

“A SERIES OF TRAGICOMEDIES”:
MAILER’S LETTERS ON
THE DEER PARK, 1954–55

EDITED BY J. MICHAEL LENNON

Editor’s Note: The following 16 letters chronicle Mailer’s extraordinary effort to complete and publish his third novel, The Deer Park. As he says in one to William Styron, the process was “a series of tragicomedies.” The novel was finally accepted by Putnam’s and appeared on October 14, 1955. It became a bestseller, sold over 50,000 copies, and has remained more or less continuously in print. Random House will publish a selected edition of Mailer’s letters in 2008, edited by Lennon.

115. To William Styron

Mexico

August 18, 1954

Dear Bill,

I wanted to answer your letter immediately when I got it because I truly appreciated the “critique”. But I was mixed up in reading one David Riesman for an article I wrote for *Dissent*, and somehow the weeks went by. (As if I had to explain a phenomenon like that to you!)

Anyway, the amazing thing to me was how similar your reaction to *The Deer Park* is to mine, or at least would be if hypothetically someone else had written it, and I had read it. For in a way I admire it too, and I also don’t like it—don’t like it in the sense that I don’t want to write more books like it, and hope this is the last of its sort, for the thing is really too painful. There’s a kind of destruction of the value of life almost implicit in it. By now I feel quite cool toward it (maybe I’ll warm up when I read the galleys) and really

feel glad it's done, and at the moment at least I can face the critics with some equanimity—the sons of bitches. But in reading your letter I understood why I was so eager for your reaction—because it is truly amazing how similar are our standards and tastes about books considering how different we are. So I suppose what I wanted in essence was my own reaction, only via you.

The only thing which depressed me about *The Deer Park* is that somewhere along the way I missed the boat. I still think it could have been a great novel, with a great dryness similar say to *The Red and the Black*, but my imagination and my daring and my day to day improvisation dried up a little too much, and the result is the result. What makes me feel cheerful is that I think I'm coming out of a five-year depression where writing, just the act, became progressively more depressing. Of course I'm not writing now. But I do feel as if some kind of pressure is off. I suppose what it is that whether I end up mediocre, good, or great, at least I know I'm a writer, and I haven't known it all these years.

When you wrote of your own depression I was going first to embark on a long lecture in which I furnished you with all kinds of valuable precepts drawn from my own depression and mastery of it, Hark! Hark! But a day or two's reflection showed me how pompous it was. And also I remember how utterly disheartening was the comfort of my friends with all their remarks about what do you want to become a psychoanalyst for or a businessman, etc., why, boy, you don't realize how much talent you have. And of course what put the knife in my heart was that finally I had to do the writing, not them, and they just didn't know. So I don't want to go on about how much talent you have, etc. cause that won't cheer you. But I do want to remind you that the writing depression may not last forever, and that what you learn now and what you accomplish now (even if it be half as much at twice the effort) is going to represent later the years when we got iron in our spines and lead in our pencils. After all, we're both like bullfighters who arrived too early.—The thing I love more and more about bullfighting is its panoramic violent extrapolation of the agony of the artist, the half-artist, and the never-will-be artist. Whereas all our dramas go on in wormy corners of the brain.

Mexico has been mildly pleasant, mildly boring. Maybe our house is just a little too nice. I put in a couple of hours a day studying Spanish which unfortunately with my dogged unpoetic mind (I'm serious) I approach like geometry rather than music so the progress tends to be muscular. Then I

read novels or poot around. It's pleasant if a little wasteful, but what keeps me in good spirits is that for the first time in years I have ideas for two novels instead of wondering what the next one would be. And so long as I don't start to write them they stand powerful and eloquent in my mind.

Most of the time we see Lew Allen and Bette Ford, and Vance [Bourjaily] and [his wife] Tina. Lew is the same as ever, kind of remarkably good and sad and self-effacing and of course essentially reserved, and Bette is getting a little older and a little less arrogant and overbearing which of course makes one like her better, and Vance and Tina are the same. Close propinquity allows me to like Tina a little more and Vance a little less, Tina because I have the feeling that under the affectations and the ghost-like existence exists a fairly decent woman; Vance, because behind the amiable blandness is a kind of pokiness and lead-assed sluggish greed (under rigid control, of course) which makes it impossible to ever become close with him. He's finally too competitive, too envious, too gloating over his little triumphs, and to my shame, I'm afraid he makes me the same way, at least when I'm with him. For a minor example Adele and I went with them to Puebla to see the town, got there at two PM, ate in a restaurant, and then they went shopping in a good souvenir shop. We left them several times to walk around the town a little bit, but they stayed in that goddamn shop accumulating until five-thirty, and then it began to rain, and we had to go home. So a two-hundred mile trip to a beautiful city was spent in a store. Also he's so goddamn slow. But this is all chit-chat bitching.

Then there are the bullfights which I love, and my daughter who gets under my skin because she is so utterly charming and sensitive on the one hand, and so unhappy, confused, and unaffectionate on the other, and all because of her peculiar situation. But we see her often, and have her out here, and sometimes there are fine moments. So in wishing you and Rose congratulations, I hope that you have a girl because the relationship at its best is extraordinary—which of course you were born knowing. And if you can stand Polonius giving more heavy advice, try to do a lot of work now, and be prepared and undismayed if it's hard to work the first few months after your child is born. At least that was my weighty experience, and the lot of a few other tender ones like us. So here's wishes she looks like you, Rose.

The news about Meloney was depressing if unsurprising, and I feel more and more that he really seeks prison with at least half of him, which indeed I can commiserate with—being three thousand miles away—for is there

anything finally so horrible as to face one's life with the understanding that it will go on as it has gone on before, and no apocalyptic storms are on the horizon? If you see him and he's sober, give him my regards.

Right now we plan to come back some time around the beginning of November, although it could easily be a month either way, depending on whether the boredom here, which is so far half pleasant becomes too boring, or conversely if things pick up.

Do give my love to Rose, and Adele sends hers.

Abrazos,

Norm

116. To Eiichi Yamanishi, Japanese Translator

Mexico

August 27, 1954

Dear Eiichi,

I'm very happy that you liked *The Deer Park*, and as you say I think many people in America may be outraged when it appears. At least I hope so. The last paragraph of the book is I suppose my personal credo, and "the small trumpet of defiance" is about all that's left in expression in the United States. As I told you before I trust you to make whatever arrangements you consider the best under the circumstances, and if you wish to translate *A Time To Love* etc. first, it's perfectly all right with me.

Very little has been happening here. I've been studying Spanish, and Adele has been painting, but the days have been pleasant because I've found ideas for two new novels, and a few months ago when I finished *The Deer Park* I felt so tired and empty that I thought I should never have an idea again. By the way, as we did with *Barbary Shore*, I think it might be a help to you if I characterized the speech of the more important characters.

Eitel—speaks like an educated cultured man with considerable precision and grammatical correctness.

Sergius—Speaks well too.

Elena—Speaks with a certain coarseness, but it should not be exaggerated. The Japanese equivalent of someone from the middle class or the lower middle class would be right.

Lulu—speaks in a mixture of everything. She is self-educated, and speaks like an actress, that is, she is more interested in the sound and the emotions of what she is saying.

Teppis—Perhaps the most difficult to render, because I believe I have done something there which is unique in America's literature, and yet very real. He is unbelievably pompous, and yet extremely vulgar. He both acts as a big-shot, a "public figure" and betrays his crudity every time he opens his mouth. He is also very rhetorical, fancy, over-ornate. The word faggola which he uses about Teddy Pope is a very [common] word in American slang. It comes from fag which is an ugly word for homosexual about the equivalent of Kike for Jew or Wop for Italian. But faggola is a very crude and yet fancy diminutive for fag. You may indeed have to make up such a word. I go to such lengths on this word to exemplify the problem.

Munshin—is very slangy, and uses the Hollywood argot of big words used correctly next to vulgar words. "I hear angel's voices in the background—only not full of shit." He is more intelligent and more educated than Teppis, a little less gross in language but essentially similar except that he's younger.

Marion Faye: Speaks correctly and tersely except when he used slang. But he uses slang purposely, consciously. He is very economical in the way he expresses himself.

Dorothea Faye: Like a rough tough old actress. Speaks more like a man than [line missing]. These are of course only indications, and I have no idea whether the Japanese language contains greater or fewer distinctions of class and culture and idiosyncrasy in speech, but I thought you might be interested and that it would be of some help when you prepare to translate the book.

[...]

Do give my regards to your wife and children, and accept Adele's and mine.

Warmly,
Norman

117. To Editors of *One: The Homosexual Magazine*

Mexico

Friday, September 24, 1954

Dear Editors,

So, here finally, is the "famous" article. I think it's far from being extraordinary, as indeed I apologize somewhere in the course of it, but I imagine the important thing is that it's a signed article rather than what it says. I hope it isn't too long for you. James Barr mentioned something about the ideal

length being between 500 and 1000 words, but since I'm irredeemably windy it's gone quite a bit over that. If you want to trim just a little, I'm agreeable to cutting out lines seven to fifteen on page 2. I must request you, though, to clear any other cuts with me.

Now, something which you may find somewhat irritating. And I hate like hell to request it, but I think it's necessary. Perhaps you've read in the papers that *The Naked and the Dead* has been sold to Paul Gregory. It happens to be half-true. He's in the act of buying it, but the deal has not yet been closed. For this reason I wonder if you could hold off publication for a couple of months? I don't believe that the publication of this article would actually affect the sale, but it is a possibility, especially since Gregory—shall we put it this way—may conceivably be homosexual. For that matter, there are times when I wish some *deus ex machina* would louse up the sale, but since other people besides myself are involved in the negotiations, I feel it would be fairer to them to make this request of you. I see that the December issue is all-fiction. Could you hold this then until the January issue? I ask for no longer time because the negotiations may well go on forever, and I certainly don't ask you to hold this forever. But on the other hand, it's quite likely that by January the deal will be closed. And even if it isn't, by that time it will be time enough. If you want to hold it longer, that of course is up to you.

There's no need for a token payment.

Now, for a title. I can't think of one. Perhaps I will in the next few weeks, but in the meantime if you have any thoughts on it, would you let me know? However, please don't print a title without consulting me first.

My wife and I will be at this address until October 12th. After that we'll be on the road until October 20th. Post-October 20th, mail can be sent to me care of Charles Rembar, 521 Fifth Ave. New York, N.Y.

Sincerely,

Norman Mailer

118. To William Styron

Mexico
October 7, 1954

Dear Bill,

This'll be comparatively brief since it's our last week here, and along with all the other horrors of getting oneself together, is the business of back

correspondence. Anyway, I just wanted to say a few things and leave real conversation for later—we'll be back about the twentieth of October.

Mainly to give a *salud* for beginning your novel, and a commiseration to Rose who will learn that your previous depressions were gaiety compared to the GLOOM which is to come. Since you say it's to be a big effort, let's hope it's a mountain, the peak of the century with (be honest, Norman,) no competition but a mountain I'll do some day.

I know how you feel about the house, for I had a painfully strong yes-no set of reactions about the house I once owned in Putney, Vermont. That failed because it was too far out, and my first marriage was souring badly. But my advice on the basis of my character, not yours which I'd hardly pretend to know, is to take the house as something not necessarily permanent. What made me love and hate and finally flee the house I had was that I saw myself living in it the rest of my life, and that was a great error. Far better for me to have seen it as a potential long-term base of operations. Anyway, I know Adele and Susy and I will love it for your invited weekends. (My daughter, by the way, unlike most five years olds is more interesting than most adults I know, and there are times when I can talk to her for more than an hour without realizing how odd it is not to be bored. Maybe it's because Susy has a Spanish accent.)

Vance is in New York now. Who knows why he neglected to send his book. Maybe fear, maybe he just never got around to it. Tina we've seen a great deal of since he's left, and we really like her now, very much. Never thought I would, but there's an awful lot to Tina, and deep-down she's very good. I find myself sort of wanting to run interference for her. She'll meet people, they'll often take a quick dislike to her, as indeed I did years ago, and I find myself wanting to tell them "Look, she's really a great girl."

I've spent this summer reading all or almost all of our contemporaries, and my opinion of us (and incidentally *From Here to Eternity*) has gone up greatly. Most of them are just no goddamn good, and I cannot understand how people get so wild about Carson McCullers, say. Boy, I think what we need is better Personalities. We need a handle. Otherwise they'll come to us like old Faulkner when we're too old to do anything about being a celebrity but make idiots of ourselves. Of course now that *Naked* may be sold, I'll probably become a celebrity. Actually I'm half disgusted with myself for getting into selling it. (The deal, by the way, is not yet made. Lawyers, lawyers,

lawyers.) I'll try to explain why I feel so queasy about letting it go. But that's for when I see you and Rose.

Don't bother to answer this, for indeed there's no time. We saw George Mandel down here, and got to like him (although he gives me just a little pain in the ass cause he talks even more than I do and he is truly wild about you. Anyway, he said, "You know, Bill's got just one little fault—he's the biggest fucking hypochondriac that ever hit New York.") So, if he's right, get your tottering liver into a chair, and work, m'fucko, work.

Love to Rose from Adele and me,
Norm

119. To Paul Gregory

128 Willow Street, Brooklyn, NY
November 1, 1954

Dear Paul,

I've been meaning to send you this letter for some time, but ever since Adele and I got back from Mexico, we've been apartment-hunting, furniture-hunting, etc, and are just now beginning to come out of the woods.

I write this with some hesitation because I've been a great meddler almost from birth, and often think I meddled too much with Harold Hecht on his abortive attempt to make *Naked* into a movie. But since Cy seems to feel that you'd be interested in these particular opinions, I'll venture into something about which I know very little.

By the newspapers (for whatever information or misinformation they give) I read that you'd signed Bob Mitchum for *Naked*. Now, assuming it's true, it occurred to me that you planned to have him play Croft, or possibly Red, or possibly Hearn. I have no quarrel with the latter two, and no quarrel with Mitchum whom I met once, and who seemed a good enough guy. But I'm a little worried about him playing Croft for two reasons. The most important is that Croft is a small man, and since a great deal of the dramatic action of the movie will revolve about his domination of the platoon (moral domination, spiritual domination, evil domination, what-you-will) I'm afraid that Mitchum by virtue of his height and obvious toughness will convey something quite opposite. He'll be dominating the men just because he's bigger and tougher than any of the others. The other reason concerns Mitchum as an actor. He's often been excellent, but I'm afraid that he may

have just a little too much pride about “walking” through a role. And I don’t know if he can convey the sort of fanaticism, overweening pride, the virtually religious intensity of a man like Croft. Of course, you probably know much more about this by now after shooting Davis Grubb’s book [*The Night of the Hunter*] where I understand Mitchum plays a mad preacher.

The actor I thought of for Croft is Brando. I don’t know how you and Charles Laughton feel about him, but generally he’s impressed me more each time out. Many people of course mentioned him to me in the past as being ideal for Croft, but since he has so little physical resemblance, I rather shrugged it off. However, his performance in *The Wild One* which contained and projected so much suppressed violence together with a certain “spirituality” made me feel that he could give quite a remarkable performance as Croft, and since he is a little man, little certainly next to Mitchum, Brando as Croft and Mitchum as either Red or Hearn would make for considerable dramatic excitement. Naturally, I have no idea if Brando’s available, if you two want him, if his salary would fit the budget, and a thousand other such things, but I throw it out for what it’s worth. If you’re at all interested, and haven’t seen *The Wild One*, I suggest you do.

I have a few very tentative other ideas on casting, but if Charles Laughton and you feel that you’d rather not have me increasing the complications on this, I understand only too well. Do give my regards to Mr. Laughton.

Yours cordially,

Norman

120. To Mr. Cole

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

November 16, 1954

Dear Mr. Cole,

I regret that I cannot answer your letter in the sort of full detail which would be of most use to you but I am very busy now, and so I hope the little I give you will be of use.

In the past the writers who influenced me most were probably the major American novelists of the 20s and thirties, particularly Dos Passos and Farrell, at least so far as *The Naked and the Dead* is concerned. However, Tolstoy (especially *Anna Karenina*) was perhaps the biggest single influence on that book. *Barbary Shore* was influenced very much by the ideas of a

relatively unknown French novelist named Jean Malaquais (that is to say, his personal acquaintance rather than his works), and my last book *The Deer Park* which is to be published some time in 1955 has been directly or even indirectly influenced by no particular author I could name. Perhaps a vague link to Stendhal, another to [Alberto] Moravia, a little to [André] Gide, A little to [Marcel] Proust, but even in naming them I think I underline the connection too much.

At present the two contemporaries for whom I feel the greatest affinity are William Styron and James Jones. Not that I think the work of any of the three of us can be compared really, but they are good friends, and I believe it would be safe to say that our literary values as opposed to our themes and styles are often surprisingly similar.

The mention of Melville is well-chosen. I was thinking consciously of the mountain in *Naked* as a sort of symbolic equivalent to the white whale, and of Croft to Ahab, but the symbolic “ideas” were probably influenced by a book by the late F. O. Matthiessen called as I remember *American Renaissance* which treated the themes of Melville, Emerson, Poe, Hawthorne, Whitman, and Thoreau.

I hope this is of some use to you.

Yours cordially,

Norman Mailer

121. To Basil Mailer

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

November 17, 1954

Dear Basil,

Thanks a hell of a lot for your letter which I shall treasure among other things as being the only letter I'll get from someone in movie-making which is dispassionate—the same cold objective family blood must run in both our veins. Also, for a moment of really wild hilarity when I read it over just now. It's your reference to Harry Watt, and how he's like Eitel, and how Harry likes my books. And at that moment I realized, “My God, if Eitel really were a person, he would like my books too”. But I am delighted, seriously, that you liked *The Deer Park*, and I agree with you about the faults. I'm not absolutely sure (once in awhile I think it was right to do it the way I did it) but generally I wish that I had written it all in third person, or

autobiographically for each person, but the fact of the matter is that I didn't choose the form, but rather, to be a little pompous about it, the form chose me. Which is merely to say, that I just couldn't write the book in third person, try as I did for a period of three or four months. And on the other hand, I didn't feel the imaginative reserves or whatever to enter each person's mind. Particularly, this was true of Sergius. Every time I tried to write him in the third person, he became even more colorless and lifeless, and since whatever little affirmation the book has comes in his final statement as an artist, and since I couldn't give it to him in third person (there's nothing more difficult to make credible than a young man who is going to be a good writer) I had to take the tortured path of having him write in and out of things, so that at least, at the end, the reader might (I'm afraid they don't) see the total of the book as Sergius' book, and therefore believe that he will be a good writer. But the problem is really larger. I've noticed in other American writers as well as in myself that as we get older, there seems to be a progressive failure of nerve (which phrase I just used in a letter to your father [Louis] this morning). When I wrote *Naked* I had the kind of ignorant confidence which had me ready to try anything. If *Naked* had needed the Shah of Brat-mah-phur to make an entrance, I'd have run to the library, read fifty pages on Hindu philosophy, and come back ready to enter the Shah's mind. Now that I know more, I have less confidence, I feel I understand the world less, and what I've discovered is that to write a really good book in third person, the one thing you must have is a world-view, be it right or wrong, simple or complex. Without that, it becomes almost impossible to feel your material, dominate it, what have you, and so the tendency is to retreat to the first person, because there you need no overall view of life, you only need one person's perceptions. Since *The Deer Park* demanded entering other people's minds, its cockeyed form developed. In a funny way, taking realistic account of my infirmities as a writer, the form is organic, it grew out of what I was capable of doing during these particular years.

Anyway, I thought this might interest you. In a peculiar way, novel-writing reproduces in capsule the problems of making a good movie. The initial conception always has to deal with the productive realities, except that instead of a contract star whose acting is limited, and a producer whose eye is on the budget and schedule, and so forth, these external restrictions just sit in parts of the writer's head.

The [Tallulah] Bankhead story, alas. It's not true. I never met her. But I hear the story everywhere. Probably her press agent put it out. In irritation (because the story has me by implication shifting my feet and blushing to the ears) I spread a counter rumor. The new legend (all mine) has it that I retorted, "Yes, and you're the young lady who doesn't know how to." This, too, has spread, although not as completely, but once or twice I have actually heard people say to me, "Your answer was wonderful." Publicity marches on!

I'll be very happy to send you a copy when the damn things are finally printed. If you ever want to go to Hollywood again, (as indeed who doesn't) you'll have to change your last name.

Commiserating with you on the Advertising Films, and hoping you get something of your own soon—

Yours,

Norman

122. To Robert Lindner

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

November 29, 1954

Dear Bob,

Just a shortie to tell you what a good time we had, and to let you know that there's no news on the big thing yet. I've submitted it [*The Deer Park*] simultaneously to Knopf and Random House (please don't mention Knopf, nor for that matter that I'm in the act of changing publishers) and in a funny way I'm hoping that both houses don't want the book with equal enthusiasm—, mainly because I had to use such pressure to make them both agree to the simultaneous business that it's going to leave me with an enemy when I turn one down. I'll let you know as soon as there is news. Maybe by next Monday.

My inner life continues with much stimulation. I've gotten on to something in advertising which I believe is pretty big. It's the old thing I discovered from Lipton's [marijuana] that tremendous truth is to be found in the cliché if you crack open the shell. As a matter of fact I feel a little bit these days as if I'm a man from Mars. I walk around (even when I'm not taking Lipton's) really listening and concentrating on what I hear. On exactly what is said. It's amazing what one discovers if one only listens. And of course my

great mental weakness in the past has been one of not concentrating. Now I feel as if everything I see, do, feel, and hear, is in italics.

By the way, I'm a little pissed off at you for your attitude on Lipton's. Mainly at the element of condescension, the feeling that you know me. Like Gide I scream! Please do not understand me too quickly. If our activities were reversed, I would be extremely interested in what you had to say, and what you thought about it. And, by the by, I don't ascribe magic powers to Lipton's. For anyone to get a radically new insight, some sort of magic or catalyst—if you will—is necessary, be it love, liquor, psychoanalysis, religion, or what have you, and this happens to be mine. You can of course be right, and I think no better, hear no better, etc., but why be sure ahead of time? Do you know everything? Am I that simple? There exists the danger in you, Bob, and I say this to a beloved friend, that you can end up as some sort of avant-garde pater-familias. One is either truly radical or merely a liberal with muscles.

Anyway, when next I see you, I have three large subjects to expound on—1) The artist and psychopathy, 2) Advertising and the modern state, 3) The illusion of psychoanalysis. Where and when did the German lecturer come to birth in me. But do remind me because I really have so much to discuss.

By the way, *Dissent* needs money. If you want to send them a few bucks, great, if you don't, please do forget about it. I feel embarrassed mentioning it.

Also, as usual we left half of ourselves behind. In this case, various items from Susie's wardrobe. If Johnnie has run across them could we put you to the annoyance of mailing them?

My love to Johnnie. I miss all of you.

Con amor,

Norman

123. To Adeline Lubell Naiman

November 29, 1954

Dear Lubby,

You're wrong. I'm not angry at all, and I'm not hurt—mainly because there was neither malice nor venom in your reactions. Only love. That's true, and what more can one ask from one's friends. As a matter of fact while I would quarrel here and there with some of your specific reactions, I think

you hit the book well—at least it expresses very well what I feel about the book when I'm down on it. There are times when I think it's very good, there are times when I think I failed completely. And when I do, I think less articulately along the lines you criticized.

Your sexual squeamishness vis-a-vis *The Deer Park* did bother me. If you react that way then God what a host of others will. You know, Lubby, I think it's my blind spot. Outside of licking feet or supping on shit there's almost nothing in sex which shocks me, and I find it very hard to understand why others are shocked. So the end of the Teppis chapter strikes me as necessary, absolutely necessary. I'll explain why when I see you. Parenthetically, and secretly, it has caused me such a set of out and out fights at Rinehart that I may have to leave there yet.

On Eitel, I don't know if you got exactly what I was driving at. Which of course can be my fault. I didn't want to show him so much as a lost genius—the book is not a tragedy, but a horror tale—as rather a relatively decent man who can no longer act in relatively decent ways. There just isn't the room left to be decent and independent. If one wants to be decent, one must give up all thought of being an individual as well. Which is indeed what Eitel does. That's what's so horrible about America today. It doesn't destroy most people, it just injects them with a touch of zombie.

Anyway, as a favor to me, I wish you would reread the book when it comes out. Most of the people who've read the book twice like it better the second time. I think it's because its groove is so peculiar that the reader fights it the first time.

The form. Ah. It ended up being the only way I could write the thing. And indeed the only burn I did was in your reference to Angus. The manly Mr. Cameron with his pipe and his Stalinism and his homilies. Sweet Lubby, I could have told you years ago that when a writer is at the height of his powers and confidence he writes in third person, and the reasons are a little more interesting and extended than what Angus gives. But writers are frail, and often suffer no confidence in themselves, and what is one to do during those years—do no writing at all? One does the best one can, and writhes in the form that permits one to write. I spent three or four months trying to do *The Deer Park* in third person, and it just wouldn't go.

Your account of your own life made me sad. I won't say more—indeed how could I since I really don't understand you no matter how much I like you. But, Lubby.

My own life goes fairly well, in fact better than in years. To my surprise I have learned that I love Adele very much, much more than I thought, and right now I'm more content being married than I ever was living with her. Sometimes I think that while women are the ones who desire marriage, it is men who can accept it most easily.

I'd love to come to the party, but we've let too many things slide on the house, and anyway there'll be small opportunity to talk. Can you ever ever get in? We have an extra bed now, and after Susy goes there'll be beds for you and Lucky. Have a good party, and write soon, and know that nothing is changed. I mean it.

Love,
Norman

124. To Mickey Knox

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY
November 30, 1954

Dear Mick,

My apologies for scolding you about the bitching. The way you describe the exhaust system, it makes perfect sense. So bitch away.

And I thank you for the \$100. Right now I'm pretty flush, so if there are debts you feel are more pressing, take care of them first, Knoxovitch. And when the hell are you coming back to New York?

I've had an annoying two weeks. A fortn't ago, Stan Rinehart who's hated *The Deer Park* all along decided all of a sudden to breach the contract. Since the book was already in page proof, it's just a hell of a waste of time, energy, and duplicated effort. Right now I've submitted it to two other publishers, and I expect they'll take it, one of them anyway. Do keep quiet about this, because the thing that hurts most is the bad name it's going to give the book. With all the critics, book reviewers, and knife men, the word will probably go around that this was such a stinker, Stan Rinehart ran out on his contract. Anyway, Rinehart and Co. is torn from top to bottom with the editorial department which always liked the book just aghast. Actually, I think I'll get quite a bit of money from Stan, but it is an awful situation. I'd give you further details but they're long, boring, and finally resolve down to Stan wanting me to cut out the blow-job sequence. What else? I've come to the conclusion that I'll publish the book privately before I do that. The reason I

sold *Naked* was to get financial independence so I could write what I want to and hang the consequences, and if I don't use it now, I've been a fool to sell *Naked*. Anyway, don't fret about it yet, because I'm fairly confident the book will be taken quickly somewhere else.

Believe it or not, Susy asked for you the other day. Seems she remembers you, and remembers you playing the harmonica. I think you did that day, but Susy is certain, and her memory is often better than mine. What a kid she is. I wish you could see her. Five year old girls are fantastic.

Adele sends her love. I think she misses you as much as I do.

Good luck, good fucking, and good loot.

Love,

Norm

125. To Robert Lindner

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

December 20, 1954

Dear Bob,

More notes from the journal. I don't intend to keep sending this stuff to you, having respect for your time among other things, but I do believe these notes clarify a hell of a lot I said before. On Note 56 you will find a blurb for *The Fifty Minute Hour*. The corrections come for an interesting reason. I wrote the blurb before I reread the book in its published form. Reading it, I liked it considerably better than the first time, particularly Charles, Mac, and Anton—Kirk is about the same, but you know how enthusiastic I was about that. I'd really be very excited about the book it weren't for two literary faults of yours, one overcome by discipline; the other perhaps psychically more serious. The first is just your style which at its worst gets down to pure cornball, Bob. But this is just wasteful. You should make the effort yourself, but after I go over the lectures, let us say. For if I give them a week, I think I can show you what I mean. My editorial principles are very close to Orwell's, even though when I write I'm guilty of many lapses myself. And this you can learn. Charley Devlin once went through a book for me (*Naked*) and I learned an awful lot from him.

Perhaps you don't like the blurb. If you don't, I'm willing to write something shorter, vaguer, and more complimentary cause I would like to help

you sell books. But I do have this conviction that the evaluative blurb as opposed to the laudatory blurb actually interests people more. They're given five new classics every week, and so a blurb which is not simply dithyrambic catches their eye more I think.

The other difficulty is something we must talk about carefully. In short what it comes down to is that your endings tend to be wandering and uneasy. I suspect, although I may be wrong, that it comes from being at the cross-roads of your ambition. On the one hand you want to be a great man; on the other you want to be a celebrity here and now. Your contempt for the thinking of celebrities keeps you from really serving the pabulum which is requisite, but the tendency in all your thought which is to go out very far, very wide, with nothing but your speed and your sincerity to protect you is something you probably hesitate before. So, the equivocation which probably expresses itself in the ends and the endings.

My own affairs, alack, alay. As of today it looks like I can't get together with Knopf. I really believe they want to do the book, but Blanche Knopf seems almost irrationally terrified by the thought of the book being prosecuted. I cooperate with them to a point. I took out sentence after sentence which might be construed as sexually gratuitous. I went far because they were willing to leave the Teppis scene intact. But finally it came down to cutting passages which involved the motivation of characters. And this I can't do. It's the heart of the book. The worst of it, is that gossip has made the book seem so pornographic that by the time it goes to six more publishers, somebody is going to have to believe it's the best thing since *Remembrance of Things Past* before he's willing to publish it. Bob, it looks like *The Deer Park* is in for a long haul. But of course I have the ace in the sleeve of finally publishing it myself, no matter the cost. What the hell did I sell *Naked* for, if not to have such options? Anyway, I'll give you no more day by day communiques until a contract is signed. For, frankly, it's like being on an elevator. Yet, deep-down, a part of me is delighted. I must have done something to get people that upset.

Reading *Fifty Minute* made me realize something again about you. You're such a manipulator of people. I suspect my notes have not been answered because you're worried about me, and you're trying to think of the thing to say which will move me in the direction which is best (by your lights) for me. If it is true ... oh, Bob! Just tell me what you think straight out. Don't

manipulate me. My mother is the great one of all time, and I have enormous sensory apparatus toward that.

How's about getting some mescaline, kid?

Love,

Norm

126. To Robert Lindner

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

Friday, December 31, 1954

Dear Bob, in fact, Dear Dear Bob,

Happy New Year. And what a year this new one is going to be.

I've decided to send you one-half of the journal, my carbon. Please keep it in some safe place. And as I add to it, I'll send you more. The part you haven't read starts on page 19. And I think it carries along much of what I had before, and expands it.

Incidentally, try not to read it critically. That is, don't pick out such and such items as good, others as bad, etc. I'm putting it all down because I want the record. As I read it over, there is hardly a note which could not be improved, or indeed expanded into an essay. So, the thing is very crude. But I don't want to stop to polish now. And I want the wild with what is less wild because some of the wild ones become less wild as I expand them subsequently. Viz the saint-psychopath thing. Essentially I started it by saying, Saints and psychopaths are brothers. But, by now, I feel I'm pushing it into a new view of personality.

If you don't have much time, and want to read the homo-erotic corollary, it is in Note 155. If you have time, I suggest coming to it naturally.

Brother, one thing. You must suspend your caution or we'll get nowhere. So much of your thought is now in mine. Truly I'm not competing with you. Don't look at me that way in my relations with you—it's beneath us. I send you these notes because deep in me I feel that you're the only person who can understand me right now intellectually, just as Adele is the only woman who can understand me intuitively. Which is why the two of you are so drawn to each other and so jealous of each other. (Don't forget you called her the Peruvian Yenta.)

I'm mailing the blurb to Dudley Frasier. I would have made it bigger, but truly, Bob, I couldn't. You can go so very far that some day you'll look back

on *Fifty Minute Hour* as one of your last stands or retreats before the big kickoff.

I'll try to make the flight for the 13th.

Answer this at your leisure. Unless something goes wrong, we'll be skiing from the Second of Jan. to the Fifth or Sixth or Seventh.

Much love,

Norm

P.S. Don't forget your depression at reaching forty. That was you telling yourself that you haven't gone far enough.

127. To William Styron

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY
February 4, 1955

Dear Bill,

I made a resolve which I almost broke for you not to write any letters for a month in order to get some work done. What happened were a series of tragicomedies with *The Deer Park* which brought me in eight lightning weeks from radical realism to radical mysticism. And several bows to Kafka en route. What happened was that Stanley Rinehart who always hated it, finally erupted when the book was in page proof, and demanded that I take out six lines. I refused, and he fired me outright. So I went to other houses, six of them, the six best, and gave them all schizophrenia because half the people in the house loved it, the other half hated it. (Bill Raney who loves it told me he can't even stand to talk to people who don't like it.) The moral is: When you write a novel, don't fuck around with love. Finally, Ted Purdy at G. P. Putnam took it, and it's going to come out in August or September and they're going to do it big, and I don't have to delete anything. So, for once, a victory. But you can't imagine the madness of the trip. The lawyer at Knopf who wanted me to take everything else out of the book complimented me on the six lines Stan Rinehart fired me for—the lawyer said in more or less direct quote: "Now why don't you get around the obscenity problem all the time the way you do here." And of course to the hipnoscenti the book isn't the least bit obscene. At any rate, due to the twentieth century speeding-up-of-communication-processes books now have the chance to have publishing histories before publication.

I'm delighted that Moravia is coming here, and as you know I'll be equally delighted to help him any way I can. As a matter of fact I caught myself going through my rather incomplete list of bars, pads, and general hangouts which he might find interesting. But what with friends and all, maybe I can think of a place or two he might not otherwise come across. So do give him my regards, and tell him that it's a future pleasure for us.

At the moment there are of course no copies of *The Deer Park*, but in a couple of weeks I think I'll be able to get one of the manuscript copies to send to you. If you'd care to keep it, it's yours. For Moravia, perhaps I'd better just wait until there's a hard cover book which is certainly pleasanter to read. By the way, the same applies for you. If you'd rather wait a few months, Bill, I'll be delighted to send it to you in book form. So, either way on that.

Vance's address is Aida 49, San Angel Inn, Mexico D.F. Actually, he's away now for a couple of months in Oaxaca, digging for Indian relics, but I'm certain any mail sent to him at the above address would be forwarded. I have the feeling (off the record) that both he and Tina are approaching some sort of focus-crisis in their lives. By which I don't mean divorce or drink—as a matter of fact quite possibly the contrary—but as we've all noticed in ourselves and in our friends there's something about turning thirty which acts as a catalyst. It's as if you can't keep on quite the same way you were before. The enthusiasms which carry you through the twenties just seem to peter out. Anyway, although Vance and Tina never spoke directly on these lines, I had the feeling that each in their subtle way were preparing to change, and one outer expression of that is that Vance has become just hipped completely on archaeology which I must say on my slight understanding of him I had never seen as one of his developments. Maybe that's because I don't understand the appeal of archaeology. Which I suppose is all a preface to saying that he and Tina are fed-up too, I believe, with New York and its life, and when last heard from planned to stay in Mexico indefinitely. So, if you feel like writing to him, there may be good ground again.

Adele and I have burrowed in for the winter, go to parties seldom, see just a few good friends, and to my amazement spend hours listening to our hi-fi set. You know how I used to be about music. (Incidentally, our new address is 320 East 55th St. and the phone number is MU 8-0785. As always, it's unlisted.) She, as well as me, is looking forward to your return. Is it definitely for this summer?

And our condolences for yellow jaundice. I had it in the army so I know what it does in confusing psyche and soma. God, the depression.

Our best to you, Bill,

Norm

128. To Mickey Knox

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

March 3, 1955

Dear Mick,

It's late at night, or more accurately near three in the morning, and I'm in one of those moods. Is there anything like them? Jesus. I made the mistake of finishing a Raymond Chandler novel about an hour ago, and since Chandler just gets more and more depressed as the years go on, it's a poorer and poorer idea to read him at night. Good Christ how many men there must be in the world who get that sinking feeling as deep night comes on and they have to wonder how the hell they're going to sleep without a pill or a drink.

[Charles] Laughton was in town for a week, and I spent from last Thursday to yesterday talking to him about the book. It's much too early to tell of course, but I did have or rather got to have an awful lot of respect for him, and by the time he left the thing happened which I've been afraid of—you know—the dream of a great movie being made of *Naked*. And now I'm a little scared because that was the one dream I didn't want to get back into, and it's going to hurt doubly if it misses.

Anyway, I naturally sounded him out about casting, and this is strictly between us but nothing at all is set yet on casting. Laughton has a certain preference for well-known actors which is reasonable I expect considering that he's one himself. But from the way he talked about the various characters, I think you'd do well to try for Minetta. (At present L plans to do the scene in the psycho tent where Minetta tries to pull a Section 8 so it's a role with some size to it.) When the time comes, I'll make a big push for you, but frankly Mick I think the selling is going to have to come mainly from you. Laughton is very smart, very very smart, and is not at all amenable to having casting thrown at him, one has to ease it up, so to speak, and since he was ahead of me most of the time, I mentioned your name a couple of times and temporarily let it go at that. But if I were you, I'd try to get to see [Paul] Gregory again for he has a lot to do with casting. He remembered you coming in

to see him and seemed to have a pleasant memory of you. What I'm trying to say is that with both these guys they pride themselves on their knowledge of actors and actor's capacities and so while they're ready to listen to me I definitely got the feeling that they're far more ready to follow my lead on story than on casting.

The ski trip is off. We figured out that it would cost us well over a thousand bucks and since we've been spending money like water we thought we'd better call a halt. But again we miss not seeing you. Really, Mick, New York is dull without you to spark things up. However, I suggested to Laughton that if he wanted me to work on the script I wouldn't mind coming out to the coast. And he seemed amenable to that. So maybe in May or June, Adele and I will be flying out for a month—I sure as hell hope you're there cause without you it'll be a dull old deal.

The Deer Park is now slated for August or September, and I'm going to give it a whirl for a month to try to add a little to Sergius at the end because to my surprise a lot of people who read it seemed to feel that Sergius was interesting and they were disappointed when he sort of dropped out. I'm kind of dreading getting into the book again, but I feel that I ought to make one more attempt. As you know, this has nothing to do with bowdlerizing it, because it's understood with Putnam that that is out of the question. Like you, I hope the fucking thing sells a million copies, if for no other reason than to give hemorrhages to a bunch of publishing houses.

Adele is sleeping now, and writing this letter has improved my mood considerably. Let me know what's doing with you. Your last couple of letters have been barren of inner news.

One last bulletin: The Styrons have a six day old daughter named Susanna.

Love, Mick,

Norm

129. To Beatrice Silverman

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY
March 19, 1955

Dear Bea,

I'm sitting here in what may just possibly be a mellow mood for me, and since the hi-fi is on, and I'm listening to it with just a little bit of pleasure, I started thinking after awhile about how when we were married, I deprived

you of all your pleasure in music because I refused to come along, and I realized suddenly because you know what a pious ass I can be, that it was very cruel of me not to go along with you on the music, and not to learn about music from you, and so I suppose this is a way of saying I'm sorry about this. But I also don't have to tell you what a coward I've been in a dozen ways about life—as well as being brave about it in other ways I suppose—and I guess I was a coward about music, and about being a father, and a dozen other things. So, with the little bit left between us that's friends, perhaps take all the above as a sort of tentative apology. I know how proud you are, and you know how proud I am, and it's hard for us to talk to each other most of the time.

I suppose this is a sort of preamble to a few words about Susy. Deep in your letters I felt that just possibly—maybe I'm dead wrong—you were trying to tell me that you were just a little worried about Susie. I am, too. There are times when I think she's extraordinary, and there are times when I'm close to dissolving in a lump of accusing self-pity when I think of all the damage I've done her, and perhaps you too, and for that matter all of us. Anyway, I don't have any program for Sue. I don't know what to do with her—the kid is frankly beyond me—I often have the suspicion she's a lot smarter than me. I never did really tell you, but I thought you were very wise the day after she got there when you made her come with you to visit those people down the street. By which I don't believe I mean that one should always use force with Sue—one should perhaps follow one's instinct, make one's mistakes, be right at times, be wrong at times, and just hope. A kid learns from parents' mistakes as well as the wise things they do, and there are times when I feel very humble about Susy, and frankly just don't know what the hell to do.

Anyway, Beatty, since this is one of my “open” days, let me take the opportunity to wish you a fine baby, and tears in the eyes and hands across the sea and all that—but I hope the child brings a little happiness to you and Chavo and even to Sue. You know, part of her obstreperousness now may just possibly be due to the child you're bearing. I remember that when Barbara was born I felt as if my world had been smashed—I was a very selfish little boy as indeed I ought to have been what with the adulation I got.

Anyway, take this silly letter on its merits or lack of them, and give a little handshake to Chavo. Chavo and I have a little feeling about each other—once in awhile anyway.

Love from the old bully-coward,
Norm

130. To Robert Lindner

320 E. 55th Street, New York, NY

April 25, 1955

Dear Bob,

I came over to my studio today to do some work and found a letter from you which must have crossed mine. So since I'm not in a working mood, I think I'll write you a long one—there was so much I wanted to tell you the other day when we met in Philadelphia, and of course I was in bad shape—the cigarette withdrawal deal was hitting me in full force and I was just churning with anxiety. But one of the things that I believe has happened to me is that to a certain extent by the aid of Lipton's and other things I can pick a given direction for a week or more, assuming of course that I am not compulsive about the Lipton's, about which I'm not altogether convinced—the problem of course is that the internal world of L is so much more exciting, charged, and fabulous than the everyday world. However I suspect that I have certain built-in mechanisms which regulate the whole thing for when I push L too hard, I begin to lose its advantages. My weight goes down, my confidence goes down, my anxiety state takes away the pleasures of my sensitivity and I find in myself the desire to build up again. So for instance these days after a particularly active exhausting and devilitating (let it stand) week, I've been concerned the last couple of days to take care of myself and I'm building up, eating carefully, off L and off seconal, and feeling relatively strong, calm, and with a desire to build weight and physical strength. Part of the problem over the last month was that I was working very hard on *The Deer Park* and in order to cut it up and go through it with a scalpel revealing what I had come to see was the core of the book under the surface moralizing, I needed the particular heightened sensitivity of L plus seconal. But since it had to go on for too long a period of times, I wore myself down, and began to live too much on nerve and in anxiety. However, despite your skepticism I do believe in the self-analysis. What has happened to me is that I learned to get into my unconscious, to live there, to explore my conflicts, and what conflicts they are and when I come up for air, I find that over the long haul I do feel stronger, more confident, and more aware. One thing I think you have to realize about me is that I do contain a scientist in myself, a doctor if you will, and in a peculiar way the transference you speak of consists of a continuous internal dialogue between the doctor and the patient in me,

and I'm far from sharing your idea that I'm merely entering my neurosis. In the act of entering it I discover all kinds of reasons and underpinnings to my neurotic habits of which I've been intellectually aware for years—but in seeing the restricting and compulsive character of them I realize the necessity to change. So I go out in the world in the following few days and as if I were a gambler I tackle little situations where I would have lost in the past and where I now feel I may be able to win. Sometimes I win and sometimes I lose—the victories are important, because the essence of changing a habit is to have a life-victory rather than a life-defeat. Defeats as I know you know merely send one running back to the habit. But I can take defeats better these days because the longer I go on with this self-analysis, the less I see it as a problem of will or pride, and more a business of patience, of digesting losses and trying to understand victories and what happens much more often—draws and partial victories. The bad part of it is that when I get too deep in I feel at times an incredible anguish—I am not able to communicate, I feel burning desires to reach across to people, my paranoid urge to fuse is almost unlivable, and I have to wonder at times if I'm going mad. That scares me, and I pull up, and begin to build up again. But the process is fascinating.

One thing I've come to feel very strongly is that *The Deer Park* has to do well at least so far as I can affect its fortunes. I've learned about myself that I simply do not have the strength to do it all alone with the will and the pride of a Joyce. If I'm going to be able to express the very far removed but nonetheless potential genius in myself, I have to have certain victories along the way for victories nourish one, they allow new habits if one is ready to make new habits, they create a climate for one's thought—at least all this is true for me—when I feel most strong and confident, so I also feel most ready to tackle more, be more outrageous, bold, and creative in my thinking. Defeats shake my grasp on confidence. Some time I have to show you the reviews on *Barbary Shore*. They were vicious, Bob, and I believe I was unconsciously petrified when I understood how much I was hated, and how little capacity I had to fight back. Now, I think I know how to fight, and I want *The Deer Park* to succeed, because if it does I think it'll make a legend which will aid me greatly. You know—seven publishers turn it down and it turns out to be a small classic. The only thing I can see stopping it from success is a climate of unanimously bad reviews, and that I'm determined to prevent if I can. What I intend to do is to fuck all pride and stand-offishness and approach in the most canny way about twenty-five to fifty important writers—it I can

get quotes from about four or five of them before the book comes out, I believe that people will wish to read it even with bad reviews, and moreover I suspect that a lot of reviewers in New York will not quite dare to attack the book as viciously as they did *Barbary*. So, Bobbo, I want to ask you for a favor in line with this. When you meet [Aldous] Huxley and [Christopher] Isherwood, I would like you to talk about the book a little, just enough to whet their curiosity, for they are two of the people I'm going to approach. Isherwood knows me slightly, and Huxley I met once, and I believe they're both sympathetic to me as a writer. And anyway give them my regards.

I think I ought to try to explain something to you about how I feel about mysticism. You see the irony is that I don't like it, it's uncongenial to me, and when I talk to other mystics I get a pain in the ass. Nonetheless I find myself drawn to it *malgre moi* [despite myself]—at some of the deepest states of sensitivity I've entered the psychological reality is so intense, so self-evident that it's far easier to believe in a mystic entity or whole than to posit a totally imaginary and unreal construction. In other words what the realist calls imagination, I find myself believing is reality for I can hardly comprehend the experience as being one of artificial and baseless construction. One thing I have come to feel very definitely, and about this we would have to talk endlessly, is that there is such a thing as a death-instinct, that deep in our biology, perhaps in our cell-life itself, there is the knowledge that we do not die as such but instead enter the universe, and so when life becomes unendurable, or when our energy is worn out, death literally calls—we know it is not death but some new state of being. I know that I've found that this makes an enormous amount of sense in understanding things like suicides, murders, self-destructive activities, etc., provided of course that death itself is understood as a good or a partial good. To posit, as I believe Freud did, a death-instinct which leads merely to oblivion, makes far less sense in terms of human conduct. The life instinct as I see it depends of course upon a relatively powerful ego with its counterpart of relatively low sensitivity. For the state of high sensitivity with its almost telepathic awareness of other people's unconsciousnesses is not easily endurable what with one's awareness of danger, hostility, etc. etc. To me, mysticism is a call to death, and since I enjoy life much more these days, at least a good deal of the time, the liver in me, the novelist, the scientist, etc. is torn between leaving sensitivity and its quick concomitant of knowledge for the pleasure of just enjoying things. Anyway we have to talk about this.

A word about the Journal. I haven't written anything on it that you haven't seen. Looking back on it now I believe that much of its composition was a first outpouring and dissolution of my old intellectual baggage as if before I could enter my unconscious, I had like most intellectuals in analysis to go through an enormous sympathetic discharge of intellectual concepts—the doors to my unconscious always having been guarded by my intellectual barriers. These days I don't think as a Journaleer—instead of being confident and manic in my intellectual notions I have been testing some of the general assumptions I came up with in quiet ways and that has been secondary to work on *The Deer Park*, general self-analysis, etc.

Norman

NOTES FOR THE ABOVE LETTERS

115. David Reisman: In his *Dissent* review (summer 1954), NM called Reisman's *Individualism Reconsidered* (1954) "boring." He also discussed another book by Reisman (1909–2002), *The Lonely Crowd* (1951), and found greater merit in it. The essay is reprinted in *AFM* 190–204.

Vance [Bourjaily]: NM met Bourjaily (b. 1922), the author of *End of My Life* (1947) and *The Violated* (1958), in 1951 in New York City. Bourjaily later introduced NM to James Jones, who became a close friend

William Styron (1925–2006): A major American novelist. Close friend of NM's during the 1950s.

Rose: Rose Burgunder Styron married Styron in 1953.

your reaction to *The Deer Park*: Styron said in his letter, "I don't like *The Deer Park*, but I admire the sheer hell out of it."

your own depression: Styron was depressed off and on for many years and wrote a memoir about it, *Darkness Visible: A Memoir of Madness* (1991).

Adele: Adele Morales (b. 1930) was NM's second wife.

116. Eiichi Yamanishi: NM's Japanese translator, with whom he corresponded for over thirty years. NM explicated his writings more thoroughly to him than to anyone else. Yamanishi also translated the work of Charles Dickens, Erich Maria Remarque and Leon Trotsky.

"the small trumpet of defiance": Eitel sends a message to Sergius at the very end of *DP*: "So, do try, Sergius," he thought, 'try for that other world, the real world, where orphans burn orphans and nothing is more difficult to discover than a simple fact. And with the pride of the artist, you must blow against the walls of every power that exists, the small trumpet of your defiance' " (374).

117. the “famous” article: “The Homosexual Villain” appeared in *One: The Homosexual Magazine* in January 1955; it was reprinted in *AFM* 220–227 and NM recounts his dealings with the editors of *One* in his “advertisement” for the essay preceding it. NM’s candor about how he had previously equated homosexuality with evil, and his recantation, came far in advance of the gay revolution in the 1970s.

James Barr: An editor at *One*.

118. your novel: *Set This House on Fire* (1960).

Suzy: Susan Mailer, the only child of NM and Beatrice, was born in 1949 and lived with her mother in Mexico after her parents were divorced in 1952.

Vance. . . his book: Probably *The Girl in the Abstract Bed* (1954).

Carson McCullers: A writer in the southern gothic tradition, McCullers (1917–67) became famous with her first novel *The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter* (1940).

George Mandel: Associated with the Beats, Mandel (b. 1920) published several novels, including *Flee the Angry Strangers* (1952). His story “The Beckoning Sea” appeared in the first Beat anthology, *The Beat Generation and the Angry Young Men* (1958), ed. Gene Feldman and Max Gartenberg, along with NM’s “The White Negro” and contributions from Jack Kerouac, Ginsberg as well as English writers John Osborne, Colin Wilson and others.

119. Charles Laughton: NM first met the great English stage and film star when Laughton (1899–1962) tried and failed to write a screenplay based on *NAD*. Laughton made a score of memorable films from the 1930s through the 1960s, and was the first British citizen to win an Oscar for best actor, which he did for his starring role in the 1934 film, *Henry VII*. He was also nominated for best actor for roles in *Mutiny on the Bounty* (1935) and *Witness for the Prosecution* (1957). Laughton was supposed to produce the film version of *NAD*, but turned the job over to his longtime associate, Paul Gregory (b. 1920), who completed it in 1957.

apartment-hunting: NM and Adele moved into an apartment at 320 East 55th Street in November 1954.

Bob Mitchum: Appearing in more than 100 films, including his much-lauded role as the mad preacher in *The Night of the Hunter* (1955), and as a psychopathic killer in *Cape Fear* (1962), Mitchum (1917–1999) was often portrayed as being more anti-establishment than he was. He did not appear in the film version of *NAD*.

Davis Grubb: Author of *The Night of the Hunter* (1953), Grubb (1919–1980) wrote several other novels and a collection of short fiction.

The Wild One: Marlon Brando (1924–2004) met NM in Hollywood and in the early 1950s attended some of his parties in his loft apartments in New York. Brando did not appear in the film version of *NAD*. NM admired his acting and can do a fair imitation of him. NM praised Brando in his review of *Last Tango in Paris* (1972), which appeared in the *New York Review of Books* (May 17, 1973) and is reprinted in *PAP* 114–133.

120. Mr. Cole: Unknown.

Jean Malaquais: A Polish Jew (real name Vladimir Malacki) whose parents perished in the Holocaust, Malaquais (1909–98) was a labor organizer, veteran of the Spanish Civil War, member of the French Resistance, filmmaker and novelist. NM has often said that Malaquais influenced him intellectually more than anyone else. They met in Paris in 1947 and became close friends a year or so later when Malaquais was translating *NAD* into French.

[Alberto] Moravia: Major Italian novelist who wrote a score of books, Moravia (1907–1990) is perhaps best known for his 1947 novel, *The Conformist*. NM admired his work and sent him an inscribed copy of *DP*.

[Andre] Gide: A major French novelist and autobiographer, Gide (1869–1951) won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1947.

[Marcel] Proust: *Remembrance of Things Past* (1913–1927) by Proust (1871–1922) has often been mentioned by NM as the sort of ambitious novel he wished to write.

Melville: *Moby-Dick* (1851) has been cited by NM as an influence on *NAD*. See CNM 15; SA 99–100; see also Bernard Horn, “Ahab and Ishmael at War: The Presence of *Moby-Dick* in *The Naked and the Dead*,” *American Quarterly* 34 (fall 1982), 379–385; J. Michael Lennon’s “Mailer’s Cosmology”; and Michael Cowan’s “The Quest for Empowering Roots: Mailer and the American Literary Tradition,” both in *Critical Essays on Norman Mailer*, edited by J. Michael Lennon (1986). Also see NM’s comic description of a meeting with a whale in FIG 91–92.

F. O. Matthiessen: Author of *American Renaissance: Art and Expression in the Age of Emerson and Whitman* (1941), Matthiessen (1902–1950) was a professor at Harvard that NM heard lecture. Both were involved in the Wallace campaign in the 1948 election and took part in the Waldorf conference the same year.

121. Basil Mailer: The son of NM’s South African uncle Louis Mailer and his wife, Moos, Basil became a filmmaker after studying at Oxford.

Harry Watt: A noted British film director, Watt (1906–1987) made documentaries in the 1930s and then with Ealing Studios, feature films in Africa and Australia.

you liked *The Deer Park*: NM sent a draft of the Rinehart *DP* to South Africa.

third person: *DP* begins in the first person with Sergius narrating, but NM was forced to switch, somewhat awkwardly, to the third in order to depict the love affair of Eitel and Esposito. All told, the narrative focus shifts thirty times, between their affair and O’Shaughnessy’s parallel affair with Lulu Meyers, and later to Marion Faye, back and forth from first to third person. Henry James would be appalled, but the fascinating love affair of Eitel and Esposito more than compensates for the split perspective.

[Tallulah] **Bankhead story:** Although NM never met Bankhead (1902–1968), she or her press agent contrived the story that she had met him at a party and said, “Oh, hello, you’re the writer who doesn’t know how to spell fuck.” See *CNM* 116–117, for NM’s comment on their now-legendary imaginary encounter; he also discusses the 1960s rock group, The Fugs, who make an appearance in *AON* 132–146.

122. **Robert Lindner (1914–1956):** A psychoanalyst and author of several works of popular psychology, including *Rebel without a Cause: The Story of a Criminal Psychopath* (1944) and *Prescription for Rebellion* (1952), Lindner became close friends with NM shortly after they began their correspondence. He was to NM in psychology what Jean Malaquais was in politics.

to Knopf and Random House: After Rinehart rejected *DP*, it was submitted to six publishing houses before it was accepted by the seventh, G. P. Putnam’s. NM liked the chief executive, Walter Minton, who reminded him of a general, and remained with Putnam’s through 1967. NM recounts the saga of *DP* in “The Mind of an Outlaw” (*Esquire*, November 1959), which was reprinted as “The Last Draft of *The Deer Park*” in *AFM* 228–267.

Lipton’s: Or tea, another name for marijuana, which NM smoked from the early 50s through the 60s before stopping in the 70s. During this period he compiled a 100,000-word journal, titled “Lipton’s,” which records his observations before, during, and after using the drug. The manuscript is in the HRC.

three large subjects: All three are explored in *AFM*.

123. **Adeline Lubell Naiman (b. 1925):** A college friend of NM’s sister, Barbara, at Radcliffe, Lubell was a junior editor at Little, Brown in 1946 when she heard about NM’s novel from his sister. In January 1946, even before he was discharged, she wrote to him asking to see a rough draft. In September, NM sent her 184 pages and she told her superiors it would be “the greatest novel to come out of WWII” (*MLT* 102).

Rinehart . . . leave there yet: NM had already crossed this bridge, but until he found a new publisher was selective in revealing the split.

Cameron: Angus Cameron (1908–2002) was Editor-in-Chief at Little, Brown when Lubell worked there and was responsible for rejecting *NAD*.

124. **Mickey Knox (b. 1922):** NM met Knox, an actor, during his first trip to Hollywood in 1948 when he was stumping for the Progressive Party. They became good friends and in June 1951, NM, now at loose ends and looking for action after breaking with Bea, decided to accompany Knox on a cross-country drive to California in Knox’s new car. On the way to Hollywood they made a 20-minute drive through Palm Springs, which NM was scouting as a possible setting for his still-unwritten third novel, *DP*. NM wrote more letters to Knox, a blacklisted actor and acting coach who lived in Rome for decades, than to anyone else. See Knox’s fascinating and lively memoir, *The Good, the Bad, the Dolce Vita: The Adventures of an Actor in Hollywood, Paris and Rome* (2004).

reason I sold *Naked*: *NAD* was sold to Paul Gregory's production company, Gregjac, for \$100,000, and distributed by Warner Brothers in 1958.

Stan Rinehart: President of the firm of Rinehart and Co., Rinehart (1897–1969) was enthusiastic about *NAD*, but rejected *DP*.

125. the journal: Lipton's. See note 122.

***The Fifty Minute Hour*:** The subtitle of Lindner's 1955 book is *A Collection of True Psychoanalytic Tales*. It had been reissued several times, most recently in 2002.

Charlie Devlin: A Brooklyn writer who helped NM with *NAD*, he was also the model for McLeod in *BS*.

the evaluative blurb: NM has generally held to this principle in the hundreds of blurbs he has given over the past half century.

Blanche Knopf: Wife of Alfred C. Knopf, president of the eponymous publishing house.

Mescaline: NM tried mescaline when in Mexico and used it to write the final sentences of *DP*, but paid for it with "a hangover beyond measure." See *AFM* 245.

126. Saints and psychopaths: The idea, which derives from NM's reading of Søren Kierkegaard's discussion of the relationship between the criminal and religious temperaments in *Fear and Trembling: A Dialectical Lyric* (1843), has been discussed by NM in several contexts. NM also remembers reading Kierkegaard's *Either/Or* (1843). In the mid-1960s he planned but never completed a collection of previously published work titled *The Saint and the Psychopath*. He did write a preface, however, which he includes in *EE* 209–211, that opens as follows: "Many years ago I wished to write a book called *The Saint and the Psychopath* and in time that book swelled to such proportions in my mind that I thought of a magnum opus to bear the monumental name: *A Psychology of the Orgy*. Ah, my *Psychology of the Orgy* reduced itself to the dimensions of an essay. "The White Negro" came out of these titles and ambitions and those years of immersion in marijuana." NM's dialogues with Lindner, his experiments with sex and marijuana, his exposure to jazz and the *demimonde* of Greenwich Village contributed to his idea of the hipster, and also to his theology of a limited God locked in struggle with the Devil with humankind as a third, co-equal force.

Dudley Frasier: Lindner's editor at Rinehart.

127. six of them: There were seven, if Rinehart is included. The other six: Random House, Knopf, Simon and Schuster, Harpers, Scribner's, and Harcourt Brace.

August or September: *DP* was published October 14, 1955.

128. Raymond Chandler: Author of *The Big Sleep* (1939), *Farewell, My Lovely* (1940), and several other hard-boiled detective novels and stories, Chandler (1888–1959) was an influence on *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (1984).

Minetta: Malingering soldier in *NAD*, played by Greg Roman in the film version. Knox did not appear in the film.

in May and June: NM and Adele spent the early summer of 1955 in Europe, mainly Barcelona and Rome.

129. a fine baby: Bea and Steve “Chavo” Sanchez became the parents of a baby boy, Francisco, known also as Chavito.

130. cigarette withdrawal: NM had great difficulty quitting smoking and did not succeed until he was 40.

seconal: NM was a heavy user of the barbiturate Seconal, a sleeping pill, in the mid-50s. See his 1956 poem, “A Wandering in Prose: For Hemingway” where he describes trying to kick the habit (*PP* 309–310; reprinted in *DFL* and *MG*).

get into my unconscious: NM conducted his own self-analysis during this period. He comments on Lindner and psychoanalysis in *AFM* 301–309, and comments on the unconscious in *SA* 138–144.

Joyce: Near the end of the opening essay of *CAC*, “Introducing Our Argument,” NM says, “The wish to go back to that long novel, announced six years ago, and changed in the mind by all of seven years, may be here again, and if that is so, I will have to submit to the prescription laid down by the great physician, Dr. James Joyce—‘silence, exile, and cunning,’ he said. Well, one hopes not; the patient is too gregarious for the prescription” (*CAC* 5).

twenty-five to fifty important writers: “I sent off inscribed copies to Graham Greene, Cyril Connolly, Philip Rahv, and a dozen others whom I no longer remember, probably from shame” (*AFM* 267).

[Aldous] Huxley and [Christopher] Isherwood: It is unknown if Lindner fulfilled this request.

some new state of being: This passage presages NM’s belief in reincarnation, hinted at in “The Metaphysics of the Belly” and “The Political Economy of Time” in *CAC* (262–299, 312–375), and then confirmed in his 1975 interview with Laura Adams (*CNM* 217–218).

Titles of books by and about Mailer referred to in the notes are abbreviated as follows:

NAD *The Naked and the Dead* (1948)

BS *Barbary Shore* (1951)

DP *The Deer Park* (1955)

AFM *Advertisements for Myself* (1959)

DFL *Deaths for the Ladies (and Other Disasters)* (1962)

PP *The Presidential Papers* (1963)

AAD *An American Dream* (1965)

CAC *Cannibals and Christians* (1966)

WVN *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967)

AON *The Armies of the Night* (1968)

- MSC *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968)
 RAM *Running against the Machine* (1969)
 OFM *Of a Fire on the Moon* (1971)
 POS *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971)
 MM *Maidstone: A Mystery* (1971)
 EE *Existential Errands* (1972)
 SGG *St. George and the Godfather* (1972)
 MAR *Marilyn: A Biography* (1973)
 FOG *The Faith of Graffiti* (1974)
 FIG *The Fight* (1975)
 SHM *Some Honorable Men* (1976)
 GAL *Genius and Lust: A Journey through the Major Writings of Henry Miller* (1976)
 TTN *A Transit to Narcissus* (1978)
 ES *The Executioner's Song* (1979)
 OWE *Of Women and Their Elegance* (1980)
 PAP *Pieces and Pontifications* (1982)
 MBM *Mailer: A Biography* (Hilary Mills) (1982)
 AE *Ancient Evenings* (1983)
 TGD *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (1984)
 MLT *Mailer: His Life and Times* (1986)
 CNM *Conversations with Norman Mailer* (1988)
 HG *Harlot's Ghost* (1991)
 LNM *The Lives of Norman Mailer* (1991)
 OT *Oswald's Tale* (1995)
 PPP *Portrait of Picasso as a Young Man* (1995)
 MBD *Mailer: A Biography* (Mary Dearborn) (1996)
 GAS *The Gospel according to the Son* (1997)
 TOT *The Time of Our Time* (1998)
 WAD *Norman Mailer: Works and Days* (2000)
 SA *The Spooky Art* (2003)
 MG *Modest Gifts: Poems and Drawings* (2003)
 WWW *Why Are We at War?* (2003)
 LAD *Norman Mailer's Letters on An American Dream* (2004)
 CIF *The Castle in the Forest* (2007)
 HRC *Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.*