POSTSCRIPT TO THE FOURTH ADVERTISEMENT FOR MYSELF

NORMAN MAILER

[*Editor's Note: This Postscript appeared in Norman Mailer's* Advertisements for Myself. *New York: Putnam, 1959. 265–267. We are grateful to the Estate of Norman Mailer for permission to reprint.*]

Rewriting The Deer Park *I had come to recognize by the time I was done that willy-nilly, in admiration for Hemingway's strength and with distaste for his weaknesses, I was one of the few writers of my generation who was concerned with living in Hemingway's discipline, by which I do not mean I was interested in trying for some second-rate imitation of the style, but rather that I shared with Papa the notion, arrived at slowly in my case, that even if one dulled one's talent in the punishment of becoming a man, it was more important to be a man than a very good writer, that probably I could not become a very good writer unless I learned first how to keep my nerve, and what is more difficult, learned how to find more of it.*

Filled with this hard new knowledge that the secret to everything was never to cheat life, I set out immediately to try to cheat life. The Deer Park *was done, it would be out in six weeks; I could not keep myself from thinking that twenty good words from Ernest Hemingway would make the difference between half-success and a breakthrough. He would like the book, he would have to-it would be impossible for him not to see how much there was in it. So I cracked the shell of my pride, got his address from a reliable source, and sent him an inscribed copy. But because I was furious with myself for stealing a trick from that Hollywood I knew so well, I turned on my intent, and put the following words on Father Ernest's copy:*

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To ERNEST HEMINGWAY

-because finally after all these years I am deeply curious to know what you think of this.

-but if you do not answer, or if you answer with the kind of crap you use to answer unprofessional writers, sycophants, brown-nosers, etc., then fuck you, and I will never attempt to communicate with you again.

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

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About ten days later, the book came back in the mail, same wrapper and maybe the same string enclosing the package. Stamped all over it was the Spanish equivalent of Address Unknown-Return to Sender. *So I had the following possibilities to choose from:*

1. The address was not correct, and the mail clerk in the Havana post office had never heard of Ernest Hemingway.

2. By Standard-Operating-Procedure, all unsolicited books received by Mr. and Mrs. Hemingway were returned unreceived to insure the minimum of bile for the sender.

3. Good wife Mary saw the inscription first, thought it best to leave the husband to his work, and made a lady's executive decision.

4. Hemingway looked at The Deer Park*, decided he wasn't ready to say yes or no, called up his good friend Colonel C.—in the Cuban postal service, had the island searched for shipping paper similar to mine (the original wrapper having been torn by a Latin houseboy on reception), had the best Havana forger copy the handwriting, gave a* mordida *to the proper authorities for this breach*

of postal etiquette, and broke a bottle of champagne over the book just before it was stamped by some of the best bureaucratic hands in Havana and sent on its way back to Putnam where Walter Minton put it in his desk, figuring the copy might be worth half a grand to the grandchildren.

Or, 5. The inscription was read, and that carried the day. "If you want to come on that hard, Buster, don't write words like 'deeply curious,'" Papa said, had the original wrapper put back on, stamped it with his private Address Unknown stamp (purchased at Abercrombie and Fitcb) and started to drink fifteen minutes early that day.

This is all fine in its way, but once on television in the eighth round, as I remember, I saw Carmen Basilio take one of Paddy De Marco's best punches, go out on his feet, start to sit down on the canvas, and then with his butt three inches from the ground, Basilio did a one-legged knee stand, pushed up, avoided the knockdown (he had never been knocked down in a fight before or since) and went on to knock out De Marco in a few rounds. The story in the newspapers the next day which I would like to think is true, was that Basilio, when asked why he didn't take an eight-count and get some rest, answered, "I didn't want to start any bad habits."

I could have followed that advice. Moderation is the last virtue I'll capture, and a day or two after the book went off to Hemingway, the broken shell of my pride collapsed into powder, and I sent off inscribed copies to Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly, Philip Rahv, and a dozen others whom I no longer remember, probably from shame. The only one who answered was Moravia, but then we knew each other, and I had told him I didn't want his comment for advertising copy, so that particular effort to promote myself ended in fiasco, and I hope I'm not so hungry again as to send off novels of which I'm not ashamed to the narrow attention of established novelists and critics.

This confession off my liver forever, it occurs to me now that I must have carried the memory as a silent shame which helped to push me further and deeper into the next half year of bold assertions, half-done work, unbalanced heroics, and an odd notoriety of my own choice. I was on the edge of many things and I had more than a bit of violence in me.