

Roger Donoghue, whom Mailer had met the previous year by way of Knox, also spent time at the Miller Hill house, where there were many parties. A former middleweight boxer, Donoghue retired from the ring after a fighter he knocked out in a 1951 Madison Square Garden bout died a few days later. The Mailers introduced him to Fay Mowery, a painter, who was visiting her brother Eldred in ^{Provincetown} P-Town. Soon after, they married. Donoghue gave Mailer some boxing lessons and Mailer helped him with a book he was trying to write. Donoghue knew Marlon Brando, and told stories about teaching him to box for his Oscar-winning role as Terry Malloy in the film, *On the Waterfront*, written by Budd Schulberg, and directed by Elia Kazan.

Mailer was fascinated by Donoghue's stories and easy Irish humor. He admired the Irish, Adele said. "I sometimes thought he really wanted to be Irish." (N)

A few years later he explained why he had so many Irish friends: "I've always loved the Irish and felt very close to them," he said, because "The Irish have what the Jews didn't have, and the Jews always had what the Irish didn't have. The Jews have this *funny knowledge* that if you respect life enough, it's going to respect you back. The Irish have never understood that. On the other hand the Irish have this *great bravura, a style, an elegance*." One side of Mailer was drawn to the dutiful Jews; the other, more daring side, took pleasure in Irish characters like Donoghue and, a couple of years later, Brendan Behan, the dramatist and memoirist. Behan, who described himself as "a drinker with writing problems," represented Mailer's Dionysian side. His radical IRA past and rumbustious escapades were enormously appealing to Mailer, who later "blessed" Behan for teaching him to perform in public. Susan, then an adolescent, remembers her father arriving at the apartment with Behan and his girlfriend, Valerie Danby-Smith, a former

Isn't it
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intimate of Hemingway's. It was seven or eight in the morning, and they were drunk and happy after a night of revelry.

One night that summer, Mailer and Adele were walking home after having drinks at the Atlantic House. It was a little after one in the morning, and when he saw a police car driving slowly by, he called out, impulsively, "taxi, taxi." The two policemen in the cruiser were ^{amused} not ~~unhappy with this~~ ~~appellation~~ words were exchanged, and Mailer was arrested. At the station house, when they put hands of escort on him, he resisted. He described it in a letter to the *New York Post* a few weeks later: "I was afraid of a flip, afraid I would begin to hit a uniform. I had the sustained image of a summer or a year in cellular, and so I did no more; let us say that I was reduced by this caution to ducking, spinning, blocking and sidestepping." This passive-aggressive behavior inflamed the two officers, and one of them, allegedly, hit him in the back of the head with his billy. It took thirteen stitches to close the cut. He was charged with public drunkenness and disorderly conduct and, rather than pay a fine and admit his guilt, opted for a June 23 bench trial, at which he represented himself. Disproving the canard that non-lawyers are unable to defend themselves in relatively straightforward trials, Mailer swam easily through the forensic waters and won a dismissal of the disorderly charge, but was found guilty of drunkenness. The judge said that Mailer "had enough to drink to act like a fool," and reprimanded the police for being "thin-skinned." Mailer was quite satisfied with ^{he} a draw.

Right after the July 4th holiday, he flew to Los Angeles. He wanted to get the feel of the city before the convention. Driving with Felker from the airport, Mailer said, "The only political writing I know anything about is Marx. I'm not exactly sure how to go about it." Felker

introduced him to some reporters, and Mailer found that he already knew some people there, including Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the historian, who would later join the Kennedy administration.

Mailer's name, of course, was well known. "The Democrats fascinated him, and they in turn were fascinated by him," Felker recalled. When the convention was under way, he came up to Felker and said, "I know how to do this."

I had an epiphany the day I saw Jack Kennedy arrive at the convention. He was in the back seat of an open car, his face suntanned, and there was a crowd of gays on the other side of Pershing Park, all applauding, going crazy, while the convention itself was filled with the whole corrupt trade-union Mafia Democratic machine.

And I could feel these two worlds come together, both juxtaposed to this incredible guy who looks like a movie star. I'd found my image, and at that moment it was almost as if I saw it like a great painting. In fact, out of all the pieces I've written, that one's probably more like a huge mural in my mind than almost anything I've done.

Mailer (smoking again) had 17 days to write his essay. Kennedy's "prefabricated politics" bothered him, however, and he did not immediately decide on the stance he would take. Recalling the moment much later, he said, "I never saw Kennedy as a politician I was in agreement with. I saw him as an active agent, as a catalyst, if you will, who would accelerate a great many trends in American life." Subsequently, Mailer was able to override his doubts and produce, for the first time in his life, a piece written with "deliberate political intention; I wanted to get a man elected." He also feared that Kennedy might lose. If party workers "had eased up a little bit," he said, "Nixon might have won." The 1960 presidential election was one of the

closest in history, with Kennedy defeating Richard Nixon in the popular vote by just over 100,000 votes.

Mailer When he was in the middle of writing what turned out to be a 13,000-word essay, Felker flew up to Provincetown to get an early look at it. "It was much better than I expected," Felker recalled. When it was all but finished, Mailer got a bonus: Kennedy was in Hyannis Port for a few days, about an hour from Provincetown, and had agreed to an interview. On the appointed day, before meeting privately with Kennedy, he spoke with some of the others gathered in the living room of the senator's waterfront home, including Schlesinger, Prince Radziwill, the husband of Lee Radziwill (Jacqueline Kennedy's sister), Peter Maas, a writer who knew Mailer, and Kennedy's press secretary, Pierre Salinger. Everyone was dressed casually, but Mailer had worn a suit and tie, and was uncomfortable in the heat. "Sweating like a goat, tense at the pit of my stomach for I would be interviewing Kennedy in a half hour, I was feeling not a little jangled," and when introduced to Mrs. Kennedy, "I felt like a drunk marine who knows in all clarity that if he doesn't have a fight soon it'll be good for his character but terrible for his constitution." She offered him some iced tea, and they chatted about Provincetown, which she had never seen.

EARL She must, I assured her. It was one of the few fishing villages in America which still had beauty. Besides it was the Wild West of the East. The local police were the Indians and the beatniks were the poor hard-working settlers. Her eyes turned merry. "Oh, I'd love to see it," she said. But how did one go? In three black limousines and fifty police for escort, or in a sports car at four a.m. with dark glasses? *now* "I suppose I'll never get to see it," she said wistfully.

(TXFL) A year later Mrs. Kennedy, now the ~~First~~ Lady, got her wish. Accompanied by Gore Vidal, whose stepfather had been married at different times to her mother and to Vidal's, she spent a couple of days in Provincetown with a small Secret Service escort. She wore a blonde wig and dark glasses, but was still identified by the locals. }

(TX) In their conversation, what struck Mailer was something Kennedy said at the outset, which he found to be "altogether meaningful" to him, but otherwise irrelevant. Kennedy said that he had read his books, paused and continued, "I've read *The Deer Park* and ~~the~~ others," a remark that startled Mailer. In countless similar situations, the book invariably mentioned was *The Naked and the Dead*. "If one is to take the worst and assume that Kennedy was briefed for this interview (which is most doubtful), it still speaks well for the striking instincts of his advisors." As it turns out, Kennedy was briefed by Salinger who, in turn, had been prompted by Maas. According to ~~him~~, there had been some reluctance to grant the interview in the first place, because "at that time in his life Norman was not viewed as Mr. Stability." So Maas told Salinger that "if you really want him eating out of your hand," have Kennedy mention *The Deer Park*. "But string it out a little. The timing has to be just right." Salinger, who was present for the interview, saw his boss deliver the line perfectly, and "Norman just melted." They got along well enough for Kennedy to invite him to come back the next day with his wife, which he did. Mailer wrote later, "After I saw the Kennedys, I added a few paragraphs to my piece about the convention, secretly relieved to have liked them, for my piece was most favorable to the Senator."

✓ Three weeks before the election, on October 18, the November issue of *Esquire* appeared, and "Superman" was given wide attention. Pete Hamill, another Irishman who became friendly

with Mailer, was a young journalist at that time. Looking back, he said, "When it came out, it went through journalism like a wave. Something changed. Everyone said, 'Uh. oh. Here's another way to do it.'" Mailer had taken political journalism "beyond what the best guys, ¹ Mencken, Teddy White, Richard Rovere ¹ had done. Rather than just a political sense there was a moral sense that came out of the piece." Felker and Hayes also were impressed: "It made an enormous impact and caused a lot of young writers to begin to think about politics," Felker said. Hayes added that the essay "set the tone for many, many things to come for him, and for us."

Arthur Schlesinger said he had "a vague memory that Kennedy was rather pleased" with the profile. Mailer only learned of Kennedy's reaction much later, but shortly after the piece appeared, he received a four-page ¹ hand-written letter from Jacqueline Kennedy expressing gratitude for his essay. "I never dreamed that American Politics could be written about that way ¹—why don't more people have the imagination to do so," she asks, and then answers by saying, "I know why ¹—the poor things don't have the talent." She then assured him that her husband had indeed read *The Deer Park*; she remembered clearly the room where he finished it on a rainy day the previous fall, as well as her own reading of it. Perhaps he and his wife could visit them at the Kennedy compound next summer, she added. Reading this, Mailer began to imagine a role he might play in the new administration.

In her letter, Mrs. Kennedy does not refer to any specific passages in "Superman," but the following scene could certainly have been one of those that elicited the wonder she felt. It is a description of Kennedy's arrival at the Hotel Biltmore, seen from Mailer's vantage point on an outdoor balcony of the hotel.

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(T)he Kennedy cortege came into sight, circled Pershing Square, the men in the open and leading convertibles sitting backwards to look at their leader, and finally came to a halt in the space cleared for them by the police in the crowd. The television cameras were out, and a Kennedy band was playing some circus music. One saw him immediately. He had the deep orange-brown suntan of a ski instructor, and when he smiled at the crowd his teeth were amazingly white and clearly visible at a distance of fifty yards. For one moment he saluted Pershing Square, and Pershing Square saluted him back, the prince and the beggars of glamour staring at one another across a city street, one of those very special moments in the underground history of the world, and then with a quick move he was out of the car and by choice headed in to the crowd instead of the lane cleared for him into the hotel by the police, so that he made his way inside surrounded by a mob, and one expected at any moment to see him lifted to his shoulders like a matador being carried back to the city after a triumph in the plaza.

(TX)

"Superman" is a classic piece of reportage and a foundation stone of the "New Journalism" not least because of Mailer's skill with long periodic sentences. They take us through the scene as if we are watching ^{an overhead} a high tracking shot in a film, while giving hints of the emotions felt not only by the writer (here designated by the indefinite pronoun "one" to emphasize his shared identity with the crowd), but by the crowd, the police, the TV camera operators, the "beggars," the ~~Senator's~~ handlers and Kennedy himself, the ski-instructor-prince-matador-movie-star who spontaneously elects to wade into the crowd. The consequences of the Democrats nominating "a great box-office actor," he continued, "were staggering and not at all

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Years later Mailer said that the reason he had a great many Irish friends was that he felt "some kind of instinctive link with them."

easy to calculate." The fact that Kennedy was Irish did him no harm in Mailer's eyes. When

Kennedy came on the stage at the convention, a writer friend said to him, "Sergius

O'Shaughnessy born rich," a remark that struck Mailer. As Schlesinger later said, "He finds the

Irish dramatic; they're romantic, they're outsiders, they're oppressed and they live by words.

They're also tough, and I think he responded in part to the machismo, so it's possible that Jack

Kennedy came along at a useful time for him." An oft-quoted passage in the essay, which comes

shortly after the description of Kennedy's triumphant arrival, demonstrates the accuracy of

Hamill's Schlesinger's comment about a new kind of politics:

Since the First World War Americans have been leading a double life, and our history has moved on two rivers, one visible, the other underground; there has been the history of politics which is concrete, factual, practical and unbelievably dull if not for the consequences of the actions of some of these men; and there is a subterranean river of untapped, ferocious, lonely and romantic desires, that concentration of ecstasy and violence which is the dream life of the nation.

The two rivers came together in Kennedy, a canny, bold political operative ready to shake a thousand hands a day and spend his father's money to win (with the help of his family) a string of nine primaries, but also a war hero with a vision for the future, funds of imperturbability, and looks as heart-piercing as the matinee idols whom Americans had loved and envied in the darkened movie palaces of the Depression and World War II.

Even after receiving Mrs. Kennedy's letter and receiving congratulations all around on "Superman," Mailer still had last-minute pangs. "The night Kennedy was elected," he wrote, "I felt a sense of woe." By presenting Kennedy as an archetype, a young King Arthur, Mailer felt

he was "bending reality like a field of space to curve the time I wished to create." He didn't know if he was enabling an opportunist or bringing a hero into his own. Would Kennedy be the first hipster president, or just another politician? "Victory has a thousand fathers, but defeat is an orphan," Kennedy once said, and after he won the White House a number of people claimed paternity. Mailer listed several—^{Chicago, Richard} Mayor Daley, ^{Lyndon} J. Edgar Hoover, Senator Johnson and Frank Sinatra, a strong supporter of J.F.K. Mailer said his "cool conclusion" that "Superman" had been one of the deciding factors "might be high presumption but it was not unique." His contribution, he argued, had been to dramatize the race between the Republican candidate, Richard Nixon—¹⁻⁷ "sober, the apotheosis of opportunistic lead"—^{and} a J.F.K., "a prince in the unstated aristocracy of the American dream." He didn't claim to have shifted 100,000 votes directly, but "a million people might have read my piece and some of them talked to other people." His essay sparked the energies of Kennedy volunteers, "enough to make a clean critical difference though the country."

Looking back at the election 20 years later, he said that part of his uncertainty about going all out for Kennedy came from his fear that he was too impressed by Kennedy's star quality. But he came to believe that he had done the right thing. "Kennedy did make a profound change, he altered the country forever and as a result was one of the most important presidents we ever had. Also, the piece left me with a feeling that the one thing I must always count on is the navigator at the center of my unconscious, which knows more than I know. I take this for granted now, but back then I wasn't as sure."

Shortly after he finished "Superman," he heard that Capote was working on a new book about the savage murder of the Clutter family on a Kansas farm the previous fall. *In Cold Blood*,

published first in 1965 in the New Yorker, and the following year as a book, would have a strong influence on Mailer. "I hate you for writing about murder," he wrote to Capote, "I thought that was my province." He didn't say that the big novel he was preparing himself to write was also about a murder. All he said was that it was too late in the summer to make a big push on it. He added that he was trying to close a deal on a three-story brownstone in Brooklyn Heights, not far from Capote's apartment, and if it happened, "the possibility suggests itself to light a candle every night for Senor Capote, our peripatetic Truman." The Brooklyn house didn't work out at that time. Instead, the Mailers began renting a fairly large apartment at 250 West 94th Street, 13th floor. *th. 13th floor*

They learned about the apartment from Harold L. "Doc" Humes, who lived in the same building. A writer, activist, provocateur and devoted marijuana smoker, Humes was one of the founders of the Paris Review, and a legendary figure in the Hip world. He had written a brilliant novel, The Underground City, and in the fall of 1960 founded the Citizens' Emergency Committee in response to the plight of an eccentric comic, Richard "Lord" Buckley, whose permit to perform had been recinded. Billie Holiday, Charlie Mingus, Thelonious Monk, among many others, had also been denied permits. Mailer, who was still involved with the Fair Play for Cuba Committee, signed on with Humes' committee, whose efforts ultimately led to the resignation of the police commissioner, and several years later the dismantling of the cabaret permit system. He began spending a lot of time with Humes, who he later described as "one of the few people I have ever met, who was essentially, at bottom, more vain, more intellectually arrogant than I am." The success of "Superman" had put him into what he called a "Napoleonic mood." He had fantasies about becoming a member of Kennedy's kitchen cabinet. "I wanted to

"Napoleonic
ambition" on
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be an advisor," he said in 1999. "I felt that, you know, I might have a certain talent for it." At that time, he said,

I realized that life, in its imminence, in its presence, in its resonance, once you could feel it, was extraordinary, and that we were all living like cockroaches, scurrying here and there and not having that life. And so that became, if you will, my sermon. That was what I was preaching for the next 10-15-20 years: let's get back to the instinctive life. Let's get back to where we can feel what's going on in ourselves. And I felt that President Kennedy, and his wife, precisely because of their youth and their good looks, were going to encourage ^l~~in~~ willy-nilly, whether they chose to or not ^l~~in~~ an opening in America, a return more to the pagan, to the sense of oneself as an animal who lived in a field of senses.

Kennedy owed him some gratitude, Mailer felt, and in recompense, he wanted "some drinks and dinner and a chance to preach to the President." He was certain he could help Kennedy understand the country better, and perhaps he could become his confidante.

Mailer had his own confidante — "Doc" Humes — and that fall they were discussing the possibility of Mailer running for Mayor of New York on the existentialist ticket. Humes, who would become his campaign manager, recalled that Mailer "was grim-faced every day. He wasn't sleeping well, he was using a lot of Demerol and alcohol, and he had collateral worries about his work." He wanted to lead New York, while calling it "this insane, cruel, rapacious, avid, cancerous and alas ^l~~in~~ in the end ^l~~in~~ cowardly city." ^{New York} It was certainly having an effect on him, according to Humes: "I think he transmogrified into a personage: the public persona, a projection of the media, I think he even described it once as a Dr. Jekyll-Mr. Hyde type of thing, with the

city driving him mad." Others noticed how he changed when he returned from the country or Provincetown. Pleased as he was about his piece in *Esquire*, he was infuriated when the magazine's publisher, Arnold Gingrich, decided to change the final word of the title from "Supermarket" to "Supermart." When Mailer saw the change on his contract, he told Felker to make the restoration, and Felker said he would. But he didn't. Consequently, Mailer instructed Rembar to ensure that his future contracts specify that no changes could be made to magazine pieces, including titles, without his permission. Then he wrote a letter to the editor at *Esquire*, detailing his complaints and ended, "You print nice stuff, but you gotta treat the hot writer right or you lose him like you just lost me. When I'm mayor, I'll pay you a visit and see if you've cleaned the stable." In later years, whenever he autographed copies of the essay, he always carefully restored the original title by hand. Reasonable people can debate which title is slightly more euphonious.

After discussions with friends and family in late October, Mailer began his public campaign for mayor with a flurry of letters. He asked for the support of comedian, writer and musician Steve Allen, with whom he had become friendly; liberal columnist Murray Kempton, whose idiosyncratic style he admired; Seymour Krim, who had written him about reaching out to New York Catholics and Jews; and Karl Edd, the author of a banned book, *The Tenement Kid*. He asked Edd for the names of "some very hard hip kids" to work in the campaign, and told Krim that he needed public relations professionals who would work for nothing. The kind of people he hoped to attract, he explained to Allen, were people who had "evolved a private philosophy which will have perhaps some point of possible communion with my own." He told

his German publisher he had no time to answer questions because "it is necessary to start a new political party in America," and agreed to do an interview with *Mademoiselle* on the condition that it be a discussion of politics. He did respond positively, however, to Allen Ginsberg's request for a testimonial for Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, which he had now read. For the Grove Press edition, he wrote, "Naked Lunch is a book of beauty, great difficulty, and maniacally exquisite insight. I think William Burroughs is the only American novelist living today who may conceivably be possessed by genius. And I make these remarks in sourness and without enthusiasm, since Mr. Burroughs, after all, is one of my fellow racketeers. But I don't know that we belong to the same part of the literary Mafia." The second sentence of the blurb continues to appear on editions of Burroughs' novel.

On the campaign trail, Kennedy was talking about the possibility of sending a volunteer force to Cuba to challenge Castro, and Mailer was sufficiently disturbed to write a note to Schlesinger saying that such an operation would be "tragic," and Kennedy might "lose more than he will gain from this" in the election. He also said no to a request to use his name on a national advertisement sent to him from the National Committee of Arts, Letters and Sciences for John F. Kennedy for President. "Kennedy's Wagnerian vision of a new American expeditionary force captained by Saint Grottlesexers and soldiered by some yet undefined Marine corps lumpen proletariat for the invasion of Cuba," he wrote, was "chilling" and he hoped it was only "a perhaps forgivable mistake due to the excesses of campaigning."

Not all of his letters were as reasonable as these. In undated letters written around election day to four writers, there are signs, at least in retrospect, that the fears of his wife and

sister about his mental state were justified. The letters are to pitcher Jim Brosnan, author of professional baseball's first un-sanitized memoir, *The Long Season*; John Cheever, who had a fine story, "The Death of Justina," in the same issue of *Esquire* as "Superman"; Stephen Spender, the literary editor of *Encounter*, a highbrow British magazine, where Mailer had sent "Superman" in the hopes of publication; and T.S. Eliot. Spender was the only one that Mailer knew personally. Following are a few lines from the first three, and the whole of his letter to Eliot:

To Brosnan: "I can't pitch worth a fuck, and you write like a dull whore with an honest streak, but if you ain't afraid of a grand slam, which you is, come around when you get to the New York, and we'll have a drink or two—you to beer and small Martinis, me to B, not Bourbon, but blended Bellows, if that's not bragging too hard. Your new pal Fan letter Mailer (First name Norm)"

To Cheever: "For its length it's an extraordinary story, not altogether alienated (?) from a great literature but . . . you did cowardly thing—you kept the children from seeing the dead woman—thus depriving me of their reactions. Yet one does write a letter. Your tablemate, Norman Mailer"

To Spender: "I have a hide like a Bantu flunky but you might recognize the subtle bit that I found you one of the few people who were at bottom not wholly detestable. So not hearing from you it was sad to think that Mailer, the punch-drunk clunk is wrong again. Norman"

Mailer was trying to convince André Deutsch, his new publisher in England, to include "The Time of Her Time" in the edition of *Advertisements* to be published there. He hoped that

Had been with Deutsch but now Deutsch was on his own

Eliot, after reading that Denise Gondelman believed that the poet "was the apotheosis of manner" would endorse its inclusion. To Eliot:

Eliot
If he comes out with words for The Time of Her Time, I will force my publisher to print or have nothing further to do with him. Self educated gentleman, I will swear a vow on what is important to me that I will not use his letter in any way without the perfectionist permission of his ecclesiastical Name.

EXTL
Prince Mailer the Norman of Principath to T.S. Lord King of Eliot, Impervious to Compassion, Blind by Pride, Timid as Temerity, Royal as a Royal Roach who has Earned his Place which is High. Spirit of Denial and Quick Withdrawal I, hereby, as Norman, do challenge your inflexible taste by presenting the fruits of my orchard and the war of my castle. Do answer. No answer is war, and one would detest that. Mailer.

TXFL
It is unlikely that ^{these} letters were sent, but it is clear that he was less and less able to bridle his irrationality. The struggle between the saint and the psychopath was challenging the navigator's abilities.

TX
In his reply to Mrs. Kennedy before the election, he responded to her comment about how incredible it would be if he could some how visit earlier centuries and write reports in the manner of "Superman." Mailer said he would enjoy talking with her in Hyannis Port about his interest in the late-eighteenth century France. Specifically, he would like to discuss the works of the Marquis de Sade. "There's a man I'd like to do a biography of when I'm dead beyond repair. I might be able to throw a hint or two on the odd strong honor of the man." His balance can be

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gauged by his feeling that Mrs. Kennedy would naturally be delighted to discuss de Sade's thought as "a fair climax to the Age of Reason." Not surprisingly, she did not reply. Later, he deduced that he had "smashed the limits of such letter-writing," and trod "as close to the edge as I have ever come." But at the time, "I saw it somewhat differently. The odds were against a reply, I decided, three-to-one against, or eight-to-one against. I did not glean that they were eight-hundred-to-one against. It is the small inability to handicap odds which is family to the romantic, the desperate and the insane."

Two days after he wrote to Mrs. Kennedy, Mailer called a meeting to discuss his candidacy with Irving Howe and a half-dozen *Dissent* writers and editors. Mailer opened it by saying he wanted to be mayor "to establish New York as the West Berlin of the world." He called for an existential campaign. He then read his "Open Letter to Fidel Castro," and said that if it was published, and Castro responded positively, and Hemingway agreed to write an assessment of the Cuban revolution, voters would get the sense that "New York can be a force in the world." Howe said that the Cuban situation was no way to start a New York mayoral campaign, especially a third party campaign. The meeting ended after a desultory discussion of a name for the new party.

According to his sister, he was surly and difficult in the fall of 1960. One afternoon she came to the 94th Street apartment to deliver something she had typed for him in connection with the mayoral campaign. He found fault with it, and said she was trying to sabotage him. They argued and, then, she recalled, "He actually hit me across the side of my face. Broke my glasses. He was very upset. Oh, God, it was a terrible time." Adele was present and remembers Barbara crying and saying to her brother, "What's the matter with you? Are you crazy?" and then

leaving. Barbara now believes that Mailer had gotten fascinated with political power when he went to the Democratic convention. "I think he really felt that if I can't change the world with my writing, I can change it if I get some power, some political power." He wasn't merely angry with her, she said, he was angry with his entire family: "He felt that the Kennedys all pulled together, and his family wasn't doing this for him. I wasn't happy at all about his running for mayor. Thought it was ^a terrible idea." A decade later, Mailer said he was in complete earnest at the time. "I thought I was unique; that I had a unique mission. I had something to do in the world." When the two women spoke the next day, Barbara said, "I've never seen him like this." Adele replied, "Well I have, and it's getting worse."

His descent began to accelerate. On November 14, he was arrested at Birdland, a fancy jazz club in mid-town Manhattan. He insisted on paying a bar bill with a credit card, although the law forbade alcohol purchases on credit at the time. He spent the night in jail. The next afternoon he was cordial during his interview with two young women from *Mademoiselle*. Most of their discussion was given over to the issues raised in "The White Negro" and "Superman." Mailer said Kennedy was a hipster, and that he was as well, but a "terribly philosophical" one. He wasn't about to recommend hipsterism to everyone, he said. "I just ask that the hipster be considered at least as interesting and serious as a young congressman." Mailer admitted to still taking an occasional toke, but found that it was affecting his short-term memory. When the discussion turned to writers, he praised Burroughs. "I think he's going to last a long time after me because he's more intense. He's got a quality I don't have. I mean, I write sentences that embrace people. But he writes sentences that stab people and you never forget the man who stabs you." Indeed.

✓ Mailer was tired after spending the night before in jail, but nevertheless spent the evening drinking with Lester Blackiston and Bill Ward at the Cedar Tavern in the Village. He got to bed at six a.m. (We know the specifics of his life for the next three weeks because of a rough diary he kept from November 15 through December 8). The next afternoon he had a mayoral planning meeting at Downey's Steakhouse in Manhattan with some friends, including Seymour Krim, who along with Allen Ginsberg and Noel Parmentel, Jr. (credited with coming up with the famous line about Nixon, "Would you buy a used car from this man?"), were named informal press secretaries for the campaign. He returned to 94th Street for a meeting with Humes and the Citizens' Emergency Committee. ✓

The following day, November 17, Mailer took the train to Providence to give a reading at Brown University. According to an account by Richard Holbrooke, he began his presentation announcing, "I come to bring you the existentialist word" (five years later, Mailer said that at the time, "I thought I had God's message"). Another reporter, Ellen Shaffer, wrote: "The audiences were at once alienated by this brusque man, and having lost his audience, Mailer never regained it." He read from his work, and "his voice swelled with each obscenity, and he made lewd gestures to aid his re-enactment of the scene." A few members of the audience walked out; others applauded. She concluded: "Norman Mailer is an egocentric, malcontent genius, who has courageously, indignantly come to blows with the world around him." Holbrooke ends his report with Mailer in quiet dialogue about various writers after the reading. "Fitzgerald," Mailer said, "pissed away his talent," and Farrell is "as great as Beckett." Mailer's notes sketch the rest of the evening: "Drinks at Ginger Chivvies (?), Freddy candy (?) man and punch he caught for me, going outside—Chinnie Thibault looking for WPRO, splitting with him and Reis, car-ride out for

girl, no-find, eating in a spade joint, near rumble, split-out onto street, back to hotel, chinfest with Reis, sleep." (7)

The next day he met his sister at his apartment. They had a fight about the preparations for the ^{thirtieth} 30th birthday party he was giving Roger Donoghue on November 19. Mailer planned to make an informal statement at the party that he was running for mayor; a formal announcement would be made a few days later at a press conference. The Donoghues came by for drinks in the late afternoon, and then they all went to the Stork Club for more. After dinner, he went home and took Tibo for a walk, and the dog ran away. Chasing him, Mailer got into a fight with a "prep school type." He went to bed in the early morning hours. (OK?)

In the morning, he was "ego-dampened by fatigue." Mickey Knox and Humes' wife, Anna Lou, came by for campaign assignments. After they left, he had had an argument with Adele. Then he got on the telephone to invite last-minute guests. George Plimpton, who was helping him, ^{later said} told Manso that Mailer called him several times that day. Doc is a His idea, Plimpton said (N)

You'll remember that his campaign was based on the rather interesting idea that

^{was that} he was truly suited to represent the disenfranchised of the city — Bowery bums, ~~deadbeats, bag women, prostitutes, pimps, victims of police brutality, outcasts,~~ ~~runaways, and so forth~~ — and if he could convince this marginal if large group that he had solid connections with the 'power structure' of New York City, he'd get their support in his quest for the mayoralty. (N)

Dutifully, all afternoon, Plimpton made calls to various dignitaries, including the fire commissioner, police commissioner, David Rockefeller of the Chase Manhattan Bank, and

Sadrudin Aga Khan, the publisher of *Paris Review*. According to one person who attended, "Norman hoped to bring together these two disparate strains of New York life, thinking that some interesting combustion, some mutual reaction, would come of it." But the only society representative Plimpton convinced to attend was Peter Duchin, the bandleader.

A heavy load of booze was delivered in the late afternoon and Adele, with the help of their maid, Nettie Biddle, was busy preparing food. C. Wright Mills, the sociologist, came early, as did various street people Mailer had invited. There were many crashers. The party was roaring by ten p.m. Plimpton remembered seeing a man wrapped in bandages and was told he was a victim of police brutality. Another guest saw a cop and a drug addict avoiding each other, and "a few silly, simpering debs around, and the usual cluster of homosexuals and floozies. There was so damn much noise I don't know how the kids and the dog—a poodle—slept through it."

Tony Franciosa, the film star, was at the party. Mailer knew him through his old friend Shelley Winters, who had divorced Franciosa the day before. He was the closest thing to a major celebrity who attended. Several close friends were there: Roger and Fay Donoghue, Mickey Knox and Adele's sister Joan, Dwight Macdonald, Delmore Schwartz, the other two Normans, Rosten and Podhoretz, and their wives, Hedda Rosten and Midge Decter, Lew and Jay Allen, Barbara and Harold Solomon, "Doc" and Anna Lou Humes, Barbara and Larry Alson, and Mailer's parents, left early. Provincetown was represented by Bill Ward, Harriet Sohmers and Lester Blackiston, Barney Rosset, the head of Grove Press was there, along with Allen Ginsberg, and an editor from *Harper's* magazine, Robert Silvers. Jason Epstein and his wife Barbara, who would later found the *NYRB* with Silvers, also came. Gossip columnist Leonard Lyons came for a short while. Estimates of the number of guests average around 200.

^{Mickey} Knox, who thought he had seen the full spectrum of his friend's moods, said that Mailer "was in a strange zone." He paced through the apartment, "taut as a cat," giving his greetings. He had drunk a lot and smoked marijuana, and soon got into arguments about the campaign. He also tried to stare people down. "It was a spooky evening," ^{Doc} Humes recalled. "It was exactly the kind of atmosphere that Norman in his state should have avoided." Allen Ginsberg, usually the mildest of men, got into a shouting match with Norman Podhoretz. According to Ginsberg, Podhoretz was patronizing, telling him the only way he could gain entrée into the larger literary world was by breaking with the Beats. "To my eternal shame," Ginsberg recalled, "I lost my temper" and began screaming at Podhoretz. "You big dumb fuckhead. You don't know anything about anything." Mailer was called and Ginsberg assured him that he wasn't going to get violent. Ginsberg saw that he was making a scary party worse, so he left, riding down in the elevator with C. Wright Mills. (N)

Scuffles kept breaking out as the party wore on. Larry Alson remembers that people kept challenging Mailer to a fight. When Epstein arrived, Mailer tried to box with him. "I don't know anything about boxing," ^{Epstein} he said, "so I just held out my hand as if to make him go away. I didn't touch him, and he fell over." Mailer went down to the street several times for fights, according to his notes, once with a man named Curran: "Punch at Plimpton's belly—^{first} P's counter to chin, chasing Duchin and P to cab. Fighting Curran. Taking punishment—^{Barbara's husband} holding on—draw. Curran getting into cab—^{book editor Jason} ask him to tell accurate version—^{Epstein} gets out, new fight, lands on ground, me astride—^{first} he squeezing, me up—^{first} finally wanes—^{first} goes home. Puerto Rican wants to fight. I shame him." Podhoretz summed it up: "There was a lot of bad feelings in the air, most of it emanating from Norman." (N)

Around three a.m. there were about twenty people left. In his drunken state, Mailer announced he was dividing them into two groups: supporters and enemies. He judged each person; most were found wanting, including Adele. Nettie the maid, he kept saying, was the only person who had remained loyal. As ^{gossip columnist} Leonard Lyons wrote in his column the following day, "It has been quite apparent, for more than a year, that the gifted writer needed psychiatric help." Mailer was barely standing, but he went back down to the street. He walked north to Podhoretz's apartment on 106th Street, and called for him to come out. Neither Podhoretz nor his wife heard anything. On the way back, he saw Donoghue and ^a his friend ^{the friend} Terry. Mailer tried to fight Terry and then, according to his diary, Donoghue himself. Although Donoghue was as drunk as Mailer, he knew better, and left. Later, Mailer told Donoghue, "I wish you'd hit me." Around 4:30, he went upstairs. His face and bullfighter's shirt were bloody, and he had a black eye.

Only a few people were left. When Adele saw her husband, she taunted him, as she recalled in her memoir: "*Aja toro, aja*, come on you little faggot, where's your *cojones*, did your ugly whore of a mistress cut them off, you son of a bitch." Mailer's diary reads as follows:

Head upstairs and have trouble getting in. Adele mocks me (fag crack)—I rush the door, others try to push me out, I flail, fight, succeed in getting in, Adele looks away in scorn, I hit her, then order others out. Mannix offers resistance, and I rumble with him, am too weak, and Lester bops him. Then go back in. There is Neddie, Clint, Les, & Adele—Back to the hall with Adele ??? We come out, after while she leaves with others. I start to go to sleep, Les comes back, they are over at Humes—glass tale. Humes comes by—I abuse him, drive him away, as he flees, he drops bottle behind him on floor thus stopping my exit.

MNR to P. 395
 TX Doc
 Humes said that when he saw Mailer in the apartment after the stabbing, he was in a "zombielike" state. "I don't think he was fully aware of having stabbed her," he said. But while Mailer's diary says nothing about a knife or a wound, the reference to the "glass tale," indicates that he later recognized what he had done. Humes had convinced Adele to tell the police and doctors that she had fallen on broken glass, and that was the cause of the wounds to her back and abdomen. That was her first explanation, but later she told the truth: "He didn't say anything. He just looked at me. He didn't say a word. He stabbed me."

N You're talking us the aftermath of the stabbing but you're saying it was the water!

TX
 EXC
 EXFL
 Mailer
 Several months before he died, he looked back on the worst night of his life.

Well, Adele and I had been getting into bigger and bigger games when I ran for mayor in '60 that got her, it absolutely got her, in a state of suppressed hysteria because she thought it was going to shatter our lives. What does she know about being a mayor, a mayor's wife, what if I got elected? Like, you know, we had our children by then, we had Danielle, we had Betsy. Those were very important events for me in the '50s, Danielle and Betsy being born. And, so, we were getting along very badly, and we getting into a kind of gotcha routine where each of us was doing something that was superior to the other. And so finally I had this big party at which I was going to announce my coming out for mayor, and Adele was going nuts at the party, from my point of view. And, finally, in a rage I took out my penknife and stuck it into her with the idea of, "Here, you think you're tough, I'm tougher." It was madness. I was pretty drunk at the time and probably on pot. The idea was not to do her any damage, just give her a nick or two, you see? Damn it, if I didn't nick her heart. She could have died from it. And, of

course, they took her to the emergency hospital, cut her open from the sternum virtually down to below the navel. So for years afterwards, she had this huge scar and she'd sometimes show it at parties. This would give people the idea that I'd used a butcher knife, which is why Gore Vidal mentions a butcher knife.

Vidal's reference to a butcher knife has not been located, but if he made it, he was not alone in getting things wrong. Evelyn Waugh—¹no friend of Mailer's—¹wrote that he had cut his wife's throat, and George Plimpton—¹always a friend—¹said that Mailer had used a kitchen knife. Another alleged that scissors had been used, and one claimed Mailer had shot her. In point of fact, the instrument was a slender black penknife or pocketknife, with a two-and-a-half inch blade that he used to clean his nails. He stabbed her twice, once in the back, which proved to be a superficial wound, and once in the upper abdomen. This thrust penetrated the pericardium, the tough, fibrous, conical sac that envelops the heart and the roots of the great blood vessels. By great luck, he missed his wife's heart by a fraction of an inch.

Someone named
Adele remembers Mannix helping her to Humes's apartment, and then disappearing.

Humes says she was pale and in shock. He dragged a mattress from a bed and with his wife's help got Adele to lie down and remain still. Anna Lou Humes held her hand and tried to comfort her as Adele kept repeating that this sort of thing didn't happen to people like her, they only happened to Puerto Ricans. Humes, "always a take-charge guy," according to Anna Lou, got on the telephone and called a doctor he knew, Conrad Rosenberg, who he said he would come immediately. Humes also tried to find a psychiatrist because he believed that Mailer would fare better if hospitalized for a mental breakdown than being arrested for assault. Humes also called Barbara and Larry ^{Alison} and told them what had happened, and they immediately left for 94th Street to

get Betsy, who was alone in the apartment with her father. Fan was notified and she took a cab, leaving Barney home with Danielle, who was visiting for the weekend. Shortly after they all arrived, the ambulance took Adele to University Hospital on 20th Street and Eighth Avenue, where she was admitted at eight a.m. Nettie rode with her.

Pick up from p. 393

Barbara knew a psychiatrist, Dr. Emmanuel Ghent, and had called him before she left for ~~Homes's apartment on Bar Brothers~~ 94th Street. She asked him to go to the apartment and examine her brother. Mailer was awakened by Ghent ringing his bell, but refused to let him in. When Fan and the Alsons arrived, Ghent told them what had happened and offered to see Mailer later. At some point, he told Barbara that Fan reminded him of "a Mafia mother." Before she left for the hospital, Barbara called her brother and told him the situation. He had roused himself and was gone by the time Fan arrived to pick up Betsy, who was then 14 months old.

Mailer and the Alsons arrived at the hospital at about the same time. They found the surgeon, Dr. Macklin, and according to Alson, Mailer began talking with him, carefully describing the nature of the incision. The doctor listened patiently and then left, telling them that the operation would take an hour. Mailer was able to get a glimpse of Adele and her sister Joan through a window. He and the Alsons were sent to a lower floor to wait. Mailer's diary: "Descent into Hell on elevator." They were all exhausted and distraught. "It was probably the most horrible day of my life," Barbara said. She told her brother that he had to recognize that he had "flipped," which angered him. For four hours, they waited in silence. Dr. Macklin finally came down in the early afternoon to say that she would make it. Dr. Rosenberg was also there and had a brief opportunity to observe Mailer, as he later testified.

"Oh, God," Barbara recalled

"that was a terrible time"

The family and friends began closing ranks. After they left the hospital, there was a conference back at the 94th Street apartment. Attending were Fan and Barney, Cy Rembar and his wife Billie, "Doc" Humes, Knox, ^{Lester} Blackiston, Podhoretz, a lawyer friend, John Cox, the Donoghues and a friend of theirs, Dick Devine, who advised Mailer to ^{put} ~~get~~ a suit on. He ^{did} ~~put one~~ and left with Knox and Blackiston in the Triumph. They had drinks at Joey's bar and then went to the hospital, where he was allowed to see Adele.

Mailer's ^{diary} record of the visit is brief: "Descent downtown to hosp. Knife. Adele's fear." In her memoir, she goes into more detail. "He looked haggard and strained, with dark circles under his eyes," she wrote. She was fearful and tried to make him go away. He said, "Do you know that I watched you being wheeled into the operating room, and I'd never seen you look so beautiful. Do you understand why I did it? I love you and I had to save you from cancer." She thought he was "hopelessly crazy," but felt sorry for him. "He cried, and yes, I held him, and we wept together, but even in my grief, I knew his were tears of self-pity. It was all gone between us." Mailer stayed the night at the Donoghue's apartment. He recalled that he had "crazy ideas about going down to Cuba or something, joining Castro," perhaps by renting a fishing boat in Provincetown. But the next morning, he called the hospital and left word he would be there.

Before he left, Fan arrived, and pressed her son to see Dr. Ghent. Mailer wrote about it later in a poem, "A Wandering in Prose: For Hemingway, November, 1960": "That first unmanageable cell to / stifle his existence arrived / on a morning when by / an extreme act of the will / he chose not to strike his / mother." The poem dates the moment as coming two days after he had stabbed his wife. By his reasoning, if it can be called that, he had saved Adele from cancer by stabbing her. And, by not throttling the woman who loved him more than anyone else

ever would, he had allowed a cell in his own body to take the leap into cancer. He left with Knox. Mailer asked him to go into the 94th Street apartment and retrieve the open letter to Castro that he had been working on for the past three weeks. "Christ, I thought, he stabbed his wife the night before and what was uppermost ⁱⁿ on his mind? Getting the letter published. It did not surprise me. The foundation of Norman's being is the sum of his writing, and that letter to Castro was a building block in that foundation." Knox said he would get the letter if Mailer gave him the penknife. "Reluctantly," Mailer agreed, but after Knox gave him the letter, Mailer changed his mind and wanted the knife back "for personal reasons." Reluctantly, Knox relinquished it. (N)

From there, Mailer left Knox to see Dr. Ghent and had a conversation with him. He then kept a two p.m. appointment with Mike Wallace to tape an interview for WNTA-TV. He told Wallace that he intended to run for mayor on the existentialist ticket. He also said that disarming young gang members was probably impossible. "The knife to a juvenile delinquent is very meaningful," he said. "You see, it's his sword—his manhood." Dr. Ghent told the family, according to Larry Alson, that "the defenses Norman had built up were of such intricacy that there was no way to demolish them." Mailer met Podhoretz for dinner and asked him to do everything possible to keep him from being sent to a mental institution. Then they went to the hospital, where he planned to be arrested. A nurse told them to wait for five minutes, and then three detectives arrested him and took the knife. Detective Francis J. Burns told him that his wife had admitted he had stabbed her. Mailer denied it. Adele also said that she did not wish to see him. Mailer was handcuffed and taken to the West 100th Street police station. Podhoretz was allowed to go with him, and said the police were polite. John Cox arrived and, in his presence, Mailer was photographed and booked. (N)

was he wanted to Barb...

The lawyer

(The next morning, early) he was taken to ~~Felony Court~~ ^{was} on Centre Street in lower Manhattan. Reporters were waiting. All Mailer said ~~is~~ ^{was} that he loved his wife. He was again photographed, and then put in a lineup with other detainees. At the hearing a report from Dr. Rosenberg was read by Assistant District Attorney William Reilly: "In my opinion Norman Mailer is having an acute paranoid breakdown with delusional thinking and is both homicidal and suicidal. His admission to a hospital is urgently advised." According to wire service reports, Mailer challenged the report as "gratuitous and presumptuous." The *Times* carried the rest of his statement: "Naturally I have been a little upset but I have never been out of my mental faculties. I only saw Dr. Rosenberg for thirty seconds or a minute. It is important to me not to be sent to a mental hospital because my work in the future will be considered that of a disordered mind. My pride is that I can explore areas of experience that other men are afraid of. I insist that I am sane." Magistrate Rueben Levy told Mailer, "Your recent history indicates that you cannot distinguish fiction from reality," and committed him to Bellevue Hospital for observation.

Levy's judgment was wise. Mailer was incensed and intoxicated when he stabbed the mother of two of his children, but the next day, sober, he told Mike Wallace and a television audience of his intention to run for mayor of the nation's largest city on the ticket of the ~~Existentialist Party~~ ^{Political, that}—which did not exist. In 1960, few New Yorkers knew the meaning of the word existential. But if he was unhinged, he was mad north-north-west. His diary detailing the events of the three-week period ^{during} which ended when he was released from Bellevue shows a mind alert to the uniqueness of his experience and eager to garner biographical shards from the men in the violent ward where he was confined. The early part of the diary is retrospective, while the rest was written day by day ^{the hospital} in Bellevue. In the manner of the Puritan fathers, Emerson and

(N)

what
readers
know
about
his
insane
?

20
4
Hawley

Whitman, Mailer knew the extraordinary benefit of having a written record of a bad time. Emerson turned his diary entries into lectures and essays; Mailer saw his as ore for his fiction. He not only recorded events and his responses to them, he also noted, as he had in the army, marbles of fact that could be used in his fiction. He notes, for example, the "head-sweat on cop" who arrested him; a "Negro being beaten up" at the 100th Street Precinct; and the story of Fred Wood, a murderer who confessed to detectives, in exchange for a pack of cigarettes and a pint of sherry, how he cut the throat of a lover with a broken beer bottle. He wanted to get out of Bellevue, but while there his novelist's instincts never waned. Three years later he would draw on these experiences for *An American Dream*.

The inmates in the violent ward passed their time betting cigarettes in a card game called Bordertown, a variant of pinochle, ^{which} that Mailer called "my tranquillizer." Forty-five years later, he remembered the rules taught to him by ^{Fred W.} Wood. He had visitors ⁱⁿ his mother and father, Barbara, Cy Rembar, Joseph Brill, a criminal lawyer, and Knox, who Mailer told that he feared getting electric shock treatments. Rev. Steve Chinlund, who Mailer knew slightly, visited and told him about his visits to Adele in the hospital. Mailer was jealous and told his sister to tell Adele not to fall in love with Chinlund. The three men he spent the most time with were Wood, ^{in Bellevue} Arnold Kemp, and Harry Grant. ^{Fred W.} Wood, a jailhouse character and con artist, was given a long sentence for his crimes. Kemp, a young man from Harlem who spent almost a decade in prison for armed robbery, later got a graduate degree from Harvard, and wrote a novel that Mailer blurbed. They corresponded for years. ^{Harry G.} Grant was in Bellevue for stabbing his brother, and Mailer was eager to hear his story. He had "rabbinical" discussions with ^{Harry} Grant, who was highly intelligent, but seriously disturbed. ^{Harry} Grant "let slip that he is not altogether unconvinced he is the

Second Coming." After he was released, he wrote a poem about ^{Harry} Grant's assault on his brother:

"So long / as / you / use / a knife / there's / some / love left." It is invariably, ^{and} incorrectly and ^{referred} unfairly seen as a depiction ^{referring to} of his assault on Adele. if incorrect this is fair

Dr. Jordan Lachmann was his psychiatrist, and they met daily. Mailer recited his biography to him as he probed his resistance to treatment. He told him the story of Castro in the jungle and "made the argument of existential psychosis." For a time, it was touch ^{= =} and go ^{^ ^} as to whether he would be released, and when Lachmann told him he could be sent to a sanitarium for an extended period, Mailer called it "a Kafkan nightmare." Much later, he remembered telling "the doctors who were quizzing me: 'Didn't you guys ever hear of a crime of passion?' From their point of view, there I was a Jewish intellectual. Jewish intellectuals don't have crimes of passion, they just go crazy." Finally, Mailer said, Lachmann "had the guts to let me out." His ^{is} diary end with this entry for December 8: ⁱ

At 4:30, the guard who had a writer for wife, took me aside and whispered, "Today," after querying me on when I would get out. A few minutes later I was called, "Mailer, get your belongings." So I said my goodbyes and moved to the door, feeling quite moved at leaving them, and then getting dressed, Captain Kennedy, the trip in the Black Maria with Burns, the Tombs and the Bellevue workers, out to the interview with reporters and trip home with Brill. Kids at the door and then greeting Adele.

Having been declared "not psychotic" by Dr. Lachmann, Mailer appeared on January 12, 1961, in ^{TX} felony court to learn if there was sufficient evidence for felonious assault charges to be sent to a grand jury. Adele accompanied him and testified. "My husband and I are perfectly

happy together," she said, and declined to sign a complaint against him. When asked whether she had seen the penknife, she said she didn't remember because she had been drinking. A few weeks later, a reporter went to the Mailers' apartment to inform him he had been indicted. As Adele cooked dinner and Danielle and Betsy read a picture book, Mailer said that he couldn't say anything about the case. Asked if the charges, which could have led to a 5-10 year prison term, had affected his writing, he said, "I really couldn't say if this is affecting the writing. I don't think about it ¹—except on certain days." He had spent eight hours that day in his Brooklyn studio. (N)

At first, he pled not guilty, which meant he would have to stand trial. A short time later he decided to change his plea to guilty "because he feared a trial would bring harmful publicity to his wife and two children." When he appeared in court for sentencing, Judge Mitchell D. Schweitzer said, "I gamble on human beings and I intend to gamble on you." Mailer said in response, "I feel I did a lousy, dirty, cowardly thing." Six months later, having kept out of trouble, he was given a suspended sentence and three years probation. (N)

With few exceptions, he lived quietly during the first few months of 1961. Friends and family rallied around him. A letter appeared in *Time* shortly after he was released in response to *Time* magazine's conclusion that Mailer's critical reputation had declined since *Naked*. Signed by eight writers—Baldwin, Epstein, Hellman, Kazin, Lowell, Podhoretz, Lionel Trilling and William Phillips—the letter said that *Time*'s recent estimate of Mailer needed "correction." His "work is of continuing brilliance and significance." Vidal did not sign the letter, but he did reach out to, inviting him and Adele to Edgewater, his home on the Hudson River 100 miles north of New York. Mailer who was awaiting trial at the time, never forgot the gesture, calling it "a fine thing to do at that point because it was his way of saying, 'I'm not afraid of you, you're first a

literary man and second someone who got into criminal trouble^h and that was bold and decent. If our relations had stayed that way, we'd be dear friends today." Podhoretz and Decter were similarly generous, and invited him to a party a couple of weeks after he was released, as Mailer recalled:

I walked into the room and the reactions were subtle as hell. Five degrees less warmth than I was accustomed to. Not fifteen degrees less^l—five. I guess that once you bring a violent man to a party, people are generally polite to him. Looking back on it, the stabbing was not altogether the turning point. I mean it was terribly shocking and things could never be the same. If any of us does something like that, people just don't look at them in quite the same way. I think ten years went by before people forgot about it. Once in a while they would get a reminder and they would say, "Oh my God, yes." I think the real separation came after Adele and I split up and Jeanne [Campbell] and I started going around together, because then I started traveling in another world.

Mailer met Lady Jeanne Campbell, a New York-based reporter for the *London Evening Standard*, at a party in March 1961. He was introduced by Marion Javits, wife of New York Senator Jacob J. Javits.

Adele was not at the party. She was out of bed and her incision was healing well, but she was unable to do anything strenuous. She said that there was no letup in his social life, that he was welcomed back to "the bosom of his sympathetic literary friends." Some of them blamed Adele as much if not more than Mailer for "The Trouble." James Jones, for one, said that the stabbing was partly the result of Adele being "a lousy wife." Fig wrote on the envelope of a letter

The introduction
very new
questions
How did
we know
her etc

Mailer's army buddy

Gwaltney

Mailer had written to him from Bellevue: "Letter written in psycho ward after he finally did to Adele what should've been done years earlier." Fan Mailer, who on the day her son was committed to Bellevue told reporters, "My boy's a genius," wrote in her memoir: "Whatever happened with the stabbing she goaded him into it." Others saw Adele as being noble for not pressing charges.

Judy Feiffer, then married to Jules Feiffer, said Adele ^{cartoonist and writer} "was a lady, and her behavior towards Norman was admirable and loyal." If Adele had turned against him, if she had revealed the harshest details of their marriage, he would probably have gone to prison. "I saved his neck," Adele wrote in her memoir. "I could have put him away for fifteen years if I had chosen to testify." But she didn't. She wanted to keep the marriage going. "In a sense," Feiffer said, "she was his creation, like in *The Deer Park*." He was the man in her life, and she's a passionate woman, so it had to be one of the most intense and convoluted and strange relationships." After Mailer's release, their relationship began to recover, and then in late March collapsed entirely. According to Adele, the decisive moment came when he returned home the morning after a literary party. She accused him, correctly, of spending the night with another woman and threw him out. The next day she called a divorce lawyer.

"The Trouble" reverberated throughout the family. Even a half-century later, Mailer's sister found the event difficult to discuss. "I remember being terribly disappointed in him," she said, "very angry about it." At the time, she thought, "We'd never be the same, sort of like the end of everything." Susan said, "It affected me very much. I wasn't so little; I was like eleven." So I understood what was going on. I was very close to, very fond of Adele. I liked her a lot." Prior to the stabbing, she felt as if she had two sets of parents—Adele and her father and Chavo

and her mother ⁱⁿ but when her father was committed, her mother ^{would no longer} wouldn't let her visit New York. This angered Mailer. "I happen to think that she was right," Susan said. "You know, if I had a kid and ^{something like this} the same thing happened I would have ^{reacted in the same way.} done the same thing." Her mother never fully trusted her father after the stabbing, Susan said, ^{adding that} calling the stabbing ^{was} "the single most painful thing in my childhood." Danielle, asked when she realized that her father was the famous writer, Norman Mailer, replied, "That's a good question. You know what, it's like my hair was brown, my mother was stabbed, my father was Norman Mailer. Each one created about as much emotion in my upbringing. Those were three kind of — not so much my hair's brown — but my father's Norman Mailer, my mother was stabbed and, you know, I'm a female."

add insert p. 404A

Two years before her father's death, Betsy repeated to a family friend what her father had said to her about the assault: "I let God down." He had tears in his eyes, she said. The dynamic of the Mailer family was permanently altered. Reflecting on her parents' relationship, she said:

EXT FL

I think there was so much antipathy at times, and so much guilt at times, and so much remorse and great passion and a depth of connection. It was so much all that all the time. And I think there were times when they loathed each other and there were times when they remembered how passionately they were in love. They both felt poignant and sad about what they had that was gone. I think, at times, there was a desire on both their parts to recover what they had, maybe even illicitly, but not. My mother tells about when she wrote a play about her early life during the time dad was on a panel at the Actors Studio. My mother was in the playwright's unit and she wrote this piece and dad didn't collaborate with her but he critiqued it. He loved it and gave her notes. She went out to Brooklyn Heights, this was in the early 1990s, and gave him a special reading of it after she incorporated his notes. My mother said they were down in the studio and there was

[Insert, *Norman Mailer: A Double Life*, p. 404]

I was maybe four or five, and thought something like: "My hair is brown; I'm Norman Mailer's daughter; my father stabbed my mother." Throughout my childhood, to survive this piece of history, and navigate, I remained stubbornly neutral. Whenever it came to light that he was my father, invariably the person would remark, "Oh, you're Norman's kid." Pause. "Was your mother the one who he..." I have no memory of the post-stabbing events, only my mother's ribbon scar dissecting her stomach. But I was fiercely loyal to my father, never allowed anger or disappointment to enter into our relationship. Only in recent years have I had a chance to reflect on the event in my art: I frequently focus on the female torso.

~~unmistakably, undeniably, this sense of intimacy between them; they had rekindled something in that moment. She reached over to kiss him and he pulled back.~~

“The Trouble” became one of Mailer’s memory crystals, an experience to be harvested, via refraction, for his fiction, but never to be delineated autobiographically. When questioned about it, he was usually guarded. In a 1997 interview with Andrew O’Hagan, he said that his children paid a big price for his crime, and that much of the animosity towards him “comes from the fact of people saying, ‘That son of a bitch—he got away with it. He doesn’t deserve anything after that.’ I say leave it to heaven.” He did, however, make two considered statements in his books. The first was in his 1963 miscellany, *The Presidential Papers*: “One got out of Bellevue, one did a little work again. The marriage broke up. The man wasn’t good enough. The woman wasn’t good enough. A set of psychic stabbings took place.” The second, a brief recollection titled “The Shadow of the Crime,” came in his 1998 collection, an omnibus volume titled *The Time of Our Time*.

Through the years a shadow of the crime would accompany many hours. I could never write about it. Not all woe is kin to prose. It was one matter to be guilty—_m by inner measure, irredeemably guilty—_m it was another to present some literary manifest of what was lost and what was wasted, what was given to remorse and what was finally resistant to remorse. Violence is the child of the iron in one’s heart, and decomposes by its own laws.

The remainder of the piece is for the most part given over to a statement of regret about the collateral damage the stabbing inflicted on his “Open Letter to Fidel Castro,” a piece of writing he felt might have had “its effect on history,” but appeared too late to be of any consequence. He

ended by noting the "incalculable" damage done to his daughters. "Murder and its sibling, assault," he concluded, "are the most wanton of the crimes, for they mangle the possibilities and expectations open to others."

Perhaps his most frank statement about his blighted role as an unfrocked prophet came in ^a his 1965 interview with Brock Brower: "I lost any central purchase I had on the right to say what is happening. I'm *parti pris*. Now when I argue the times are violent, they can say, well, look what he did. I destroyed forever the possibility of being the Jeremiah of our time." Not entirely, however. A comeback was not far off. After his release from Bellevue, "a good deal of the sweetness came back," Barbara said. "It's as if he really let go of something." The fact that "he was pretty appalled at himself" made a "big difference" to the family. Years after the stabbing, he said, "A decade's anger made me do it. After that, I felt better." It would take two years for him to fully resume his literary career, but then he had it all his own way, in large part, for the next dozen years.

Adele, after she had recovered, became an alcoholic for 20 years until joining Alcoholics Anonymous, and then quit drinking entirely. "The Trouble" clouded her life. She became permanently bitter, according to Danielle, and "damaged in a lot of ways. Profoundly. And obsessed—as if symbolically she was never able to cut the tie with him." Betsy said, "You know, my mother never stopped loving him, never. And she's still obsessed with him; she still loves him." At the end of her memoir, Adele wrote, "I was trapped in my purgatory of hatred." Asked why she had written it, she replied, "I want my book to make Mailer suffer." Over the decades, her relationship with him became progressively more distant and troubled.

Betsy spoke of the toll caused by "The Trouble".

My mother was profoundly damaged by the stabbing. She adored me and Danielle, she wanted desperately to be there for us and she did her best to rally over the long-term. She always said that it was because of 'her two little girls' that she survived the stabbing. But for most of my 53 years, she has been bitterly obsessed with Dad and has never been able to get past the pain of what he did to her. When she moved into assisted living at the age of 85 (back in 2010), I was stunned when she said to me one day: 'Betsy, I'm so sorry I've become a burden to you. Up until now, I was always so independent and I never leaned on you.' I found her statement shocking. Was she that oblivious to the burden, emotionally and psychically, that she'd been on us for so many years? Had she forgotten how often her resentment and anxiety reeled out of control? She can be very loving, with great empathy and a marvelous sense of humor; but there were so many times when I'd find myself getting sucked into this kind of bottomless black hole of her needy, despondent energy.

At the legal proceeding where he was given his suspended sentence, his lawyer told the judge that he would make a contribution to society. He also said that Mailer had "reduced his drinking to a minimum," which was not the case. Mailer wrote little during the months before and after the stabbing, but he drank heavily. Before the event, he drank "explosively"; afterwards he drank "steadily" — most nights I went to bed with all the vats loaded. His hangovers were "steeped in dread" and he feared becoming an alcoholic. To avoid drinking too early in the day, he sorted through the notes in his pockets, his record of whiskey moments when some bar conversation or insight crystallized.

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own right

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you're a

very

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SPC

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can't do two things /

at once /

said Rasputin. /

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The poems, which were published as *Deaths for the Ladies (and other disasters)*, are by turns observant—"Drinker / with a / problem said: I'll drink / to that / even if / it's not / quite / true"; angry—"Rip / the prisons open / Put / the convicts / on / television"; nuanced (and reflecting Lady Jeanne's influence)—"The English / have a sense / of ambush / about vulgarity / it is: / do you / descend / the steps / properly?" and blunt—"In the first week / of their life / male jews / are crucified." There is irony—"I want to / be a / fine / woman / and a / great / mother / to my / children / and / oh yes / you / she said"; and revealing: "If / Harry Golden / is the gentile's / Jew / can I be / the Golden Goy?" Some are impressionistic, revealing the influence of Ezra Pound, who Mailer had long admired: "the remembered musk / of wood-smoke at dusk / in Cambridge / and New Haven."

The poetry volume sank quietly, with few reviews, most of them late. *Time* was predictably nasty. John Simon, in the first of his long run of negative reviews of Mailer's work, classified him with "the various anti- and non poets, whose tribe, regrettably, increases." Writing in *Poetry*, May Swenson said that Mailer "longs to be a true primitive, a child making figurines

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out of his excrement," but had praise for two poems, both titled "Wanderings in Prose: for Hemingway." Only Richard Lanham in the ^{Village} ~~the~~ Voice, who praised Mailer's satirical powers, and Selden Rodman in the ^{New York} ~~the~~ Times Book Review, were positive. Rodman, a friend of Mailer's, compared his ^{the poems to those of} ~~his~~ "pyrotechnic" typography to that of E.E. Cummings, and praised his "fast footwork and low blows." Dwight Macdonald, writing in *Commentary*, found the poems to be "slangy" and "ironic," but called the book "a triumph of bad taste." The only reason it was not a trivial collection, he said, is that Mailer "seems to be trying to find out how much weight his ideas (or better, his attitudes) will bear." He advised Mailer to move on, get back to prose. In the only interview given when the book was published, Mailer said that writing poems was an interlude between long stretches of disciplined novel writing. But there was another reason, which he later revealed: poetry was a "way of digging myself out of the hole I had dug for myself." Poetry was "the first rung." He was mending.

At the party where Mailer met Jeanne Campbell (Vidal's apartment on East 55th Street), they went off to a separate room to talk, had a long staring match, and were besotted. "The night I met him," she said, "I knew I was going to marry him and have his child." She didn't become pregnant that night but, as with Bea and Adele, the first night was spent in bed. He recalled their meeting eighteen months before he died: "I went to a party and met Jeanne Campbell and we spent a day and a half in the sack. That was the last straw, that and the fact that Adele wanted me to quit drinking because her psychoanalyst said I had to. I said I couldn't quit drinking then or I'd get cancer, but offered to drink outside the house a couple of nights a week. She wouldn't

accept this, and so I moved out." He moved into his sister's apartment in the Village, but spent much of his time at Jeanne's apartment.

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 If Adele lacked self-confidence, Jeanne Louise Campbell was brimming with it. On one side, she was the daughter of Ian Campbell, the 11th Duke of Argyll and head of the Clan Campbell, one of the great families in Scotland. On the other, she was the daughter of Janet Gladys Aitken, whose father was William "Max" Aitken, Lord Beaverbrook, one of the most powerful press barons in English history. A confidante of both Winston Churchill and President Roosevelt, he headed the British delegation that met with Joseph Stalin after the German invasion of Russia. Beaverbrook's daughter and son-in-law were divorced in 1934, and the year after his wife died in 1927, he took over the job of raising Jeanne Louise. She was named after Jeanne Marie, Lady Malcolm (the illegitimate daughter of American actress Lily Langtry and Prince Louis of Battenburg), and Princess Louise (the sixth child of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert). Through Jeanne's family connections, and her own moxie, she became acquainted with many of the most influential and accomplished people in Great Britain. Randolph Churchill, eldest son of Winston, was a particular friend.

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In the late 1950s, she had a fairly lengthy affair with a man thirty years her senior, Henry Luce, the founder of the Time-Life empire, who met her at La Capponcina, Beaverbrook's villa on the French Riviera. He offered her a job at Time, and she accepted and came to New York in 1956. Luce thought of marrying the statuesque young woman with a wild mass of curly hair, but his wife, the politician and diplomat Clare Booth Luce, convinced him otherwise. Campbell had left Time and was working for her grandfather's paper, the London Evening Standard, when she met Mailer at Vidal's party. Vidal found her to be "very attractive, very bright," and Mailer thought

accepted and
 one of
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he had "some idea of possibly having some sort of liaison with her." When Vidal asked Campbell what had attracted her to Mailer, she said, "I had never gone to bed with a Jew before." Mailer had never slept with the daughter of a duke before, and was similarly curious. Besides the personal attraction he felt, he also ^{thought} saw that Lady Jeanne's social ties and acumen could be a great literary resource. [≡] The fact that she was leaving the man whose magazines had attacked and ridiculed him for the past decade made her irresistible. He learned that Luce "suffered a bit" when he heard of Jeanne's affair. "I loved the idea," he said.

Jeanne's voice was the first thing that Mailer noticed. "She had this incredibly beautiful voice and was capable of putting on numerous airs, a voice which was as lovely as Mozart. It had an absolute range. If she'd been able to move as well as she spoke, she would have been a great actress." She was 31 when they met, he recalled,

but she looked a little older, maybe 35. And she was slightly... almost plump. And she had fiery eyes, these pale green eyes, full of spite and vigor and venom and wit. How to put it? They had their power. Combative, and I was just in the mood for that. She was wearing white pearls and I thought, "She's a very wealthy woman from Westchester." She was wearing a gray outfit with white pearls, and gloves, perhaps. I didn't know it was Lady Jeanne. ^m all I knew was here's this dame who's attractive to me because of some sort of special social. ^m I don't know ^m upper class about it. Having been with Adele for years, I was in the mood for a woman who was in the upper class.

She was poised, he said, and "very proud to be Lady Jeanne, but never said a word about it." Their dissimilar backgrounds added to their initial attraction, as Mailer recalled:

"There I am, from a middle class Jewish family, and I'm in sort of an indefinable position.

Because I'm a well-known author, in a certain sense I'm part of the establishment. But I'm a criminal, a felon on parole. There she is, Lady Jeanne, her father is a duke." His situation made him think of how Jones and Styron "would be eating their fucking hearts out" to be in his position. He was having great fun, he said, but more important, "I was learning about things. The novelist in me was absolutely on fire. I loved it." The two people who had shaped his thinking the most, he said, were Jean Malaquais and Jeanne Campbell, the former on intellectual matters and the latter on social ones. Jeanne's influence on *An American Dream* was especially pronounced, although she got no pleasure from being the model for the protagonist's wife, Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly. She called the novel "the hate book of all time." Deborah is murdered in chapter one.

In May 1961 he wrote to Knox to say the affair was blossoming: "The Lady and I are making the scene and it is not at all uninteresting." He was still writing poems and had begun sending them for consideration at a dozen different magazines. He also continued his correspondence with his Bellevue friends, enclosing books, cigarettes and money. "Some of the best people I've come across since the Army were in Bellevue," he wrote to Don Carpenter, a West Coast novelist with whom he frequently corresponded. "It was just simply that for the last six months my little old navigator didn't know whether to get set for a year or less above ground or below ground and I suppose the psychotic sensation is a little like trying to hit a baseball when you are standing on a turntable." When his navigator got its bearings, it sanctioned, we might even say *urged* a liaison with Jeanne. Always unable to live alone for long, Mailer was hungry for something beyond one-night stands, and Jeanne seemed perfect. It was a fiery, intense affair.

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Kate Mailer adds that her parents were drawn to each other not only because of his fascination with Jeanne's background, but also by "her reaction to her background and her refusal to be done down by it, or to be hemmed in by it. A reaction which made her curious about all people in life, everyone. The most ordinary of people could capture her imagination and interest and this was something that I think he was drawn to, as he could not at first understand it. "How could you find that person interesting at all," he told me he would ask her. "But yes, they are fascinating," she would answer, "if you only probe a little below the surface." He was also "charmed" by her "across-the-board, unflagging gusto for life," and pleased that she shared two of his own obsessions: "politics and spies."

As Jeanne said after their eighteen-month marriage, ^{of their} ended, "We had both been extremists who knew no limits; and such an alliance takes you a breath from heaven and a sob from hell." Jeanne was more than simply another rung on the ladder out of the pit of depression and nascent alcoholism. She was both the ladder and the prize at the top; she was his new mate. In June, she accompanied him to Provincetown, where they spent a few days in a dune shack, and then to Mexico, where she first met Susan. It was there that they got the news that Hemingway had committed suicide in Ketchum, Idaho on July 2, 1961.

Often mentioned as Hemingway's successor, a role he had openly sought, Mailer expected to be contacted for a statement after Papa blew his brains out with a double-barreled shotgun. When he read the statements of regret by various celebrities and politicians in the ^{New York} Times (including President Kennedy), ^{she said he experienced} he had "one full heart-clot of outraged vanity that the Times never thought to ask *his* opinion. In fact, he was not certain he could have given it. He was sick in that miasmal and not quite discoverable region between the liver and the soul." Finally, he gave a statement to Jeanne for her grandfather's newspapers in London, which he paraphrased in *Of a Fire on the Moon*. Papa's suicide, he wrote, would strengthen the hearts of ignoble bureaucrats because "Hemingway constituted the walls of the fort: Hemingway had given the power to believe you could still shout down the corridor of the hospital, live next to the breath of the beast, accept your portion of dread each day. Now the greatest living Romantic was dead." He ^{said} wrote later that Hemingway is "the father of modern American literature, at least for men."

^{Enavelist} I keep thinking of John Gardner's unforgettable remark that when a father commits suicide, he condemns his son to the same end. Well, of course, you can

go to suicide by more ways than killing yourself. You can rot yourself out with too much drink, too many failures, too much talk, too many wild and unachieved alliances—^l_m Hemingway was a great cautioning influence on all of us. One learned not to live on one's airs, and to do one's best to avoid many nights when—^l_m thanks to Scott Fitzgerald's work—^l_m one knew it was three o'clock in the morning.

What was "doubly depressing," Mailer said shortly after the suicide, "was that he died in silence." Absent any valedictory message, he called his hero's suicide "the most difficult death in America since Roosevelt." Until the end of his own life Mailer ruminated on Hemingway's. He examined every aspect of his life and work—^l_m his Midwest childhood, his characters (Jake Barnes, Frederick Henry and Robert Jordan, mainly), his mistakes (taking the literary world too seriously, and establishing "a royal court of followers"), his sense of identity (as strong as Mohammad Ali's), his narcissism (which he compared to Henry Miller's), his moral vision (comparing it to that of ^l_m St. Thomas Aquinas), the inability of biographers to put his character in focus and, several times, his style: "Hemingway's style affected whole generations of us, the way a roomful of men are affected when a beautiful woman walks through—^l_m their night is turned for better or for worse. His style has the ability to hit young writers in the gut."

He derided Papa for putting on airs, and also for not heeding his call to comment on the Cuban Revolution. He found it to be "damn depressing" that Hemingway didn't "come to the rescue when us Indians were about to burn one of *Life's* forts" (^{an ironic} a comment worth noting in light of Mailer's own association with *Life* a decade later). And he worried the bone of the suicide, even to the construction of a scenario: ^l_m

There is a no-man's land in each trigger. For the dull hand it is a quarter of an inch. A professional hunter can feel to the division of a millimeter the point where the gun can off. He can move the trigger up to that point and yet not fire the gun. Hemingway was not too old to test this skill. Perhaps he was trying the deed a first time, perhaps he had tried just such a reconnaissance one hundred times before, and felt the touch of health return ninety times.

Then, with a leap of empathy, Mailer gives a simulacrum of Hemingway's conversation with himself on that particular morning in July.

Look, we can go in further. It's going to be tricky and we may not get out, but it will be good for us if we go in just a little further, so we will have to try, and now we will, it is the answer to the brothers Mayo, ergo now we go in, damn the critics and this Fiedler fellow, all will be denied if papa gets good again, write about Monroe, and Jimmy Durante, God bless, umbriago, hose down the deck, do it clean, no sweat, no sweat in the palm, let's do it clean, gung ho, a little more, let's go in a little gung ho more ho. No! Oh no! Goddamn it to Hell.

The rendering of Papa's final moments is a run of associations: Mayo refers to the clinic where Hemingway received psychiatric treatment. Marilyn Monroe was a suicide a year after Hemingway and just before Mailer's discussed their deaths in *Esquire*. Umbriago was an imaginary companion of comedian Jimmy Durante, an Italian folklore version of Zorba the Greek. Whether Hemingway actually had any feeling for Umbriago or Durante is unknown, but the comedian did visit Havana in the 1950s when Hemingway was in residence. Leslie Fiedler wrote what can only be called a ghoulish piece, "Hemingway in Ketchum," about his November

Partisan Review

1960 visit to the much-diminished writer. It came out in PR in September 1962, just before

Mailer published his thoughts about Hemingway's final reconnaissance. Hemingway told Fiedler

to tell Mailer, whom he called "so articulate," that he had not received the copy of *The Deer*

Park sent to him in Cuba. Fiedler's profile may have led Mailer to try to find a happier

explanation for Hemingway blasting off the top of his head in his *Esquire* column, which he

called "The Big Bite."

Mailer's speculations are an outcropping from a longer examination of Hemingway's psychology in his philosophical self-interview, "The Metaphysics of the Belly," written in the summer of 1962. It was intended to be part of the big novel, which he was then referring to as both "The Saint and the Psychopath" and "The Psychology of the Orgy." One can wonder how this non-narrative material would fit in, and it is quite possible that the problem of integrating this and two other self-interviews contributed to the slow death of the big novel. But, as so often happened in the course of Mailer's headlong compositional process, the interviews became part of a new project: a study of Picasso. They were to be "an introductory chapter on questions of form and function," he said later. He went so far as to sign a contract for the book with

Macmillan in the early spring of 1962, but soon abandoned the project, and did not return to it for decades.

In 1995 he published Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man.

Hemingway's death was clearly one of the factors that led him quite naturally given Hemingway's acquaintance with Picasso to think of a book about the painter. When the self-interviews, which veer far afield from Picasso, were finally published as a whole in his 1966 collection, *Cannibals and Christians*, they came to 135 pages. There is no simple way to describe the catechetical ebb and flow of the dialogues, but his description of the growth and

diminution of Being as it moves from state to state, from a molecule in the sea to a piece of driftwood, near-extinction to rebirth ^Lit could be sub-titled "The Progress of Souls" ^Lis close to the core of Mailer's concerns, and it could be argued, Picasso's ^{Mailer's} His method can be glimpsed in the following conversation of Mailer with himself about the division in Hemingway's psyche ^C

MAILER
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Mailer: Postulate a modern soul marooned in constipation, emptiness, boredom and a flat dull terror of death. A soul which takes antibiotics when ill, smokes filter cigarettes, drinks proteins, minerals, and vitamins in a liquid diet, takes seconal to go to sleep, benzedrine to awake, and tranquilizers for poise. It is a deadened existence, afraid precisely of violence, cannibalism, loneliness, insanity, libidinousness, hell, perversion, and mess, because these are the states that must be passed through, digested, transcended, if one is to make one's way back to life.

INTERVIEWER

Interviewer: Why must they be passed through, transcended?

Mailer: [] These states, these morbid states, as the old-fashioned psychologists used to say, can obtain relief only by coming to life in the psyche. But they can come to life only if they are ignited by an experience outside themselves. [] A dramatic encounter with death, an automobile accident from which I escape, a violent fight I win or lose decently, these all call forth my crossed impulses which love death and fear it. They give air to it. So these internal and deadly experiences are given life. In some cases, satisfied by the experience, they will subside a bit, give room to easier and more sensuous desires.

Interviewer: Not always?

Mailer: Not always. Hemingway, it seems, was never able to tame his dirty ape.

Interviewer: His dirty ape?

Mailer: It's a better word than id or anti-social impulse.

Interviewer: I think it is.

Mailer: Once we may have had a fine clean brave upstanding ape inside ourselves. It's just gotten dirty over the years.

Interviewer: Why couldn't Hemingway tame his ape?

MAILER: [. . .] An artist is usually such an incredible balance of opposites and incompatibles that the wonder is he can even remain alive. Hemingway was on the one hand a man of magnificent senses. There was a quick lithe animal in him. He was also shackled to a stunted ape, a cripple, a particularly wild dirty little dwarf within himself who wanted only to kill Hemingway. Life as a compromise was impossible. So long as Hemingway did not test himself, push himself beyond his own dares, flirt with, engage, and finally embrace death, in other words so long as he did not propitiate the dwarf, give the dwarf its chance to live and feel emotion, an emotion which could come to life only when one was close to death, Hemingway and the dwarf were doomed to dull and deaden one another in the dungeons of the psyche. Everyday life in such circumstances is a plague. The proper comment on Hemingway's style of life may be not that he dared death too much, but too little, that brave as he was, he was not brave enough, and the dwarf finally won.

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TX The discussion, as seems likely, is as much an exercise in self-analysis as commentary on Hemingway. The references to seconal and benzedrine, the demarcations between timidity and boldness, the predilection to explore extreme states such as cannibalism, libidinousness, violence, and insanity, not to mention the need to propitiate a monster that inhabits one's psyche, point as much to Mailer's psychic states as to Papa's. Mailer's suggestion that "we" may all have our own dirty ape supports this idea. A few years later, Mailer would come to call his ape "the Beast," noting that the monster was "witty in his own way and absolutely fearless," and required a "breath of air" about once a month. Papa's death, like the death of many fathers, liberated something in Mailer, and despite his immediate woe, anger and disappointment, can be seen as the symbolic beginning of the decade of his greatest achievement.

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Advertisements for *Myself* was scheduled for publication in England in September and Mailer had been invited by André Deutsch to fly over for a round of publicity events and public appearances. He was peeved with Deutsch for convincing him to accept the evisceration of "The Time of Her Time" (20 of 26 pages cut) in the British edition, and said he did not think that "this draping of breasts and covering of asses will solve very much at all," but he had given Deutsch his word that he would accept the verdict of the lawyers. So he accepted the invitation, and was no-doubt happy to have Jeanne on his arm during his visit to London. "England was absolutely abuzz with this affair," Mailer recalled. "Each of us loved it, because each of us loved being the center of attention." They arrived in mid-September for a month-long visit, with a week in Paris toward the end. Deutsch had set up a press conference at his editorial offices, and Mailer answered questions for two hours while sipping Scotch whisky and smoking English cigarettes.

(TX) Press reports on Mailer's problems preceded him, and the reporters "half-expected," as one of them put it, "a combination of Brendan Behan, De Quincey, Rimbaud, Hemingway and Kerouac." The reporters didn't know what to make of Advertisements, which they called a "hotch-potch," but were clearly charmed by his American candor as well as his statement that "sentence for sentence" English novelists such as Kingsley Amis, Evelyn Waugh and Graham Greene "write better than we do." It was a relatively subdued event and, it seems, a successful one. He had spoken at political press conferences when he campaigned for Wallace, but this was his first literary press conference. There would be many more.

At some point in his visit, ~~Mailer did an interview with~~ the British philosopher, Richard Wollheim, on the subject of violence. Hemingway was still on his mind, as was Adolf Eichmann, the Nazi death-camp bureaucrat who had recently been captured by Israeli agents. In a discussion of the nature of a free act, Mailer distinguished his definition of a free act from Sartre's idea of a willed action by which a person "can literally recreate himself." For Mailer, as for Hemingway, "the life of the day has become more complex than the morality that covers it." His assumption, he said, "is that life always advances far ahead of morality. Morality is the quartermaster corps bringing up supplies to starving soldiers." One acts and then one decides on the morality based on whether the act felt good or not. This sensation was a wheel Hemingway was writing about this all the time," he continued, and the hipster also "follows his unconscious, he acts on the basis of his id," although Mailer didn't like the word "id," and preferred "it," as in "get with it." As for Eichmann, Mailer used him to distinguish between personal and collective violence. If Eichmann, responsible for uncountable deaths, "had killed 500,000 victims with his bare hands, he would have been a monster," but he would have "worn the scar of his own moral wound," and thus gained "our

unconscious respect." He was not to relent on this point; he would continue to seek merit, even a smudge, in the psyches of evil people.

He ended his conversation with Wollheim by saying New York City seemed to be dying slowly. "There's a psychic poverty in the city today, perhaps in the whole country. The thing that distresses me about America is that for all the country's done, I don't think it's done one quarter of what it should. I believe it was destined, by history if you will, to be the greatest country that ever existed. I don't think it's come near it." For the rest of his life he would harp on his disappointment with the ^{United States} U.S. for failing to achieve its millennial promise, the Puritan idea of a "city on the hill," a beacon of hope for humankind. The advent of totalitarianism in all its forms ⁱⁿ and few writers have identified as many of its subtle variations ⁱⁿ was the tocsin he pealed, much as Jonathan Edwards had warned sinners in the hands of an angry God two centuries earlier. Mailer's God was not so much angry as disappointed, tired and over-extended. Humankind was a disappointment. The desire to be a Jeremiah lingered.

He and Jeanne were in England for at least three weeks and socialized with her friends between interviews for his book. We know that he did not visit Lord Beaverbrook during this visit, his first to England since 1947, but there is a record of his trip to the Somerset home of ^{Gladys} Janet Kidd, Jeanne's mother. She threw a huge party for the couple, one ^{that} which Evelyn Waugh attended, as Waugh noted in a letter to a friend.

— Mrs. Kidd's ball was very lavish ⁱⁿ—nothing remarkable if it had been in Surrey but sensational in Somerset. Two bands, one of niggers & one of buggers, a cabaret, an oyster bar in the harness room, stables flood lit, much to the

discomfort of the horses. One bit an American pornographer who tried to give it vodka.

I had never before met Lady Jeanne Campbell and was fascinated. She came to us next day bringing the bitten pornographer. He might have stepped straight from your salon—^la swarthy gangster straight out of a madhouse where he had been sent after the attempt to cut his wife's throat. It is his first visit to England.

In 1978, the editor of Waugh's letters wrote, asking about Waugh's comments. Mailer replied:

The horse did bite me on the finger, but I was not feeding him vodka, just petting him on the nose. Maybe it was my breath that enflamed the animal, or maybe he was fond of Evelyn Waugh. I also thought I could point to the inaccuracy that I did not cut my wife's throat but realized on reflection that throat-cutting is only a general term of description when used by Mr. Waugh. Otherwise, his account is accurate and his description of me adequate, and will doubtless enhance my status.

Mailer's forbearance is not as unusual as it might seem, and might perhaps be attributed to his admiration for Waugh's facility with sentences.

Colin MacInnes, the novelist and social activist, interviewed Mailer when he was in London. MacInnes, sometimes called the English Norman Mailer, had a long discussion with him on BBC radio, covering a range of issues, including the ways in which mood is undermined

by modern life, God and the Devil, hip, and *Time* magazine. *Time* has "a detestation of all the younger and more adventurous American writers," he said, "and willy nilly I'm considered the figurehead." Shortly after they returned to the U.S., *Time* reported that Mailer was doing the Twist with Lady Jeanne Campbell at the Peppermint Lounge on 45th Street in New York. An

unflattering photograph of a perspiring Mailer accompanied the story. He was upset and wrote to Don Carpenter that the magazine had done "a nice knife job" on him. The piece said he had "a dazed look on my face which my probation officer will naturally read as drugged. In the dreams of Walter Neo-Mitty there is one recurring fantasy. He comes to power like Fidel Castro and enters TIME MAGAZINE with a burp gun."

He decided to make a push on the big novel and in the fall of 1962 rented a house in Bucks County, Pennsylvania, about an hour north of Philadelphia. He and Jeanne spent most each week there and weekends in New York. The work did not go well. He wrote to Carpenter to complain: "I always suffer from the same thing you suffer from: to wit, I start a novel and immediately I'm getting all my best ideas on the excursions and departures from it." He had never found a way to avoid this, he said, and his only working principle was to "let the unconscious have complete dominion." He wrote to the still incarcerated Harry Grant to say how "lucky" he, Mailer, had been to avoid prison, and to say he was sending him a pile of books and a subscription to the *Voice*. Being holed up in the country and writing every day was a "depressing activity," he said to Grant, and "sometimes after two hours of writing I feel as if I've done six or seven hours of manual labor." In December, they gave up on country living. "I suppose I suffer from some no doubt misguided notion that New York is the big leagues," he

said, "and so when I get away from it for too long I begin to miss the feeling that history is being made around me." Jeanne, now pregnant, was also ready to move.

Just before Christmas, Jeanne got an assignment to cover the two-day summit meeting in

Bermuda between President Kennedy and British Prime Minister Harold Macmillan. The

meeting was to discuss the Berlin Wall, which had recently been constructed by the East

Germans to separate the Russian zone from those of the British, French and Americans. At one

of their meetings, Kennedy famously told Macmillan, "I wonder how it is with you, Harold. If I

don't have a woman for three days, I get terrible headaches." Campbell's contact with the

President was no doubt restricted to press meetings, but she had a brief affair with him before she

met Mailer, rendezvousing with him at her Georgetown townhouse. Mailer wrote to Knox about

Jeanne's trip, adding that she would be flying from Bermuda to her grandfather's villa on the

Riviera for a week. "I'll be a bachelor during Christmas. How could this happen to me?" he

asked Knox.

Emile "Mike" Capouya of Macmillan wrote to Mailer offering \$10,000 for a book on Castro. He was tempted but wanted a larger advance, as well as an assurance that he could travel

around Cuba with Castro, as Sartre had done. While waiting to hear, he plugged away at the

novel, writing only a few pages at a time. On New Year's Eve he missed Jeanne, and cabled

Randolph Churchill, whom he had met in England, asking him to please call Jeanne at her

grandfather's villa and ask his "old honey bun, dearest alley cat," to come home to share her

pregnancy with an obviously lonely husband. She flew back almost immediately. Divorce

proceedings with Adele were dragging on, he told Knox, and he and Jeanne "are still together,

sometimes in and out." But with a child on the way, he was eager to get married. When Clay

Felker contacted him about writing a long piece on the First Lady and the upcoming televised tour of The White House she was conducting, he agreed instantly, happy to end his feud with *Esquire*, and have a paying reason to shelve the big novel.

The winter 1962 issue of *Dissent* contained a fairly harsh critique of the Kennedy Administration by social critic Paul Goodman, whose 1960 book on the disaffection of young people, *Growing Up Absurd*, made him a well-known left-wing intellectual. Mailer knew him casually; both contributed regularly to *Dissent*. In the course of his essay, Goodman criticized Mailer for describing Kennedy as a hipster, calling Mailer "a chump" for missing Kennedy's true intentions. Eschewing forbearance, Mailer fired off a brilliantly *ad hominem* letter to the editor which led off by saying that he did not read Goodman often "because his style reminds me of the gray unfortunate odor in a prison laundry." He continued:

I do not know that the cause of pacifism, anarchism, socialism, radicalism, existentialism, Goodmanism, Mailerism, priapism, or the breath of a new underground is going to be enlivened much by Goodman calling me a chump. The insult is not powerful nor accurate enough to touch a creative sore and so sharpen my appetite to work, it is not on the other hand insignificant enough to be ignored. The result has the unhappy effect of an old creep's fart. It seeps into the air and dulls the mood at an office party. Time which takes such gas for sneaks of oxygen will end no doubt by quoting Goodman on Mailer.

TX His letter, "delivered exactly to the jugular," as he later put it, made *Dissent's* editors unhappy; they wished to avoid unpleasantness, and Mailer agreed, reluctantly, to withdraw ^{it} the letter. He liked his association with the journal, "although his private mixture of Marxism, conservatism, nihilism, and large parts of existentialism could no longer produce any polemical gravities for the digestive apparatus of scholarly Socialist minds." Mailer remained on *Dissent's* Board for twenty more years, but never wrote anything for it again. It was another sign that the 1950s were over. For the next decade, the bulk of his magazine work would appear in *Esquire* and the *Voice* and, at the end of 1960s, *Harper's* and *Life*.

TX Something close to ⁷⁵ seventy-five percent of the national television audience watched the First Lady give a tour of the White House on February 14, 1962. ~~Perhaps the only time she~~ received the same measure of sympathetic interest again was when her husband was shot in Dallas. All three networks showed the program, "A Tour of the White House with Mrs. John F. Kennedy." Unhappy with the lack of authentic furnishings, she had led an ambitious restoration effort and proudly displayed the results during the program. Earlier, Mailer met with Pierre ^{press secretary} Salinger in Washington to ask for an interview with the First Lady. A few days later, ^{it was} the word came back: request denied. Mailer was piqued, as he said in the essay: "One's presence was not required. Which irritated the vanity. The vanity was no doubt outside, but one thought of oneself as one of the few writers in the country." If she was going to be the nation's muse, or "queen of the arts," he felt she should be willing to stand for an interview. His letter to her about the honor of the Marquis De Sade had not been forgotten, and he would have to ^{write} do the essay, "An Evening with Jackie Kennedy," from a distance. ^{He was critical of Mrs. Kennedy and}

The program as stultifying.

The White House tour was leisurely, and much attention was given to the provenance and merit of the restored furnishings. Mrs. Kennedy had worked hard for historical elegance, and had every right to brag quietly about her work. To Mailer, the details about Dolly Madison's favorite sofa and Julia Grant's desk were boring; he wanted a livelier show. "The country would stay alive by becoming more extraordinary, not more predictable," he wrote, and what it got was a description of "the booty now within the White House." Where was that sense, he asked, that "one got of her in newspaper photographs, of a ladygirl healthy and on the bounce," he wondered. "Mrs. Kennedy," he said, "moved like a wooden horse." Near the end of the piece he stated that he could only "offer his sword" to the Kennedys if, along with Robert Frost and Archibald MacLeish, non-establishment writers like Henry Miller and Gregory Corso were invited to chat with the Kennedys. Earlier he named Ginsberg, Burroughs and himself as "the apes" who had been excluded, while Saul Bellow and Arthur Miller had been welcomed. The tragedy, he concluded, is that "we diverge as countrymen" like "a space ship broken apart in flight which now drifts mournfully in isolated orbits, satellites to each other, planets none, communication faint." Mailer's essay was a last yelp of anger against the decorous tedium of the Eisenhower era, one he feared had not yet ended.

Mailer
He also made a comment about the First Lady's "surprisingly thin, not unfeverish" legs in the piece, comparing them to the legs of Southern girls walking down the street when he was stationed at Fort Bragg. This remark was seen by conservative readers, he said, "as an attack on the flag." When Roger Donoghue read the essay, he was too upset to speak. Not long after, Mrs. Kennedy came to one of George Plimpton's parties. Gay Talese recalled that as she was escorted in by Plimpton, the host surveyed the large crowd, pausing to decide which of his ~~100~~ ^{hundred}-odd guests

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he would introduce to her. "And I could see that the long guest list suddenly got very short. I remember one guy he wouldn't introduce Jackie to, and didn't, was Norman Mailer, who was probably the most famous writer in New York at the time." Mailer's memory coincides with Talese's: "It was a pretty mean piece, actually. Anyway, Jackie walked into George's party, and I remember she made a point of talking to Styron for the longest damn time. I was dying." It didn't end there.

Mailer remained in Coventry for several more years. In 1965 or 1966, Mrs. Kennedy asked Richard Goodwin, who had been one of her husband's speechwriters, and an important figure in his and the succeeding administration, to help Norman Podhoretz put together a party where she could meet a group of prominent New York writers and editors. Mailer, of course, would have been at the top of any such list, but one of the conditions given to Podhoretz was that he not be included. "So," Mailer said, "Norman, my good friend, didn't invite me, and told me later, in effect, that her presence at the party meant more to him than my bruised feelings."

Styron, "who was then my dire rival," was invited, another blow. Styron's star receded somewhat in the next decade, and Mrs. Kennedy broke off her relations with Podhoretz in the late sixties. In the 1970s, she became friendly again with Mailer.

In late February, he flew alone to Mexico to finalize his divorce from Adele, and then took a two-week trip to France with Jeanne to inform her father and grandfather of her pregnancy. They visited her father at the ducal seat, Inveraray Castle in western Scotland. Jeanne recalled the visit: "Because my father is really almost out of medieval times, for Norman that was like being put down in the middle of a Japanese court." Mailer remembered the duke as "one of the coldest, nastiest men I've ever known." At dinner, he was seated at the opposite end

of a long table from Argyll, with Jeanne in the middle. "He talked to her throughout the entire meal; I was out of it," Mailer said. "It was the stuff of a novel, a comic novel, on a very high level." The visit to Beaverbrook was easier, Jeanne said, "Grandfather and Norman had a meeting ground. Both were intellectuals, they were both very interested in politics, both men of action." Mailer described the visit to La Capponcina at Cap d'Ail, across the bay from Monte Carlo:

As I was saying goodbye to Beaverbrook at the end of a surprise visit Jeannie and I afforded him (for we did land without warning), I said to him in parting, "Well, sir, under the circumstances you've been gracious," at which point the, I suspect, famous gleam came into his eyes and he repeated in an evaluative voice, half statement, half question, "Under the circumstances." I would like to think it amused him but I can't bet on it.

He completed the essay on Mrs. Kennedy shortly after they were married on May 4, as Jeanne remembered, "by a Black woman Methodist minister in the Maryland Woods." No friends or relatives were present. Later that month, they took possession of the three-story brownstone in Brooklyn that Mailer had first seen two years earlier. The building at 142 Columbia Heights overlooks the East River's Buttermilk Channel, with a matchless triptych of the Statue of Liberty on the left, the Manhattan skyline in the center, and the Brooklyn Bridge to the right. Several famous writers have lived in "The Heights," including Whitman, Thomas Wolfe, Hart Crane, McCullers, Auden, ^{Walt} Capote and Mailer's erstwhile neighbor, Arthur Miller. ^{Carson} Fan and ^{W.H.} Barney lived around the corner on Willow Street. Mailer used to tell friends that Irish

politicians favored "The Heights" as a place to ensconce their mistresses, who then looked longingly across the river to Manhattan. He kept his apartment there for the rest of his life.

With the help of a carpenter, Mailer redesigned the third floor to give it the feel of a yacht, with rope and wooden ladders, hanging lines and catwalks. The ceiling was teak, and bowed out like the side of a ship. He also purchased a brass engine order telegraph and compass binnacle, which remained there for decades. To get to his small writing room 18 feet up, he had to climb a rope ladder and then walk across a 10" catwalk. He explained to Yamanishi that to get all the way up to the ridgepole and skylight, 25 feet up via the rope ladder, was "so arduous that I have been able to climb successfully to the top only a few times, and then during periods when I'm not smoking." He purposefully did not attach the bottom of the ladder to the floor so that it swung and twisted with the exertions of climbing, giving him exercise without "the monotony of calisthenics." Coming down was even more difficult because "one is tired and devils seem to get into the rope." The children enjoyed the rigging and played on it all the time. The chief reason for installing it, he said, was that "Jews have a bad head for heights," and the setup "keeps a small sense of danger present so that it can, I suspect, serve as a tonic for my much-abused liver." The nautical setup and his memory of walking narrow ledges in San Francisco also helped him imagine what negotiating the narrow stone parapet in Waldorf Towers was like for Stephen Rojack. in An American Dream.

Jeanne's pregnancy proceeded well while he worked uneasily on the big novel. He wrote Fig (with whom he had reconciled after receiving Fig's glowing review of *Deaths for the Ladies*) that he was not so much moving ahead, as "making separate starts" on different versions. One of these would continue the account of Marion Faye's Provincetown party, "Advertisements for

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Myself on the Way Out," and then alternate, as Mailer wrote in his notes: "The novel sits in two periods, the present and the future. Present is O'Shaugnessy in Monroe St. [the long whitewashed apartment where Mailer had been attacked with a hammer], Marion out of jail, Joyce [Dr. Sandy Joyce, Denise Gondelman's shrink] with Elena, etc. The future is O'Shaugnessy as a TV star, Marion as a millionaire and President-maker, and Joyce as a great intellectual who is dying of cancer." The most important¹ and final¹ piece of the big novel to be published is a meditative-fantastical short story worthy of Borges, "Truth and Being, Nothing and Time: A Broken Fragment from a Long Novel," which he wrote in December 1960 after being released from Bellevue. It appeared in *Evergreen Review* in September 1962.

Mailer called it "an odd, even exceptional, essay about: shit. Literally." It appears to be narrated by Dr. Joyce, the "archbishop of the New Royal Scatological Society," as he is dying of "a rebellion of the cells." He explains the nature of his disease with Spenglerian elan, noting that the rate of his cancer's growth bears a relationship to "the rate of increase in the decomposition of radium to lead." He describes the anus as "the final executor of that will within us to assign value to all which passes through," and ponders the digestive process by which we "expel the exquisite in time with the despised"; out of the asshole "pour the riches of Satan." We are not brave enough to extract the best nutrients from the food we eat, not any more. The piece can be better appreciated if ^{understood in the larger context of} Mailer's cosmic war between good and evil is seen as its larger context. He brings in the Holocaust, modern architecture and even invents a saint—Exquisitas of Odometamo—and concludes that "the state of Being in the Twentieth Century was close to extinction of itself because of the diseases and disasters of soul over the centuries."

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Totalitarianism, in its subtle and blatant forms, and its handmaiden, technology, ^{was} seeking to extinguish ^{the} civilization. Feces was one battleground.

He was in complete earnest. As the British novelist Anthony Burgess, ^{noted} in a review of Mailer's 1983 novel of pharaohs, sex, war, magic, odors and excrement, *Ancient Evenings*, Mailer understood that "Egypt is fertile because of Nile mud, and mud is a form of faeces." Thus, he continues, "The sorcery of the anal passage is the source of power." And odor is one of the keys to the meanings of excrement, as Mailer concluded in "Truth and Being": "It is characteristic," he said, "of revolutionaries, passionate lovers, the very ambitious, the greedy, the stingy, and dogs, to fix on what is excreted by others." Most commentators pass over his fecal interests holding their noses. He didn't care. His navigator told him to keep probing. Burgess was one of a small number of who did not mock or dismiss Mailer's hypotheses about shit, but even he could not resist a joke about the matter. The only occasion he met Mailer, Burgess said, was at one of those "fabulous New York parties (literally because the big modern sources of fable were there—^{Lowell, Warhol, Ginsberg, et al})—he said: 'Burgess, your last book was shit.' I can see now that he was paying me a compliment." Burgess may have been correct. Dung was of inexhaustible interest to Mailer. ^{As he wrote in his essay,} "Some of the best and worst of us are drawn to worship at the congregation of the lost cells." In later years when the subject came up, he invariably enjoined: "Never ignore shit."

The Mailers spent the summer of 1962 in Provincetown, ^{where they rented a unit on} Commercial Street owned by Eldred Mowery. The previous months had been turbulent, with the couple sometime fighting in public. Jeanne wrote later that "we could empty a room quicker than any couple in New York." But the baby was due in August and their lives, perforce, were quieter

for a time. He had turned in the essay on Mrs. Kennedy, and ^{still} was working, somewhat fitfully, on various parts of the big novel. Before he left for Cape Cod, he had written to ^{his Bellows (kind)} Grant, with ^{Harry G.} avuncular advice that had personal resonance. He told him to read and "immerse yourself in the past" as a way of confronting his key problem: "your mind is three times more powerful than your culture." Mailer said that for the first time in many years "there is a small chance I am going out of my particular madness which has been like yours elephantiasis of the ego." Summer-- in P-town was always full of craziness, but Walker was in Tangiers, Blackiston and Donoghue were not around, and the Mailers spent July and the beginning of August in relative tranquility. ²

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Mailer was among the many novelists from around the world who had been invited to Edinburgh for a five-day conference, "The Novel Today," in late August. He wrote to Sonia Brownell, George Orwell's widow and one of the organizers, saying he wanted to come, especially because there would be no set speeches, just unrehearsed exchanges among the assembled novelists. He could not be definitive, however, as Jeanne was due close to the ^{dates of the} conference. They were thinking of calling the child "Christmas," Mailer said, which Brownell thought was a marvelous idea. Jeanne's mother came to New York for the birth and was charmed by Mailer. When she wasn't with her daughter, Mrs. Kidd found herself being "whirled round the nightspots" by her son-in-law. He was a "mercurial character, loaded with talent, and someone you either loved or loathed. I loved him." Mailer said he got along "famously" with her. When the baby arrived on August 18, she was named Kate Cailean. He intended to remain home, but both Jeanne and her mother urged him to go to the conference. He flew to Edinburgh

on August 21, arriving on the conference's second day. His first statement to the conferees was an announcement of Kate's birth.

Over 2,000 attended the conference in McEwan Hall, a massive amphitheater that Mailer likened to a Roman circus. There was much banter from the audience, and the session leaders, Mailer and Mary McCarthy among them, were not totally surprised to learn that someone had filled the water carafes with whisky. "A nice touch, don't you think?" said one of the organizers. No one was allowed to speak for more than five minutes, so the discussion of aspects of the novel was spirited and easy to follow. Besides Mailer and McCarthy, those given a speaking slot included Lawrence Durrell, Muriel Spark, Malcolm Muggeridge, Stephen Spender, Rebecca West, Alex Trocchi and two writers Mailer was to meet for the first time: William Burroughs and Henry Miller. The French delegation, which was supposed to include Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus, failed to appear, as did the Russian delegation. While the British and Americans dominated, there were representatives from nearly every European country, and some from Asia and Africa. Mailer said that he came to the conclusion that he had to be "a bit of a public figure" at the conference, as the audience would "listen more carefully to Behan than Dos Passos." By some estimates, he was the star of the conference.

When Mary McCarthy lamented that it was difficult to have a real debate about censorship without the presence of a genuine practitioner, Mailer took on the role of devil's advocate, one he always relished. "This man Mailer," one reporter wrote, "stocky, curly-headed, almost cherubic at times (like a Rubens) has the reputation of being so far out as to be almost inarticulate," but when he spoke in favor of censorship, he did so with "quite brilliant articulateness." He began by saying that "a profound argument can be advanced that sexual

literature, you see, does weaken warlike potential because it tends to drain it." He elaborated on his hypothesis and drew rejoinders from several speakers, including McCarthy, Burroughs and Miller. McCarthy cited Sparta where sex "was felt to be the pap of war," and Mailer responded with the example of Stalin using sexual censorship to make Russia into a warlike nation in the 1930s. Burroughs noted tersely that censorship of sexual material was an adjunct to capitalism's desire to "channel the sexual instinct into production and purchase of consumer's goods." Henry Miller held fire until near the end, and then spoke briefly. "It's all very much more simple than it sounds," he began.

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The whole world today is in my mind strangled. We have no freedom of action really, we are all talking nonsense. Well, we all would like to do when we see a good interesting woman is to sleep with her. We should not make any bones about that. There is nothing wrong with lust or with obscenity, we all have impure desires. We should have the pure and the impure, they exist together. Good and evil belong together. You can't separate them. Let's stop talking about censorship; let's do it, think it, talk it, act it. Thank you.

summary
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Miller's remarks (which recall D. H. Lawrence) neatly reinforced Mailer's ideas about the existential life. Remembering his first meeting with him, Miller said he not only admired his work; he admired his personality. "It is all of a piece," he wrote, "no neurotic push-pull, no maggots in the smile, no envies, no nervousness." Miller, wearing knickers and a cap in Edinburgh, had "a good tough face, big nose, near bald head, looking for all the world like Marx's noble proletarian, like some bricklayer, let us say, you started talking to on the train, and then it turned out he had eighty-two kids and worked at his hobby in his spare time—it was

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translating Sophocles." Mailer recalled that Miller "leaned over and said, 'Where are you from, Norman?' I said, 'Brooklyn.' He said, 'Yeah, I'm from Brooklyn too.'" That cemented things.

His admiration for Burroughs was also burnished by their interaction. At one point, Burroughs was describing his cut-up/fold-in method of composition, whereby he cut typed pages in half vertically, and then folded one half into another cut-up section. "The method," he said, "could also lead to collaboration by writers on an unprecedented scale to produce works that were the composite effort of any number of writers, living or dead. He had used fold-ins, he explained, from Shakespeare, Rimbaud, Saint-John Perse, along with passages from magazines, newspapers and letters, to produce composite novels whose authorship he shared. When the turbaned novelist, Khushwant Singh, who sitting near him on the speakers' platform, asked if he was really serious, Burroughs, looking for all the world like Buster Keaton, answered, "Yes, of course." Remembering Burroughs at the conference, Mailer said that "he spoke to his friends exactly the same way he spoke to his enemies, which was somewhat remotely." Burroughs remained undemonstrative.

Edinburgh was still a bit Calvinist in 1962, and it was hard to get a drink in a bar after ten. Consequently, there were private drinking parties every night of the conference. "Edinburgh had very many evil spirits loose for those few days." Mailer recalled, "there was madness in the air." At a celebratory party after the final day, he was drinking with Sonia Brownell and John Calder, the two chief conference organizers. Burroughs was also there. They were joined by Max Hayward, the translator of Doctor *Dr. Zhivago*, who was quite drunk. Calder says that Hayward made a clumsy pass at Brownell; Mailer remembers him complaining about being roughed up by some Edinburgh hoodlums. Hayward went on interminably, Mailer said, in a whining, self-pitying

manner about this unmerited cruelty. Angry or disgusted or both, Mailer picked Hayward off the ground, and with some help from Calder carried him out to the landing. "He told me to let go," Calder said. "When I did, he heaved Hayward over his shoulder and on to the stone stairs, whereupon he rolled down all the four or five flights to the bottom. Five minutes later, he reappeared, blood flowing from several places, and quietly resumed drinking." Many years later, Mailer recalled that crazy night and shook his head. "I could have killed him," he said.

Mailer returned to a full plate. He had agreed to a September 22 debate in Chicago with William Buckley, Jr. who he had called "the most important conservative in the public eye after Barry Goldwater." Two days later, he would go to Comisky Park to watch the heavyweight boxing match between champion Floyd Patterson and Sonny Liston, which he planned to write about in his *Esquire* column. He stayed at Hugh Hefner's Playboy mansion overlooking Lake Michigan. Hefner was clearly cultivating Mailer, and Mailer liked "Hef," and looked forward to mingling with the fight crowd and a bevy of playmates at his sybaritic mansion. His first concern upon his return, however, was his wife and the new baby. He found that Jeanne was recovering nicely, and that the "frighteningly bright" Kate had the admirable ability of "staring one hard in the eye." Now the father of four girls, he wondered if he possessed "some exceptional virtue or vice to be so curiously blessed." He was feeling better about himself than he had for some time. Graham Greene's recent letter saying he had been "moved and excited" by the "magnificent" *Advertisements*, was also encouraging. His literary correspondence had now grown to the point where he needed a full-time secretary.

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He hired a young woman named Anne Barry, a WASP from New Hampshire who had just graduated from Radcliffe. She had spent a day with Mailer in Manhattan several months earlier, discussing a paper she was writing on *Advertisements*. Her ^{thesis} basic idea was that Mailer was having an identity crisis in the late 1950s, and although they laughed about this, she was correct. Shortly after they met, she wrote "First Meeting with Norman, March, 1962".

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I met Barry on High Street?

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He was a particularly intense man. I was, of course, impressed because a famous or rather notorious writer asked me to have a drink with him. I saw that rather square face, that broadshouldered frame now slightly paunchy, those eyes so sharp, in a soft tough too old face, and I knew that every word counted, that I would be judged not unfairly but strictly by this man.

(N)

EXTL
We walked out on the street; we went to Dorgene's; there was a piano, and we couldn't hear ourselves talk, so we went to a bar across the street. "I don't know what it is about you. You interest me." And then, after he said this, "I just thought I'd tell you that now. It's something to take home with you." I thanked him, sarcastically, knowing that I would need this to take home with me—and this made me bitter. So trapped, I am in pettiness. "You can't take a compliment, can you?" (suddenly he was frighteningly ingenuous.) "You look like a girl who can hold her liquor. I like that." And, later, "When I first saw you, Barry, I thought you were Boston Irish. I came down the stairs, and saw you standing there, with your chin set, looking me over, and I knew right then you were a monster." (His eyes sparkle, his face crinkles into a smile, imp-like, suddenly.) Two bars, four scotches. I must live up to my hard drinking reputation. He walks away from the

table: "Get me another drink," and I must, somehow, fight my way past the drinks at the bar, and order him I can't remember what, not paying for it. "I knew you'd get me that drink," he said, and our eyes met, and I knew I'd passed another test.

Always testing his friends, his enemies, never relaxing.

Barry typed up whatever he was working on—columns for *Esquire* and *Commentary*, stories, poems and speeches—he would edit them, and she would retype, sometimes several times. It was a routine he maintained with all his subsequent secretaries. Writing poems on scraps of paper for a couple of years had convinced him of the merits of longhand, and he never used a typewriter again. He wrote in pencil on white, unlined paper from then on. His relationship with Barry was open and friendly; they joshed and joked. She found him to be "a very funny man," and corrected his punctuation. He called her "Mrs. Mark Twain," and in a letter to Carpenter that she typed, "a stuck-up little New Hampshire cunt whom you may have met." She also made him breakfast and lunch, walked Tibo and Zsa Zsa and helped him take care of Sadie, Jeanne's maid, whom she had left with him when she moved out. Barry said she admired his "freedom, his humor, his willingness to look things that are unpleasant in the eye—these are Jewish qualities, and they come through in his work as well as in the man." They had a warm relationship and remained in contact until his death.

The debate with Buckley was billed as "The Real Meaning of the Right Wing in America," but the context was the intensifying arms race with Russia—the Cuban Missile Crisis occurred October 1962—and the emergence of an energized conservative movement led by the GOP Senator from Arizona, Barry Goldwater. Buckley's magazine, *National Review*, was Goldwater's cheerleader and applauded his plan to spend more on nuclear weapons. Mailer

United States
 wanted to end the cold war, arguing that the U.S. was demonizing the communist state. "Let communism come to those countries it will come to," he argued before the audience of nearly 4,000. The cold war, he said, has become "an instrument of megalomaniacal delusion," and had turned the nation's attention away from the true plague, which

In his speech and the ensuing debate with Buckley, Mailer defines this plague in more specific ways that he had in the past, a reflection, in part, of existential philosophy, especially that of Heidegger. He points to the blandness of modern architecture, and the way it masks the functions of buildings: "The airports look like luxury hotels, the luxury hotels are indistinguishable from a modern corporation's home office, and the home office looks like an air-conditioned underground city on the moon." New drugs proliferate to treat "small epidemics with no name," but are ineffective. "Nature is wounded in her fisheries, her forests. Airplanes spray insecticides. Species of insects are removed from the chain of life. Crops are poisoned just slightly. We grow enormous tomatoes which have no taste." Five days after his speech, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, an indictment of environmental pollution that led to the banning of DDT, was published.

Their speeches were
 Buckley's
 Buckley's speech was published in *Playboy* with the subtitle, "A Conservative's View", Mailer's was "A Liberal's View." Mailer took umbrage. "I don't care," he said in a letter to the editor, "if people call me a radical, a rebel, a red, a revolutionary, an outsider, an outlaw, a Bolshevik, an anarchist, a nihilist, or even a left conservative, but please don't ever call me a liberal." Few called him a liberal again, but left conservative or, eventually, Left-conservative, stuck, despite his never-ending difficulty in explaining exactly what he meant by it. For Mailer, a liberal was a knee-jerk, unthinking incrementalist on social issues, a helpful, smiling, reverent,

grown-up scout who opposed nothing but discourtesy. Mailer opposed much and wanted to be sure that the world knew it.

9/11 In and some of his framing comments
 When he reprinted his speech in *The Presidential Papers*, he added a brief preface of the same kind found in *Advertisements for Myself*. ~~In it~~, he says that Americans are afraid of something beside the communists. "Dread," he continues, "has been loose in the twentieth century, and America has shivered in its horror since the Depression." Besides the more tangible manifestations of dread, he notes with alarm that philosophy itself may be dying. "Metaphysics disappears, logical positivism arises," and "soon a discussion of death will be considered a betrayal of philosophy," a remark reflecting Heidegger's adjuration to humans to stand "in the openness of Being, of enduring [...], and of out-braving the utmost (Being toward death)." Mailer notes ruefully that the logical positivists are displacing the existentialists in Anglo-American philosophy, and goes on to attack psychologists (excluding Reichians and Jungians) for treating dread as "a repetition of infantile experiences of helplessness." The dread and anxiety felt by humanity, he believes, should be seen as something more primitive and authentic, namely, the danger of "losing some part or quality of our soul unless we act and act dangerously."

There is no way to determine how much influence his reading had on his debate speech. But we do know that during his 17-day stay in Bellevue, ^{head} he read an anthology edited by Walter Kaufmann, *Existentialism from Dostoevsky to Sartre*, which contained excerpts from the writings of ten existential writers, including Nietzsche, Kierkegaard and Heidegger. It is no weak supposition to conclude that the title of the Nietzsche chapter, "Live Dangerously," and the Nietzsche quote from which it was taken, rang a big bell for Mailer: "For believe me, the secret

of the greatest fruitfulness and the greatest enjoyment of existence is: to *live dangerously!* Build your cities under Vesuvius! Send your ships into uncharted seas! Live at war with your peers and yourselves!"

Perhaps Kierkegaard's most influential work is *The Concept of Dread*, and an excerpt from it, "Dread and Freedom," is included in the anthology. It appears to be the source of Mailer's oft-stated notion that "the saint and the psychopath were united to one another, and different from the mass of men," and that this "paradox" had "driven Kierkegaard near to mad for he had the courage to see that his criminal impulses were also his most religious." But it is the Heidegger chapter that may have been uppermost in his mind when he decided to explore the concept of dread in his speech. Dread, for Heidegger, is felt in the face of Nothingness, and courage is the essential virtue ^{that} which opposes dread and sustains Being (which Heidegger called *Da-sein*, or human existence or presence). Heidegger says the dread felt by courageous persons is no simple joy, but stands "in secret union with the serenity and gentleness of creative longing," which can be taken as certifying the high valor of the artist. The extent to which Mailer's conception of the artist's role was invigorated by the writings in the Kaufmann collection is uncertain, but the force of his belief in the heroic mission of the artist is indisputable. The last line of his 1971 introduction to a new edition of *Deaths for the Ladies* captures it best: *Time's* dismissive review of his poetry, he says, "put iron into my heart again, and rage, and the feeling that the enemy was more alive than ever, and dirtier in the alley, and so one had to mend, and put on the armor, and go to war, go out to war again, and try to hew huge strokes with the only broadsword God ever gave you, a glimpse of something like Almighty prose."

Gay Talese, who had met Mailer a few years earlier at a prizefight at the St. Nicholas Arena in Manhattan, covered the debate for the New York Times. He described it as a contest between the conservative Buckley ("a clever jabber with a tiptoe stance"), and Mailer the hipster ("who hooked with his fists as he spoke"). In his lead, he said the match was considered to have ended in a draw. Talese's story ran in the Times on September 24, the day before the Patterson-Liston fight. Mailer read it, and then saw the reporter at one of the pre-fight receptions for the press. Talese, who remembers wearing "a summer weight suit, a tan, gabardine, three-piece suit," saw Mailer walking his way. "I sensed that he wasn't happy, he wasn't smiling, and he was carrying a drink. I remember him walking over, and he said, 'It wasn't a draw.'" Talese tried to make light of it, but Mailer "continued to be serious and looked at me in a very hostile way. And I did see his drink in his right hand and I thought, 'He's going to throw that drink at me,' because I had a recollection of Mailer's public image as a guy who could be volatile and throw a drink at someone, or a punch. I thought, 'It is early in the evening, I'm wearing this suit, there are people here who will see this guy throw this drink at me.'" Talese said Mailer looked menacing, and he said, "Don't throw that drink at me." Mailer said he had no intention of doing so. "Then there was a smile, and then there was a casual reflection on the article. That little moment passed, but it was my one moment."

Mailer was adamant that he had won the debate. Buckley had used most of his 30 minutes attacking various prominent people on the Left—Murray Kempton, Mailer and Castro—while ^{Mailer} he had analyzed the nature of the ~~Right Wing~~ ⁱⁿ. "The crowd was high partisan that night and cheered separately for us with the kind of excitement one expects in a crowd at a high school football game," he wrote, and "I had succeeded in pushing a salient into the intellectual territory

of the Right." Therefore, he argued, the laurels should go to him. Coming after his nimble-footed performance in Edinburgh, the Chicago debate gave him another reason to feel cocky about his extemporaneous speaking abilities. Roger Donoghue, Mailer's second, scored it in the manner of a ten-round boxing match: six, three, one for Mailer. (N)

"I was full of myself," is how Mailer described his state of mind on the eve of the championship bout. He was certain that Patterson would defeat the heavier contender, Sonny Liston, who was favored by the odds-makers. Patterson was agile and experienced, but Liston's weight and reach proved too much, and Patterson was down and out at two minutes and six seconds into the first round. Some fans hadn't even found their seats when the champion fell. Fight ended in Esquire (N)
 Mailer published his report as his February 1963 "Big Bite" column. Titled "Ten Thousand Words a Minute," the 20,000 word-essay (10K per minute) is to sports writing what "Superman Comes to the Supermarket" is to political reportage—a revamping of the genre. Its power resides not only in his extended slow motion analyses of the action, but in his stunning similes, as in his description of another fight in the essay in which Emile Griffith pounded Benny Paret to death: in what a public cyphon (N)

EXTL
 Paret got trapped in a corner. Trying to duck away, his left arm and his head became tangled on the wrong side of the top rope. Griffith was in like a cat ready to rip the life out of a huge boxed rat. He hit him eighteen right hands in a row, an act which took perhaps three or four seconds. Griffith made a pent-up whimpering sound all the while he attacked, the right hand whipping like a piston rod which has broken through the crankcase, or like a baseball bat demolishing a pumpkin. I was sitting in the second row in the corner—they were not ten feet away from me, and like everyone else, I was hypnotized. (N)

EXTL

TX [~] What further distinguishes the essay from ^{other} the run of first-rate sports writing is the way

Mailer opens his focus to include portraits of the fight crowd, the celebrities, the dignitaries, the hangers-on, and the reporters who covered the fight: "Have any of you ever been through the smoking car of an old coach early in the morning when the smokers sleep and the stale air settles into congelations of gloom? Well that is a little like the scent of Press Headquarters." N

EXC
EXFL It is like being at a vast party in Limbo[!]—there is tremendous excitement, much movement and no sex at all. Just talk. Talk fed by cigarettes. One thousand to two thousand cigarettes are smoked every hour. The mind must keep functioning fast enough to offer up stories (Reporters meet in a marketplace to trade their stories[!]—they barter an anecdote they cannot use about one of the people in the event in order to pick up a different piece which is usable by their paper. It does not matter if the story is true or altogether not true, it must merely be suitable and not too mechanically libelous.) So they char the inside of their bodies in order to scrape up news which can go out to the machine.

EXC
TX The Mob is at the fight, of course[!]—Liston had connections to the underworld[!]—and Mailer devotes a thousand words to a group portrait. A sample: "Heavy types, bouncers, plug-uglies, flatteners, one or two speedy, swishing, Negro ex-boxers, for example, now blown up to the size of fat middleweights, slinky in their walk, eyes fulfilling the operative definition of razor slits, murder coming off them like scent comes off a skunk." His metaphors are surprising but precise: "If a clam had a muscle as large as a man, and the muscle grew eyes, you would get the mood." The Mob bosses are "hawks and falcons and crows, Italian dons looking like little old N

shrunk eagles, gulls, pelicans, condors." The essay expands the scope of the sports essay, reshapes it, and then transcends it.

But it is Mailer's inclusion of himself in the piece that sharply distinguishes it from the writing of fight reporters of the quality of Red Smith and A.J. Liebling, writers saturated in fight lore, but men ^{plus who} (no female fight scribes yet) who bowed so deeply to the canons of objectivity that they could not conceive of making themselves major characters in their own work. Mailer, on the other hand, is present from the beginning, depicting his exchanges with other reporters and with handlers, trainers and managers, including Patterson's, the legendary Cus D'Amato: "He had stopped drinking years ago and so had enormous pent-up vitality. As a talker, he was one of the world's great weight-lifters, not brilliant, but powerful, nonstop, and very solid. Talk was muscle. If you wanted to interrupt, you had to bend his arm off." Toward the end of the piece, Mailer moves to the center of the action.

Drinking all night at Hefner's mansion, he convinced himself and several reporters that he knew how to publicize the inevitable rematch of Liston and Patterson so as to make it ten times more profitable. His plan is to present the idea the following morning before Liston's press conference. He explains how in the "plot-ridden, romantic dungeons of my mind" he has ^{re-} conceived Norman Mailer as a version of Castro, a man who *knows* the impossible may be accomplished. He drinks until seven a.m., washes up, and goes to the hotel where he learns that Liston had moved his press conference up a half-hour, thus stealing ^{Mailer's} his crowd. He walks into Liston's meeting with reporters, plops himself down on the dais, and tries to insinuate himself into the event. He fails. Removed physically by house detectives, his caper is over, although later, he does shake Liston's hand, and they agree they are both bums.

Mailer's drunken behavior was widely reported. His probation officer read about his stunt. He was called in and told that his probation, about to end, would be continued until June 1963. He had paid a high price for his actions, and so reflected at the close of the essay that "some ghost of Don Quixote was laid to rest in me." Once more, after a notable victory, Mailer overreached. It was now a confirmed pattern. He called his essay "a *mélange de genres*," but it is one of the glories of sports writing, and ample recompense for his embarrassing ejection from the press conference. Remembering his story, "The Notebook," one can wonder if Mailer staged the stunt in order to write about it. He invariably had two motives for his actions. Although he never revealed his publicity plan for staging the rematch (beyond billing it as struggle between Good and Evil), Mailer genuinely believed he was on a mission to crown Floyd Patterson as "a genius," and "our champion," for the nation to admire. He had yet to meet Muhammad Ali.

A few days after the boxing match, Mailer sent a telegram to Attorney General Robert F.

Kennedy: "Go to Oxford, Mississippi, or arrange a way for me to go down. I can talk to those students." He was referring to the situation of James Meredith, the first Black to enroll in the University of Mississippi. ~~President Kennedy~~ had sent federal marshals backed up by army troops to quell violence and compel his admission. The Civil Rights Movement had grown in numbers, grown hugely, since the federal desegregation of the Little Rock, Arkansas public schools in the fall of 1957, and by the fall of 1962, there were outbreaks of violence all over the South arising from the actions of thousands of Black and white "freedom riders" who flouted "Jim Crow" laws by riding on busses and trains, and eating in segregated terminal restaurants.

TX Mailer wanted to get involved, but there was trouble on the home front, and he stayed in New York to try ^{to} and save his marriage, *already in jeopardy*

His relations with Jeanne had *frayed since* improved somewhat after Kate was born, but then started to fray. He was traveling a lot, and when he wasn't, was at meetings in Manhattan *or in his studio*

1. writing. Jeanne lived on the first floor of the brownstone for a time and then moved out. She had her own journalistic career. Much was left to Anne Barry and another Jeanne, Jeanne Johnson, a 20-year-old woman Mailer had met at Bellevue, who became his ward and helped with chores at the apartment. Mailer had assumed that he and his wife would agree to some sort of household routine. "Having grown up in the middle class, life and background," he said, "I was very responsible to appointments, habits, agreements. For her it was just will-o'-the-wisp. So we could agree to be doing something, and she would change her mind at the last moment. That used to drive me nuts because I thought we couldn't get along without structure."

Jeanne also didn't like living in Brooklyn. "She had a feeling that her social life was swallowed up. I don't know how powerful a factor that was because she was never someone who said, 'I'm giving up more than I'm prepared to give up.' She wouldn't have talked that way," he said. Another factor was Jeanne's strained relations with Fan. "My mother was prepared to accept any woman I was married to, but I'd never pretend they liked each other," he said. Barney, however, with his British manners, got along well with her. In regard to affairs, Mailer said that infidelities weren't the largest problem: "There may have been a few en route, but that was hardly part of it. ^m I mean, I was screwing everybody I could. ^m she certainly had the right. It was more, that we never could build anything. It got worse and worse. And she was a dreadful cook. I remember she'd invite people over for dinner and it was comic to watch them eating and

OK?
Seems as though they must have

screwing their mouths ⁱⁿ—it was awful swill ⁱⁿ—and they'd say, 'Oh, it's delicious, Jeanne.' Then they'd leave and I'd say, 'You've no idea what an awful cook you are.'" By late fall, the marriage had begun to splinter.

Whatever his domestic problems, he continued to write a lot, mainly essays, and book reviews, while making no progress ^{on} the big novel. After more than seven years of work, albeit interrupted work, all he had to show was a handful of fragments. But he couldn't interrupt the flow of shorter pieces; he needed income. The reputation of *Advertisements* ^{for M. Scott} and "The White Negro," the debate with Buckley, and his "Big Bite" column ^{in Esquire} led to many requests for interviews and paid speaking engagements, and he accepted virtually all of them. In 1963, he agreed to give talks at Harvard, ^{the universities} University of Connecticut, University of Michigan, University of Chicago and Wesleyan University. He also rented Carnegie Hall for a May 31 performance, titled "An Existential Evening," and drew a paying crowd of 1200. *Playboy* and *Esquire* wanted more material from him, and *Cosmopolitan* interviewed him for a profile. But the big novel went begging and debts accumulated. Beside household expenses and the large mortgage payment for 142 Columbia Heights, he was responsible for support payments for several of his children, plus alimony for Adele, Anne Barry's salary, and Jeanne Johnson's expenses. Royalties from *The Naked and the Dead* helped, but his lectures and columns for *Esquire* and *Commentary* paid little, and both his U.S. and British publishers wanted him to deliver his promised novel, the big

one.

Jeanne Campbell moved to Manhattan in early 1963. Mailer wrote to Adeline about the situation. "Jeanne and I are apart, yet not apart. We see each other almost every night, come together a bit, go away a little ⁱⁿ—it's deadening in the extreme. Limbo." Desirous of family

He had learned all he cared to about these "types" 451

stability, but eager for affairs, he was torn: "When I was young I was always married and rotting my liver with envy that I was not free. Now that I am almost middle-aged I am of course free, and see for the first time that there can be something rich in a large family and lots of responsible detail." The breakup was prolonged, and even as late as mid-June he wrote to Knox saying there were "indications" that they might patch things up. "She's the toughest babe I've ever known," he wrote, but "most of her friends I find intolerable and sickening, and of course that's a fundamental division in my psyche when I as a radical am traveling around with upper-class types." But to Harvey Breit, he spoke of the relationship in the past tense, and bemoaned the losses incurred when his marriages had ended.

Part of the absolute funk is that one ties one's creativity to one's mate, and when they start grinding you into dry goatball powder and there's nothing left but to split or become a whining piteous concentration camp victim, well there one splits if there's one sperm cell left, but there's a near mortal anguish which consists of even more than the awful execution of the love that's left. For one's killing part of the creativity in oneself—all those delicate habits and projects which were built up around the half-ass life one had with the beloved. And I think it's almost as bad as a woman losing a baby. I've lost three wives, and there was something large to lose in each of them, but I also lost three large chambers of the talent.

✶ married to Barney Mailer's brother Louis ✶
A few days later in a letter to his Aunt Moos, one meant for family consumption, he made it clear that the marriage was over: "She's got a will at least as strong as mine and was no more ready to become a Brooklyn housewife (of the grandest sort, I assure you) than I was ready to become Mr. Lady Jeanne."

TX There was one bright spot: collecting his recent journalism, interviews, essays and a few pieces of the big novel for a new collection. He had over 200,000 words of material ^{which} and Putnam's wanted him to cut it in half, a task he savored. Initially, he planned to call the miscellany ^{either} "The Devil Revisited," but the title was changed to *The Presidential Papers* shortly before it was published in November 1963. The focus was to be on Kennedy's administration, for which he had much pointed advice, all of it unheeded. The work was satisfying, but it was only a holding action. Sometime in the winter or early spring of 1963, he came to the conclusion that he needed to write a short novel, one that would amount to a down payment on his large promise that he would "hit the longest ball ever to go up in the accelerated hurricane air of our American letters." If he wasn't ready to hit a home run, perhaps he could belt a double, "dare a bold stroke," one that would give him a big paycheck and enable him, as he wrote to Fig, "to do my big book in relative calm" ^{to}

has Fig been re-30017 → his army buddy, Fig Swathney a minute
After "10,000 Words," the most ambitious piece of this period is "Norman Mailer versus Nine Writers," subtitled "Further Evaluations of the Talent in the Room" ^{which establishes} to establish it as a continuation of his earlier essay that had so exasperated Jones, Styron and Baldwin. In the new essay, begun in early March, he discusses the latest novels by these three—respectively, *The Thin Red Line*, *Set This House on Fire*, and *Another Country*—and recent novels by Burroughs (*Naked Lunch*), Heller (*Catch-22*), Updike (*Rabbit, Run*), Roth (*Letting Go*), Salinger (*Franny and Zooey* and *Raise High the Roof Beam, Carpenters*), and Bellow (*Henderson the Rain King*). When it appeared in the July issue of *Esquire*, it was preceded by a full-page photo of a truculent-looking Mailer in suit and tie standing in the corner of a boxing ring at the Gramercy Park Gym. Mailer's insights are as unflinching as in the earlier essay, but less rebarbative, and

Mailer was deeply impressed by how the photographer Diane Arbus caught his mood that day, and had great admiration for her work.

slightly more self-deprecatory, as in his opening comments on *Henderson*: "Well, one might as well eat the crow right here. Henderson is an exceptional character, almost worthy of Gulliver or Huckleberry Finn." He goes on for two paragraphs.

the Rain King

(N)

EXTS

EXTL

Bellow's main character, Henderson, is a legendary giant American, an eccentric millionaire, six-foot four in height, with a huge battered face, an enormous chest, a prodigious potbelly, a wild crank's gusto for life, and a childlike impulse to say what he thinks. He is a magical hybrid of Jim Thorpe and Dwight Macdonald. And he is tormented by an inner voice which gives him no rest and poisons his marriages and pushed him to go forth. So he chooses to go to Africa (after first contemplating a visit to the Eskimos) and finds a native guide to take him deep into the interior.

EXTL

The style gallops like Henderson, full of excess, full of light, loaded with irritating effusions, but it is a style which moves along. *The Adventures of Augie March* was written in a way which could only be called *all writing*. That was one of the troubles with the book. Everything was mothered by style. But Henderson talks in a free-swinging easy bang-away monologue which puts your eye in the center of the action.

the

EXTS

TXFL

It is uncertain, as the novel moves to "the threshold of a stupendous climax," whether Henderson is someone who can save the world or is "a noble man lost in Faustian endeavor." But Bellow falters, Mailer says, perhaps revealing that he is "too timid to become a great writer." James Jones "or myself," he concludes, "would have been ready to urinate blood" rather than give up "the possibilities of a demonically great ending," as does Bellow in Mailer's shrewd judgment.

TXFL

(V)

(TX) He was working on the essay in early March 1964, when one evening he went with Roger Donoghue to P. J. Clarke's, a midtown saloon frequented by Frank Sinatra and other celebrities. Mailer was nursing his wounds over Jeanne Campbell. A sexy blonde, Beverly Bentley, who knew Donoghue was sitting nearby and motioned them to join her. Sitting with Bentley was a girlfriend and "the Raging Bull," former middleweight boxing champ Jake LaMotta. She got Mailer's attention immediately: "Well, if it isn't Norman Motherfuck Mailer." An actress from Georgia who broke into show business on Arthur Godfrey's television show, Bentley (formerly Rentz) had appeared in several films, including the 1960 film, *The Scent of Mystery*, and had roles in television shows (*Naked City*), and Broadway plays (*Romanoff and Juliet*). In the summer of 1959, she had been part of the *quadrilla* at Hemingway's birthday party in Málaga, along with several Spanish bullfighters and Valerie Danby-Smith. Papa told her that she reminded him of "The Kraut," as he called Marlene Dietrich. The Hemingway connection impressed Mailer. Shortly before he died, Mailer recalled that night at P. J. Clarke's:

* EXFL So I come over and there's this attractive blonde who was full of pep and vigor. And we're chatting away and LaMotta turns to me and says, "Hey, get lost." And I did maybe the single bravest thing—second bravest thing—I've ever done in my life. I looked back at him and I said, "I'll leave when the lady tells me to." And you know something came off him that was enough to give you pause. But I held my ground and then she came through. I figured, "This bitch, she brought me over here and I could be destroyed, then fuck it, I'll be destroyed." In those days, I was hell-bent for destruction. And she said, "No, Jake, Mr. Mailer is my date for tonight." So he left and she and me just started talking—yakking and chatting.

And ended up in bed. Of course. Every one of my wives ⁱⁿ one common denominator in all of them is that we all ended up in bed the first night. Which I'm proud of in a way. I think it's as good a way of deciding something as any.

"I wanted a home and children desperately," Beverly said, recalling their meeting. "I was attracted to the vulnerability underneath the tough act. He walked me to my apartment. That night he was wonderful in bed." Mailer later learned that a few years earlier, when she had been working as a hostess on television quiz shows, she had been in a long-term relationship with jazz trumpeter Miles Davis, a man Mailer admired. Davis would become the model for Shago Martin, a brilliant jazz vocalist ^{who was} and one of the major figures in his next novel, *An American Dream*.

Mailer was still in touch with Jeanne, but their contacts ^{had} diminished as spring blossomed. When Randolph Churchill flew to the U. S. to accept honorary citizenship for his father from Congress in April, he stopped in New York and visited with Jeanne, a dear friend. Mailer saved an Associated Press photo of them that appeared in the *New York Post*. Jeanne, wearing a wide brim hat, is smiling and holding Churchill's toy pug, Oswald, in her lap. The dog's name seems to have stuck with Mailer: he used it in *Dream* as Barney Kelly's middle name. His first name came from I. B. Mailer.

By spring, Beverly had moved into 142 Columbia Heights. Mailer wrote to Knox in early June to say that he had been thinking about traveling around the country and seeing what the mood is. The Broadway play in which Beverly had a leading role, *The Heroine*, had folded and she was eager to join him. First, they would drive to Fayetteville, Arkansas to see Fig and Ecey, and then on to Las Vegas for the Patterson-Liston rematch on July 22. After the fight, which he considered writing up for *Esquire* as a bookend to "Ten Thousand Words a Minute," they

planned to drive to San Francisco for a couple of weeks, and then take the long drive back via Georgia where he ^{would meet} Beverly's family. His idea was to get out of New York, range about the country with his new woman, and see what plot prompts for new work came his way. He had a wisp of a situation in mind, and he told his new agent, Scott Meredith, to leak word that he was working on a novel about "a man who takes a 21-year old girl to Las Vegas." He was thinking of Beverly, although she was 33. He said later, "I wanted a blonde American girl; it was really as simple as that. A shiksa. And she was perfect; she fitted perfectly because she was adventurous. She came from a relatively ⁱⁿ if you want to get down to it ⁱⁿ a quite unremarkable Southern family. She had risen in the world through her own efforts." Shortly before they left for Arkansas, Jeanne sent Mailer a telegram saying that her lawyer would telephone him to ask for an immediate Mexican divorce. "My darling let us now be pragmatic," she said. Mailer agreed. On July 9, he and Beverly drove off in his ^{Triumph} Ford Falcon convertible with Tibo in the back seat. Zsa Zsa was gone; Mailer had given her and the last of the pups away.

During their four days in Fayetteville, two important things happened: Beverly was tested for pregnancy and Mailer observed an autopsy. Beverly asked a pathologist friend of Fig's if he would give her a pregnancy test, and he agreed to do so. The same doctor invited Mailer to watch him perform an autopsy he was doing the next day. Mailer used the experience in *An American Dream*. In the novel, Rojack's doctor friend opens up an old man whose face was "lustful and proud, much hate it in, but disciplined." He had cancer, but died of peritoneal gangrene when his appendix burst. It is all that Rojack can do not to retch when the odor hits his nostrils.

I remember I breathed it in to the top of the lung, and drew no further.

Pinched it off in the windpipe. After half an hour of such breathing, my lungs

EXX
EXTF.

were to ache for the rest of the day, but it was impossible to accept the old man's odor all the way in [. . .] I kept getting a whiff of the smell for the next two days, all along the trip through the dried hard-up lands of Oklahoma, northern Texas, New Mexico, on into the deserts of Arizona and southern Nevada where Las Vegas sits in the mirror of the moon. Then for weeks I never lost the smell. In the beginning the dead man came back at every turn, he came back from phosphate fertilizer in every farmer's field, he rose up out of every bump of a dead rabbit on the road, from each rotting ghost in the stump of a tree, he chose to come back later at every hint of a hole in emotion or a pit of decay [. . .]

~~TX~~ EXTL

In some, madness must come in with breath, mill through the blood and be breathed out again. In some it goes up to the mind. Some take the madness and stop it with discipline. Madness is locked beneath. It goes into tissues, is swallowed by the cells. The cells go mad. Cancer is their flag. Cancer is the growth of madness denied. In that corpse I saw, madness went down to the blood—leucocytes gorged the liver, the spleen, the enlarged heart and violet-black lungs, dug into the intestines, germinated stench.

The hypothesis that cancer and schizophrenia were mutually exclusive cohered here, and Mailer's intuition, gained on patrols in Luzon, that smell is the primal sense was further confirmed.

An Dream

He explored his hunch in *Dream*, and further elaborated it in later work, especially his 1984 mystery novel *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. He also spelled it out in a one-page, handwritten note, probably written in late 1963. Titled "Cancer," it begins by hypothesizing that cancer

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results from "impotent emotion," which "cannot find the situation for its life." An ugly woman who waits for a handsome lover is a slave to this emotion, as is a poor young man who wishes ill on his wealthy relatives, but sees them continue to prosper. So too is "any over-civilized person who carries murder within" but represses it. Without relief, the emotion is "visited upon the cells" of the body, and "when such inner tension becomes acute, the cells live at the edge of rebellion—they may dare to secede from the body." This Mailer calls a "psychosis of the cells"; this is the madness Rojack saw in the organs of the old man. "When the weight of impossible desire becomes intolerable, either the mind or the body must divide itself from the whole." His intuition is that certain mental states can have a discernible effect on whether one gets or doesn't get cancer, or schizophrenia. Twenty years later, in 1981, neurobiologists conclusively established the hardwired link between the body's immune system and the central nervous system.

That mind affects body as much as the reverse was an article of faith for Mailer.

After leaving Arkansas, the couple drove to Las Vegas via the baked landscape of the High Plains Desert. Mailer thought about beginning the new novel with a description of the autopsy, but used it in the final chapter of *Dream*, which covers Rojack's drive on the same route to Las Vegas. Encountering extraordinary bodily corruption by way of his nostrils opened new reaches in his imagination, an experience no doubt heightened by his struggle, all through 1963 and early 1964, to quit smoking two-and-a-half packs of Camels a day. "I used the sense of smell," he said shortly after finishing the novel, "because it's the closest to the dream." In addition, "it is the most shocking sense. All bourgeois society seems to be built on that one abstention. You never mention odors." In *Dream*, he explored these off-limits olfactory lodes more thoroughly than any other American novelist before him or since.

They arrived in Las Vegas on July 20. Meeting them there was Harold Conrad, a fight promoter, and his wife Mara Lynn, both of whom later appeared in Mailer's films. A good deal of drinking took place and Mailer got into at least two fistfights. The championship fight two days later was a letdown. Mailer had privately concluded that it would be a 15-round draw, but Liston again defeated Patterson. His plan had been for the novel's protagonist to drive to Las Vegas with a young woman where ^{to see} he gets "caught up in the fight." But the boxing match was a repeat of the first one. Liston again knocked Patterson out in the first round and Mailer didn't know how to proceed.

A telegram from Arkansas was delivered to their hotel: Beverly was pregnant. Because of his already weighty commitments, Mailer was distraught at first. He and Beverly fought, but during a late night drive into the desert, were reconciled. The extravagant contrasts of this artificial city in the desert—drunks and millionaires, showgirls and grandmas, winners and losers, icy air-conditioning and baking sun—imprinted themselves on Mailer, always fascinated by opposites at close quarters. He would use Las Vegas as a touchstone for the contradictions of America more than once in books to come. Toward the end of July, with the new novel gestating, they left for San Francisco, where they had made arrangements to meet his *Harvard Advocate* friend, Mark Linenthal, and his ^{now} ex-wife, Alice Adams.

San Francisco was an oasis after Las Vegas. They announced that they were getting married and there was some quiet celebration and outings with Linenthal, Adams, and Don Carpenter. They also spent time with the Beat crowd, including Lawrence Ferlinghetti and Michael McClure. Mailer liked to ramble alone around the city. During several of these walks, he walked on narrow ledges, testing his nerve, probably in the Telegraph Hill area, as he later

last we heard on p. 44 they were married

not to p. 431

remembered. Mailer's hand-eye coordination was poor, and he did not excel at sports such as baseball and basketball. At one point, he bought a pool table in an attempt to develop his skills, practiced hard, but had no aptitude for the game. But he prided himself on his balance, and later was able to walk the catenary of a thick hawser (aided by a balance pole) on the decks of his various homes in Provincetown, ^{his} and also in Brooklyn ^{apartment}. When he awoke in the morning in San Francisco, he knew, as he later recalled, that he would feel a compulsion to walk on narrow ledges. He drew on these daily tests of balance for his description of Rojack's harrowing minutes on the parapet of Kelly's ^Gpenthouse balcony atop the Waldorf Towers, near the end of *Dream*.

After two weeks they got back on the road, driving to Arkansas, and then on to Columbus, Georgia, where they visited for two days with Beverly's mother and stepfather, Brownie. In a letter to Fig, Mailer described him as "an ex-Southern master-sergeant, lick lips, blue lightning farter, ^mone of the boys. He's really like so many guys we used to know ^m the kind that you'd like if you went out on a drunk with him and would dislike if he picked your ass to chew." They also met Beverly's half-brother, Charlie Brown, who two years later helped Mailer and Eldred Mowery assemble a model, "Vertical City," out of thousands of Lego Blocks. After a quick stop in Atlanta to meet Beverly's stepmother, "a real crazy Southern-Georgia rich town lady," they returned to New York in late August. With no trace of irony, he told Fig, "It was so nice not to have worries for six weeks."

Exactly when he signed off on the arrangements for the publication of *Dream* is uncertain. ^{TXB} ^{TXF} His new agent, Scott Meredith, was involved in lengthy discussions with Cy Rembar and various publishers while he and Beverly were away. By mid-September the deal was done.

An American

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p-456

The previous issue of *Esquire* (December 1963), contained the last short story Mailer would write, "The Last Night," a science fiction fantasy about the end of the world, and his fourteenth and final "Big Bite" column, in which he announced the serial. "The early installments," he wrote, "will be in print long before I go to work on the later ones. Indeed it is likely I will be working on each installment up to the day *Esquire* goes to press. It's been a long time since anything of this sort has been tried by an author who takes himself seriously." He distinguished his effort from those of writers ^mDreiser, Hemingway and Fitzgerald ^m—whose serialized novels had been completed before serialization. Dickens and Dostoyevsky were his models, he continued, "novelists of the first rank who put their books together under the exigency of meeting a magazine's publication date each month." He said that "no comparison is intended to Dickens and Dostoevsky," noting that *The Idiot* was written when the Russian was "suffering from epileptic fits, two days past the date he had promised to deliver the manuscript," writing only at night "when his mind could function between each epileptic fit." But the strain Mailer was under, arguably, was somewhat commensurate. When he was only a third of the way done, he wrote to Carpenter that the serial "has me more or less pissing blood." He also called ^{An American} *Dream* "one of the more Dostoevskian novels of the last hundred years."

As the following passage from the opening installment in *Esquire* suggests, he intended to use Kennedy, in ways undetermined, in later chapters.

I met Jack Kennedy, for instance, in 1946. We were both war heroes and were both Freshmen in Congress. Congressman John Fitzgerald Kennedy, Democrat from Massachusetts, and Congressman Stephen Richards Rojack, Democrat from

New York. We even spent one night together on a long double date and it promised to be a good night for me. I stole his girl.

The assassination not only smothered the reception of *The Presidential Papers*, it also destroyed whatever plans he had for using Kennedy in the novel. Mailer had intended to set the novel in 1965, but was forced to move Rojack's narration back to an earlier time so that lack of comment on the assassination would not seem intentionally disrespectful. For the novel to be credible, Kennedy had to be president, and he had to be alive. Furthermore, because the October 1962 Cuban Missile crisis was mentioned, and the novel was firmly set late in March, Rojack's retelling of events could only take place in March 1963, approximately nine months before the dark day in Dallas.

But these complications came later. Immediately after the assassination, he seemed ready to abandon the project. He wrote to Knox on December 17th.

The Kennedy thing hit very hard here. Women were crying in the streets (mainly good-looking women), a lot of middle-aged Negroes looked sad and very worried, and then we all sat around in gloom and watched the television set for the next seventy-two hours [Mailer watched it with Podhoretz]. Altogether it was one of the three events having something profoundly in common: Pearl Harbor Day and the death of Roosevelt being the other two. And the Ruby-Oswald stuff was just too much on top of it. I haven't felt like writing a word about the whole thing, I've been too fucking depressed every which way. The main loss I think was a cultural one. Whether he wanted to or not Kennedy was giving a great boost to the arts, not because Jackie Kennedy was inviting Richard Wilbur to the White

House, but somehow the lid was off, and now I fear it's going to be clamped on tight again. [...] With Kennedy alive it was a good book, but with him dead, it's just a curiosity, and somehow irritating in tone. I don't even mind the loss of it in a funny way.

He also elaborated on his feelings about Kennedy in a letter to Yamanishi^t

At any rate, I have no desire to write more now because the event is not only deeply depressing but enormous in its ramifications. Kennedy had personal charm^m—one misses him certainly that way^m—he was also nothing exceptional as a politician, rather a conventional middle-of-the-road leader of the Democratic Party. What was lost was an intangible good. There was a particular magic or let us say liberty surrounding Kennedy which enabled one to be critical of him in a way that had been impossible in America since the War, and all sorts of subtle but exciting changes were occurring in America's culture.

Mailer said that Kennedy's presidency had affected him personally: "My function has shifted in these few years from some sort of mysterious half-notorious leader of the Beat Generation, a sort of psychic guerilla leader, in fact, to something quite other, a respected if somewhat feared leader of the literary Establishment."

Before Kennedy's rise, he had ^{considered} ~~seen~~ himself as a literary outlaw who was pleased to be seen as a contrarian and outsider. But Kennedy's charisma, political ruthlessness, and movie-star looks, not to mention his war hero status and beautiful, artistic wife, galvanized Mailer's

imagination and drew him to the power nexus. He wanted a ticket into the new establishment; he wanted to influence it, push it in various adventurous ways; he wanted more energy, more power. He aspired to be the U.S. equivalent of what André Malraux was in De Gaulle's France: Minister of Culture. But he also wanted to maintain his ties to the demimondeⁱⁿ to Greenwich Village hipsters, Harlem jazz joints and Provincetown artists. The Kennedy clique seemed to understand his ambitions; one of them told Jeanne Campbell that Mailer was "an intellectual adventurer," a remark Mailer said was accurate, if spiteful. Only such an adventurer, Mailer wrote, would write an open poem to the President, as he had done earlier. His interaction with the Kennedys made him understand the advantages accruing to someone who is both in and out of the game. Within two years of the assassination, Mailer would become the pre-eminent insider-outsider of American culture. While there were other rival claimants over the next 40 yearsⁱⁿ—Vidal, most notablyⁱⁿ—and periods of partial eclipse, it was a position he never entirely relinquished.

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In a 1965 interview, Mailer said it was important to understand Kennedy's nature "because his nature once understood helped to point toward a way of understanding America. So, on a vastly smaller scale, I think some people may be interested in me because something of the same process may be present." After the assassination, he thought and wrote about Kennedy as much as ^{he did} Hemingway, returning again and again in works of fiction and nonfiction to the assassination and what might have been. Near the end of his life, he said that no public event in his lifetime had affected him as powerfully. Although he says that a comparison with Kennedy is unfair, he was willing to make it, willing to propose the personality of insider-outsider-left-conservative Norman Mailer as a replacement for the slain president's, ^{and} a new key to the deeper meanings of the nation, and would do so for the remainder of the decade. Noting that a

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comparison was inappropriate, but then making it anyway was one of Mailer's characteristic rhetorical gambits.

In December, he flew to Juárez, Mexico to finalize his divorce from Jeanne. They disagreed on custody provisions, and Mailer saw their daughter only rarely for the first four or five years of her life, ^{until} when they came to a new understanding and he saw Kate more regularly, especially in the summer. A few years later, Jeanne recalled her marriage to Mailer: "A holocaust of a love affair in many countries and many rounds of mind," a marriage that produced "a daughter Kate who grows in beauty with hayseed speckling her yellow-green eyes. A bad divorce and a long term of silence, then years of close friendship and some good work together." The collaboration she refers to is his 1968 experimental film, *Maidstone*, in which she played an important role. Mailer's summation: "A remarkable girl, almost as interesting, complex and Machiavellian" as himself. "I was crazy about her," he said, but "our two worlds were pretty far apart."

On the domestic front, matters were much improved with Beverly ("my Georgia peach") running the household. She developed a warm relationship with Fan, who shared her son's favorite recipes. Beverly and Anne Barry organized Mailer's schedule and visits from the children—¹_m Danielle and Betsy came almost every weekend. On December 29, shortly after his Mexican divorce was final, he married Beverly, now six months pregnant, in the living room of his Brooklyn Heights apartment. His gloom over Kennedy's death retreated somewhat, and he submitted the fourth installment on schedule in mid-January, 1964. Novel writing on demand was getting interesting, as he wrote to Fig. ^{of the novel} "It's a little like playing ^{comparing it to a playing} ten-second chess. You have to

take the bold choice each time." He was full of metaphors for the effort; perhaps the best was embodied in a story he told Vance Bourjaily.

Years ago, Theodor Reik was being analyzed by Freud, and as a talented young man he was naturally interested not only in being a superb analyst but a musician, a writer, a lover, a boulevardier, a vigilante, even a mad genius. Freud listened and got angrier and angrier. Finally, he said, "Reik, you want to be a big man? Piss in one spot." So that is what the serial business puts you up to.

The serial may have given Mailer more focus, but writing 10,000 words a month did not completely occupy him. In addition to his college lectures, he wrote a tribute to Kennedy for the New York Review Books memorial issue; revised his answers to a long interview with Steven Marcus published in the Paris Review; engaged in a debate with Yale professor Vincent Scully on modern architecture in Architectural Forum; published a short story he wrote in 1960, "The Killer," in Evergreen Review; and debated Buckley again, this time on David Susskind's television program, Open End. At one point, Mailer asked Buckley why he agreed to go on television with him if he disapproved of him. Buckley answered, because "you are a magnetic field in this country." Mailer also flew to Miami to watch a young heavyweight he had met during his Las Vegas trip, Cassius Clay (now Muhammad Ali), defeat Sonny Liston for the title, a bout that so intrigued him that he asked Hayes if he could postpone an installment to write about it. Hayes said no, and he went back to work.

The novel's protagonist, Stephen Richards Rojack, a 44-year old Harvard graduate, WWII veteran and New York intellectual, might easily be confused with Norman Kingsley Mailer, who was 42 when he addressed these similarities in 1965: "Rojack is considerably more

from me $\frac{1}{m}$ he's more

elegant, more witty, more heroic, his physical strength is considerable, and at the same time he is more corrupt than me." Even so Rojack, who is half-Jewish, half-Wasp, must be considered Mailer's stand-in. The resemblances, Mailer knew, would do the novel no harm. But those between Rojack's wife Deborah, who has "a huge mass of black hair and striking green eyes," and Jeanne Campbell were another matter, and potentially libelous. In the first chapter of the novel, after Rojack strangles Deborah and then pushes her body out the window onto the East River Drive, it is clear that he had brazenly modeled her on his third wife. Both are tall, strong, intelligent and self-assured women who come from privileged cosmopolitan backgrounds. Like Jeanne, Deborah "could not utter a sentence for giving a tinkle of value to some innocent word," as Rojack says of his wife, although he took the precaution of making Deborah Irish and Italian. There was a more worrisome problem. *Esquire* publisher Arnold Gingrich told Harold Hayes to kill the serial after he read the graphic description of anal intercourse—a first in American publishing—between Rojack and his wife's German maid, the carnal Ruta. Mailer's description of the "high private pleasure in plugging a Nazi" was based, at least in part, on the five days he had spent with the German barmaid in 1959. Only after "a pruning job as delicate as any in the annals of magazine editing" by *Esquire*'s fiction editor, Rust Hills, did Gingrich lift the *verboten* signal and allow the serial to go forward.

Almost every month there was a new problem: Hayes left a chapter in a taxicab (later retrieved); the retrospective plot summaries accompanying the later chapters had errors and imprecisions; the magazine's lawyers peppered Mailer with queries and requests about the explicit sexual descriptions; and monthly copy came in at the last possible minute. He wrote to Harvey Breit on February 11, "I've been down in the mines working on my novel, five

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installments now done, three to go — ¹ mortal terror all around that I will run out of gas." But he didn't, and interest grew as the installments appeared. The magazine's circulation jumped to over 900,000, a record, in the first month the serial appeared. To capitalize on the buzz, *Esquire* purchased an ad in ^{New York} ~~the~~ *Times* announcing that Dial Press would publish the book in hardback, ^{COVER} Dell would do the paperback, and Warner Brothers would make the movie. (N)

As Beverly came closer to term, Mailer struggled to tie the plot threads together neatly, always difficult for him. He was also distracted by two major cultural events in February ¹⁹⁶⁴: the arrival of the Beatles in America (he approved of their performance on The Ed Sullivan Show), and the premiere of Stanley Kubrick's film *Dr. Strangelove, or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. He wrote to Knox about the latter: "It's the only great movie I know which is great not because it's great as a movie but because it's sociologically great that the thing was made." While he was "banging away now in the pits of the sixth installment," and "feeling wrung out, dull, and smoking too many cigarettes," his first son, Michael Burks, was born on St. Patrick's Day, ¹⁹⁶⁴. Mailer reported to his Aunt Moos that the baby "looks more like his mother than like me," and that his ears were "benevolently close to his head." After four daughters, he was enormously pleased. (N) (N) (N) *Has been born any indication of Mailer's previous sons?*

He was unhappy, however, about the shape of the last half of the novel. He wrote to Knox on April 19 that the fifth, sixth, and seventh installments were "not up to the first four, and I've lost the chance I had to write a really major novel." He continued: "It's been an incredible push because I've had to write figuratively with a locked wrist, since there was no time to explore and follow the kind of incidental bent which two times out of three leads you up a blind alley and then discovers a bigger book within the book." The inclusion of Rojack's intuitions (N)

about the cosmic war between good and evil was also weighing on him. When the serial was nearing its close, he told an interviewer of his fears: "A good writer feels he is dealing with secrets about the nature of things, which inspires an almost biological fear." He was referring to the fact that two months before Kennedy's assassination, Mailer had given Deborah's father (and Rojack's antagonist) the middle name Oswald, a spooky circumstance that enhanced his belief in divine and/or demonic meddling. "If psychic coincidences give pleasure to some," he wrote of the coincidence, "I do not know that they give them to me."

In retrospect, it was ^{fortunate} fortuitous that the book was written under deadlines. Mailer was forced to create a novel with an ending that grew organically from what preceded it. Given the wherewithal to wander leisurely through the alleyways of plot possibility, he might have written a novel twice as long, but perhaps only half as good. The first seven chapters of *Dream* came in at just over 77,000 words, roughly the number desired by *Esquire*. The much-foreshadowed climax of the novel, the meeting between Rojack and Kelly, was by now conceived, but Mailer was late in completing it. The presses were literally held waiting for the final pages, which came in at ^{22,000} 20,000 words. *Esquire*'s editors were forced to print part of it in six-point type.

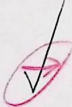
Until Mailer wrote *Dream*, his most sensually evocative and lyrical novel, his narrators were not his protagonists (excepting Sam Slovo^{da} in "The Man Who Studied Yoga"). Nor had he invested his heroes with his own deepest beliefs, namely, a distrust of pure reason, faith in the authority of the senses, psychic growth achieved by risk-taking, courage as the cardinal virtue, anger at the greed and corruption of American life, and fear that fascism might be ^{rooting} getting rooted. Underlying these beliefs was the vision of a heroic but limited God locked in a struggle with a powerful and wily Devil. The fate of the world, perhaps of the universe, hinges on this struggle, one in which humans stood on both

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An American

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in "The Man Who Studied Yoga"

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sides. Rojack shares these beliefs. A near-alcoholic talk show host and author of a popular book, *The Psychology of the Hangman* (Mailer published a poem, "The Executioner's Song," the month after completing the serial), Rojack like Mailer, is susceptible to omens and portents. He hears voices, studies the phases of the moon, and waits for either cancer or madness to strike his person.

The operatic plot is easily summarized: Rojack's wife Deborah taunts him with her infidelities (he has his share), and attacks his manhood in nasty ways, goading him into a physical attack (which recalls his assault on Adele) that ends with her strangulation. Rojack then throws her body out of her apartment window ten stories down to the pavement below. He claims that her fall was suicide and the brunt of the story is devoted to his attempts to convince his and her friends and associates, the police, and her father of his innocence. No one believes him, but the voices he hears and the balm derived from his night in bed with Cherry Melanie, a former jazz singer (modeled on Beverly and Carol Stevens, who became his fifth wife), plus Kelly's indirect manipulations, keep him from being arrested, but just barely. As he overhears the beating of a Black man in another room of the station, the police press him hard, but he is able to sidestep their questions. We learn that Cherry had been Kelly's mistress, and that she also had an affair with an extraordinarily talented African-American jazz vocalist, Shago Martin, modeled on Miles Davis. He begins to feel the possibility of expiation for his crime, and the end of his moral odyssey. Barry H. Leeds, one of the most perceptive of Mailer critics, says that Rojack moves "from imminent alcoholism, damnation and madness to salvation and sanity. In a modern analogue of *Pilgrim's Progress*, Rojack confronts a series of adversaries, defeating them and the weaknesses in himself that they represent, and in the process absorbing their strengths."

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of Kelly
Deborah's
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 Rojack defeats Martin in a fight at Cherry's apartment and carries off his talismanic umbrella as a victory token. She tells him that she is pregnant with his child, and they pledge their love.

The novel shows Mailer at the height of his ^{metaphoric} ~~word~~ power. The mood of the novel, which takes place over 32 hours, is haunted; it swarms with malign and beneficent presences, especially in Kelly's apartment. As Rojack enters the lobby close to midnight, Mrs. Kennedy is about to come down from her Waldorf-Astoria ^{Towers} apartment, further heightening the tense *mise-en-scène*. As he waits, Rojack imagines that he has

^{He} died and was in ^{an} antechamber of hell. I had long had a vision of Hell: not of its details; of its first moment. A giant chandelier of crystal above one's head, red flock on the walls, red carpet, granite pillars (as I proceeded) now a high ceiling, was it gold foil? A floor of white and black, and then a room of blue and green in whose center stood a nineteenth-century clock, eight feet high with a bas relief of faces: Franklin, Jackson, Lincoln, Cleveland, Washington, Grant, Harrison, and Victoria; 1888 the year: in a ring around the clock was a bed of tulips which so looked like plastic I bent to touch and discovered they were real.

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 This is a description of the actual Waldorf Towers lobby. But, in this as well as in countless other passages in the novel, the reader is uncertain as to which reality is being presented: imagined, remembered, or presently experienced. The subtly shifting states of consciousness, punctuated by the corporal, the sensuous, the bloody, became Mailer's hallmark with ^{An American} *Dream*. In December 2005, after reading a portion of the novel, he closed the book, which he was signing for a friend, and said, "I'll never write that well again."

(1x) In a conversation in Kelly's bedroom, which resembles a sixteenth-century Italian chapel, replete with a massive gold-framed mirror and a Lucchese bed with "a canopy encrusted in blood-velvet," Kelly, who suggests he may be "a solicitor for the Devil," admits he had been in an incestuous relationship with Deborah since she was fifteen; Rojack confesses that he killed her. They speak a little longer and then Rojack picks up Shago's umbrella, now quivering ominously, and with Kelly following, goes out to the balcony of the ^{thirty-eighth} 38th floor apartment. It is raining with strong wind gusts, but he knows that he must walk the three-sided parapet of the balcony to propitiate Deborah's spirit. Kelly approves of the test, and Rojack gives him the umbrella before clambering up to the ledge. Sodden with fear, he walks all three sides, and then turns to Kelly who attempts to push him off with the umbrella. Rojack turns like a bullfighter, seizes the umbrella, jumps down and gives Kelly one fierce retributive whack across the face. Then he heaves the umbrella, its magic expired, over the parapet. He rushes out of the apartment and goes to Cherry's, arriving just in time to see her briefly before she dies, beaten to death by a friend of Shago's, who has also been mistakenly murdered. In the denouement, Rojack drives to Missouri where he observes the autopsy, and then pushes on to Las Vegas, where he wins \$24,000 and pays his debts. Before leaving Vegas, he makes a hallucinated telephone call to Cherry in some chamber of the afterlife. She tells him that Marilyn Monroe sends greetings. Rojack, "something like sane again," leaves the next morning to work out his destiny in (N) Guatemala and Yucatán.

The stir created by the serialization was strong and before Mailer had completed it, Warner Brothers optioned the novel, ultimately paying \$200,000 for it. This brought his total income for the novel to \$345,000, a tremendous sum at that time. With the last installment

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 Dostoyevsky +
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completed, he wrote to Knox, saying "What a murderous fucking installment this last one has been. I'm in pretty good shape, but of course tense as hell, and all burned out from smoking. I feel just the way a wire must feel after a short circuit." In mid-June, he and Beverly left for Provincetown, where he would be joined by all of his children, save Kate. Assuming there were no major interruptions, he planned to carefully revise the novel over the summer.

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From this date until the early 1970s, literary projects dropped into Mailer's lap just in time, all the time. On July 12, after catching up on correspondence and getting the family settled in Provincetown, he flew to San Francisco to cover the GOP convention, on assignment from *Esquire*. He expected that Barry Goldwater, a conservative senator from Arizona, would get the nomination. The right wing of the GOP had grown strong and was ready to wrest control of the party from the old middle-of-the road gang — retired President Eisenhower, Governor William Scranton of Pennsylvania, Governor George Romney of Michigan, and their ilk. Part of Mailer wanted Goldwater not only to win the nomination, but to defeat the presumptive Democratic candidate, President Lyndon-B. Johnson, whom he distrusted if not despised. His conjecture was that a Goldwater victory might invigorate the left wing of the Democratic Party. Feeling more confident writing about a convention than he had in 1960, he used the same technique as in the earlier essay: slowly delineate an overarching theme while moving from portrait to portrait of the politicians.

TX

His sketches are acerbic, unforgiving and hit the mark. Ike, the grand old man of the party, who "usually fought a speech to a draw," comes on like "a cross between a boy and an old retainer." Romney "looked like a handsome version of Boris Karloff, all honesty, big-jawed, soft-eyed, eighty days at sea on a cockeyed passion." Scranton, the favorite of the Eastern

Establishment, "a pleasant urbane man, so self-satisfied, so civilized, so reasonable, so innocent of butchers' tubs and spleens and guts." And Goldwater, who won the nomination easily: "Talking in a soft modest voice, he radiated at this moment the skinny boyish sincerity of a fellow who wears glasses but is determined nevertheless to have a good time. Against all odds. It was not unreminiscent of Arthur Miller: that same mixture of vast solemnity and unspoiled boyhood, a sort of shucks and aw shit in the voice."

Mailer was convinced that the nation was in terrible shape, full of bad cess, gorging itself on frozen food, sappy television, antibiotics and cut off from nature by technology and the most insidious of substances, one that was becoming ubiquitous: plastic. He never stopped raging against its lack of any direct organic connection (In 1981 he had a horrific argument with Norris, his sixth wife, about her purchase of a plastic dishwasher that "smelled like formaldehyde," and said that if it didn't go, he would. It went.) That hardly anyone took him seriously about plastic only enraged him more. The prospect of a Goldwater victory, therefore, made him think, almost hope, that it might produce an underground movement rising against the soft totalitarianism his administration might impose. Always disposed to volatilization, Mailer came to this state of happy warrior-hood at the convention after hearing, day after day, and once at four a.m. in his hotel room, a band of bagpipers, "giving off the barbaric evocation of the Scots, all valor, wrath, firmitude and treachery," a sound that seemed "to pass through all the protective gates in the ear and reach into some nerve where the eschatology is stored." "Acute disease is cure," Mailer had written, and so the idea of a conservative victory was not just exciting, but even necessary, because "like millions of other whites, I had been leading a life which was a trifle too pointless and a trifle full of guilt and my gullet was close to nausea with the needless compromises of an

Anticipating
The Evader
are

Goldwater's

empty liberal center." As he put in one of his "Big Bite" columns, "If we are ill and yet want to go on, we must put up the ante. If we lose, it does not mean we wished to die." After a decade of being an outsider, he began to think closely about the state of the nation. "One worried," he said, "about it for the first time the way you worried about family or work, a good friend or the future." He would continue to brood, and for a time became Dr. Mailer, diagnostician of America's diseases. Their etiology would be explored in all of his books through 1972.

The finished essay, titled "In the Red Light: A History of the Republican Convention in 1964," went to Harold Hayes for publication in the November *Esquire*. Mailer wrote to Kemp, still in prison, to say he was pleased with it, and that if Goldwater wasn't so negative about civil rights, he might vote for him. He went on to say he was still working on *Dream*, and compared his editing method to adjusting a slack drum, tightening it all around, little by little. You have to do this, he said, "until you can't stand it any more, and then go over it twenty times more. If you're left with nothing by the end of that time, that's probably just as well. There may have been nothing there." André Deutsch hoped to publish the British edition at the same time as the American, and had been pestering him for the final manuscript. Mailer told him he was still tightening the drum, and hoped to have it completed by October 15. In the end, he needed until almost the end of the year.

Deutsch was in a dither about Mailer's new agent and his "hard stick-'em-up methods." Meredith had gotten \$125,000 up front for *Dream*, which impressed Mailer, especially since before Meredith took over from Rembar, Minton had given him only \$50,000, half up front, for a still unwritten novel. Mailer told Deutsch to stop calling Meredith a pirate, and recognize that he had good credentials: he was one of the most hated agents in New York. He said he didn't care

"to hear about the less agreeable methods of people who work for me, but back them up eventually I must, until they fail to do their job, which is to get me the best publisher and the largest royalty available in every country." Deutsch had already paid \$70,000 for the rights to *Dream*, the highest price ever paid in England for the hardcover rights of an American novel, but he would be outbid on later Mailer books. ~~Until his death in 1993, Meredith would remain his agent.~~ (N)

Twice more before the year ended, Mailer put aside his revisions to *Dream*. Robert F. Kennedy, formerly President Johnson's Attorney General, was running in New York against the incumbent Republican Senator, Kenneth Keating. His entry in the race came after Johnson had turned aside Kennedy's effort to be named his running mate in the 1964 election. ~~Despite his previous disapproval of Kennedy, he decided to write a piece in the *Village Voice* endorsing him for senator.~~ *Previously Mailer had had reservations about Kennedy's civil rights activism but he* (N) *had reservations about* (N) *but Kennedy's civil rights activism led him* (N) *OK?* While both were equally liberal, Keating was dull and "had a face like the plastic dough children play with." Kennedy was an "active principle," he said, "who had come "a pilgrim's distance" since his brother's assassination, and "something compassionate, something witty, has come into the face." Kennedy won easily and Mailer became his ardent supporter.

President Johnson incited Mailer's ire more than any politician of the era. He sided with the Kennedy clique in distrusting L.B.J. and only grudgingly congratulated him for pushing through the Civil Rights Act. Vietnam was just becoming a major issue. Congress passed the Tonkin Gulf Resolution in August 1964, which led to a military buildup and Johnson's war policies would soon enrage Mailer, but at the end of 1964, it was the president's prose that riled him. Johnson had written a campaign book, and Mailer agreed to review it. J.F.K.'s prose, he

wrote, is to L.B.J.'s as de Tocqueville's is to Ayn Rand's. "It is even not impossible," he said, (N)

that *My Hope for America* is the worst book ever written by any political leader anywhere." (N)

Mailer also disliked Johnson's face, which reminded him of a medieval Italian warlord, a member of the *condottieri*, with its "hard, greedy, exceptionally intelligent eyes whose cynicism is spiked by a fierce pride, big fleshy (and acquisitive) nose, thin curved mouth." Johnson won the election decisively and got Mailer's vote. (N)

After turning in his revisions of *An American Dream* just before Christmas, he dug into

the accumulated mail. Kemp, still imprisoned, remained a regular correspondent. Jean-Paul Sartre had just turned down the Nobel Prize and Mailer told Kemp that this was a mistake. "It bugs the bourgeoisie" when iconoclasts accept big prizes, he said. Accepting awards gave one "leverage." *Life* would now find it difficult to continue calling Sartre an "Apostle of Despair." He wrote to Knox to say that his piece on the Republican Convention had received more positive responses than anything he had written since *Naked* (Dwight Macdonald called it "a masterpiece of political criticism"), and this might put him "back in fashion," and help the reception of *Dream*, now scheduled for publication on March 15. In a letter to Tina Bourjaily, he announced that he was building "a city of the future" out of Lego Blocks with Beverly's half-brother, Charlie Brown, and Eldred Mowery, Mailer's friend from Provincetown. When completed, it would be a scale model of a fantastical half-mile-high city of 15,000 apartments housing 60,000 people. Mailer was proud of it, Anne Barry recalled, and "people who hated it fawned over it and him to such an extent. I thought he got a swelled head." She told him it belonged in the garbage disposal. "Norman used to laugh and laugh" at her jibes, she said.

~~OK~~ → In ~~month~~? January 1
A month later, "Cities Higher than Mountains" appeared in the Sunday Times

accompanied by a photo of the assemblage, now called "Vertical City." The project gave him a much-needed break from ~~fiction~~ writing. He told Carpenter that he was "bored, bored, bored of writing," partly because he had spent so much time on the "subtle, pervasive, and close textured" revisions of *Dream*. He enjoyed planning Vertical City (which he based on his memory of Mont.

St. Michel), but given his aversion to plastic, pressing together 10,000-plus Legos made him "feel flat and dead." The construction ~~7' x 5' x 3'~~ stood in a corner of Mailer's Brooklyn

apartment for the next 40 years. "It was a bitch to dust," Norris said, and finally began to crumble as the glue disintegrated. Members of the family and friends kept a few pieces as souvenirs of the structure, a color photo of which graced the cover of *Cannibals and Christians*.

~~TXB~~
~~TXF~~
Mailer was asked to help William Burroughs and his publisher, Barney Rosset of Grove Press, who was being prosecuted for obscenity in Boston. On January 12, 1965 along with Allen Ginsberg and poet John Ciardi, he testified as to the merits of *Naked Lunch*, specifically about Burroughs' language: "He catches the beauty and, at the same time, the viciousness and the meanness and the excitement, of ordinary talk ~~in~~ the talk of criminals, of soldiers, athletes, junkies. There is a kind of speech, gutter talk, that often has a fine, incisive, dramatic line to it; and Burroughs captures the speech like no other American writer I know." The prosecution won the case, but it was reversed by the Massachusetts Supreme Court, and as Mailer said later, the decision "changed the literary history of America." The banning of books for obscenity in the ~~United States~~ U.S. was drawing to an end. Looking back on the decision, Mailer was somewhat nostalgic "for the days of oppression, because in those days you were ready to become a martyr, you had a

sense of importance, you could take yourself seriously, and you were fighting the good fight.”
 More than a few times, he humorously fantasized about dying a literary warrior's death, one that
 would carry his boat to what he called “the golden islands of posthumous investiture.”

TXB
TXF
 A poet-professor friend, Edmund Skellings, who taught at the University of Alaska,
 invited Mailer to come for a visit. He replied, somewhat outrageously, that he would come if he
 could be met by the governor at the airport, address a joint session of the Alaska legislature, and
 meet with the Democratic Party caucus. The speaker of the Alaska House of Representatives,
 and later U.S. Senator, Mike Gravel, was a friend of Skellings and an admirer of Mailer, and he
 arranged for the legislative address and the caucus meeting. Gov. William Egan was also
 willing and invited Mailer to dinner. With all conditions met, Mailer cheerfully agreed to the
 visit, beginning on April 1st. The Alaskans had wanted him to come the previous week, but
 Mailer's friend, José Torres, a light heavyweight boxer from Puerto Rico, was fighting against
 the champion, Willie Pastrano, at Madison Square Garden on March 30. He had been introduced
 to Torres by Pete Hamill at the Liston-Patterson fight in 1962. They became lifelong friends, and
 Mailer sparred with him on weekends for years.

TX
 Another invitation came, one which indicated that the literary establishment had changed
 its views on Mailer. He was asked by the Publishers' Publicity Association to participate in a
 Manhattan press conference as part of the annual National Book Award events. On March 10, he
 spoke and answered questions for an hour. The first question concerned Saul Bellow, who the
 day before had been awarded the National Book Award for his novel, *Herzog*. In his acceptance
 speech, Bellow stated that “our rebels” attribute the low quality of current American literature to

"the horrible squareness of our institutions, the debasement of sexual instincts, and the failure of writers to be alienated enough." Not so, he said, adding that it was "evident that polymorphous sexuality and vehement declarations of alienation are not going to produce great works of art."

Bellow may still have been smarting over Mailer comments about him in *Esquire*. In an interview a few months earlier, Bellow had sharply disassociated himself from "the apocalyptic romanticism" of ^{twentieth =} 20th century writers who believed "the world is evil, that it must be destroyed and rise again," writers such as D.H. Lawrence. When the interviewer asked his response to Mailer's comment about his timidity, he answered: "I'm sure I'm not a great writer in Norman Mailer's light, but then I don't want to be."

Asked about Bellow's speech, Mailer acknowledged that he was one of the writers (along with Ginsberg and Terry Southern, among others) that Bellow had attacked. "But we moral nihilists," he said, "are responsible for all the real developments in literature. We are the adventurous ones. Conventional morality attacks violence, he said, but better to commit an act of violence against one person than "to curb that impulse and spend 20 years poisoning the lives of everyone around you." Then he turned to Bellow: "I admire the novel 'Herzog' very much. But it is not a book of ideas. There is nothing intellectually new in it. Bellow is mindless. There is depth of feeling in his novel. His humanity gets to you. But his mind is that of a college professor who has read all the good books and absorbed none of them." He concluded by calling Bellow a "hostess of the intellectual canapé table." Mailer's widely quoted remarks poisoned his relations with Bellow.

An American
The publication party for *Dream* took place at the Village Vanguard on March 15. The booze was plentiful as were copies of the book with its distinctive dust wrapper showing a

stylized American flag with an inset photograph of Beverly Bentley, the model for Cherry. James Jones and Irwin Shaw were there, as were Richard Baron, the publisher of Dial Press, and one of his editors, Christopher Lehmann-Haupt, who had worked with Mailer on the novel. Miles Davis also came, and began flirting with Beverly. José Torres saw Mailer getting tense as he watched, and it appeared that he might get into a fight with Davis. Torres was afraid that he might have to ~~defend Norman~~ ^{step in to}. "I didn't want to hit Miles Davis," Torres recalled, "but I didn't want him to punch out Norman first. Luckily, Davis just walked away."

Mailer was surly. Lehmann-Haupt remembered that he was "fairly drunk and moody and deep in some funk. I've only seen him that one time in that degree of withdrawn moodiness."

Earlier, he had tried to spar with James Jones, and when Lehmann-Haupt stopped at his table to say goodbye, he threw or spilled his drink when Lehmann-Haupt put out his hand. Aldridge also attended and recalled that Mailer "was absolutely catatonic." As he was leaving, he went up to Mailer, "and he looked as though he was completely out on his feet. He was standing, but propped up against the wall," he said. "I think he was simply plastered." But the next day when he visited Mailer in Brooklyn, he looked no worse for wear. The jazz musicians who played at the party were at the apartment, Beverly was there, and Anne Barry, who Aldridge remembered as "a small round girl with chubby cheeks and huge horn-rimmed glasses. There were also two black maids in white uniforms. It seemed distinctly a ménage and very much a Mailer ménage crowded, busy, vital." Mailer had put on weight, twenty pounds, Aldridge estimated, and was sharp and alert. Styron's name came up, and Mailer noted that Styron had been invited to the White House by both Kennedy and Johnson; neither had invited him. He said that Styron's social

ambitions might prevent him from being a great writer. He was aware, certainly, that he faced the same problem, but to him divided loyalties were the equivalent of catnip, irresistible.

After lunch, Mailer walked Aldridge to his Brooklyn hotel, "wearing an old trench coat and looking like Harpo Marx. He shook my hand with real warmth and feeling, as if we had some affinity. I felt we had and felt sad to say good-bye to him. He's a very lovable and remarkable man, a genuine creative force, undoubtedly the very best we have." Aldridge's review of *Dream*, appeared in *Life* a few days later. Mailer liked it well enough to pay for the reprinting of the heart of it in the same issue of *PR* containing Elizabeth Hardwick's negative review. *PR*'s editor, William Phillips, sent it to him before publication, and after reading it, Mailer sent him an excerpt from Aldridge's review and this statement:

An American Dream has received the best and worst reviews of any book I've written. Now it is rumored that Elizabeth Hardwick has written a bad review for *Partisan*. I hasten to shudder. She is such a good writer. I also hasten to furnish for her company a review by John Aldridge which appeared in *Life*. I cannot pretend I was displeased to see it there, but I'm nearly as pleased to see it here even if I have to pay for the pleasure.

As Mailer notes, the division of opinion on the novel was nearly absolute. There were few half-and-half reviews. In addition to Hardwick, who called it "a fantasy of vengeful murder, callous copulations and an assortment of dull cruelties," leading critics and literary figures such as Granville Hicks, Philip Rahv, Roger Shattuck, Stanley Edgar Hyman and Tom Wolfe said the novel was a conspicuous failure. On the other side of the chasm, in addition to Aldridge, who called it "a religious book" that "dramatizes the various ways a man may sin in order to be saved,

consort with Satan in order to attain to God," ^{was} were a cadre of enthusiasts: Leo Bersani, Richard Rhodes, Joan Didion, Paul Pickrel, and Richard Poirier, a young academic who would become one of Mailer's most ^{discerning} intelligent critics. reception?

TX Perhaps the most significant thing about the book's reception is that his erstwhile ^{Partisan Review} ^{The New York Review of Books} admirers at ~~PR~~, the ~~NYRB~~, and the ~~Village Voice~~ were negative, while stuffy Harper's, conservative *National Review*, flag-waving *Chicago Tribune* and, most surprising of all, Henry Luce's *Life*, applauded the novel, evidence of the new openness, ^{to} the appetite for the outrageous in the country. Even *Time* had a few good words, while *Newsweek* called it "noxious." William F. Buckley, Jr. sent Mailer an advance copy of the review of Joan Didion, then a young editor at *Vogue*. He added a note: "Congratulations on a nearly near-perfect novel." Didion thought it even better, "a novel in many ways as good as *The Deer Park*, and *The Deer Park* is in many ways a perfect novel." As sensitive to social fragmentation as Mailer, she thought the novel caught the mood of the country, which was going through the same kind of change ^{that} it had in the 1920s. *Dream* is "the only serious New York novel since *The Great Gatsby*," she said, adding that Mailer and Fitzgerald shared several things: "The notoriety, the devastating celebrity which is probably in the end as nourishing as it is destructive. The immense technical skill, the passion for realizing the gift. The deep romanticism. And perhaps above all the unfashionableness, the final refusal to sail with the prevailing winds." Mailer wrote to Buckley that it was the "nicest" review he had received. "What a marvelous girl Joan Didion must be." They met soon after and became friendly. In the 1980s, she and her husband, John Gregory Dunne, wrote a screenplay based on *The Deer Park*, which was never produced. N

Mailer himself was, not uncharacteristically, two-headed about the novel. In a letter to Diana Trilling, he said it was either "an extraordinary piece of crap," or "the first novel to come along since *The Sun Also Rises* which has anything really new in it." He was planning to visit her and Lionel, who was teaching at Oxford for a semester, when he went to England, and had begun anticipating the British reaction to *Dream*. He was secretly enjoying the argument over the novel's merits, he said, "because no vice of mine could be greater than my desire to create a sensation and be forever talked about. Sometimes I wonder, beloved, if I am the ghost of some long-dead London beauty. Well, well I expect the British will give me a good whipping with the thinnest strings of leather for the outrages I've committed in the name of literature."

The novel sold quite well and spent several weeks on the *Times* bestseller list, reaching number eight in late April. It was his first bestseller (and first novel) in ten years. At this moment in mid-1965, as the country was sliding into carnival and revolt, Mailer's situation can perhaps best be summed up by the title of Aldridge's review—"The Big Comeback of Norman Mailer"—which ended by saying that *Dream* "may well represent the first significant step the current American novel has taken into fresh territories of the imagination." The country was undergoing profound change and Mailer was poised to become its chief chronicler and interpreter. Over the next decade, he would write sixteen books, create three experimental films, produce an off-Broadway play, and in 1969, before appearing on the cover of *Life*, would run for (and lose) the Democratic nomination for mayor of New York. Five consecutive books during this period, beginning with *The Armies of the Night*, would be nominated for the National Book Award. *Armies* won it, and also a Pulitzer. It would be the most productive, celebrated and accomplished period of his life.

Eight
Chapter 8

Third Person Personal: *Armies* and After

Norman Mailer, professional writer and amateur boxer, climbed in the ring to congratulate José Torres, professional boxer and amateur writer, a moment after he defeated Willie Pastrano for the light-heavyweight championship of the world at Madison Square Garden. Mailer was as jubilant as Torres. He would soon trade writing lessons for boxing instruction from Torres, the first Latin American to win this championship, and a heroic figure among Puerto Ricans. Mailer had offered to lend him money to guarantee the fight, a considerable sum, but ultimately, the original backers came through. The gesture endeared him to Torres. After the bout, there was a victory party at 142 Columbia Heights. Harry Grant, Mailer's Bellevue friend, was the bartender for the large crowd, which included Gay Talese and Pete Hamill—both good friends of Torres—and also Truman Capote and James Baldwin. Barney was there—but not Fan—and enjoyed himself thoroughly as he always did at his son's parties. Torres, in a tuxedo, arrived late with his wife Ramona, and Mailer “greeted the new champ in the lambency of a triumphant party, and they embraced like two new-born orphans,” as another writer present, Brock Brower, recalled. Uncharacteristically, Torres got drunk, went home to bed, and then returned in the morning to find that the party was still going. A day later, Mailer flew to Alaska for a five-day visit.

He spent the first day in Juneau with Sen. Mike Gravel and Gov. William Egan, and received enthusiastic applause for his off-the-cuff speech to a joint session of the Alaska

(in Juneau.)
 Legislature. Then he flew to *Anchorage* Fairbanks, where he appeared on local television with Gravel and the two professors who hosted his visit, Edmund Skellings and Donald Kaufmann. At a reception in a downtown *Anchorage* Hotel, locals came to meet Mailer. As Kaufmann recalled, they glared at Mailer and said things like "Where's that tough guy?" and "Where's that wife-knifer?" At one point, he got into a fight, but security personnel broke it up. Early the next day, he and the two professors flew on a small plane to Fairbanks, the second largest city. *Senator* (N) (N) (N)

When they arrived, Mailer took a breath of the crystalline air of the city and was ecstatic. "I can breathe here. You can see for miles with clear vision," he said. Ralph Ellison met them at the University, and for the next three days the two writers met with students and addressed audiences assembled for a festival of the arts. As he usually did, Mailer threw himself into meetings with students. He nicknamed the state "God's Attic," and said it had an extraordinary characteristic: "The future of this state is totally unknown. But it is an unknown in extremes, for the end result will be one of two opposites, the best or the worst." He was aware that the hawkish state was generally in favor of the Vietnam War, and that Fairbanks was Alaska's "Sin City," where military personnel came on R & R. He also knew that he was close to the magnetic North Pole, especially after he saw a display of the aurora borealis. In words that anticipated his next novel, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* he told the University audience: "All the messages of North America go up to the Brooks Range. That land above the circle, man, is the land of icy wilderness and the lost peaks and the unseen deeps and spires, the crystal receiver of the continent." On the return trip to Anchorage, Mailer asked the pilot of the small plane if he could buzz the top of *Mount* Mt. McKinley. The Indians call it Denali, "The Big One." The pilot agreed and told them the altitude would require them to breathe oxygen through small mouth inhalers. "For *why was Ellison high?* (N) (N) (N) (N) (N)

twenty long minutes," Kaufmann wrote, the pilot "made low passes around the peak, and with each pass, buzz, or mind-skimming on Denali's top, I looked down and wondered what Mailer was imagining or seeing as he sucked oxygen." ^{Wear} ~~Short~~sighted and vain about wearing glasses, Mailer nevertheless put on a pair for a better look. "I lost myself," Kaufmann ^{wrote} write, "in simultaneous images of Papa Hemingway peering down on Kilimanjaro, seeing a frozen leopard, and Mailer (on Alaskan oxygen plus magic) peering down on Denali." Would there have been a ^{Why did we in Vietnam?} novel about Alaska without these loops around the highest point (20,320 feet) on the continent? ^{his} Kaufmann, with some justice, thinks not. ^{Did you want to talk the reader which novel?}

Upon his return, he wrote to Diana Trilling to nail down the dates of his April 28 visit to Oxford. ^{she} Diana suggested that they dine in the Oxford faculty dining room, but Mailer had a different idea: ^{and Beverly's}

Now what I'd like ideally is a dinner for eight at your house and then perhaps a few more people in afterward. One can't possibly get to talk to sixteen or twenty people at dinner by any method known to man, and the Senior Common Room, while appealing to the novelist in me, and very suitable and exciting if it should come to pass promises still less in the way of a delight than dinner for eight in that charming small house you seem to possess. Surely even at Oxford people have been known to drop in after dinner. Isn't that remotely possible. I have only one firm request: you must get Iris Murdoch for dinner. I loved her novel, The Severed Head. ^(N)

Murdoch accepted the invitation, but according to Trilling, she and Mailer were not convivial

dinner-mates. "She snubbed him when he wanted to talk about existentialism, and she wasn't

success. Her guests "adored" Mailer and "celebrated ^{that} the dinner was a great you both most shamelessly" ^(N)

very nice to him about playwriting." As always, he hoped to both enjoy the meal and profit from his conversations. Murdoch aside, Trilling said that "the guests adored you."

(Tx) Dinner parties for Mailer, ideally, were a happy combination of pleasure and diplomacy, good food, plenty of drink, laughter, gossip, debate, flirtation and the exchange of intelligence. He was a careful social planner and personally assembled his guest lists and seating plans. Lunch and dinner guests were sometimes struck by the semi-formal arrangements and the solicitous manner of their host. Steven Marcus remembers Mailer preparing and serving lunch in Brooklyn "in what must be called a lordly fashion," with the host conducting himself "without affectation as a kind of secular prince." He drew his guests out in conversation, and was ever eager to hear about their roots, passions, opinions on the events of the day, and the occasional glimpse of an Achilles heel. Everyone was expected to contribute. In later years, he sat at the head of the table with a woman on either side, often newcomers, while Norris sat at the opposite end with their male partners. He also made it at point, even at large, loud, and crowded parties to try and speak with each guest for a few minutes. His manners were "exquisite," Marcus said.

(Barbara's son) Family dinners were a bit different. Peter Alson recalled his self-consciousness as an adolescent at Uncle Norman's table.

Being around Norman exacerbated the intensity of the feeling, because he was so fucking brilliant himself that it was impossible to try and share the stage with him. And there's no question that there was a certain amount of theater in those dinners, an aspect of performance art. And of course Norman was always the red-hot center; he dominated in a way that's almost impossible to describe except that it was both incredibly fun but at the same time scary and intimidating, especially

Exquisite
dinner
manners
from
someone
who was
often the
opposite -
Ecstacy
and
drunk
each.
How of
Peter
this
dichotomy?

How is
he a
republican?
Barbara's
son?
Alson?

Bar
Bar

if you actually dared to take part. There were two things that characterized him[↑] he always listened very intently when someone else spoke, but he also had an extremely short attention span. If you didn't grab him in the first few sentences you were done. I remember a few times when I started to say something, and ended up trailing off pathetically because I could see that I hadn't grabbed him.

His uncle liked to be provocative, Alson said, but you "could usually see the twinkle in his eye." He enjoyed verbal sparring, and "it could be very tough." But Alson always looked forward to the family dinners "because I knew, *knew*, I was going to be dazzled in the best possible way. I was going to learn things." For many people, a family dinner is something to be endured, he said. "In our family it was something to look forward to with glee and excitement."

Upon his return from England, Mailer flew to California. He had agreed to speak at a teach-in at Berkeley. The teach-in was part of "Vietnam Days," May 21-22. The event ran for 36 hours with an aggregate live audience of 30,000, and was also broadcast on radio station KPFA. There were 50 speakers and entertainers, mainly anti-war, although not because the organizers failed to invite Administration officials. The State Department and the South Vietnamese Embassy declined invitations, as did pro-war members of the Berkeley faculty. Old Left figures were invited, but they posed so many restrictions[↑] X wouldn't come if Y was there, so-and-so didn't like the set-up, etc.[↑] that they were excluded. The New Left had begun its climb. The organizers, including Jerry Rubin and Berkeley mathematics professor Stephen Smale, quickly concluded that the peace movement didn't need the "futilitarians," as they called the Old Left.

Rubin made up a preliminary list of speakers, including Dr. Benjamin Spock, the baby doctor; Mario Savio, the founder of Berkeley's Free Speech Movement; I. F. Stone, the Mailer told Yamanishi it was "the largest audience" he had ever addressed, approximately 10,000.

independent journalist Paul Krassner, editor of the *Realist*, who served as an emcee; Staughton Lynd, a Yale history professor; and comedian Dick Gregory. Mailer's name was on Rubin's list ~~but there was opposition~~ *Mailer was not a unanimous choice of the organizers* because of his unpredictability. Rubin persisted and called Mailer, who said, "I've never spoken to 20,000 people before." *But organizer Jerry*

On May 21, Mailer began his speech by noting that the citizenry's "buried unvoiced faith that the nature of America was finally good, and not evil" had over the past months "taken a pistol whipping." The cause: the most advanced nation in the world was "shedding the blood and burning the flesh of Asian peasants it has never seen." This was being done, officially, to keep the nations of the Far East from falling one after another ~~the Domino Theory~~ *under the* Communist yoke. The Communists could only flounder in the nations they conquered, he argued. The real reason for the Vietnam War, he continued, was that the president needed to get the country's mind off the civil rights movement at home. His fear, he said, is that this "bully with an Air Force," was "close to insanity" brought on by "his need for action." And so, he said, we stand at a crossroad: "Is this country extraordinary or accursed?" He ended his one-hour speech by urging everyone to attach photos and drawings of Johnson's face, on every surface, on walls and phone booths and billboards. "You, Lyndon Johnson, will see those pictures everywhere upside down, four inches high and forty feet high; you, Lyndon Baines Johnson, will be coming up for air everywhere upside down. Everywhere, upside down. Everywhere. *(Realist editor Paul)* Everywhere." *Issue* Krassner published the speech in the June *Realist* with an upside down photo of the president on the cover. Mailer wrote to Yamanishi after the teach-in and said that for the first time in his life he had received "a standing ovation which went on for many minutes." It was

most welcome, he said, because that at this stage of his career he was caught between "counter-waves," of approval and disapproval, and "I am being bounced like a cork at the confluence."

Fig and Ecey and their children joined the Mailers in Provincetown ^{that summer} at the place they had rented for the season, the Joe Acker House at 607 Commercial Street. Barbara, now divorced ^{from Larry} joined them. Her new boyfriend, Al Wasserman, a pioneering documentary filmmaker, ^(they married in 1968) was also there; ~~he rented the upper floor of the Acker house.~~ Mailer had hoped to do some new writing, but he was mainly enjoying the summer and starting to put together a new collection, consisting mainly of material written after *The Presidential Papers*. And he was distracted by two of his passions: boxing and protesting ^{against} the war. In mid-July, before 2,000 at Harvard's Sanders Theater, ^N he gave the same speech he had at Berkeley, appearing again with Staughton Lynd. Martin Peretz, the Harvard instructor who chaired the teach-in, said the crowd was more than twice as large as the turnout for McGeorge Bundy, President Johnson's ^N National Security Advisor. Mailer also produced an entirely new anti-war essay for *PR*, where it appeared with those of 13 other intellectuals, including Howe, Macdonald, and Sontag. ^{Irving Dwight Susan} He began the essay by mocking the moderation of the editors: "Three cheers, lads. Your words read like they were written in milk and milk of magnesia. Still your committee didn't close shop until close after this extraordinary remark: 'The time has come for new thinking.' Cha cha cha." Mailer was all for pouring oil on the fires of anti-war protest, and was now the ^N (unappointed) ^{spokesman} point man for The Family in this regard.

^{TX} ^{successfully fight heavyweight} Torres defended his title against a strong contender, Tom McNeely, on July 31 in San Juan, and won on a ten-round decision. Muhammad Ali fought in an exhibition match before the

^{At the end of July, Mailer made a quick trip to San Juan to see}

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main event, and the next day Mailer arm wrestled with him on the balcony of the San Jerónimo Hilton. The photo of the mock contest, with Mailer smiling and Ali appearing to strain mightily, has been reprinted endlessly. Henceforth, Mailer would be identified with Ali, even more so than with Torres. Mailer encouraged the connection and while in San Juan called himself Ali's "intellectual precursor." He said that to understand modern society an intellectual had to "infiltrate" the Establishment, "act as a spy and remain true to his ideal of the Renaissance man" who is at odds with modern man, "destroyer of the ideal."

Also that summer Mailer was interviewed several times by Brock Brower, a regular contributor to *Esquire*, who was writing a profile of Mailer for *Life*, and interviewed him several times. He also interviewed Beverly, Mailer's parents and sister, and a number of his friends. Mailer was uneasy about the piece, and wondered if *Life* would actually publish it. If it didn't, he told Brower, "We would each become quietly famous as a result, and quiet fame is always, repeat always, superior to public renown. How else account for the happy progress of John Updike." On September 24, *Life* ^{published} did publish the profile, "In This Corner, Norman Mailer, Never the Champion, Always the Challenger." It is now hard to imagine an American writer receiving this kind of attention ^{at the time} — Oprah Winfrey notwithstanding ⁱⁿ — and, with the exception of Hemingway, it was rare enough in the 1950s and 1960s. William F. Buckley, Jr. ^{National Review} was impressed enough to devote his bi-weekly column to Brower's piece, stating that it was "final confirmation" of Mailer's status. "He is probably," Buckley said, "the single best-known living American writer, second only to John Dos Passos." Two things make him interesting, he said. First, "he makes the most beautiful metaphors in the business," and second, "he represents present-day America. He expresses their feelings that America today is shivering in desolation and hopelessness, is looking for her identity after a period of self-alienation." Although Buckley

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said he would pay "a week's wages" to avoid listening to anyone who spoke "more predictable nonsense" than Mailer on foreign policy, he nevertheless believed him to be "in his own fashion, a conservative." He based this ^{judgment} on Mailer's disdain for big government and liberal ideology.

Buckley concluded by noting that there was a good deal of hope in Mailer's "turbulent emotions" although he had scant regard for "the emunctory noises of psychic or physical human excesses" in his novels.

Mailer responded immediately, "What the hell does emunctory mean?" and then turning to Buckley's comment about a week's wages: "Sailor Bill, I come close to loving you here. When the hell did you ever earn a week's wages, you bleeding plutocrat." Buckley, who was independently wealthy, was then running for mayor of New York on the Conservative Party ticket, and Mailer said he'd consider voting for his old debating partner if he wasn't such "a hopeless ass on foreign policy." Buckley wasn't given much of a chance, but "his flair for arch phrase-making" helped enliven what would have been a dull race for a position that had belonged to Democrats for decades. Asked what he would do if he won, Buckley said, "Demand a recount." His quixotic campaign re-kindled Mailer's own desire to be mayor, and his 1969 campaign would in many ways resemble Buckley's race. Sam Tanenhaus, Buckley's biographer, wrote, "To campaign in New York as an authentic conservative required, to some extent, redefining what modern conservatism meant—or what it might mean." Mailer's run for mayor years later in the Democratic primary was a parallel attempt to re-define the nature of the Democratic Party. But in 1965, Mailer was supporting Lindsay over both Buckley and the Democratic candidate, Abe Beame.

(N)

(N)

or for elected office
7

Republican John

A week before the election, Mailer's article extolling Lindsay and chiding Buckley appeared on the front page of the *Village Voice*. Buckley, he said, is "majestically unsuited for here." for the position since becoming Mayor since it is possible Old Bill has never been in a subway in his life." But he was also "majestically suited for spoiling Lindsay's campaign. Buckley's personality is the highest Camp we are ever going to find in a mayoralty. No other actor on earth can project simultaneous hints that he is in the act of playing Commodore of the Yacht Club, Joseph Goebbels, Robert Mitchum, Maverick, Savonarola, the nice prep-school kid next door, and the snows of yesteryear." Mailer was correct about Buckley's strength. He drew 13 percent of the vote and is given credit by many political observers for nudging Lindsay into a victory over Beame. Buckley was irritated enough about Mailer's piece in the *Voice* to write a head-scratcher of a letter arguing that Mailer had employed an enthymeme (suppression of a logically implied premise of an argument) in his comments. The *Voice* gave Mailer a chance to respond below Buckley's letter, and he did: "Dear Bill, Be a swell. Don't sue." The two men relished opportunities to tweak each other for perceived errors and vanities. A few years later, Buckley sent a copy of a collection of his columns to Mailer, but did not inscribe it. Knowing that Mailer would look up his name in the index, Buckley wrote next to it, "Hi Norman."

Another marker of Mailer's stature at the end of 1965 came in a poll conducted by the *New York Herald Tribune Book Week*. Richard Kluger, the editor, had written to Mailer and 200 other leading literary figures, asking them to fill out a form noting the most important works of fiction by Americans in the 20 years since after World War WWII. In his letter, Kluger said that President Johnson "was genuinely pissed off by your piece on him for us," referring to Mailer's review of Johnson's *My Hope for America*. Douglas Cater, the president's special assistant, called Book

Week and "bawled the hell" out of a staff member for publishing the review two days before the presidential election. "Lady Bird was particularly pissed," Kluger said. Mailer had again gained the attention of a sitting president and his wife. (N)

When the results of the poll, based on the comments of 117 respondents, ^{were} published, Mailer was one of the most mentioned writers, ahead of Hemingway, Flannery O'Connor, Styron and Updike, but behind Bellow, Nabokov, Salinger and Ellison. Kluger sent Mailer the results before publication, and he wrote back to say that there were no surprises. "Just think when Time magazine gets a hold of all this, just think when they start making All-Star teams out of us, just think when they start having mass polls, just think of how James Jones feels to come in behind John Updike, just think how fat Saul's ass is now (fat as his head) just think of all the needless enemies Ellison has made with no desire at all. You are a warlock, Richard." ~~There were 20-odd head shots of writers on the front page of Book Week. Mailer's photograph was in the upper right-hand corner, just above Hemingway's.~~ (N)

(TXB) (TXF) The Mailers remained in Provincetown until the beginning of October. Beverly learned she was pregnant several weeks before they returned to Brooklyn. ~~They enjoyed the last days of Indian summer after the tourist hordes departed, always a magical time on Cape Cod.~~ Mailer was calling ^{his} the new miscellany *Cannibals and Christians*, his names for two mutant forces in contemporary life arising from the political Right and Left, respectively. The former stretch from the Republican Party to "the ghosts of the Nazis," he wrote, and the Left covers a spectrum from L.B.J. to Mao Tse-Tung. Mailer's dualisms are rarely simple, and invariably contain vigorous tinctures of their opposite, "the minority within," to borrow the astute phrase of critic Richard (N) (N) (N)

Poirier. A number of reviewers had difficulty understanding the Cannibal-Christian opposition. But, as Poirier noted, the first key to understanding Mailer's mind (and his life) is to realize that he "is quite unable to imagine anything except in oppositions, unable even to imagine one side of the opposition without proposing that it has yet another opposition within itself" that needs to be discovered and illumined. The collection, ^{Mailer's} examines Cannibals and Christians, these "two huge types" and the historical whirlpools from whence, like sea monsters, they have emerged. It contains his latest political and Vietnam pieces, his book reviews and literary criticism, the three long self-interviews (two of them reprinted from *Presidential Papers*), and 54 poems. The only fictional pieces he could find to include in this 397-page collection were two previously published short stories.

He was working on a piece of fiction, however, one begun in 1962, perhaps earlier, and then set aside. Known initially as "The Fisher Novel," and then "The Book of the First-Born," it was completely separate from the big novel, and like Laurence Stern's *Tristram Shandy*, begins with the protagonist ^{Stephen Merrill} *in utero*. Over the next decade, he would occasionally read "First-Born" aloud to friends and family, who found its half stately, half mock-heroic descriptions of Stephen Merrill's earliest days—his breach birth delivery ("the contractions of birth came with the panic of convicts who discovered their dynamite is not sufficient to blow the doors"), his circumcision ("an animal wounded wantonly"), and his breast feeding ("the infant's mouth flew like a hawk to the nipple")—to be riveting. Barbara remembers vividly her brother reading it to her to-her in Provincetown during the summer of 1963; Carol Stevens, ^{recalled him reading} was similarly impressed when he read it to her in the early 1970s. Mailer signed a contract with Minton for the novel and received an advance, but never got beyond 80 pages.

Merrill is born on Mailer's natal day. His head is wrenched by the forceps of Dr. Blucher (much as Tristram Shandy's nose is injured by those of Dr. Slop), although it recovers its shape nicely. He has a big head and will eventually wear a size 7 and 3/8 hat (Mailer's size). Merrill also has Mailer's large red ears. His parents, Jenny (née Fisher) and Archibald "Archie" Merrill (born Mirilovicz), are Jews whose families emigrated to the U.S. from Lithuania, Archie's via South Africa. Their portraits instantly call to mind Fan and Barney. Jenny "a woman with the courage of a lioness and the innocence in 1923 of a nineteenth century heroine," goes into the hospital with little knowledge of the difficulties of childbirth. *She resembled*

No, she had been working after school in her father's butcher shop from the age of ten, and so losing all the afternoons of her childhood which might account in part for her height—she is not a half inch more than five feet tall. It certainly helps to account for her obduracy. Strong as a horse, stubborn as a mule, final in her efficiency with a butcher's cleaver or a carving knife, she was proud, timid and fierce—forty years later she still looked like those healthy woman with large

pleasant features one sees in photographs put out by the offices of propaganda for Soviet womanhood, strong, direct, free of perversion and the imagination for it.

Archie has Barney's barrel chest, spats and silver-rimmed eyeglasses; they both look a bit like F. Scott Fitzgerald.

Except that Archie's mouth was narrower, his nose was shorter, he looked even more like a Goy than Scott (which is one of the reasons—let us not make Jenny too much of a heroine—that she had been drawn to him) and indeed Archie's speech was English, a touch fraudulent, and stuffy as phumpherdom. *At his worst*

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