employ the secret names of God), and his followers over several generations were revered as charismatic teachers, or *zaddikim*. These spiritual masters claimed to the power to discern, intermittently, the divine emanations surrounding humanity and, in indirect ways, to communicate with God. The *zaddikim* taught with parables and metaphors of the homeliest sort, but leavened with humor, as in the following, which Mailer quoted:

The Fear of God: Once Zusya prayed to God: 'Lord, I love you so much, but I do not fear you enough! Lord, I love you so much, but I do not fear you enough! Let me stand in awe of you like your angels, who are penetrated by your awe-inspiring name.' And God heard his prayer, and his name penetrated the hidden heart of Zusya as it does those of the angels. But Zusya crawled under the bed like a little dog, and animal fear shook him until he howled: 'Lord, let me love you like Zusya again!' and God heard him this time also.

He did not write about Buber's collection until 1962, but its influence is apparent in the Beckett essay. The *Tales*, he said, became his vehicle in the mid-1950s "for a small intellectual raid into the corporate aisles of modern theology," and a point of departure for his opposition to Sartrean existentialism. Henceforth, Mailer's apprehension of the invisible universe would be a subtle/ but steady presence in his thinking and writing, although it was rarely taken seriously by his readers, or barely noticed, for several years.



He ended his essay, "~~A Public Notice on Waiting for~~<sup>on</sup> Godot," by arguing that Beckett's work could mark the end of ten years of "angry impotence," referring to the anxieties of the postwar period. While he was not a great admirer of the likely Democratic presidential candidate, Adlai Stevenson, he had significantly less regard for President Eisenhower, who he thought, ~~incorrectly~~, might not be re-elected. His guarded optimism in the summer of 1956 led him to hear "the whispers of a new time coming. There is a universal rebellion in the air, and the power of the two colossal super-states may be, yes, may be ebbing." If that proved true, then "the creative nihilism of the Hip" might usher in a revolution, "the sexual revolution one senses everywhere"—from the suggestive jokes of TV comedians to the "growing power of the Negro." Thus, in his final piece in the *Voice*, he links Black power with sexual emancipation at a time when both were only dimly perceived—and not in tandem—on the cultural horizon. Mailer's essay on *Waiting for Godot* is the prologue to "The White Negro," and his advertisement for himself as the philosopher-general of Hipsterism.



According to Adele, Mailer was somewhat relaxed on the crossing on the S.S. *United States of America*. They drank and fought less than they had during the previous few months. Once in Paris, they regularly visited the Montparnasse apartment of Jean Malaquais. It was there that Mailer met James Baldwin, a writer who would influence and later challenge his ideas about Black sexuality. The Harlem native was already an acclaimed writer and, with Ralph Ellison, considered to be one of the most talented and promising postwar African-American writers. In 1953, he published a novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*, about the role of religion in Black America, based on his own experience as a teenage preacher in a revivalist church in Harlem. He

followed this with a collection of autobiographical essays, *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), that solidified his reputation as a leading commentator on racial issues. One of the essays sharply criticizes *Native Son* (1940), the masterwork of another African-American Paris expatriate, Richard Wright. Baldwin was seen to be clearing a place for himself.

Meeting Mailer gave Baldwin the opportunity to measure himself against a writer whose ambition matched his own. "Jimmy had an absolutely wonderful personality in those years," Mailer told James Campbell, Baldwin's biographer. "I don't think there was anyone in the literary world who was more beloved than Jimmy. He had the loveliest manners." Baldwin remembered it this way: "[T]wo lean cats, one white and one black, met in a French living room. I had heard of him, he had heard of me. And here we were, suddenly, circling around each other. We liked each other at once, but each was frightened that the other would pull rank." They were about the same age, both were New Yorkers, both had published three books. Mailer was somewhat more famous and considerably wealthier. Baldwin said his chief credentials were being Black and knowing more about the "periphery," the mean streets of Harlem. He didn't know that Mailer was already thinking about an essay premised, in part, on the superior sexual prowess of Blacks, but he did know that "to be an American Negro male is also to be a kind of walking phallic symbol."

who was gay  
Baldwin had come to Paris to escape prejudice against Blacks and homosexuality. Mailer, deeply curious as usual, wanted to discuss both, as well as jazz, Harlem, criminals, books, everything. When they met, Baldwin had just concluded an unhappy affair with a Swiss man, and was in no mood to discuss matters that verged on his intimate relations. He also saw that Mailer accepted the "myth of the sexuality of Negroes," and so he "chickened out" of what he

thought would be an excruciating attempt to challenge Mailer's ideas. Instead, he socialized with the Mailers—he could drink as much as Mailer—and after a few weeks left for Corsica. He had no inkling of his new friend's roiled state, his addictions and career anxieties. Mailer's public visage prevailed, and Baldwin's chief memory of that time in Paris was of "Norman—confident, boastful, exuberant, and loving, striding through the soft Paris nights like a gladiator."

Baldwin hid his despair over his failed affair from the Mailers. He was working on a novel, *Giovanni's Room* (1956), a bold study of violence and homosexuality set in Paris, but was having difficulty finishing it. Nights after leaving the Mailers at the Hôtel Palais Royal, he "wandered through Paris, the underside of Paris, drinking, screwing, fighting—it's a wonder I wasn't killed," he said. Mailer had insomnia and left the hotel in the early morning hours. It would not have been surprising if they had bumped into each other. In a poem about that summer, "A Wandering in Prose: For Hemingway," <sup>Mulier</sup> he begins with the memory of Adele's face ✓ "powder which smells like Paris when / I was kicking seconal and used to / get up at four in the morning and / walk the streets into the long wait / for dawn." He would find himself "at five in an Algerian / bar watching the workers take a / swallow of wine for breakfast, the / city tender in its light even to me / and I sicker than I'd ever been, / weak with loathing at all I had not done." He then recalls her "detestation" of him for not being "nearly brave enough for you." Adele's memory is that Mailer, in withdrawal and "still reeling from *The Deer Park* disaster," was both angry and scared and often took it out on her. "In my own way," she said, "I could fling a lot of shit right back at his face." Mailer, however, put on a good face for Baldwin, Jean and Galy, <sup>Malguais,</sup> and they didn't grasp the tense situation. *state of the Mailers' marriage.*



They rented a car and drove to Munich to meet his German publisher. As they approached the German border, <sup>Adele</sup> she told her husband that her heart was pounding. "Norman laughed, 'Baby, mine is pounding harder. I'm a Jew, you aren't.'" The men in Munich "made much of my dark good looks," she said. "I would overhear words like 'schoene mädchen' in restaurants and elevators. Norman looked pleased." They went from Munich to Buchenwald, which Mailer said he felt obliged to visit. They saw all the horrors. The small oven for children, Adele said, was "most graphic and heartbreaking." He never recorded his immediate response to viewing the camp, but his memories of the visit, deeply lodged, surfaced when he wrote "The White Negro." Back in Paris, Adele found she was pregnant. Mailer told her he knew what night the baby was conceived. They were very happy. Adele said that she "never learned to disentangle myself from his moods," but the pregnancy necessarily changed her focus. She found that the odor of alcohol made her ill. The distaste would continue for the length of her pregnancy and through the period that she nursed the baby. "[H]ow I wish it had stayed that way for the rest of my life," she wrote, referring to her later alcoholism. They left a few weeks later, again on the *United States*. Mailer, sometimes unfeeling about the illnesses of others, was thoughtful and tended her as the morning sickness continued during the crossing.

He had promised Baldwin that he would do all he could to aid the reception of *Giovanni's Room*, which he had read in manuscript. He sent a blurb for the novel to Baldwin's publisher, and on August 16, before heading to Provincetown, he wrote a letter to Francis Brown, editor of the *Times Book Review* offering to review the novel. Brown politely turned him down. Mailer mailed a carbon of his letter to Brown to Baldwin with a note asking him to let them know when he would be back in New York, and Baldwin wrote a warm note from Corsica

thanking Mailer for the "very sweet thing" he'd done. His personal life, he said, "has gone all to pieces. But I imagine I'll recover this winter, if I work hard." They did not see each other for six months, but then their paths crossed often in New York.

Recalling his first meeting, Baldwin said he was "aware of a new and warm presence in my life." His biographer, James Campbell, believes that he saw Mailer as "a partner, an equal, and therefore a lover," and this seems quite possible. Baldwin's preference for sexual relationships with bi-sexual and straight males <sup>was</sup> is well known. He would not be the only gay man who was attracted to Mailer. Their relationship was complex. Campbell summed it up.

What did exist, on both sides and in plentiful supply, was petulance, ego, vanity, impatience with the other's direction and aspirations. There was a considerable amount of mutual respect, but also a feeling on Mailer's side that Baldwin had wasted his substance in Europe, and on Baldwin's that Mailer's much-vaunted theories about Negroes' superior sexuality and elegance amounted to nothing more than a portrait of the noble savage re-drawn. They mirrored, after all, the kind of stereotypes he had been fighting for years. 'Next thing you'll be telling me is that all coloured folks have rhythm!' was one of his favorite rebuffs, borrowed from Richard Wright.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

In September the Mailers visited their friends from Mexico, Lew and Jay Allen in rural Connecticut, where they had recently moved. They liked the area—rolling hills, horse farms, rambling colonial houses and lots of green. With a new baby on the way, the 55<sup>th</sup> Street

apartment seemed small and they decided to move to the country. The presence of the Styrons and John Aldridge and his wife, Leslie, was another factor. George Plimpton, the editor of *Paris Review* and a good friend of both men, said "Norman moved up to Connecticut really because of Bill Styron. They became very close. They're both great conversationalists, great storytellers . . . the kind who sit around the kitchen table until four a.m." The Mailers bought a large house and barn on fifty acres of woods and meadow in Bridgewater, about four miles from the Styrons, and not far from the New York State border. "The house is old," he wrote to Malaquais, "and it smells good as a house, the cellar has the odor of a warm bird's wing." It was bracketed by ancient elms.

One night two weeks before they moved, he took Tibo and Zsa Zsa for a walk at one a.m. When he paused near some doorsteps where three young men—"hoodlums" Mailer called them—were sitting, one of them made a crack about the dogs being queer. Mailer said something back and the man called him queer, which led to a fight. Mailer thought he would win, as he was older and heavier, but the hoodlum gouged his eye in a clinch, "very professionally, I may say," Mailer wrote to Malaquais. They clinched again and he gouged Mailer's other eye.

At that point a whole crowd of people—a gang—poured out of a house (we were fighting on the sidewalk) and some tremendous brute of a character clouted me, and said 'Have you had it?' Well I had had it. I could hardly see, my eyes were bleeding, and I could see myself being beaten to death. So I nodded hopelessly, muttered several times over, 'Yes, I've had it, I've had it,' picked up the dogs from another hoodlum who ironically enough had been holding them during the fight and shambled off.



For a week, he had to stay in a darkened room because of a blind spot in one eye. He told his family that he had an infection. He was pleased with himself for not backing down, and happy that they had bought the Connecticut house before the fight, <sup>he told Malaguasa</sup> "or else I would always have felt that I was fleeing New York in a panic." He gave a briefer version of the story to Baldwin, adding that what was worse than the injury was working up the nerve to walk that street again, which he did.

In his letter to Malaquais, Mailer said he was losing many friends in New York because of his radicalism. "Phone calls don't come in any longer from one's elevated social friends." Mailer, of course, was obstreperous when he drank, and he was drinking a lot, bourbon mainly. The booze sanctioned crazy behavior. He took on accents—an Irish brogue, a British one that resembled Barney's, and the Texas drawl he had learned in the army, his favorite. When Dwight Macdonald asked why he put on these antic dispositions, <sup>he told Macdonald</sup> he said that he lived "in a perpetual stagefright, going to so many parties, and <sup>the other time</sup> that he consciously assumed the accents as a kind of mask." His *Voice* column, his boozing and his sexual freedom platform had checkered his reputation. When he went to parties in the Village, he said, the attitude was that "Satan and his wife had come into the room." With the move to Connecticut his life-long pattern was firmly established: immersion in the "inhuman city with its violence, its coldness, its electric assault on the nerves," and then retreat to the country <sup>and</sup> or Cape Cod.

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In the spring of 1956, the relationship <sup>of</sup> Mailer and Jones <sup>is</sup> was souring; Jones wrote to him that *The Deer Park* was a mistake. He added that "writing a fucking column for the *Village Voice*" was "another serious mistake in judgment." Mailer didn't reply, but when he was in Paris, he drafted a note to Jones.

Dear Jim—this is just to let you know that this is the last line you will get from me until I have read your 1500 page novel [*Some Came Running*]. On which my congratulations. But, if as I fear, you have turned a little chicken since you've written *Eternity*, and this book, for all its size, and I suspect growing skill, is the color yellow, then I will feel obliged to tell you so. Mailer

Having rebuked Jones for being craven without even having seen his novel, Mailer thought better of it and decided not to send the note. Jones had the same impulse. The six-page letter he <sup>had actually</sup> ~~sent to Mailer~~ <sup>mailed</sup> was a second, toned-down draft. The touchdown twins were disappointed with each other, but enough love remained for them to pull their punches. When he was unpacking in the new house in early November, <sup>Mailed</sup> he dropped a note to Styron asking him to remember him to Jones.

<sup>This old friend</sup> Mailer had also had a serious argument with Adeline, and got "boiling mad" at her. At a party at the 55<sup>th</sup> Street apartment, he accused her of believing Adele to be "intellectually shallow and inferior." Perhaps because Mailer saw Adeline as a "brilliant intellectual," as she speculated, he projected his own views about Adele on her. Her insight was on the mark. The truth, Adeline said, was that she had little in common with Adele but had no ill feelings toward her, just the opposite. His harsh words drove her from the party, and they did not speak for some time. He also fought with Fig about Adele. Undoubtedly entwined with Mailer's intuitions about how his friends felt about Adele was their response to *The Deer Park*. Adeline, Aldridge, Malaquais, Fig and Jones all disliked it. The novel's admirers were the ever-loyal Knox, Dan Wolf (from whom he was estranged because of the *Voice*), and Lindner, who was dead. Mailer's friendship with Styron was still intact, however, perhaps because Styron had sugared his criticisms of the novel.



Fifty years after the sexual revolution, court cases overturning anti-obscenity laws, and the fading of facades erected before Hollywood's workaday exploitation and sordidness, the merits of *The Deer Park* are more obvious. It was published at a time of knee-jerk prudishness when even metaphoric descriptions of sexual acts were considered bad taste. As Gay Talese noted in his memoir, *A Writer's Life* (2006), a *New York Times* picture editor lost his job in 1954 "because he permitted the publication of a wedding-day photograph showing Marilyn Monroe and Joe DiMaggio revealing their physical attraction to each other while standing in front of City Hall in San Francisco—she with her head back and her mouth slightly open, and he with his lips puckered and his eyes closed." When Dan Wakefield, speaking with Mailer many years later, noted that *The Deer Park* was the most controversial novel of 1955, he replied, "Anything that dealt openly with sex back then was controversial. The issue of sex was the cutting edge of the new novel of exploration in the fifties. It was the way of going beyond the frontier." Looking at the novel sixty years later, Minton's estimate seems on the mark: there is no better novel of Hollywood in the postwar period, or perhaps any period since. ~~Mailer was ahead of the wave.~~



Once settled in Bridgewater, he set up a gym of sorts in the barn, including a boxing ring. He also had a workshop there. He created a studio with a picture window for Adele in the house's attic, among other projects. In New York he had built a version of Wilhelm Reich's orgone box, a place where he could "scream and snort and bellow and growl and even pipsqueak." In Connecticut, he constructed a variation: a large, polished wooden egg large enough to hold a person in the fetal position. The idea, Adele explained, was to get inside, curl up and be rocked by someone outside. A bongo board was another project, a fat wooden cylinder



with a board on top on which he could balance, roll and swivel. One day when Lew Allen was visiting and Mailer was demonstrating his agility on his customized version, he fell and got a bloody nose. He convinced Allen to go along with the story that the blood came from a punch as they boxed. "Norman was ready to take offense at anything," Allen recalled. His whole nervous system was exposed, and his nerve ends were out on stalks. He was on pot all the time and primed."

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Adele's parents visited them in Connecticut. Her father, Al, a printer at the New York *roman* *Daily News*, in his earlier years had been an amateur fighter. He turned professional briefly and lost half of his 20 matches before retiring. The majority of his fights ended in knockouts. After he gave up boxing, he turned to handball, and played well into his 80s. When Al and Consuela *Morales* arrived, Mailer greeted Al with, "Hiya champ," and they would trade fake punches like old sparring partners. Mailer had again quit smoking and was feeling healthy, although he had ballooned up to 175 pounds. He and Al often put on the gloves and boxed a few rounds. Mailer was twenty years younger, so it is not too surprising that in one of their first matches, he knocked *Al* ~~him~~ down twice. The next time they visited, Al was "very edgy," Mailer remembered, and wanted to box right away. Al landed one on Mailer's chin and knocked him out. As Adele remembers it,

Norman sat up almost immediately shaking his head, rubbing his jaw. He was still groggy as my father helped him up.

'Jesus, young feller, sorry about that.'

Norman was a good sport about the whole thing, and instead of being angry, he admired my father. 'Not bad, Al, for a fifty-four-year old.' He touched his chin. 'That was some punch you landed.'

'Well, Norm,' Daddy said, 'you've got to be on your toes. You should've seen it coming. But that's the way ya learn.'

Mailer did learn and became noticeably better as a boxer over the years. He continued sparring until he was <sup>almost</sup> 60, and was quietly proud of the bruises he gave and took in his grandfatherly years.

He probably had not heard of club fighters before he got to know his father-in-law. In any case, the club fighter's attributes—a consistent level of performance, the capacity to absorb punishment, and the ability to learn from mistakes—coalesced into a touchstone metaphor for <sup>Mailer</sup> ~~him~~. Those who got to know him fairly well, or read his interviews, became accustomed to what he called his "all-purpose expression": "I'm an old club fighter; I get mad when you miss." The compensation for being a club fighter, that is, a fighter whose duty and pride <sup>is</sup> to spar with superior fighters, <sup>is</sup> that you not only enable your opponents to sharpen their skills, you might also learn how to slip a punch by taking one on the chin. Also, by taking certain blows, a boxer (now feeling more combative) can counterpunch, something that Mailer learned to do very well inside and outside the ring. Everyone gains, and sometimes the loser learns the most. Two years later, in the opening essay of *Advertisements for Myself*, he used the trope in a capsule autobiography, one he never relinquished: "I started as a generous but very spoiled boy, and I seem to have turned into a slightly punch-drunk and ugly club fighter, who can fight clean and



fight dirty, but likes to fight." The literary world, as Mailer defined it, was a place of fierce struggle. Painful experience was the soundest guide.

Mailer was now in a fever to fight. Perhaps it was the memory of his eye-gouging in New York, or Al Morales' instruction, or the emerging ideas of "The White Negro"—all of these, no doubt, played a role—but what is clear is that in 1957, he was itching for fisticuffs, with or without gloves. One night at the Styrons, Mailer told Random House publisher Bennett Cerf, who had turned down *The Deer Park*, "You're not a publisher, you're a dentist." They ~~took~~ <sup>went</sup> some swings at each other outside until Styron broke it up. When novelist Chandler Brossard, whom Mailer had met in Mexico, visited, ~~he~~ <sup>Mailer</sup> wanted to box with him. Brossard, who had fought semi-professionally and been trained by the same man who trained Hemingway—another inducement for Mailer—wisely declined, saying someone (meaning Mailer) could get seriously hurt. "Violence and pain are a form of engagement to Norman, of reality," Brossard said. In 1952, Brossard had published one of the first novels about hipsters, *Who Walks in Darkness*, set in Greenwich Village. On the dust jacket, a question is asked: "What is a hipster? The name derives from the jazz term 'hip' and denotes a person who possesses 'superior awareness.'" The lead character is <sup>an African American</sup> a Negro who passes for white. Mailer read the novel and liked it; it most certainly enriched the essay that was percolating in him.

The memories of Mailer fighting and acting out are what many friends and acquaintances of the period remember, but it wasn't all fireworks. For one thing, Susan had joined them for her annual visit shortly before they moved, and she spent a lot of time with her father. She was also fond of Adele and, like any six-year old, deeply interested in the pregnancy. Mailer wrote to a friend that he was "beginning to see himself as the patriarch of a vast family," a premonitory

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remark. As the birth approached, he started writing. He began taking notes for "The White Negro" and also working on a dramatic version of *The Deer Park*. The growing extent of his literary operation can be gauged by the fact that he now had an answering service in New York. Further help came from the Miss Baltimore Agency, a domestic help service that Fan had taken over from her sister Beck in the early 1950s. She supplied maids to her son and his wives for years to come.

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Two weeks before Adele was due, Mailer appeared on a local late-night television program, *Night Beat*, hosted by Mike Wallace. Adele accompanied him in a low-cut black velvet dress. "[S]he looked splendid," Mailer recalled, "and sent out the beauty of her pregnancy like a promulgation of status." He was excited to be on live, "the virgin air," he called it, and believed he might be able to move the million or more people who would watch the show by saying the unsayable with "wit, ~~passion and conviction~~ <sup>conviction, and</sup> conviction." His ideas about the repression in American life might catch fire, "buried sentiments could take life." But to do this he had to hold his ground against Wallace, whose "straight black hair and craggy face gave off a presence as formidable as an Indian in a gray flannel suit." And given his own "massive incapacity to stay cool," this would not be easy. Just before airtime, Mailer took out a flask of gin and poured it into his glass, clearly annoying Wallace.

Wallace asked if he was obsessed with sex in his novels and Mailer answered, yes, most definitely. I see myself, he ~~continued~~ <sup>said</sup>, continuing the work of pioneering novelists such as Henry Miller. When Wallace quoted *Life* magazine's attack on *The Deer Park* for "immorality,

alcoholism, perversion, and political terror," Mailer replied that "only hypocrisy and insincerity are dirty. *Life* magazine is a dirty magazine." He decided to raise the ante. When Wallace quoted a line from one of his columns about the country being run "by men who were essentially women, which indeed is good for neither men nor women," and then pressed for an example, Mailer replied, "Well, I think President Eisenhower is a bit of a woman." He was certain he had scored and "the heart of a million TV sets missed a beat." Wallace's eyes, he recalled, "grew as flat as the eyes of <sup>a movie</sup> ~~a~~ Apache who has just taken a rifle bullet to the stomach." Mailer recalled the moment, writing about himself in the third person.

In the elevator, going down to the street, his wife said, 'Maybe we'll be dead tomorrow, but it was worth it.' It is possible they never had a better moment together. They had been with each other for years, yet always fought in the animal rage of never comprehending one another. On this night, however, with the baby two weeks away, they were ready for one hour, at least, to die together. For once Mailer felt like a hero. In those days saying something bad about Dwight D. Eisenhower was not a great deal less atrocious than deciding Jesus Christ has something wrong with Him.

In 1957, linking timidity with the female gender was a commonplace, and didn't elicit the opprobrium it would a dozen years later, as he would learn. The <sup>immediate fallout</sup> ~~aftermath~~ came several weeks later when he learned that the Eisenhower's press secretary, James Haggerty, called Wallace's office to request a transcript of the program. For the first but not the last time, Mailer had gained the attention of a sitting president.

The baby was born in New York on the evening of March 16. Attesting to their continued friendship, the Mailers asked Jean and Galy to be the godparents. Mailer was certain it would be a boy, but was wrong. Susan suggested the name Danielle, and the middle name, Leslie, according to Danielle, came from the French actress and dancer Leslie Caron. Mailer made a fuss in the delivery room when the nurse began shaving Adele's pubic hair, saying it was unnatural, <sup>to do so</sup> but relented when her contractions got strong. He also tried, and succeeded, in convincing the obstetrician to allow him to stay in the delivery room, something that was considered bizarre in that era. He wrote to Knox to say that he had remained until fifteen minutes before the end, and had "a fantastic experience." The baby had a full head of black hair, he said, and resembled him a bit.

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After the birth, around midnight, he showed up at the apartment of his former sister-in-law, Phyllis Silverman Ott, <sup>5-7 had</sup> who remained in contact with him after he had divorced <sup>and Bea</sup> Bea. In her 2006 memoir, she says that "Norman always loomed like the North Star over me." He was off-center when he arrived, she recalled, because of his "awe at the power of a woman to endure and create, a glorious humiliation that left him feeling unloved." She had told him earlier that she loved him, and he spent the night in her bed. <sup>her</sup> For her, she wrote, it was the fulfillment of her ~~dream to be the lover of a famous man.~~ Being Mailer's lover, she said, made me feel "like I was walking on stilts." A few days later, the Mailers drove back to Connecticut "to begin" as Adele put it, "what I thought would be a new life."

In his letter to Knox about Danielle's birth, Mailer gives a clear sense of his now-heightened feelings about personal violence in the wake of the eye-gouging incident. Knox had



been threatened by a man in Rome, a rival for a woman's affection, and asked for advice. Mailer told him he had to make a stand, even if "he smashes the living shit out of you":

[H]it him where <sup>the</sup> his hair meets the neck, kick him in the balls, kick his shins, stick your fingers in his eyes, jab your finger <sup>tips</sup> against the base of his nose, but don't run, and don't just take it. Now I know this sounds easy to say, but I'm talking from experience because I've had a couple of ugly fights as you know in the last year and I know the difference it makes between fighting and quitting. If you fight, even if you take a bad beating it 1) does not hurt that fucking much while it's going on, and 2) you're left with some fucking dignity—you can actually feel good after a bad losing fight.

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Violence was much on his mind when he sat down at the beginning of April to write "The White Negro." What is sometimes overlooked is the distinction Mailer makes in the essay between the kind of personal violence he describes in his letter to Knox, and collective violence, the violence of the state, which at its most malign leads to concentration camps and the elimination by hideous means of millions of human beings. In Mailer's mind—Reich's influence is apparent—the hipster <sup>stands</sup> stands opposed to the repression of instinctual urges that are noble and natural, a suppression that seems <sup>at</sup> likely to lead, under the threat of nuclear warfare, to a new epoch of Faustian regimes that <sup>world</sup> will wield technology to eliminate opponents, regimes so efficient that Hitler and Stalin <sup>world</sup> will resemble crude bully boys in comparison. Against the emergence of such regimes stands the hipster. This Adamic figure is patterned, in part, after the Negro who

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must often choose between subservience and rebellion; the psychopath, who is in more direct contact with his unconscious than ordinary neurotics; the drug addict, who seeks ecstasy in the absence of community; the jazz musician, whose riffs and glides mimic the rhythms of sex; and the mystic, who lives in "the enormous present." Transcendental spontaneity is the quality they all share. One commentator on Mailer's writing, Joseph Wenke, describes how the hipster's sense of time differs from ordinary clock time.

Each moment fills, becomes more resonant and complex. Correspondingly, one's experience of time slows down. Such an alteration in one's sense of time is a key element of the Hip quest for freedom. It means that one is now able to control the rhythms of one's own experience and live out of what is really a transcendentalist sense that one can recreate one's own identity out of the eternity of the present moment and so escape temporarily from the limits of history. From this subjective standpoint, the future exists only as <sup>a romantic vision</sup> ~~a vision~~ of ever-expanding possibilities merging with one's experience <sup>of freedom</sup> ~~of the~~ present.

Because the essay soars and swoops through such imponderables as time, sex, love, God, courage, extermination and revolution, and is rife with qualifications, extended appositions and restrictive clauses, it is not an easy read. Mailer later admitted that it was "too elliptic." As <sup>commented</sup> ~~As~~ <sup>literary critic</sup> Morris Dickstein has pointed out, Mailer "rarely bothers to distinguish lurid metaphor from literal prescription," and writes a prose that "mingles fact and fiction, social criticism and confession, cultural prophecy and personal therapy." Nevertheless, one cannot help but feel, the seductive energy of the essay—energy, in fact, is its pith and marrow. "The White Negro" is a dithyrambic hymn to energy which pulses in a universe that is not a fact, but "a changing reality

whose laws are remade each instant by everything living, but most particularly man.” “God,” he says, is “energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga’s *prana*, the Reichian’s orgone, Lawrence’s ‘blood,’ Hemingway’s ‘good,’ the Shavian life-force.” This is not the God of organized religion, but the God within “the paradise of limitless energy and perception just beyond the next wave of the next orgasm.” How to achieve it? First, one has to be “ready to go, ready to gamble.”

“Movement is always to be preferred to inaction. In motion a man has a chance, his body is warm, his instincts are quick, and when the crisis comes, whether of love or violence, he can make it, he can win, he can release a little more energy for himself since he hates himself a little less, he can make a little better nervous system, make it a little more possible to go again, to go faster next time. [...].”

The essay’s promise of escape from Eisenhower’s wet blanket helped make it the most discussed American essay in the quarter of a century after WWII. Maligned as much for its obscurity—Baldwin said it was “downright impenetrable”—as it was celebrated for its orphic verve, it is also the most reprinted essay of the era. A generation of young people proudly carried their copies of the *City Lights* edition of the essay, a pamphlet whose cover depicts a reverse negative head shot of an archetypal hipster (rumored at the time to be Paul Newman) with them when they migrated to the awakening cities of the nation. Bored with the timidities of the middle class, the new generation saw the essay as a blast on the trumpet of defiance, a call to radical self-assertion and the fullest sexual experience, even though the hipster milieu that it celebrated was not yet real. As Alfred Kazin astutely pointed out, “The White Negro” “is an attempt to impose a dramatic and even noble significance on events that have not genuinely brought it



forth." Mailer was trying to imaginatively will into being an army of hipster revolutionaries who could bring about an urban utopia.

From its initial publication in *Dissent* in the summer of 1957, through its reprinting in 1959 by City Lights and the same year in *Advertisements*, the essay's most controversial passage drew vigorous rejoinders. It comes after a long peroration on the therapeutic benefits of expressing forbidden impulses, even violent ones, a necessary prelude to self-discipline, community and love. He gives the example of "two strong eighteen-year-old hoodlums" who assault and kill a candy-store keeper. Not much gain here, he says, because the victim is not a physical equal. But, he counter-argues, "courage of a sort is necessary" because the hoodlums are "daring the unknown, and so no matter how brutal the act, it is not altogether cowardly." Numerous commentators on the passage have expressed revulsion for the notion that even a smidgen of approval is given for such a vicious act, cowardly even though it was hypothetical. Mailer was never able to satisfactorily answer such ~~vehement~~ objections, yet he never relinquished his belief that there were morsels of redemptive gain in all risk-taking acts, even when they were criminal. "[I]f one wants a better world," the essay warns, "one does well to hold one's breath, for a worse world is bound to come first." Barbarism, he argued, was preferable to "the cold murderous liquidations of the totalitarian state." He would continue to find things to admire in unsavory individuals, even one who assassinated a president. The essay <sup>was</sup> is a turning point for Mailer, and also, as Dickstein says, "a momentous shift in American literary culture, a turn toward the dark side, the rebellious and the demonic." The sixties were coming.

*Mailer*  
 He discussed the essay with several friends in Connecticut in early 1957. These included *John* ~~Lew~~ and Jay Allen and Aldridge, who had rented the nearby home of Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe, who were in England making a film. Aldridge's wife, Leslie, recently divorced from a young *Esquire* editor, Clay Felker, had known Styron at Duke. *So* that set up what Mailer called "an odd three-way community." Aldridge lived halfway between the two writers and, initially, got along well with both. Aldridge, Mailer recalled, wanted to start "a new Athens in America. It was his idea to get a bunch of intellectuals living out there about 70 miles from New York." Adele remembers thinking that New York was a hard-drinking town, but it was "a kindergarten," she said, compared to the Connecticut scene.

Mailer later recalled the social situation. Styron, he said, was considered by some to be the most talented writer in America. "You can imagine how that hit me." Aldridge was close to Styron, but wanted to get even closer. But Styron "was sort of unhappy about sharing. You know, he was a true southerner—'What I've earned, I've earned, and I'm not eager to deal it out to other people.'" Styron commanded the social scene, Mailer said, "and I began to realize what it is to be a social inferior." *Aldridge* Leslie, "was not a social gift altogether, certainly not in the eyes of Styron." "She was on the make, and obvious. She was never a lady the way Rose [Styron] was, naturally. But compared to Adele, she was pretty slick." Rose, on the other hand,

had great social gifts. She could make anyone feel good in a hurry who came to her house, that kind of thing. Adele was still awkward, doing her best, but rough at the edges whereas Rose just could move and negotiate. All girl, pick up things, pick up the mood here, quiet the mood there. They had a very good social life, a lot of big literary parties. Well scripted. So there was Styron and I, very



competitive as literary men, but he was having a big social life and I was having a small one.

Adele said that for the first year, her husband and Styron got on well, "swapping stories, talking about writing, each being as charming as the other and as drunk as the other. I never saw Bill without a drink in his hand." Adele thought he projected "an air of smug superiority," and that Rose's manner "had a hint of condescension—that is, when she could tear her attention away from my husband." Styron's biographer, James L. W. West III, writes that the evenings the three couples got together "were intense and stimulating, but not especially pleasant." Aldridge spoke with "a ponderous authority" that irritated the others; Styron had "a tendency to stick to superficialities in conversation"; Mailer "was raffish, funny and charming, but he could also be belligerent and confrontational." The men were "ambitious and competitive, all three women were good-looking and sexy." Aldridge's memory is that that while Styron "was originally king of the roost," Mailer "quite quickly became the center of energy."

One evening, Adele recalled, Styron was "going on and on about the colored people this and the colored people that" in a smug manner. She called out to him, banged her fist on the table and said, "I happen to be passing for white, so keep your fucking comments to yourself." After a pause, "someone snickered, and my remark was ignored as the conversation resumed. My husband just grinned at me, raising his glass in a half toast." ~~Aldridge remarked on the Mailers' closeness and their "very strange, combative relationship," and Styron noticed it as well.~~ Mailer said this about ~~it~~ <sup>his relationship with Adele:</sup> "I had a situation where I was Pygmalion; I was someone who could develop someone, and I certainly could develop her, develop her into someone quite special. I had a romance with the idea that she was a member, finally, of the working class and



here was I, this leftist intellectual (via Jean Malaquais), and now finally I had someone from the working class that I, as a middle-class, guarded, sheltered, spoiled individual, could work for and develop." It was a complex marriage: they drank, they experimented sexually, they became parents, they struggled with their art, they had fierce battles, and maintained a tenuous solidarity through all the difficulties of the next year.

"The White Negro" was by far the most extraordinary piece that had appeared in *Dissent*, and brought the journal needed attention, although the editors had problems with parts of it. Howe ~~said he~~ was excited to have the piece, but regretted not asking Mailer to cut out the hoodlum-storekeeper passage. Mailer said that the essay "made me one of the spokesmen for the Beat Generation," even if the more pacific Beats had their reservations. The *Partisan Review* crowd—William Phillips, Dwight Macdonald, Lionel and Diana Trilling—especially Macdonald—didn't like the antinomian emphasis of the essay, but as Phillips explained, it was still nevertheless acceptable, "as with ~~D.H.~~ Lawrence," because "the thinking of a man who's wild was interesting." Jones had no use for the essay, telling Mailer it was "a good illustration of a swiftly accelerating decadence." Mailer read the essay aloud to Styron, and told him ~~writing~~ it was like coughing up blood." Styron, always the formalist, didn't admire its rhetoric or agree with its conclusions, yet was "fascinated by it nevertheless." The division of opinion on the essay continues; it is regularly used as a club in the continuing race-gender-power debates of academics. It rasps, it elates, it confuses, but it is unforgettable.

*Mailer*  
He told Knox the 9,000-word essay was the best thing he had ever written. It will be important over the years, he said, because it points to "a new way to think." In addition to the essay's long-term influence, he saw two immediate results: "I was now the intermediary," he

said, between the Beats and the intellectuals, between, say, William Burroughs and Dwight Macdonald, and this satisfied his two psyches. It also "emboldened" him later, he said, to <sup>assemble</sup> ~~write~~ *Advertisements for Myself*, where he planned to take on issues that no one else would. The first new piece he wrote for inclusion in this planned collection <sup>for Putnam's</sup> was a fragment from the dramatic version of *The Deer Park*. He expected to have a first draft completed soon, as he said in a letter to <sup>Chandler</sup> ~~Brossard~~ in which he also turned down his request for an interview in a girlie magazine, *Nugget*. He liked the magazine, he said, but felt that appearing in it would show his literary enemies <sup>11</sup> that my writing about sex is not the act of a serious writer but one who is looking for notoriety." Who?

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<sup>Mailer</sup> He finished a draft of the four-act play, in early August. It was over three hours long. He wrote to Bea, Knox and Malaquais on the same day to announce its completion. He told Knox that it was "one of the four or five best plays that have been written since the war," and said to Bea that "it's better than *Death of a Salesman* and *Streetcar Named Desire* put together." Mailer had seen both plays on Broadway and admired them extravagantly, so he may have <sup>g</sup>swallowed hard when making ~~when making~~ this claim. Getting it produced, he told Malaquais, would be difficult because it was "so bold that it could really cause an explosion." Knox wanted to direct it, and Mailer told him choosing a director was the prerogative of the producer. If he ever produced it off-Broadway with his own money, however, Knox would certainly get a role. Ten years later, this is exactly what happened. Knox was the star of the production, playing the comic role of Collie Munshin, Herman Teppis' opportunistic son-in-law, who introduces Eitel and Elena.

Mailer had lunch in New York with a well-known <sup>library</sup> agent, Monica McCall, and got her interested in the play, sight unseen. He mailed her a copy with a cover note saying the play was a bit shorter than Eugene O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, which he had also seen. He appended a note with his "dream cast":

|                |                                              |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------|
| Eitel          | Charles Boyer or Laurence Olivier            |
| Elena          | Marilyn Monroe (if her voice is loud enough) |
| Marion Fay     | Marlon Brando or Ben Gazzara or Monty Clift  |
| Collie Munshin | Jackie Gleason or Jules Munshin              |
| Lulu Meyers    | Elizabeth Taylor                             |

It is notable that Sergius O'Shaugnessy is not mentioned. In the dramatic version, his presence is diminished; he is a sort of impresario, a hip version of the stage manager in Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*. The play, Mailer suggests, is a product of O'Shaugnessy's memory; one that takes place in "a rather incredible hell," a metaphysical perdition. Marion Faye becomes a more important figure, and some of the action occurs after he and Eitel have both served time in prison. The Elena-Eitel affair and Eitel's subtle corruption remain the central actions. McCall began showing the play around to producers.

*which suggests his marginality in the novel.*

Almost three years had passed since the completion of the novel version of *The Deer Park*, and he wanted to begin the leviathan novel about "the mysteries of murder, suicide, incest, orgy, orgasm, and Time," as he later described it. He had no real excuse not to begin. His play



was being considered, but he conceded to Malaquais that it might be "a bad play—enough people are turning it down." A retrospective collection of his work was still on his mind, but he wasn't sure how to proceed with it, especially since <sup>Walter</sup> Minton was eager to have another novel from him. He wrote to Knox that he was going to put off "side work" and finally, after Thanksgiving 1957, he started on the novel. Over the next month "with a medium gruesome effort," he wrote 27 pages. Then he stalled again. He told Malaquais that with the exception of "The White Negro" and his *Voice* columns, nothing he had done for years had been successful and the thought of "this enormous novel I'm now starting which could well take ten years" was simply too daunting. He read Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals*, an excruciatingly bitter account of his drug and alcohol-soaked final years, and thought, "Now there's a man who's exactly like me." By the end of the year, he had reached an impasse. He told Malaquais what he needed to write again: "[I]f I had twice the youthful energy which wrote *The Naked and the Dead*, and had your powers of reasoning, and Meyer Shapiro's retention and culture, and five good friends who supported me, took care of me, even wiped my ass—why then, by God, I could write the book which would create a new radical movement."

add Stedon here

why?

In early 1958, Knox suggested that Mailer bring the play to Actors Studio, a New York City theatrical organization founded by Elia Kazan and a few others in 1947, and <sup>subsequently</sup> ~~then~~ run for over thirty years by Lee Strasberg, the guru of Method acting. The organization's guiding principle is that actors, playwrights and directors be allowed to develop their skills without commercial pressure; the productions are read or staged on simple sets. Many talented actors have been affiliated over the years, and it was there that Mailer met Rip Torn, Anne Bancroft, Kevin McCarthy and several others. The camaraderie revived him somewhat. He maintained a

One side of Mailer desired earnestly to get to work on the *Leviathan*; the other subscribed to David Stedon's aphorism: "An artist exists only in the work he has not over

Written, which to others remains  
Unsustainable "

membership in the organization for the rest of his life. A friend of Knox's, the director Frank Corsaro, staged some readings of Mailer's script, with Mailer kibitzing. Knox played Munshin, Torn was Faye, McCarthy was Eitel and Elena was played by Bancroft. But she and Mailer had disagreements and, art following life, Adele took over the role, performing well after some instruction from Corsaro. Mailer had gifts for characterization, but the play in its initial version lacked a dramatic arc, and he withdrew it after several months. He would return with a new version in the fall of 1960, and then tinker with it for several years before its off-Broadway run in 1967. At the time of his death, he was working on still another revision. The Actors Studio involvement heightened his interest in theater, and he later attempted to recast several of his novels into plays or films.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

While in Connecticut, he spent a lot of time in his carpentry shop. Adele remembers hearing "Norman's anger in the piercing whine of the buzz saw." He was "becoming more detached and more depressed," she said. But he spent a lot of time with Daniele, who they called Dandy. Every few weeks they would drive into a party in New York, returning drunk after harrowing drives in winter weather. One night (they got into a mean fight on the way home) about flirtations at the party. "I handled it in my predictably alcoholic, out-of-control way, hating him, wanting to pull his curly hair out by the roots," Adele recalled. Her mother was visiting them, but they continued to scream at each other and then, in the early hours, took swipes at each other. In the morning, her mother asked her what happened and Adele mentioned divorce. But later they thrashed it out. "Believe it or not," she told her mother, "we love each other, and he loves the baby. Don't worry, we'll work it out."



*a dinner party at*

On one of their trips to New York in early 1958, at Lillian Hellman's apartment, the Mailers met Norman Podhoretz and his wife, Midge Decter, ~~both of whom would aid Mailer's~~ *careers*. Just before they met, Podhoretz had published an essay, "The Know-Nothing Barbarians," attacking the Beats, especially Ginsberg and Kerouac, in *Partisan Review*. A Columbia protégé of Lionel Trilling who had also studied under F. R. Leavis at Cambridge, Podhoretz made some sharp remarks in the piece about Mailer's views on violence in "The White Negro." Like many others, Podhoretz was appalled by what he saw as the hipster's *psychopathic personality*. Nevertheless, he was taken with the essay's "sheer intellectual and moral brazenness." Mailer, down in the boxer's crouch he adopted for such occasions, confronted Podhoretz, telling him he had misunderstood "The White Negro." "Like me, and practically every Brooklyn boy I had <sup>ever</sup> known, he was direct and pugnacious and immensely preoccupied with the issue of manly courage," Podhoretz said. He parried Mailer's attack by telling him that he should withhold criticism until he had seen a long essay he was writing about him for *Partisan Review*. Within a short time, Podhoretz showed him the galley of the essay, titled "Norman Mailer: The Embattled Vision." It is the first major examination of <sup>all of</sup> Mailer's work, and contains a <sup>critical account</sup> summary of his strengths and aspirations. Podhoretz doesn't say <sup>whether</sup> if their conversations are reflected in the 25-page essay, but it is a warm, generous <sup>appraisal</sup> estimate, and the opening accurately captures Mailer's self-estimate. Mailer, he says, is one of the few postwar writers whose qualities "suggest a major novelist in the making." What is most remarkable, he continues, is that

his work has responded to the largest problems of this period with a directness and an assurance that we rarely find in the novels of his contemporaries. Mailer is

very much an American, but he appears to be endowed with the capacity for seeing himself as a battleground of history—a capacity that is usually associated with the French and that American writers are thought never to have. He is a man given to ideologies, a holder of extreme positions, and in this too he differs from the general run of his literary contemporaries [ . . . ]

Mailer had to be pleased with his new friend's endorsement of his desire to tackle large, hairy questions, especially since he did so in the *Partisan Review*, the flagship publication of the mandarin New York literary world. Their friendship was cemented.

He met another couple at the Hellman party who would also play a major role in his acceptance by "The Family," as the political columnist Murray Kempton called the *Partisan Review-Commentary*-Columbia University intellectuals and critics who dominated high culture in New York from the 1940s to the 1960s. Lionel and Diana Trilling were key members, and their approval meant a good deal to Mailer during the next decade. He was seated next to Diana at the table and turned to her with a comment not recommended for establishing a friendship: "And how about you, smart cunt." In her memoir, Trilling said, "I am usually addressed with appalling respect: he got my attention. We became good friends." She would also write a major essay about Mailer, and engage in an important correspondence with him. Steven Marcus, another Columbia professor, also met Mailer at the dinner party. Marcus' 1963 *Paris Review* interview with him became a major document in establishing Mailer as a serious practitioner of literary art. It was an important dinner party, and confirmed Mailer's long-held belief that the right mixture of liquor and daring at parties could sometimes dramatically change people's lives.



Village  
 He had written a number of pieces for *Dissent*, and had done his *Voice* column, but beginning in the late 1950s, he began to move adroitly between highbrow, popular and Beat publications. He had decided to plow more than one field, and *Partisan Review*, *Esquire*, and *Big Table*, a Beat publication out of Chicago, demonstrate the spread. In the 1960s, he would add *Paris Review*, *Commentary* and *Playboy*, continue with the *Voice*, appear occasionally in girlie magazines such as *Rogue*, *Stag* and *Nugget*, as well as in oddball publications such as *Way Out* and *Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts*. "The White Negro" opened doors. Not only was he invited to the homes of The Family, and asked to speak on college campuses and appear on TV, he began being noticed by important literary critics. Podhoretz was the first, but then came a clutch of essays, some of praise, some of dismay, but all recognizing that Mailer was one of the most important postwar writers. Charles Fenton, writing in *Saturday Review*, said Mailer was a "conspicuous success." Edmund Fuller, who would review his work for decades, wrote in *American Scholar* that "the promising talent of Norman Mailer has collapsed utterly" in his second and third novels. Bridging the gap between Fenton and Fuller was Dwight Macdonald, who had become quite friendly with Mailer. Macdonald named him and Baldwin as the best young novelists. He praised Baldwin for writing successfully about the "homosexual dilemma" in *Giovanni's Room*, but was more expansive about Mailer: "I value Mailer because he is 'a born writer,' whose failures (of which there are plenty) are more interesting than the successes of less-talented writers, but chiefly because he is always experimenting, changing, developing, and, naturally, making a fool of himself." Macdonald also praised his enthusiasm for ideas, saying that if he could bring his intellectual qualities together with his literary skills, "the result may be a masterpiece."



In mid-March, relations with the Styrons, and with James Jones and his wife, Gloria (née Mosolino, <sup>m</sup> who he had married a year earlier), took a turn. Mailer wrote to Aaron to tell him they

were returning to New York, as their social life in Connecticut had dissolved. "Lousy people these country gentry," he wrote. "Beneath the manners they don't even have the humanity of slum hoods," ~~thus lowering the Styrons beneath the New Yorker who had gouged his eye~~

Mailer's hand-written, two-page list of 24 grievances, titled "Styron's Style," explain some of the circumstances of the breakup. The first complaint, "Hiram Haydn and The Deer Park," indicates Mailer's vexation about the lack of Styron's support for his novel. There are three other literary complaints: that Styron would not freely comment on his work; that he had suggested that Howard Fertig (who did some secretarial work for Mailer) was the real author of Mailer's play; and the "bitchery" with Jones. One notation states that Styron had told him that Jones' 1957 novel, *Some Came Running*, which had been badly hammered by reviewers, "wouldn't be written by a 15-year old." Mailer wrote later that when Styron would read aloud the worst passages of Jones' novel, he "would laugh along with the rest, but I was a touch sick with myself for doing so."

The majority of the items on the list concern what the Mailers perceived as Styron's high handedness—cutting them off from Lew and Jay Allen, dismissing Aldridge's idea for a literary conference, calling Leslie Aldridge "the slut"; and, most irritating, inviting Adele's parents to visit them after Adele had "obviously demurred." When the Styrons visited, Bill would "snoop" and "poke around" on detours from trips to the bathroom. One night he found some of Mailer's pornography and told all the dinner guests about his discovery. Some of the slights seem minor

or misinterpreted: The Styrons gave them expensive Christmas gifts and always left some of Adele's food on their plates, "including dessert."

The core of the ill feelings centered, however, on the Mailers' perception of how the Styrons were treating Adele. She was upset because Styron gave her "clumsily patronizing pats on the shoulder" and called her "sweetie," and that they refused to look seriously at any of her paintings. The Mailers also noted Styron's "Adele-go-back-to-Brooklyn remark." But there is no mention of <sup>a</sup>the comment Styron reputedly made <sup>the one</sup> that resulted in an angry letter from M<sup>ks</sup>ailer, suggesting that <sup>the comment</sup>the list was drawn up before it was made. The Mailers had engaged in various intimacies with another woman on several occasions, and a few times with another couple. His marriage to Adele, M<sup>ks</sup>ailer said, was "very free."

We had a lot of orgies. Mostly with women because Adele was very attracted to other women. And she was attractive to women, so we'd pair her up with another girl and then we had a lot of—and very occasionally, we'd have a four-way orgy but I couldn't stand it, I couldn't stand a man making love to her. That would wipe me out. It was very painful, so those were fewer, but there were a lot of orgies on the other side. Very selfish from my point of view; those were the years I was having two women and that gave me a feeling of great superiority. I'd feel, "Oh well, these other literary lights, they had their social superiority, but I had my sexual superiority," and that was what was feeding me.

Someone told M<sup>ks</sup>ailer that Styron was making remarks about Adele being a lesbian. On March 12, he wrote to Styron.

Bill,

I've been told by a reliable source — closer to you than one might expect — that you have been passing a few atrocious remarks about Adele. Normally, I would hesitate to believe the story, but my memory of slanderous remarks you've made about other women leaves me not at all in doubt. So I tell you this, Billy-boy. You have got to learn to keep your mouth shut about my wife, for if you do not, and I hear of it again, I will invite you to a fight in which I expect to stomp out of you a fat amount of your yellow and treacherous shit.

What you choose to do about this letter is of course your own affair, but I suggest you do no more than button your lip. The majority of things you do come back to me, and my patience with your cowardly and infantile viciousness—so demeaning and disgraceful to your talent—is at an end.

Norman

According to his biographer, Styron was "astonished" by <sup>this</sup> ~~Mailer's~~ letter. <sup>and one that followed</sup> ~~Mailer's~~ <sup>2 weeks</sup> ~~later.~~ <sup>later.</sup> Lew Allen, who Styron showed it to, said, "Bill was scared, really scared." He immediately wrote a point-by-point refutation, one of which accused Mailer's source of having a "warped and perverted imagination." He denied making any remarks about Adele. But he did not mail the letter, and the next day when visiting his wife in the hospital where she had just given birth to their second child, he met Jim and Gloria Jones and informed them of the situation. They concluded that something other than the alleged remarks must be bothering Mailer.



told NM biographer Carl Rollyson  
said

Years Later, Styron ~~told~~ Carl Rollyson that the letters from Mailer were "profoundly upsetting and depressing." He called the first one "a lightning bolt." But he went on to say the following:

A lot of people didn't like Adele. She was aggressive. She was out of her—you know—I think a lot of people thought she wasn't a lady. I liked her, but she'd get drunk. I think a lot of people regarded her as common—or whatever the word is, and she just didn't fit in, a big aggressive broad . . . and people were put off by her. It may have been indeed—I suspect it was true—that I probably uttered something about her like a lot of other people did and it got back to Norman.

Adele's version divided the blame between the two men. Norman, she speculates, "probably bragged about the few times we'd indulged in a three-way." Styron, "employing one of his sneaky tactics" out of his envy of Mailer's status, "seized on the stories as an excuse to get Norman." In Mailer's recollection, he was partly to blame:

Yeah, I wrote him a letter and told him to stop bad-mouthing my wife. Because stuff had come back to me and I think looking back on it, I provoked the fight. I didn't have hard evidence of what he'd been bad-mouthing—I was certain he had been bad-mouthing Adele. You could tell almost by the way he looked at her. And of course, Adele in turn, what she had in relation to all these people – most of them WASPS—was she had her sexual intensity and she was letting them know it, so there was a certain hostility basic to the whole thing. And that was very much there in these relationships. You know, her attitude was well, 'Styron

may be superior in this way, this way, this way, but I have the best sexuality and as a result, Norman does too, and you, poor Bill Styron will never know.'

A few weeks earlier, Mailer had written to Jones giving him a critique of his recently published novella, *The Pistol* which he said, "contains a perfect short novel buried within what was for me, very frankly, a slipshod presentation." He felt it was too didactic, and it needed a "touch of mystery." He ended by saying, "Let's get together soon, you clunkhead. You're the only man I know who has an outside chance of ever understanding me." They did get together more than once in New York, and the Joneses also visited them once in Connecticut. At one of their nights out in New York, Adele got into an argument with Gloria and, distressed at what her husband called "emotional sword-twirling," they left early in the evening. In a March 18 letter, which begins with Jones' response to Mailer's comments on *The Pistol*, Jones said he was sorry about their departure, but still felt that Adele "was pretty much out of line" with both him and Gloria. She tried "to get my goat," he said, "telling me about a conversation (unflattering in the extreme) which she had heard in the hall about me, and did I want to know what people really thought about me?" She went on in this vein, Jones said, and so they departed. Apparently, the possibility of a fistfight came up, because Jones said he didn't intend to engage in one because "it would give Adele too much happiness." He and Gloria liked Adele and thought she was "a remarkably sweet gal when she's sober," but they didn't like to be around her when she wasn't. Jones left it up to Mailer about getting together again, but said he was getting too old for "perpetual hassling. If that's what you call living out at the furthest edges of danger, then I'm not for it, and will never make a hipster." Mailer found Jones' letter in his mail when he returned from a trip to Florida.

A letter from Styron was also there when he returned.

Norman:

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I don't know who your sick and pitiable 'reliable source' is (how much he must hate and envy me, or maybe you, but above all hate himself), but you might have him or her get in touch with me some day and repeat his allegations to my face.

Your letter was so mean and contemptible, so revealing of some other attitude toward me aside from my alleged slander, but more importantly so utterly false, that it does not deserve even this much of a reply.

B.S.

Mailer replied first to Jones, painfully. "Parasites," he said, seem to have undermined Jones' ability to "trust the notion that somebody just wants to see you to make friends."

Well, I'm an old enough clubfighter in New York's social eliminations to have known, even as I was doing it, that it was a big mistake to make it so obvious that I wanted to get together with you, but I kept telling myself to drop the guard just once, that you weren't a shithead snob like all the others I know, and so Mailer takes a chance, you're going to be dead one of these days. Well, buddy, you proved that my sour instincts were more reliable than my few remaining generous ones, and so you did me a damage and I don't like you a hell of a lot for it.

Nor do I like this business of giving Adele the rap. I don't know what the hell she said to Mos [Gloria], but it couldn't have been so godawful because 1)



she liked Mos, and 2) she wanted to make friends—she was damn bewildered when the two of you took your powder. My guess—from the kind of stuff you reported as flipping you—was that she went in for some heavy kidding which she saw as teasing, and both of you chose to see as deliberate insult. Well, stow that bullshit. If Adele had come to me doing a burn because Gloria had said this or that unforgivable thing to her, I would have told her to stick it up her ass, she was a big enough girl to take a little crap rather than jam up a possible friendship. It just isn't nice of you, Jim, and it isn't of Gloria, either, because you don't tear an evening over a couple of remarks unless you really want to—which is the way I read it, that both of you were not interested in doing much else but tearing the evening. If you saw a fight in the air, I didn't. I wouldn't get into a fight with you unless I were ready to kill you, and I always instinctively assumed that was true for you.

Jones had ended his letter by saying if Mailer wanted to see him, he could come to New York. Mailer ended his by saying he'd meet only in Connecticut, and if Jones didn't want to do that, there was no need "starting a farce of letters back and forth." Jones agreed, apparently, and they did not see each other for several years. Their friendship was all but destroyed. The Joneses left for Paris near the end of March and lived there for the next 16 years.

A week after writing to Jones, he wrote to Styron:

I just got back from a few days in Florida, and found this billet-doux. So I invite you to get together with me face-to-face and repeat that my letter is mean,

contemptible, and false—if you feel up to it. If you don't, recognize your reply for what it is—a crock of shit.

Mailer

Styron did not reply, and they did not communicate for <sup>many</sup> over twenty years. Styron and the Joneses drew closer after their split with Mailer, and would become even better friends after he

published a searing appraisal of their work eighteen months later. Within a few days, Mailer had <sup>partly, not largely at his own doing -</sup> lost two of his best friends. He believed them to be the only two of his contemporaries, save

Baldwin, whose ambition and talent matched his own.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

The same day that he wrote his last letter to Jones, he wrote to Baldwin. Almost reflexively, it seems, he tried to build a bridge to replace the two that had collapsed. Baldwin was also moving back to New York, and Mailer promised him a big party after the Bridgewater house was sold and they found a place in New York. He said he had just read *Notes of a Native Son* (1955), Baldwin's second book, the one that established his reputation as an essayist of the first rank and on which his continuing reputation rests. Mailer said that he thought it to be "beautifully written and intellectually alive. Of how many other things can I say that?" Another letter written that day went to Knox, who along with Malaquais, invariably received frank letters about his inner states. <sup>Mailer's</sup> He said he was exhausted and had <sup>Mailer</sup> only written sixty pages of his new work in four months. "Writing ties me into knots which only liquor releases at the expense of my fucked up brains." He was feeling middle-aged, he said, and had grown a moustache and beard.

The new work he referred to consisted of two long stories, one about Marion Faye, "Advertisements for Myself on the Way Out: The Prologue to a Long Novel," and "The Time of Her Time," about O'Shaugnessy cutting a sexual swath through the Village. There was also a fragment about Faye being raped in prison, and after his release showing up at O'Shaugnessy's loft, but it was clearly unfinished and remains unpublished. A few weeks earlier, Mailer had written to Philip Rahv at *Partisan Review* to see if he was interested in either of the stories, which he said were "on the edge between the serious and the pornographic." Rahv wrote back saying that while publishing anything too raw might endanger the magazine's non-profit status, he nevertheless felt that *PR*'s readers "need to be shocked out of their complacent regard for us," and that he would be glad to look at anything Mailer would send. <sup>Mailer</sup> He replied by saying that he liked this "damn-the-torpedoes invitation," and sent Rahv the two stories. He was also planning to include both pieces in his new collection, which he hoped would generate interest, and give him the prod he needed to proceed. In the end, Rahv selected "Way Out."

Described as "awkward," "muddled," and "cloying" by critics, the story has received little comment. It is all of these things, but it is also a tale, like some of Poe's, which emphasizes the perilous or mutable condition of its teller. From this point on in his career, Mailer's narrators will inevitably point to the harrowing difficulties of telling their stories, a circumstance which becomes as important as the story itself. Like the narrator of "The Man Who Studied Yoga," whose name changes from day to day, the narrator of "Way Out" is a disembodied figure who says, Ishmael-like, "my name eludes me." He admits to being one or more of the following: "ghost, *geist*, demiurge, dog, bud, flower, tree, house, or some lost way-station of the divine,"



perhaps a participant in the “fluid conscious of a God.” Humans, he says, partake in the deity’s struggle to forge an extraordinary destiny, “yes, God is like me, only more so.”

He hints that he may even be an old house in Provincetown, one similar to the one on Miller Hill Road where Mailer spent the summer of 1950 with Bea. A “climactic party” of several days duration took place there during a gloomy stretch of fall weather. The narrator says that “in the history of our republic there has never been a party equal in montage.” Marion Faye, the ex-con host, is now a fabulously wealthy “master pimp.” He has chartered two planes to fly in 30 powerful, prestigious and/or infamous figures, one each of the following: prostitute, boxer, psychoanalyst, athlete, jazz musician, actor, cop, spy, queer, trans-sexual, grande dame, crook, mother, taxi driver, TV entertainer, physicist, war hero, bullfighter, etc., etc.—pilgrims all. The *Canterbury Tales* could have served as a model. The party’s program: first an orgy, followed by a suicide and a murder. Faye intends to kill someone—a “Brave murder”—and so reverse the process of his corruption. The act will, reciprocally, advance God’s program by getting the dialectic working again, helping to blast the twentieth century out of the caution and propriety that is smothering everything artful, brave and good in life. The 1,000- page novel <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ is to follow would then explore the trajectories of the guests and their interactions after this very hip, potentially history-altering party. Mailer was setting a high bar.

At the end, the narrator admits that he is the spirit of the dead man—perhaps Faye himself—and the list of potential identities given at the outset <sup>might represent</sup> ~~are~~ possible stages in his reincarnation, should the embattled God who makes karmic decisions determine that the murder was justified and has aided His cause. On a functional level, Mailer was trying to surmount the point of view difficulties of *The Deer Park*. He was fumbling for a way to retain a first-person

voice, while remaining free to explore the minds and hearts of a huge cast of characters in a novel of Proustian scope and ambition—a balancing act he worked to perfect all of his writing life. If the murdered man is judged to have been a true warrior of God, he will be reincarnated after he has told the story. The entire mammoth novel will be told in the instant “between the stirrup and the ground.” The project was so vast that he never found a way to move forward from the prologue. The victim would have to have been as historically pivotal as Rasputin—someone Mailer planned to write about in his final years—and therein was his problem: he needed a half-heroic, half-malign figure <sup>of consequence</sup> and at the time couldn’t conceive one. We have, therefore, only the assurance of a nameless, irritatingly evanescent narrator that the party is of epochal dimensions. Mailer was unable to come up with a good plot, his inveterate weakness. There was another reason: he was about to be distracted by invitations too alluring to be ignored. The story, therefore, is a curiosity, but one <sup>that</sup> ~~which~~ contains the germ of much of his future fiction. (good)



The English Department of the University of Chicago invited <sup>Mailer</sup> ~~him~~ to speak, and he accepted. He was to meet formally and informally with creative writing students. His host for a week in May 1958 was novelist Richard G. Stern, who would remain friendly with Mailer. Assisting him was Robert F. Lucid, a graduate student, whose job was to show their guest around town. Lucid became one of his closest friends and vied with Aldridge for the informal title, Dean of Mailer Studies. (check in with  
history  
of Lucid  
2.77)

Mailer spoke in two of Stern’s classes and “enjoyed the sheer hell out of it.” He liked the give-and-take with students and told Knox that he could make a living teaching if necessary. In

his letter accepting the invitation, he said that he would like to explore a "series of questions on the relations between one's own experience and the experience one writes about." In the event, these questions turned into a recitation of "horror tales" about *The Deer Park*, which no doubt cranked him up to write his essay about its composition, "The Mind of an Outlaw." When he thanked Stern upon his return to Connecticut, he emphasized that his tales had not been exaggerated. The serial rejections of the novel still burned. Mailer enjoyed Chicago immensely. Stern and his wife took him to a nightclub to hear Lenny Bruce, and he did some late-night carousing with Lucid and a young poet, Paul Carroll. After the visit, he said Chicago was "the only big city I ever felt comfortable in," largely because it reminded him of Brooklyn, that is, "if Brooklyn ever made it." But the major outcome of the visit—apart from meeting Stern, Lucid and Carroll—was <sup>a published</sup> the interview he did with Stern.

He had not had much sleep for several days, and in the interview found himself "rushing into a confession of ideas I had never really talked about with anyone before." In his brief preface to the <sup>published</sup> interview, <sup>"Hips, Holland and the Navigator,"</sup> Stern says that Mailer's speech rose to "a pitch of excited engagement" as the interview progressed, the words tumbling out with "urgency" and "authenticity." The discussion takes off from "The White Negro," which Stern puts down as a product of "anti-expressionism." Mailer patiently explains that when he was younger, he might have agreed, but "I started as one kind of a writer, and I've been evolving into another kind of writer," moving from Marxist rationalism to mysticism. It has been a hard journey, he says, and "consists of losing all the friends that one's found in the past." Then Mailer made what Stern called "a fantastic assertion":



I think there is one single burning pinpoint of the vision in Hip: it's that God is in danger of dying. In my very limited knowledge of theology, this has never really been expressed before. I believe Hip conceives of Man's fate being tied up with God's fate. God is no longer all-powerful. (Here a phrase was lost to static on the tape.) The moral consequences of this are not only staggering, but they're thrilling; because moral experience is intensified rather than diminished.

Human beings, Mailer continues, "are the seed-carriers, the voyagers, the explorers, the embodiment of that embattled vision; maybe we are engaged in a heroic activity and not a mean one."

Stern: This is really something.

Mailer: Well, I would say it is far more noble in its conception, far more arduous as a religious conception than the notion of the all-powerful God who takes care of us.

Stern: And do you take to this conception for its perilous nobility, or do you take to it because you believe in it?

Mailer: I believe in it.

Stern: You believe in it.

Mailer: It's the only thing that makes any sense to me.

Mailer's reply <sup>✓</sup> echoes the one that Jones had given him about Karma in Illinois five years eailer, before he had begun his evolution, or his transmogrification, into another kind of writer. (Buddhi?)

Toward the end of the interview Lucid breaks in to say that what bothers him about Mailer's comments is that while the novelist "consciously makes decisions and accepts the moral consequences," the hipster is "unconscious of risks of this kind." Mailer responds by saying that tacit in his comments is the belief that the unconscious "has an enormous teleological sense," that it is always measuring to what degree the actions of individuals are conducive or destructive to growth. Hour by hour, minute by minute, it asks, am I growing or shrinking? "It is with this thing that they move, that they grope forward—this navigator at the seat of their being." He had discovered someone new <sup>at the rudder</sup> in the cockpit of his psyche. The "anxious boyish Jewish intellectual" who had been the link between the saint and the psychopath has given up his place to a helmsman from the lower depths, a guide and connection to the mysteries of Being and becoming.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

After Rahv had formally accepted "Way Out" for the fall 1958 issue of *PR*, Mailer wrote to his mother, who was visiting Susan in Mexico, with the news. "*Partisan* is the most important (by far) literary magazine in this country," he said, "and to print a long piece by me will do an awful lot of subtle good. I'm really pleased." He was also happy, as he told Yamanishi, that "The White Negro" was "much discussed," and that he was being touted as "one of the very few

reliable guides to the mysteries of the American nihilism which is coming into being." To be accepted by the opposed wings of America's literary culture put Mailer in the catbird seat he had

-- He Beats and The Family  
Beats + PR crowd?  
?

aspired to since falling from the heights with *Barbary Shore*. His timing couldn't have been better. *On the Road* was published in September 1957, three months after the "The White Negro." Kerouac's novel had produced a hunger for insights into the ~~movement's~~ <sup>of the Beat movement</sup> origins and meaning, and Mailer's essay was often seen as its intellectual manifesto. There were condemnations and celebrations of ~~Beatniks~~ in all the major publications, and *Life* did a photo essay.

The first chronicler of the Beat generation, John Clellon Holmes, said that Mailer brought to an understanding of Beatness "the most venturesome intellect (not to mention nerves) currently at work in American literature." He called "The White Negro" a document "fully as important to the secret history of this age as *Notes from the Underground* was to the Europe of its time." The movement wanted intellectual approbation from a celebrated writer, and Mailer wanted attention and the circulation of his ideas. His essay, considered notorious by some, gave him <sup>credibility with the Beats</sup> ~~street cred~~. By late 1958, he was at least an associate member of The Family, and the only one to rise above a condescending or angry dismissal of the Beats. While he did not care for the Beats' beatific passivity, or for Kerouac's characterization of the Beats as "solitary Bartlebies staring out at the dead wall window of our civilization," he admired the "ecstatic flux" of his language. Mailer was angry not passive, engaged not withdrawn, and much preferred "American nihilism" to the "Beat Generation." He said that the difference between Beat and Hip was the same as that between rebellion and revolution. "Beat still has no center to its rage, and so is sentimental enough to assume that the world can be saved with words. It is going to take more than that." He never changed his mind on this distinction. ✓  
OK?



his notebook, novelist  
At a party in August, Mailer told Dawn Powell that he wanted to move to New York.

"All that green makes him sick," she recorded in her diary, a remark that brings to mind Woody Allen's line about living in Connecticut: "I am at two with nature." That same month, he saw the film version of *Naked* with Adele and his sister during one of their regular trips to the city. Barbara said he was appalled by the production, and she just sank lower and lower in her seat. Mailer wrote up a response a short time later, detailing "the disembowelling naked greed which gutted this movie of its promise." Director <sup>The</sup> Raoul Walsh's casting bothered him the most. Aldo Ray, "a big fattish bull of a man with a gravel voice," played Sgt. Croft, "a small, lean man" with "a soft murderous Texas voice." In the novel, he said, "Croft was the hunter, the killer, the horn of the platoon, an icy will-driven phallus of a man, a mountain-climber—one cannot substitute a raw-voiced weightlifter." Added to the casting problems was the inclusion of a big scene in a Hawaii nightclub—no one in the novel version of *Naked* ever sets foot in Hawaii—where a stripper, played by a genuine ecdysiast, Lili St. Cyr, is pawed by drunken soldiers. He ends the diatribe by saying that if it seems he has been hard on the producer and director, "I can tell you, friends and foes, dear family, there is no one I feel harder on at the moment than the real villain, that stupid idiot—Norman Mailer." He later called the film "the worst movie I've ever seen," but he did not publish his angry comments on it in ~~Advertisements~~, as he had originally planned.

There was one more disappointment before the Mailers left Connecticut. He had been hoping that Arthur Miller and Marilyn Monroe, now back from England would invite them for dinner. They lived only five miles apart, and while not notably friendly, they were both Brooklyn boys who had begun their careers high on the mountain. But Mailer said that the invitation never came, as he remembered in his biography of Monroe (referring to himself as the "novelist"):

You have  
yet to  
tell  
about  
AFK

Nor could the novelist in conscience condemn the playwright for such avoidance of drama. The secret ambition, after all, had been to steal Marilyn; in all his vanity he thought no one was so well suited to bring out the best in her as himself, a conceit which fifty million other men may also have held—he was still too untested to recognize that the foundation of her art might be to speak to each man as if he were all of male existence available to her. It was only a few marriages (which is to say a few failures) later that he could recognize how he would have done no better than Miller and probably <sup>have</sup> been damaged further in the process.

Adele's memory is that Miller did invite them for drinks, and then mentioned casually that Marilyn was not at home, that she had gone to Hollywood on business. Mailer was angry on the drive home. "The bastard waited till she was away to invite us over," he said. Mailer wrote his account 15 years after the event; Adele's was written nearly 40 years later. Either could have misremembered. Miller's memory, however, supports Mailer's. In his autobiography, he says that Mailer "might make good company for an evening," but Monroe "rejected the idea," saying she "knew these types," that is, "people obsessed with images." Miller wrote his account while still angry about what he felt was an unfair portrait of his marriage in *Marilyn*. He speculated that Mailer might have treated Monroe and him differently "had we fed him one evening and allowed him time to confront her humanity, not merely her publicity." Monroe was aware of Mailer's writing, according to her friend W. J. Weatherby. At some point, she read his copy *The Deer Park*. Her response: Mailer was "too impressed by power." While this may seem to be a simplistic response to Mailer's hard-won insights into the complexities of how power is wielded in Hollywood, her intuition wasn't all wrong. In a later interview, <sup>Mailer</sup> he said that his plan during



time in Connecticut had been to write a play in which she would star but in hindsight, it would have been a "terrible tragedy" to play Pygmalion with Monroe, admitting that he was just another of the many men who wanted to make the most of this "sweet child of life," but in his own way, not hers.

Ψ Ψ Ψ

The Mailers moved back to New York in December and rented an apartment at 73 Perry Street in the Village. Mailer had known Ginsberg since the days of his loft parties, but had <sup>Allen</sup> ~~only~~ met Kerouac in passing. Sometime after they returned, Kerouac and Ginsberg visited. Ginsberg <sup>Jack</sup> ~~later said~~ that the meeting was friendly, and that the two writers weren't competitive even though each considered himself the best writer in the country. Mailer liked Kerouac "more than I would have thought," but found him to be tired. They talked about the ~~Village Voice~~ and writing. Ginsberg's summation was that Mailer <sup>other</sup> ~~was~~ just beginning to try and seize the world," <sup>Kerouac</sup> while Kerouac was disengaging. "In Buddhist terms," Ginsberg said, he "was already sick of the world," while Mailer was engaged in what Jews call *tikkun olam*, or repairing the world. There may not have been any discussion of "The White Negro," as both Ginsberg and Kerouac had reservations about its positions on violence. On the other hand, Ginsberg said that he felt <sup>260</sup> "a sense of brotherhood" with Mailer, because they were both trying to undermine the nation's pervasive social conformity. For Ginsberg, Mailer's essay <sup>265</sup> was "the most intelligent statement I'd ever seen by any literary-critical person, anyone acquainted with the great world of literature." Over the years, <sup>May</sup> he would have many contacts with <sup>each other</sup> Ginsberg, especially in the 1960s when they <sup>Mailer saw at least</sup> were involved in a number of anti-war protests. But he may have seen Kerouac once more, at a

what  
year  
is it?  
1957?



1959,  
party the Mailers gave in mid-1958, most of which Kerouac spent under the kitchen table, dead drunk.

All through the fall and winter of 1958 and into the spring of the next year, he labored on ~~the collection~~ <sup>the collection that would be *Advocate* selections</sup>, still unnamed. Heretofore, he had never worried a great deal about his nonfiction

prose style. His forte, he felt, was to deliver unsettling hypotheses and blockbuster theories that

would "influence the history of my time," and not engage in the kind of fancy-pants writing he

despised when he was writing for the *Advocate*. With "Lipton's" and "The White Negro," his

style had become ~~less clunky and~~ <sup>he was writing for each selection</sup> more colloquial, and the prefaces reflected this shift. The

problem he faced was that to accurately contextualize the pieces in the collection, he had to talk

more about himself more than he cared to. He had always implicitly accepted Flaubert's dictum

that "the artist should be in his work, like God's creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should

be felt everywhere and seen nowhere," a view he was parroting when he told Lillian Ross in

1948 that it was "much better when people who have read your book don't know anything about

you, even what you look like." Writing the prefaces in the face of his growing awareness of the

difficulty and doubtful wisdom of separating his personal and artistic worlds, had made him "a

little desperate," especially since he had quit smoking, again. Yet, he still felt that the prefaces,

as he told his <sup>a</sup> ~~Chicago~~ friend George Lea <sup>was</sup> to be "shit work."

I got sick of myself, sick of saying I felt this, I knew that, I wondered whether, I induced, and I and one and almost a he or two. It's weird, it's a little like self-analysis before you realize it, and your style dips into your own shitbag so fast it's staggering. So now I'm facing whether to throw all this crap away, and put the book out without the prefaces, three months of work shot, and a less readable

take  
you  
hold  
up  
the  
genesis  
of this  
collection?

called

for myself

step

he was writing for each selection  
in fiction, nonfiction, a few poems and dramatic

fragments  
in

book or maybe keep on with the gamble and waste another three months on what may not be writable for me.

But he continued, encouraged by the reception of "Way Out." He told William Phillips, Rahv's co-editor at *PR*, that he had received all good comments on the story, except from Macdonald, who "detested" it. By the end of 1958, he had a provisional plan for the collection, which he sent it to Minton, promising he would have everything to Putnam's by February 1. He had already completed some of the prefaces, the brief ones that introduced his short stories, The longer ones—introducing "The White Negro," the *Voice* columns, excerpts from *The Deer Park* and the big novel—remained to be written. He was considering a three-part, chronological division of the material: "Square," "Transitional" and "Hip," with an appendix for his college stories and early journalism. The final shape of the collection owed something to this arrangement, but it was far more subtly assembled. The only thing he was sure about at this point was that all the prefaces would be in italics.

He began "to jiggle his Self for a style" that would reflect his emerging personality, while feeling "the yaws of conscience" about such concerted and public introspection. This anxious, delicate process, he said, sent his writing "through a circus of variations and postures, a fireworks of virtuosity designed to achieve . . . I do not even know what. Leave it that I become an actor, a quick-change artist, as if I believe I can trap the Prince of Truth in the act of switching a style." He inched along, still worried about tabling the big novel. He told Yamanishi that he had (only written) 70 pages, and that the final product would take "five or ten years" and be a thousand pages long. Finishing the collection—its working title was now "Advertisements"—stood in the way of getting back to the novel. In a letter to Knox, he said that he had spent a half-



year trying to improve "my half-vanished techniques in writing," which gives a hint his slow progress. Going without cigarettes for nine months, he said, had left him with "less drive and better health." What he needed was <sup>now</sup> "a stick of dynamite up my ass."

Ψ Ψ Ψ

~~His interview with Stern and Lucid~~

~~What is this?~~

He did get a small jolt when "Hip, Hell, and the Navigator" appeared in ~~early~~ February 1959.

Lionel Trilling, the informal head of The Family, described it in a TV interview as an "important theological document," and this had created "a little stir" in the PR crowd. Just before this happened, Mailer was invited to appear on his second TV program, David Susskind's "Open End," along with <sup>Truman</sup> Capote and Dorothy Parker. He had met Parker in Hollywood several times, but knew Capote only by reputation, which <sup>by then</sup> in ~~early~~ 1959 was growing by leaps and bounds, based on the warm reception for his 1958 novella, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. Mailer was "intensely curious" about Capote, he recalled, and enjoyed the limousine ride to the studio with him and Adele. With the Mike Wallace program under his belt, he felt confident about appearing, while Capote, "in a dry little voice that seemed to issue from an unmoistened reed in his nostril," said that he wasn't. "When it comes to personality," he said, "I have something small and precise to offer, and it's wrong for such a medium." When the two-hour program was over, Mailer thought he had been forceful and articulate, while Capote had seemed "a hint bewildered." After a celebratory dinner at El Morocco with Capote (who repeatedly insisted that he had been awful), he went to bed happy. The next day, he made a few calls to friends to garner their praises.

"Bewildering" is Mailer's word for the responses ~~he received~~. His family loved the show, but most of his friends told him, "Oh man, did Truman <sup>take</sup> murder you." He was getting a lesson, not



only of Capote's one-upmanship, but also of the medium's distortions. The diminutive Capote loomed large in the many close-ups of his "young-old face," while the bearded Mailer appeared intense and pious in the medium shots he was accorded. Capote's voice, he realized, was an asset.

Nothing like it had been heard in New York before. Such presence over the camera. Such homosexual hauteur. He seemed to be certain of every word he was saying even if they were few words. Oh, that voice!—a cross between an adenoidal prince and a telephone operator. Whereas I was a verbose young intellectual spewing more ideas than anyone cared to hear in an over-friendly tone. Ugh! I had my first lesson in the transpositions of reality which come by way of television.

The key moment came when the discussion turned to the Beats. After noting emphatically that he was not a Beat but a ~~hip~~ Hipster, Mailer gave an endorsement of Beat writing, saying that it was "entirely new," and had "broken clean away from the Judeo-Christian tradition." Parker disagreed, saying that it was nothing more than reheated bohemianism. "None of these people have anything interesting to say," Capote added, "and none of them can write, not even Mr. Kerouac." What they do, he said, "isn't writing at all—it's *typing*." Mailer disagreed but his defense of Kerouac was "limp," he recalled, because he was only "two-thirds for Jack's virtues and one-third against Jack's vices." A *New Republic* reviewer said that Capote "demolished Mr. Mailer's arguments at every turn." <sup>Capote's</sup> His putdown of Kerouac has become legendary; Mailer's comments are forgotten. He learned that television viewers prefer terse

retorts to three-minute syllogisms. The experience on "Open End" gave him an appreciation for the epigrammatic, and he worked to refine his television style.

Through the early spring of 1959, Mailer continued work on the prefaces. Barbara lived around the corner at 395 Bleecker Street, and had begun doing regular secretarial work for him. He missed the February 1 deadline he had given Minton, and got little accomplished the entire month. In one sour letter he said that he needed to get the prefaces "out of the way and fast—I'm sick of fucking around with it, and the novel is not calling me right—seems to be fading as I goof off more and more of my time." He and Adele were going to jazz <sup>clubs</sup> spots, especially the Five Spot, <sup>on Third Avenue.</sup> where Thelonious Monk and John Coltrane were regulars. He was drinking as much as ever, <sup>but</sup> although he had ~~not had a cigarette for nine months~~. Adele wasn't drinking at all because she was two months pregnant; they hoped for a boy.

It was a curious period. He was trying "to make the scene," as he put it, at Village parties and events, all the while fiddling with the prefaces, adding confessional material and then drawing back out of his fear that the collection would become "a thoroughgoing autobiography." Some of them were brief, clear and functional. In others, he was going for something deeper. In one of his drafts, he calls himself "the only writer of my generation who has the particular passion to be great," and finds that his "ridiculous, dreary, narcissistic and noble" self has come to resemble a man he does not admire: Charles ~~De~~ Gaulle. Finally, he began to get some traction on how to handle his contradictions:

Begin with declaration that my overriding passion for years—from 17 on—has been to be a great writer, and I've written hardly a word which hasn't been seen

for how it would look today, and how it would read a hundred years from now. This type of Gaullist narcissism runs through every turn of my ungracious prose—muscular, blunt, brutal, bullying, shrill, mean, pompous, totalitarian, timid, arrogant, clumsy—and be it said—passionate. Because for anyone who knows anything about writing, it will be evident through all the gnarled harsh turns of my prose expression, the graceless dogged determinations of my honest ideas, that I am a man obsessed with the urgency to be great, to be a great writer, leader, philosopher, seer, a God—what! And this humorless heavyweight clubbing toward so ineluctable a goal will appear by turns to anyone concerned with the spirit of the cool, the graceful, and the elegant, as the ludicrous thrashings of a man so impossibly gauche that one can envision him in Parnassus only as the archetype of the hippopotamus, the baboon and the pig. All right. Heavy I am and graceful I would be, and in the distance between the two lies the rhetoric of this work.

By the end of March he was working more successfully, perhaps because he had—“assassin to myself”—gone back to smoking. He finished “The Mind of an Outlaw,” and continued working on an estimate of the work of his contemporaries, which would eventually be titled “Evaluation: Quick and Expensive Comments on the Talent in the Room.” He also came up with the final sequencing of the pieces, and decided to include two tables of contents: the first follows the actual order of the book, and is more or less chronological; the second is generic—fiction, essays, journalism, interviews, poetry, plays and “Biography of a Style,” which lists the advertisements and postscripts, 34 all told, written expressly for the collection. *Advertisements*



*for Myself* was finally coming into focus. Putnam's re-scheduled the collection to come out in ~~September.~~ *November.*

The rationale for "Biography of a Style" was to encourage readers to swallow the advertisements whole, read them apart from the selections that they frame, for the purpose of revealing the new kind of writer Mailer was becoming. He wanted the agonies of creating the book to bleed through, yet sparingly, in the manner of Yeats, who wanted his readers to "know about the intense and unremitting labor required to create an apparently spontaneous line." For example, he concludes "Sixth Advertisement for Myself" with this tease: "The confession is over—I sense that to give any more of what happened to me in the last few years might make for five thousand good words, but could also strip me of fifty thousand better ones." But the confession is far from over; subsequent advertisements continue to offer glimpses of his life-in-progress. Many long passages are suffused with the rhetoric of revealing and then shrouding the writer and the process of composition. In addition to being a genre-conflating work—part confession, part tirade, part visionary testament—*Advertisements* is a great work because Mailer is adept at what we might call confession interruptus. Just when we think he is done baring his battered psyche, he returns with more revelations, laced with witty revilements and cranky pontifications.



Mailer's sister, who was typing the manuscript, had reservations about of some of the writing in the collection, but said nothing at first. But finally, she recalled, she told him what she felt about "Quick and Expensive Comments."

'Norman you're not serious about publishing this thing.' I was appalled by it. 'You don't do this to your fellow writers.' I said, 'You don't expect to publish this until after everybody's dead.' He said, 'Of course I do.' And I said, 'I really think you shouldn't'—he got so angry at me. He said, 'You're wrong, you're always wrong!' And he never got over it, I mean, for years he teased me about how I'd been wrong about it. However, he did change it, a lot. He went over it pretty carefully. Some things he really toned down. I also said, 'I think some of it's marvelous.'

None of the early drafts of the essay have survived, but even the softened published version ~~explains her criticism~~. Most of the writers he comments on receive a mixture of positive and negative comments, sometimes in two sentences, sometimes in a page, no more. What immediately sets off the piece from the abstracted literary criticism of the day is that mixed in with the usual commentary are surmises and hunches on the characters of the writers themselves—their vanities, virtues and quirks—based on Mailer's interaction with them, even if it consisted of one meeting. The prose is obscene and prickly, but conversational, as if you were drinking with him over a long winter evening in some snug Provincetown bar. The praise given is grudging as often as not; and the criticisms are a mixture of shrewd insight based on careful reading and *ad hominem* gibes.

He makes comments on 21 writers, in the following order: Jones, Styron, Capote, Kerouac, Bellow, Algren, Salinger, Paul Bowles, Bourjaily, Brossard, Vidal, Anatole Broyard, Myron Kaufmann, Willingham, Ralph Ellison, Baldwin, Herbert Gold, Mary McCarthy, Jean

Stafford, Carson McCullers and William Burroughs. He had met at least two-thirds of the group. Some samples:

Saul Bellow's NBA-winning novel, *The Adventures of Augie March*: "... at its worst it was a travelogue for timid intellectuals and so to tell the truth I cannot take him seriously as a major novelist." He goes on to call *Seize the Day* "the first of the cancer novels," although he calls the ending "beautiful," and says it is "the first indication for me that Bellow is not altogether hopeless on the highest level." To reach that level, "he must first give evidence, as must Styron, that he can write about men who have the lust to struggle with the history about them. . ."

Nelson Algren: "Of all the writers I know, he is the Grand Odd-Ball. Once he took me to a line-up in Chicago and I could have sworn the police and the talent on the line had read *The Man with the Golden Arm* for they caught the book perfectly, those cops and crooks, they were imitating Algren."

J. D. Salinger, author of *Catcher in the Rye*, "is everyone's favorite. I seem to be alone in finding him no more than the greatest mind ever to stay in prep school."

Kerouac is "the first figure for a new generation," possessed of "a large talent. His literary energy is enormous." But "his rhythms are erratic, his sense of character is nil, and he is as pretentious as a rich whore, sentimental as a lollypop."

"Truman Capote I do not know well, but I like him. He is tart as a grand aunt, but in his way he is a ballsy little guy, and he is the most perfect writer of my generation, he writes the best



sentences, word for word, rhythm upon rhythm." But "he has less to say than any good writer I know" because of "his attractions to Society."

Ralph Ellison, the author of *Invisible Man*, "is essentially a hateful writer: when the line of his satire is pure, he writes so perfectly that one can never forget the experience of reading him—it is like holding a live electric wire in one's hand."

"The early work of Mary McCarthy, Jean Stafford and Carson McCullers gave me pleasure," he says near the end of the piece, noting that he was unable to read other women novelists "out of what is no doubt a fault in me." Later, he would enjoy the work of Iris Murdoch, Joan Didion and Erica Jong, among others, but in 1959, he was gender-bound. "At the risk of making a dozen devoted enemies for life," he continues, "the sniffs I get from the ink of the women are always fey, old-hat, Quaintsy Goysy, tiny, too dykily psychotic, crippled, creepish, fashionable, frigid, outer-Baroque, *maquillé* in mannequin's whimsy, or else bright and stillborn." He concluded by saying that "a good novelist can do without everything but the remnant of his balls," a line that would come back to haunt him. When asked about the line a few years before his death, he said, "I happened to grow up in a family with a lot of wonderful, adoring women—a marvelous, strong mother and a lot of terrific aunts. So I took it for granted that I could say anything I wanted about women because they knew I loved them." His dismissal of female writers would not only be remembered, it would be bitterly *intoned* by women for decades. *This mention* It is sometimes seen as the first indication of the misogyny he would be accused of in the 1970s.

*his comment on women writers*

His comments on Jones and Styron destroyed whatever shreds of comity persisted after their recent quarrels. He begins his comments on Jones generously, saying that *Eternity* was the best American novel since the end of WWI, despite being "ridden with faults, ignorances, and a smudge of the sentimental." He was unique, Mailer said, because "he <sup>had come</sup> came out of nowhere, self-taught, a clunk in his lacks, but the only one of us who had the beer-guts of a broken glass brawl." But his early success "handcuffed the rebel in him." He concluded that if Jones "dares not to castrate his hatred of society with a literary politician's assy cultivation of it, then I would have to root for him because he may have been born to write a great novel."

Styron, Mailer said, wrote "the prettiest novel of our generation. *Lie Down in Darkness* has beauty at its best, is almost never sentimental, even has whispers of near-genius," although it had three defects: "Styron was not near to creating a man who could move on his feet, his mind was uncorrupted by a new idea, and his book was without evil." Without having read a word of Styron's second novel, *Set This House on Fire*, Mailer speculates that it will be "a cornucopia of fangless perceptions which will please the conservative power and delight the liberal power," because "the mass media is <sup>g</sup>aching for such novel." The book's reception "will be a study in the art of literary advancement. For Styron has spent years oiling every literary lever and power which could help him on his way, and there are medals waiting for him in the mass-media."

On Baldwin he is no less severe. After lauding *Notes of a Native Son* for its "sense of moral nuance," he says that many paragraphs in the latter "are sprayed with perfume. Baldwin seems incapable of saying 'Fuck you' to the reader." But he has one large advantage: his personal experience has been "as fantastic and varied as the life of any of my fellow racketeers," and if he is bold enough "we will have a testament, and not a noble toilet water."

The last writer he discusses is William Burroughs, who had recently published a fragment of his unpublished novel *Naked Lunch*. Mailer saw in him exactly what was lacking in most of his contemporaries: an unflinching assault on the torpor-producing forces of the culture. He found the excerpt to be "more arresting, I thought, than anything I've read by an American in years," and if the rest of the novel were as good, "Burroughs will deserve rank as one of the most important novelists in America [ . . . ]"

He submitted the manuscript of the collection in late April. Advertisements came in at 200,000 words, one third of which was new work. When it was in the hands of the editors at Putnam's, he made arrangements to publish three of the four pieces in magazines just before or at the same time as the collection, which was now scheduled to appear on November 6. "Outlaw" appeared in *Esquire*, "Buddies" in the *Village Voice*, and "Quick and Expensive" in *Big Table*. Finally, two scenes from the dramatic version of *The Deer Park* came out in *PR*, giving Mailer close to simultaneous exposure in four very different publications, two hip and two "overground," as *Esquire* editor Harold Hayes called his magazine. While pre-publication excerpting was nothing new, no one in 1959 was doing it quite so shrewdly or widely. He continued the practice for the rest of his career, and must be considered the leading "magazinish" (a name applied to Poe) of his era.

In "Last Advertisement for Myself before the Way Out" which concludes the collection, he is as nearly as rough on himself as on his peers. Comparing himself to Scott Fitzgerald, "an indifferent caretaker of his talent," he says that he has been "a cheap gambler" with his. He goes on to describe himself as "cowardly," "stupid" and guilty of "fear and vanity," winding up with a



flourish that recalls the bold, mythical gesture of Babe Ruth, <sup>a passage</sup> ~~one~~ that would be regularly quoted in the future by detractors and admirers alike. The big novel, he says,

will be fired to its fuse by the rumor that once I pointed to the farthest fence and said that within ten years I would try to hit the longest ball ever to go up into the accelerated hurricane air of our American letters. For if I have one ambition above all others, it is to write a novel which Dostoyevsky and Marx; Joyce and Freud; Stendhal, Tolstoy, Proust and Spengler; Faulkner, and even old moldering Hemingway might come to read, for it would carry what they had to tell another part of the way.

Mailer didn't hit this "longest ball," but considering what he did produce in the ten years after *Advertisements*, <sup>he had some solid hits</sup> ~~his strokeout was fortuitous~~. In addition to challenging himself, another motive for his prediction — corroborated by the taunts and dares that he leveled at his "fellow racketeers" — was to stimulate them. He genuinely believed that a great achievement by any of them would be the keenest spur for the rest.

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Minton was uncertain about including "The Time of Her Time." <sup>because of its</sup> Its detailed sexual descriptions, ~~he felt would likely result in legal action, but would probably deter prosecution.~~ To this end, Mailer wrote identical letters to 13 literary critics, stating that a majority of those polled would have to approve of the story for Putnam's to go ahead. If opinion was seriously divided, the story would be cut. Accompanied by a copy of the story, the letter went to the following: Howe, ~~and~~ Podhoretz; F.W. Dupee, the Trillings and Richard Chase at Columbia; Leslie Fiedler

OK?

[Competition Insert, manuscript of *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*, page 351]

U We had a lot of respect for each other. I remember I received a copy of *From Here to Eternity*, which I think I'd asked for, and Jones inscribed it: "To Norman—my most feared friend; my dearest rival." That's the nature of friendship among writers. Gore Vidal—who has never been at a loss to see the negative side of human nature—pointed out that, "Whenever a friend succeeds, a little something in me dies." That's an exaggeration of this notion of competition. But in time we may get to the point where, although something of you does die, some other part of you is encouraged. You say, "Well if he's doing it, I can do it."

at University of Montana; Rahv, Phillips and William Barrett at *PR*; two important independent critics, ~~Alfred~~ Kazin and Macdonald; and Mailer's former professor, Robert Gorham Davis. He said he did not like to ask for an appraisal of unpublished work, "but I believe this piece may be important enough to justify the act." He asked for a reply by mid-July 1959. His plan was clever; he not only garnered 12 positive endorsements—Davis demurred—and convinced Minton of the story's merits, he also gained advance support for his collection from a group of influential figures. Four of them went on to write supportive reviews of *Advertisements*, including two that were highly favorable.

The story, a comic masterpiece and <sup>perhaps</sup> one of Mailer's finest short stories, is a first-person recounting of the Herculean efforts of Sergius O'Shaugnessy, a Village stud who calls his penis "the avenger," to bring Denise Gondelman, a "proud, aggressive, vulgar, tense, stiff and arrogant Jewess" to her first orgasm. As <sup>Critic</sup> Andrew Gordon has explained, "Sergius is the hipster battling Denise the Square, determined to liberate her from her dead-ass sexual repressions, her intellectual priggishness, and her obsession with psychoanalytic jargon; as Mailer would say, from her totalitarianism." On another level, it is both "a glorification of the power of sex and a *reductio ad absurdum*. The controlling metaphor is sex as war, and sexual intercourse takes on the qualities of a championship boxing match, an encounter between a matador and bull or an epic struggle for survival between two savage beasts in a jungle clearing." O'Shaugnessy, Gordon says, "sees himself, and only half in jest, as a sexual messiah" carrying the gospel of Lawrence and Reich to uptight pagans in Greenwich Village. After several near victories, she ultimately achieves "the time of her time," an obvious reference to God's whispered words to O'Shaugnessy at the end of *The Deer Park*. Far from being grateful for pushing her over the top

who?  
a critic.



after many long nights of phallic endeavor (achieved when he whispers in her ear, "You dirty little Jew"), Denise tells him the following morning that his "whole life is a lie, and you do nothing but run away from the homosexual that is you." Then she departs and is "out the door before I could rise to tell her that she was a hero fit for me." As Gordon points out, the story is a rehearsal for an even more detailed and symbol-laden (if less exhausting) series of sexual bouts in Mailer's 1965 novel, *An American Dream*. O'Shaugnessy, he notes accurately, is "the first of Mailer's *active* narrators" in a fictional work, and a precursor to Stephen Rojack, the narrator-protagonist of that novel.

He also sent "The Time of Her Time" to Lois Wilson. She shared it with her husband, Graham Wilson, also an English professor, who knew of and sanctioned their relationship from the beginning. He responded by saying that the Sergius-Denise affair seemed to parallel hers with Mailer, but in reverse. Mailer wrote to her in early May about a tryst they were planning. "A man is nothing without his greed," he said. A couple of weeks later, he wrote to a New York ~~Hotel~~ to make a reservation for her, enclosing a money order and signing the letter "Marion Faye." Reflecting on their time together, which both enjoyed greatly, he said:

once in a while I think we're ripening for one another, that in five years we'll be very good for one another, even be able to restore the nerves of love to one another that the others (some of them) deadened away. Anyway, phony schizophrenic, Junebug Daisy DeSade, have your good time in Europe. I'll be envying you except that I've got the galleys of the book that may change my life again, and I'm working on them for the next five or six weeks. Everything has to

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p. 355  
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be handed in by August First so you will either catch me either exhausted or full of myself depending on what I think of the book. And of myself.

Move  
to p 355

He added that he now had a green sports car, a Triumph, and signed the letter "J. Kafka Hemingway."

After he sent the story to <sup>he</sup> ~~He continued his correspondence with~~ the 13 critics, <sup>ed</sup> gently encouraging them to respond and <sup>ed</sup> thanking them when they did. Kazin was one of the first to respond, praising the story's "literary seriousness and power," and calling Mailer "immensely talented." Then this reservation: "You are the Rabbi of screwing, the Talmudist of fucking, the writer who has managed to be so solemn about sex as to make it grim." He argued for more passion, and ended by saying that the "characters make love with a stop-watch in each hand. For this I should make love?" Mailer wrote back immediately to say that being called "the Rabbi of screwing" gave him a laugh, and agreeing that the grimness of some of his descriptions were "the single most unattractive feature" of his writing. There was a reason, however: "I am more or less obsessed with the idea that sex is dying in a new ice-age of the psyche, and I think the only way to change one's readers and warm them—for yes, I am guilty of a messianic lust—is to make them set up camp on the ice for a while." In the big novel, he would depict "characters who are monsters of self-consciousness and try for the more difficult and perhaps impossible trip into a terrain where emotion becomes real again." Over the years, Kazin would continue to chide him in reviews and essays about taking his obsessions too seriously, and urging him to distance himself from his characters (a reflection, perhaps, of the Henry James revival then underway).

Kazin was not the only member of ~~The~~ Family pushing Mailer to be more Jamesian. Diana Trilling and Mailer liked each other from the start, and her positive vetting of the story brought them even closer. The fact that she also praised *The Deer Park* in the same letter, calling it "a fantastically courageous book, intelligent book, noble book," was further uplifting, especially since she said that her husband shared her enthusiasm. She began to see him as her personal project, and her letters over the next few years mixed praise, joshing and advice. Besides giving him her counsel, she said his work was an advance on Hemingway's. He said in reply that *Advertisements* "is a bit obsessed with Hemingway—I'm afraid he crops up in the book the way an old lover appears in the conversation of a woman who insists the man could now not mean less to her." *Advertisements* is the high water mark of Mailer's interest in Hemingway, although after his suicide in 1961, ~~Hemingway's~~ <sup>his</sup> ghost would often return. In his reply to Trilling, written after his return from Provincetown, he did not remark on the concern Trilling expressed at the end of her letter: "I hope to God you're not falling into the trap of explaining yourself. Like seeing yourself in history, self-explanation is one of the new and most elegant ways for a writer to cut his own throat." Like Kazin, she wanted Mailer to put some aesthetic distance between himself and his creations, something he was less and less prone to do. In fact, before the next decade was over, he would do precisely what she wanted him not to, exactly what Henry James had avoided. Podhoretz said Mailer saw himself as "a battleground of history," but Mailer had bigger ideas: he wanted to intervene in history, and dramatize <sup>his</sup> ~~the~~   
 *intervention*   
 *process.*

As he was making plans for a trip to Germany to meet with <sup>J</sup>his German publisher, Adele gave birth to a girl after ten hours of labor. Elizabeth Ann (soon referred to as Betsy), was born

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Pick up pp. 353-1



on September 28. He wrote to his uncle Dave, now a widower, to announce the birth. Unlike Danielle, who looked like Adele, Betsy "was very much a Mailer. She has a most definite chin, and a thin, determined, and quite beautiful mouth." He told Dave that a copy of *Advertisements* (dedicated to Dave, the memory of Anne, and Barney), would be sent to him shortly. He added that there had been "a boom in my literary stock lately." A week later, he left for Germany.

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Mailer landed in Munich on October 11. He gave a reading there, went on to Berlin, and then flew home on the 20th. Almost all that is known of the visit is contained in a November 6 letter to Lois Wilson:

Dear Lady (with the light)

Your letter was nice. First nice letter I've gotten from you since my last work. I am at the moment empty. There was almost too much of a good time in Berlin where I stayed for six days after planning only two, and I fell in love with a bar girl (a tall tough sharp mean and rather honest lady) who fell first in love with me, and would take no further money from me after the first night (as the clean proof of her love) which act unmanned me a bit, for the dream of all whoremongers like myself is to get that hard dikey man-hating pussy for nothing, and at last I had succeeded. So you were right. It was good for me to go to Europe, and it would have been better with a month.

But there is one thing awful about falling in love in Europe. Once one is back it all slips away, inexorable bit by bit, and now the lady is no longer real to me—instead I sit around wondering whether my new rocket is going to break through that most critical smog. It'll be depressing if it doesn't, although not fatal I suspect, but I can't quite keep from thinking that it'll be nice if it does.

At any rate I would rather try to answer the question you half asked me in the letter, but I hesitate because I never have a good sense of when the words we use are the same and when we're no help to each other at all. But when you wrote that you never know what goes on inside me because I do not know myself which way I'll go next, I can only say you're right but hurrah! It's the one part of me I wouldn't want to change.

*Regina*  
The German barmaid, whose name is unknown, gave Mailer a pocket photograph of herself, inscribed to "Der Dick." He never saw her again, and it appears that they did not correspond. Years later, he identified her as the model for Ruta, Barney Kelly's lubricious maid in *American Dream*. The letter also shows that the division in his psyche remained. As for his "new rocket," it <sup>went</sup> ~~made it~~ into orbit.

*ed'*  
~~Advertisements~~ had modest sales, less than 10,000 copies in the Putnam's edition, but it was a ~~succès de~~ <sup>est</sup> ~~estime~~, receiving notably strong reviews in the *Times Book Review*, *PR* and the *Voice*. *Time*, unsurprisingly, panned the collection, saying that judging from the excerpts offered from the big novel, its title should be "*The Nude and the Stewed*." Two of the most positive and perceptive reviews were from prominent members of The Family, Irving Howe and Alfred

Kazin. Both had caveats, as might be expected from men who finely sliced their discriminations, but overall they left no doubt about the fact that Mailer had arrived. Howe criticized him for getting carried away with his own metaphors, “using cancer as a synecdoche for the spread of social rot.” But he praised the “bouncy” advertisements that <sup>held</sup> stitched the collection together as being “done with bravado and good humor with an utter willingness to risk full exposure.” Howe, a deeply committed socialist, gave his highest praise to Mailer’s “devotion to restlessness,” and his “fear of stasis” in the culture. This is a new Mailer, he said, a “post-depressive Mailer.”

Kazin, one of the most intelligent critics writing in the late 1950s, was Edmund Wilson’s heir apparent. As a Brooklyn Jew with leftist inclinations and Family membership, he was comfortable in appraising Mailer’s status and prospects. He states unequivocally that his first three books, while interesting, were uneven. He expresses concern that Mailer’s “overintense need to dominate, to succeed, to grasp, to win” may interfere with his artistic development. Nevertheless, he finds *Advertisements* to be a clear advance, a book that shows “how exciting, yet tragic, America can be for a gifted writer.” Tragic because the country “hungrily welcomes any talent that challenges it interestingly—but then holds this talent in the mold of its own shapelessness.” Exciting, because Mailer seems to have found a way to be “an honest and intransigent spirit,” while remaining thoroughly American. The collection, he says, contains “more penetrating comment on the America of Eisenhower, television, suburbia, and J. D. Salinger than anything I have seen in years.” He possesses “a remarkable intelligence,” Kazin says, and yet is “one of the most variable, unstable, and on the whole unpredictable writers I have ever read.”