THE FIRST PERSON OF NORMAN MAILER

by

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ABSTRACT

The "first person" of Norman Mailer refers to the single existential consciousness underlying all of Mailer's protagonists, both the first-person narrators of his fiction, and the various masks of his non-fiction. Mailer's chief concern is the revolution of contemporary consciousness, which he attempts in an extended metaphor in which the self is both social microcosm and battleground of individual redemption. As the would-be saviour of America, Mailer prescribes a formula of awareness/courage/action, and exemplifies it in his fictional and non-fictional personae.

After The Naked and The Dead all Mailer's writing coheres around the persisting search for identity and validity by the first person, whose face forms a shifting "supra-figure". A recurring leit-motif of masks, mirrors and names, and of real and shadow worlds in, for example, The Deer Park and The Armies of The Night, provides a clue to Mailer's own role-conscious relationship to his narrators. Moreover, Mikey Lovett, Sergius O'Shaughnessy and Stephen Rojack all share important aspects of Mailer's personality and background.

The multi-volumed "great work" to which Mailer has frequently referred but never revealed, may be the already published history of his first person, a work which blurs the distinction between fiction and non-fiction and which consists of everything written since Barbary Shore. That definite
relationship exists between at least some apparently independent books is indicated by the trilogy formed by Barbary Shore, The Deer Park and An American Dream. These novels reveal a shared narrative consciousness; respective allegories of purgatory hell and heaven; and a movement inward from political to sexual to existential matters. The pattern is extended by the apocalyptic nature of Why Are We In Vietnam?, but that novel is essentially a parody of Mailer's thought.

"The White Negro" is the core of Mailer's existential theory, while An American Dream creates the first existential hero, and The Armies of The Night extends heroism to Mailer's life, an instance of life imitating art.
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**Note**

Page 58* follows 58.
"Please allow me to introduce myself, I'm a man of wealth and fame. . . Pleased to meet you, Hope you get my name . . ."

- The Rolling Stones
"Sympathy for the Devil"

INTRODUCTION

Norman Mailer has stated in Twentieth Century Authors that his goal as a writer is nothing less than "to revolutionize the consciousness of our time"1. This is rampant megalomania or the noblest of ambition, or both. But it demands that Mailer be evaluated on his own terms as a serious writer, and one who is excruciatingly aware of his own role in the evolution of American letters. By attempting to locate the centre of Mailer's own consciousness, his "first person" as a man and as a writer, I hope to show that within the vast metaphoric system he employs, he is his own chief metaphor.

Mailer is hugely talented, brilliant to the point of genius, and dedicated to the traditional goals of humanism. He is himself the best definition of "the hipster", his idealization of the twentieth-century hero pitted against the dehumanizing forces of what has recently been called the technocratic society. In his writing, he explores futures as much as he records the past in his existential identity quest. Both politically and morally, he is a radical; but
his radicalism has a strangely conservative bent, stopping short of willed violence. It is here than one senses the basic contradiction that Mailer the man, is.

For above all, Mailer is a figure of anomalies. He detests ritual and its enslaving implications, yet is fascinated by that most ritualistic of institutions, the Catholic religion. He is one of the key thinkers of contemporary American radicalism, yet persistently and soberly refers to himself as a "conservative", to which he will sometimes admit the adjective "left". As a writer, he is capable of stupendous classical literary feats - as proven by his very first novel - yet he sets forth on literary experiments that consistently run near the risk-edge of artistic failure; and which, as often as not, succeed in alienating critical opinion of him. He insists on the possibility of unpredicated action, yet is almost obsessively rationalistic. He seeks, moreover, to establish primitivism as a force for life to counterthrust the choking, mechanistic structures of contemporary technological society.

Mailer's best ideas most often prove to be someone else's, and he is usually quick to point it out. His faults are many: oversimplification, his famous egotism, an excessive rationalism, a tendency to longwindedness, unbridled romanticism, at times even a sour hint of political accommodation. And yet on the next page, or in the same line, one is likely to find the antithesis or complement:
complexity and cosmic awareness; humility; passion, love, just rage, and moral absolutism. That all these traits should be discovered within the same man is a rare thing in a time of philosophical homogeneity among prose writers. And though he is laborious and even verbose, Mailer is almost never boring.

It is not my intention to comment on the "rightness" or otherwise of Mailer's political stances, what Diana Trilling has referred to as his "final hesitation before the revolution". One thing is certain: that all true art is revolutionary, and in the best of his work, Mailer achieves the revolutionary effect on consciousness which he seeks. Whether he is more valuable in this regard than say, Timothy Leary, is neither answerable nor relevant to this study, which is literary, not political.

Mailer pursues the politics of self. His work is an investigation of the flow of energies, psychic and physical, within the individual, recognizing that revolution begins and ends in the consciousness of each cell of the social organism. In Mailer's case, this consciousness takes a peculiarly inflected and introverted form; indeed, his most characteristic trait as an artist is the non-stop self-consciousness with which every act as both writer and citizen of the republic is imbued. Moreover, since his confessional writings, like Advertisements for Myself and Cannibals and Christians hurl the reader into the inner
sanctum of this process, it is the purpose of this study to examine the relationships between the man revealed in his biographical writings, and the various narrative roles adopted in his fiction.

For Mailer, the metaphor is the message, and I hope to show that within the rich metaphoric body of his work, his own role as artist has become the cohering pattern of his complex message of existential redemption through action. And if this suggests a Messianic tinge to the whole business, it is at least consistent with Mailer's objective, stated at the beginning of this introduction. This fact should no more embarrass us, or prejudice us against Mailer than does Christ's answer to Pilate's question "Are you the Son of God?". In an age of intensified awareness, an artist should be permitted to be conscious of the implications of his genius, and to share that knowledge with his readers.

I should make clear that I am not embarking on a biographical study of Mailer, interesting as that might be. Rather, I wish to treat Mailer's apparently "biographic" writings as part of the main body of his work, in which distinctions between fiction and reality, persona and face, fantasy and confession, become uncertain. A clue to the falsity of these boundaries when discussing Mailer may be gleaned from Mailer's frequent references, from Advertisements on, to a "great work in progress", a book so
large and unusual that it would be "unpublishable in any easy or legal way". Although in the thirteen years since, there has been nary a sign of the novel, Mailer persists in talking about it. When a Playboy interviewer asked in 1967 what his Great Novel would be about, Mailer replied, "That's something I want to keep to myself". This sounds somewhat facetious, for Mailer is hardly given to secrets. But if the remark is treated as both facetious and ironic, then the "myself" may, in fact, be the subject of this Supernovel.

What I am suggesting is that all of Mailer's work from a certain point in time be considered as part of a whole coherent around the figure of the author himself, in the biographical writings, his various masks, and the narrators of his first-person stories and novels. Later in the Playboy interview he says:

Everything I write is a card out of the same deck. You can reshuffle them; but in a way, I've been working on one book most of my writing life. Probably since I started with Barbary Shore, certainly with and since The Deer Park, I've been working on one book.

Interviewer: Including the books of essays - Advertisements for Myself, The Presidential Papers and Cannibals and Christians?

Yes.

What's the book about?

Existentialism. That is to say, the feel of our human condition, which, by the logic of existententialism, is the truth of the human condition.
It is, of course, disconcerting for critics to have an author state it so bluntly, but this does not negate the function of criticism. It remains to find the thread of coherence running through the work, and to determine how successful Mailer is in describing the feel of the human condition, as seen from the mind of Norman Mailer.

The subject of this study then, the "first person" of Mailer, is the controlling consciousness behind the fictional and non-fictional masks. The study is, rather than the use of narrative voice, inventory of the personal modes which form the record of one man's quest for identity, validity and existential "good".

We shall see that this quest has two principal determinants: a serious concern with the socio-political sphere; and an extended, internalized metaphor of that sphere, the individual as author. The interaction of the two tends to be the source of energy for further movement. The movement itself is in the form of a spiral, evolving around the author's experience. Thus, while a great distance is covered from the political concerns of *Barbary Shore* to those of *Armies of the Night*, the point of focus remains the same: the impact of certain events upon a single, shaping consciousness. Similarly, while Sergius O'Shaughnessy and Steven Rojack are respectively concerned with the dissimilar problems of budding creativity and how to beat a murder rap, they share a need to discover and
activate the well-springs of their own beings.

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to see such development as exists in Mailer's work as having followed an initial plan. It is only with the appearance of *Advertisements for Myself* in 1957 that a conscious and all-encompassing scheme becomes apparent. And it would be wrong, too, to suppose that Mailer had a clear idea of where he was going. The nature of his existential commitment is mysterious: while he is determined to enter ever more deeply into the abysses of existence, the route can in no way be preplanned. Even Mailer's career as a writer has tended to take uncertain innovational paths, rather than stick to the conventional novelistic approaches which could certainly bring him both critical and popular approval.

The first mask of the "supra-figure" which comes to dominate Mailer's work is Mikey Lovett in *Barbary Shore*, a young naive aspiring writer, who is also the first first-person narrator to appear in a Mailer novel. In the next novel, *The Deer Park*, Sergius O'Shaughnessy is in many ways a more mature version of Lovett, and though not yet successful as a writer, shows poise as a gambler, lover and man of the world. Stephen Rojack completes the character, as *An American Dream* completes the trilogy. Now the narrator has the potential to make it to the status of hero, and as a mature individual, Rojack has achieved success in politics, academia, popular writing and sex.
Between the publication of *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream*, Mailer published "The White Negro", an essay which epitomizes his conception of the "hipster" as survivor and saint of technocratic oppression. It is significant that Mailer's only heroic character (not including Mailer himself), Rojack, does not appear until after the theoretical basis for such a figure has been delineated non-fictionally. In spite of their alleged spontaneity, Mailer's characters are noteworthy for the highly rationalistic manner in which they are conceived.

DJ, the narrator of *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, apparently an extension of the supra-figure of the trilogy, is actually a perversion of it; he is anti-life and anti-hero, genius run amok in an orgy of chemical and technical power. The hero of *Armies of the Night* bridges the gap between Mailer's fiction and non-fiction, and is the final reference point in the study of Mailer's first person. The search for the ideal existential hero ends finally in the self, not merely because it is himself the author knows most intimately and completely, but because it is the self which must be made to actualize the theory and logic of a set of ideas. Mailer's overwhelming concern is with the dialectic of his own being, and it is within that dialectic that his other themes emerge: the tension between and final unknowability of good and evil, God and the Devil; the dynamic of sex and violence, springing as they do from the impulses of cellular
flesh; the enigmas of time-space, self/other and man/woman; and the inevitable drift into death, at both the individual and societal level, of any being which stops growing. For there can be no staying the same: "Every moment of one's existence one is growing into more or retreating into less". Whatever other contradictics he contains, Mailer is undeniably committed to the forces of life.
Chapter 1

Although an inkling of Mailer's notion that growth is salvation and stasis is death can be found in his first novel, *The Naked and The Dead*, he did not detail it until the publication of "The White Negro", some fifteen years later. Existential growth is fundamental to his idealization of the "hipster", the man who knows that

if the fate of twentieth-century man is to live with death from adolescence to premature senescence, why then the only life-giving answer is to accept the terms of death, to live with death as immediate danger, to divorce oneself from society, to exist without roots, to set out on that uncharted journey into the rebellious imperatives of the self . . . to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and one exists in the present, in that enormous present which is without past or future, memory or planned intention . . .

This is the core of Mailer's credo; the measure of any Mailer character and of Mailer himself must be made accordingly.

It is the "psychopathic brilliance" of hip to know that confrontation and activity are life-enhancing, while the denial of impulse, however criminal or perverse the impulse may be, is the cause of death, the "cancer" of thwarted cells and choked energies.

The two most vital characters of *The Naked and The Dead*, the elitist Cummings and his proletarian counterpart Sergeant Croft are for the most part relatively unsympathetic figures. Yet at the end, Croft has achieved a sense of his own dignity, while Cummings is sliding inevitably into the morass of
dehumanized totalitarianism to which the way in which he has failed to act has condemned him.

Croft and Cummings are the central figures in the two parallel campaigns that climax the novel, the American invasion of the Japanese-held island of Anopopei, and Croft's obsessive drive of the platoon which he commands over the Moby Dick contours of Mount Anaka. (As in Melville, the quest is irrational, self-destructive, and finally fruitless.)

Cummings' intelligence is the most powerful in the story, greater even than the sympathetically drawn but finally powerless liberal Hearn, whose death symbolizes the collapse of the liberal ideal in America in the face of the ruthless power of men like Cummings and Croft. Cummings' ambition on Anopopei is to lead a brilliant invasion attack, which will display his genius as a strategist to the Pentagon. But lacking complete data on the situation of the forces defending the island, he delays action, and the inevitable - as it turns out - victory over the Japanese is won by a small-minded bureaucrat on Cummings' staff, Major Dalleson. Dalleson blunders into what turns out to be the final battle during Cummings' temporary absence. It is not that Cummings has not planned his campaign well; indeed, it has been "brilliantly conceived"; but Cummings lacks the gambler's instinct to try anything but the sure bet. In his last moments in the book, we see Cummings being swallowed up by
the arrays of statistics on which even his brilliant mind can become dependent: 7

Cummings shrugged. If he had another opportunity he would make better use of it. What frustration! To know so much and be hog-tied.

To divert his balked nerves, he carried out the mopping up with a ceaseless concentration on details.

Sixth Day: 347 Japanese - 1 American
Ninth Day: 502 Japanese - 4 Americans

In Mailer's worldview, it is precisely Cummings' willingness to "know so much" and yet remain afraid to take the plunge into mystery that dooms him to the hell of playing baseball-like number and power games - the games of the technocrat. Nevertheless, it is men like Cummings who will govern America after the war, Mailer accurately predicts.

Like Cummings, Croft is interested in people only insofar as they can help him achieve his personal objectives, in this case, the fierce and irrational desire to lead his platoon over Mount Anaka to presumed safety on the other side. He is not without doubt at the wisdom of his goal, as, facing rebellion from almost all of the platoon, he is challenged by Martinez, the one man he had thought was solidly with him:

There was no one you could trust, no one except yourself.

The mountain ahead had never looked so high and forbidding. Perhaps a part of him did want to turn back, and he flung himself from the temptation . . .

He would have to go easy. If Martinez could do this, then the situation was dangerous . . .

"Goddamn, Japbait, you turning on me?" he said softly.
Croft's realization that he entirely on his own is not unique to Mailer's brand of existentialism. But the recognition of that within him which wants "to turn back" is an aspect of awareness which Mailer develops in Advertisements, and which characterizes all of his narrator-protagonists.

Croft slides past this first challenge, but he is "extracting the last marrows of his will" in preparation for the ultimate test which he knows is coming. Red, an infantryman with whom Croft has been feuding since the march began, refuses to pick up his pack after a rest stop. Sensing that this is the moment of truth, Croft "unslung his rifle, cocked the bolt leisurely". They exchange expletives for a minute, then:

"It was worthless to temporize. Croft wanted to shoot him."

For an instant he had a picture again of lying on his stomach waiting for the Japanese bayonet to strike into his back. He could feel the blood in his head. As he waited, his will drained away slowly.

"How 'bout it, Red?"

The muzzle made a small circular motion as if Croft were selecting a more exact aim. Red watched his finger on the trigger. When it began to tighten he tensed suddenly. "Okay, Croft, you win.""ll

The essential point in this passage is that Croft is not only willing, but "wanting" to kill. For Mailer, the bloodlust for killing can be as vitiating as is for both he and Lawrence, the lust of the blood for sex. Nevertheless, Mailer
never advocates, as far as I can see, wanton murder, and
the fact that Croft's "will drained away slowly" does not
show him to be without courage, but only without the
simple savagery to kill needlessly.

And finally, it is Croft's willingness to act in
necessity that saves him from the hell of discontent that
Cummings has fallen into. Croft's ambition too, is ironi-
cally thwarted as he steps into a literal hornet's nest,
and the men are chased back down the hill they have so
laboriously climbed by the angry insects. But in his last
revery, we see that Croft has, if not success, at least
peace of mind:

Deep inside himself, Croft was relieved that
he had not been able to climb the mountain. For
that afternoon at least, as the platoon waited on
the beach for the boats that were due the next day,
Croft was rested by the unadmitted knowledge that
he had found a limit to his hunger. 12

Although The Naked and The Dead contains the seeds of
Mailer's later concern with the existence of the individual
in the character of Croft, in style, purpose and theme, it
is not related to the later novels as much as they are
related to one another. Stylistically, The Naked and The
Dead is in the mode of 1920's American realism, and it is
clear that Mailer consciously set out to write an undeniably
great novel within that tradition, knowing that this was
the most effective way to establish his claim to serious
critical consideration. Yet his very success in this aim
led him into increasingly experimental works, most of which
have done little to perpetuate the early acclaim. Mailer might have become a Steinbeck of the fifties by continuing to produce naturalistic panoramas. But thrown, as he says in _Advertisements for Myself_, "Willy-nilly into existentialism", he became more and more interested in the panoramas of his own identities, sensing that the consciousness revolving through the author-narrator relationship is a superb, multi-layered onion-microcosm of the perennial paradox of "I" and "It".

Moreover, the body of Mailer's work is undeniably "existential", and he has stated that _Barbary Shore_, not _The Naked and The Dead_ may be referred to as the first American existential novel. It remains to be seen which of his novels will survive; _The Naked and The Dead_ may have the best chance simply because of its relative universality and wide scope. Nevertheless, I agree with Ihab Hassan that "it is a serious critical error to identify Mailer's achievement with his first novel". Mailer's greatest achievement is not the writing of a first novel comparable to literary monuments, but the insight and courage to use his own public, private, and psychic realities as the stuff of a many-chaptered chronicle of existential growth.
Chapter 2

The first installment of the single, great work which Mailer began after his first success is *Barbary Shore*. It is his first novel told in the first-person narrative voice, which Mailer calls the novelist's most important source of "leverage", and his first consciously "existential" book. All of his subsequent novels and the best of his short stories continue using the narrative device, which is discussed at some length in *Advertisements for Myself*. While one must be wary of making unjustified identification between any narrative voice and the author, there is ample evidence for such a link in Mailer. *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream* form a trilogy whose most important connector is the underlying identity of the respective narrators. Mikey Lovett, Sergius O'Shaughnessy and Stephen Rojack are, like Mailer himself, all writers, all veterans of an American war, all more or less concerned with their sexual identities, and all involved in a striving for existential liberation. Their chief distinction is in age and in the progressive success of each narrator in terms of career, self-confidence and personal maturity. Thus, Lovett is naive and struggling, O'Shaughnessy rather more assured but still confused, and Rojack highly successful in every social sphere, and aware of what is required for existential authenticity. The three are masks of the same single consciousness at various stages in its development, and
Mailer implicates himself in that process with the publication of the non-fictional (but directly related) Advertisements between the second and third parts of the trilogy.

The trilogy shows other connections: a movement from external concern with society, through the mysteries of sex, which is the connection between the individual and society, to the pure politics of self. It is a spiral inward: Barbary Shore examines and rejects the possibility of meaningful political action; The Deer Park finds sex and art valueless as ends. Only after Mailer reveals the specifics of his existential theory and demonstrates his own involvement in the quest in Advertisements does the search end, in the functioning existentialism portrayed in An American Dream. At another level, the politics, sexuality and existentialism of the trilogy are allegories of purgatory, hell and heaven.

As the purgatory in this view, Barbary Shore seethes with moral and sexual frustration. The title refers to an in-between place, a shore where the barbarities of an oppressive political and economic system are inflicted on people trapped between the poles of political activity and sheer selfishness in Beverley Guinevere's boarding house, where the action takes place.

Barbary Shore is purgatory because it is political: that is, its characters believe for the most part in the "rightness" of their respective political positions. Mailer would seem to have become discouraged with serious
politics after his work for the Progressive Party's Henry Wallace in 1948. Since then, his personal politics have been relativistic; he often describes himself as a "left conservative", and in his pseudo-absurdist campaign for mayor of New York in 1969, his most frequent public statement was, "I think I'm serious". From the point of view of Mailer's existentialism, the adopting of a particular political stance would be as deadening as holding onto one mask of identity, or repeating the style of a successful book. Barbary Shore is purgatory because its people lack the energy to move out of their political perceptual patterns.

The political allegory in The Naked and The Dead, which saw a shift in America towards a totalitarianism embodied by Cummings (a prophecy remarkable in that it preceded the McCarthy-HUAC era by several years), is extended to a broad polemic on the role and future of socialism in Barbary Shore. The allegorical system may be seen clearly in the outlines of the story. McLeod, a worn-out Marxist and former member of both the Communist Party and the State Department, is hounded to his death by a cruel, ignorant and slavish agent of the CIA, Leroy Hollingsworth. They occupy rooms in a Brooklyn boarding house presided over by a fleshpot of American bourgeois sentimentality, Beverley Guinevere, who lives in the basement, symbolically the foundation of the sick society being caricatured. Two other boarders occupy the house; Lannie Madison, a psychotic but deeply human
nihilist, whose insights into the exploitive nature of capitalism counterpoint the sincere but plodding idealism of the narrator and sixth occupant, the would-be writer Mikey Lovett.

The political allegory hinges on Guinevere's varying sexual relationships with her boarders. It is her house in which the action takes place, because she is the owner and "silent majority" of America, and it is for her favor that those who would gain political power must vie. McLeod (cloud-like, he vanishes at story's end, his early faith in Soviet Communism shattered by the abuses of Stalinism) has already had his chance with Guinevere: half-way through the story we learn that he is married to her though he now lives alone in the attic. Their relationship has virtually ended before the novel begins, and all that is left of America's Depression romance with Marxism is a beautiful but demonic "nude nymph", Monina, whom her mother keeps from power by endless baby talk; the promise Monina once represented is stifled by her mother's ludicrous ambition to turn her child into a movie star.

The basis of America's political appeal is her pluralism, and it is Guinevere's willingness to sleep with anyone - "She's a nymphomaniac" Lovett is told - that fascinates the young, lonely narrator. Hoping that she can use him to spy on the activities of the other boarders, Guinevere encourages Mikey. But it soon becomes clear that she is a shameless liar: "My husband and myself were Jehovah's Witnesses", she
tells Mikey, and later, "Smith, Smith's my husband's name".\textsuperscript{16}

Even after the naive Mikey (the diminutive form is used consistently) has realized that he has no hope of bedding her, Guinevere tries to keep him dependent on her:

\begin{quote}
Be a good guy and remember I'm the one who told you all about it. You know, I do something for you, and you do something for me . . . Her voice trailed off.\textsuperscript{17}
\end{quote}

But if Guinevere shuns a sexual relationship with her two socialists, she is nevertheless vital and sexy in a bold American fashion. Moreover, she is fascinated by her own materialistic beauty and so the motherseeking, post-political Lannie is a desirable object for her. It is interesting that Mailer chooses to characterize America in female form, suggesting perhaps, that the masses are passive, dissatisfied, and a little unable to decide what they really want. His sense of reality slowly awakening, Mikey tells Guinevere "You never make up your mind. You want everyone else to do it for you." It is the wild, free, lawless Lannie who can offer Mrs. America what she really wants. Their lesbian liaison becomes the perfect symbol, reminiscent of Whitman's "Song of Myself", of a land full and complete in itself - again, woman is the necessary embodiment. "You are different" says Lannie, and we might add, "America, from all those other nations":

There is no one else like you, and you are beautiful . . . to think of you years ago, . . . and how everyone passed through you and over you, and if you became drunk enough you could think you loved them, but it was never true. You were too beautiful, and what did they know of you, what does a boot know
of the ground it soils? You gave yourself to them, and yet you were always free, for you wanted more than they did, you agreed to them and followed their ways, but you were miserable because that could never be for you. How could you love them when it was only yourself that you loved, and you are so right in that because we are born to love ourselves and that is the secret of everything. All your life you searched for a mirror to find your beauty, to see how your skin glows and your body swells in rapture and the hymn that is in you may be sung to yourself... But no one could give you even a tarnished dirty picture of yourself, for how may a boot reflect beauty? And how could they see that you were alive and that your face could shine and there was a color in you and such a sweet song, when they didn't want that, they wanted to swill and grind you into the dirt and tromp tromp tromp. What an island you must have lived in, what a cry there is in you for delivery. And that is why you love me, for I would be a mirror to you, and we escape only when we follow our mirror and let it lead us out of the forest. I can let you see your beauty, and so you will love me, for I adore you and unlike the others want nothing but to lie in your arms, the mirror.19

This is Mailer's love-paeon to America, and its boundless romanticism is directly in the tradition of earlier American anarchists like Whitman and Thoreau. This real affection which Mailer bears for America is perhaps too easily lost sight of. Despite numerous changes in relationship, the persistence of the feeling and its ambiguities is revealed much later in Armies of the Night:

—his love for America: he had first come to love America when he served in the U.S. Army, not the America of course of the flag, the patriotic unendurable fix of the television programs and the newspapers... (but) the democratic principle with its faith in the common man.20

Lannie, who as an anarchist shares Mailer's suspicion of all political positions, right and left, describes
Guinevere's lovers and the way politicians have used America: "everyone passed through you and over you . . . What does a boot know of the ground it soils?" Lannie expresses a tenet of existential politics developed later in *The Presidential Papers*: "The secret of everything (is) to love ourselves". Much later, Mailer's anarchic politics persist as he castigates the radical Left: "the Left had been until this year the secret unwitting accomplice of every increase in the power of the technicians, bureaucrats, and labor leaders who ran the governmental military-industrial complex of super-technology land".¹

Mailer's depth as a writer is indicated by the richness of metaphor in Lannie's speech quoted above. Not only is this a passionate avowal of love for the possibilities of America; it is also effective on the literal level as part of a highly erotic scene and as an example of one of Mailer's favorite metaphors, the sexual. The narcissistic affection of Lannie-Guinevere is like the tendency of bourgeois America to find itself so unique among nations as to deny any necessity for fundamental social change.

Guinevere's circle of sexual liaisons is completed in her affair with the sinister, insensitive government agent, Leroy Hollingsworth. When she leaves with him at the novel's end, the allegory places America safely in the arms of a bureaucratic and crudely efficient police state. Sent to obtain a mysterious "little object" from her husband,
Hollingsworth is small-minded; ill-educated, and hypocritically lecherous, representing all the anti-human forces of totalitarianism in the U.S. That he kills McLeod and goes off with Guinevere is the final working out of the main political theme: the death of old-style socialism and the seduction of the American middle class by thinly disguised fascism which Mailer predicted in *The Naked and The Dead*. The destructive nature of this relationship is given again in terms of sexual metaphor as Lovett overhears Hollingsworth's sick response to Guinevere's melodramatic, "Do you still love me?" To this point in the story, Hollingsworth has displayed a puritanical cleanliness of language, but his underlying animalism is suddenly revealed:

I was to hear another Hollingsworth. "Yes, I love you," he said, his delivery pitched in novel tones for me. As though language were a catapult he proceeded to tell her how he loved her, his speech containing more obscenity than I had ever heard in so short a space, and in rapid succession with a gusto that could have matched Guinevere's description of the doctor, he named various parts of her body and described what he would do to not with them, how he would tear this and squeeze that, eat here and spit there, butcher rough and slice fine, slash, macerate, pillage, all in an unrecognizable voice which must have issued from between clenched teeth, until his appetite satisfied, I could see him squatting beside the carcass, his mouth wiped carefully with the back of his hand. With that, he sighed, as much as to say, "A good piece of ass, by God!"22

Obviously, Mailer is familiar with the sweats and nuances of sex, but it is essential to an understanding of this passage to note that the imagery is entirely demonic and without love: "butcher", "slash", "pillage", "appetite", 


all indicate the nature of the forces lurking beneath the fascist in his "love" for America's body, while "squatting satisfied" he gives the Devil's ironic blessing with a final "By God". Also, the conscious political metaphor here makes Barbary Shore an interesting example of what Kate Millet has called sexual politics. Sexual politics is the use of sex as a power relationship, as, for example, the maintenance of male power in Western society. The technocrats who Hollingsworth represents have been "fucking" America figuratively for some time; Mailer simply makes the analogy literal, with a few sadistic touches thrown in for good measure.

Concern with society and its sexual-political difficulties is one side of Mailer's coin; on the other is the individual, and the problems of his survival and growth in a hostile environment. As Mailer's first first-person narrator, Mikey Lovett is important not only for his individualism, but for the light he casts on the development of Mailer's use of persona in his later works. In Advertisements for Myself, speaking of the huge success which attended the publication of The Naked and The Dead when he was twenty-five, Mailer states:

Willy-nilly I had had existentialism forced upon me. I was free, or at least whatever was still ready to change in my character had escaped from the social obligations which suffocate others. I could seek to become what I chose to be, and if I failed - there was the ice pick of fear! I would have nothing to excuse failure. I would fail because I had not been brave enough to succeed...
Barbary Shore was really a book to emerge from the bombarded cellars of my subconscious, an agonized eye of a novel which tried to find some amalgam of my new experience . . . 23

If the novel was the "eye" of the new experience, Mikey Lovett is the nerve centre of the eye. "Probably I was in the war" says Lovett in the opening sentence of the novel, immediately reminding us of Mailer's own roots, with the rest of his generation in World War II. He is a man without a face - he wears the plastic surgeon's "art", and without memory of the past. Like his author, he has been thrust "willy-nilly" into an existential void wherein he must create his own reality or be lost in a purgatory of life devoid of accomplishment. In fact, it is just such a purgatory in which Lovett is caught. The main symbol of Mikey's suffering is his frustrated sexual life. Although Guinevere seems at first genuinely interested in him, her lust soon cools to a calculated assessment of how she can use him without giving herself. As the embodiment of middle-class America, Guinevere is so narcissistic as to prefer another woman anyway. But Mikey does have one complete sexual experience, with the radical Lannie, who ironically, also becomes Guinevere's lover. Mikey's uncertainty and lack of feeling at her touch betray that the young man in this portrait of the artist is ineffective politically and artistically too:
I kissed her forehead almost automatically. With a quick motion she came into my arms, thrust her mouth upward, and kissed me. Her lips were feverish, and her slender body bore against mine, hugging me in a wiry embrace. Intoxicated with fatigue we clung to each other, swayed across the room to sprawl upon her bed.

Her body arched against mine, rigid to the touch, her mouth tight as though she must repel even as she would accept. I held her in my arms, gave her my body to which she could cling, and remotely without tenderness or desire or even incapacity I performed, riding through the darkness of my closed eyes while she sobbed beneath me in fathomless desperation.25

He is certain of only one thing about himself: that "I cannot be less than twenty-five", Mailer's age at the time his first and most popular novel was published. Both have been "scarred" by an event - war or successful novel, which leaves them rootless, existentially floating free. Although it is fruitless to attempt to "prove" that Lovett is Mailer, other striking similarities occur: most notably Lovett's political stance as keeper of the sacred flame, which in this case is the non-symbol of the "little object"; his "Narcissism", and the simple important fact that he too is a writer.

But there are distinctions to be made between author and narrator. First, Lovett is unpublished and has yet to prove his professional identity; more importantly, consciousness is some distance from the enlightenment which Mailer obviously and necessarily assumes to be his. Lovett may represent an earlier version of Mailer - his initials, ML, are reversals of subsequent letters in the alphabet,
as are the letters NM: "this is NM at an earlier remove", this playful gimmick would tell us. Mailer's own political stance is somewhere between Mikey's and Lannie's, whose nihilism causes her to reject both Lovett's naivete, and Marx's hope of a better world:

It's only you who is still the fool as I was once the fool. And you will not recognize that all these years, ever since the great man sat on his piles in the British Museum and let us think there was a world we could make, when all the time he was wrong, and we've been wrong, and there's no world to make for the world devours ... There are no solutions, there are only exceptions, and therefore we are without good and without evil. (italics added)

This denial of differentiation between good and evil, becomes in more sophisticated form, an important cornerstone of Mailer's later philosophy.

Discussing Barbary Shore in Advertisements, Mailer says, "much of my later writing cannot be understood without a glimpse of the odd shadow and theme-maddened light which Barbary Shore casts before it." What he is referring to, I think, is the search for identity which is both Mikey's and his own. In fact, this search, and the continual picking up and casting off of masks which it entails, becomes the cohering pattern of Mailer's work. Whether the mask is Mikey, Sergius O'Shaughnessy in The Deer Park, Mailer in Advertisements, Rojack in An American Dream, DJ in Why Are We in Vietnam?, the sense that the same consciousness underlies all these characters remains.
What carries through all of these identity crises is the need to find oneself not in social, but in individual and internal terms. Even Steven Rojack, like Mailer famous and successful, needs to define his reality in terms which will satisfy some basic inner urge to be and do, rather than the demands of his environment. If one considers all of Mailer's narrators to be aspects of the same "meta-figure", there is a clear pattern of growth, increased confidence and maturity, and ability to come to terms with society, culminating in the existential super-heroes of *An American Dream* and *Armies of The Night*.

One cannot read Barbary Shore carefully without gaining a sense of the importance Mailer attaches to the narrative voice, and of the pre-eminence of the theme of Mikey's search for himself. Again and again, Lovett indulges in long reveries: nightmares left over from the war, an idyllic love affair, and above all, speculations on his true identity:

At times I am certain I used to lie on the bunk and stare at a photo of myself taken in England or was it in Africa? I would examine the face which the doctors assured me would be almost duplicated. Yet I must imagine this, for of all the hours I looked at the snapshot I cannot remember that face at all, and I do not know if I think of it now or whether, lying in that cot, I saw all the endless children who waited for our leavings on garbage lines . . . I felt a crisis in my work, impulses so contradictory, understanding so scattered, that an hour or two could go by and I would produce no more than a line or two and then discard it.29

The recurring motif of masks, faces, photographic and written records of an ineluctable reality are the beginnings of what is to become Mailer's most persistent theme, his own
mystical search for identity and relationship in a cosmos devoid of certainty. The picking up and casting off of masks becomes the chief symbol of Mailer's next narrator, Sergius O'Shaughnessy.
Chapter 3

Mailer has documented the slow, painful genesis of The Deer Park in Advertisements for Myself. He includes sections of a "Rinehart version", originally scheduled for publication by Rinehart's, and a "Putnam version", substantially revised after the original publishers balked at alleged obscenities in the book.

Of special concern to Mailer in the revision was the narrative voice of Sergius O'Shaughnessy. In the earlier version it had been written in a style "false to the life of my narrator", sounding too much "like Nick Carraway in The Great Gatsby". Either he could change O'Shaughnessy's background of flier and orphan, or painstakingly change "the style from the inside of each sentence". Mailer's meticulousness as a writer, and the importance which he attaches to the nuances of his narrative voices is shown in his choice of the second alternative. His own identity is too much involved with O'Shaughnessy's to allow carelessness.

In several respects, Sergius O'Shaughnessy resembles Mikey Lovett. Both are unpublished writers, both were in the war, and both bear the scars, especially psychic, of the time spent in the military. Both are rootless in their lack of home, family and identifiable background. It is no accident that these traits also identify Mailer's own
position as writer at the time, existentially "cut off" from his roots by the huge early success of *The Naked and The Dead*.

The poker win which sets Sergius up for his stay in the Hollywood resort of Desert D'or is like the quick success of *The Naked and The Dead*: a stroke of luck releases each from the necessity to pay the customary social dues, requiring instead the act-by-act awareness of the hipster. Sergius describes his good fortune as a totally unforeseen event:

> I grew up in a home for orphans. Still intact at the age of twenty-three, wearing my flying wings and a First Lieutenant's uniform, I arrived at the resort with fourteen thousand dollars, a sum I picked up via a poker game in a Tokyo hotel room while waiting with other fliers for our plane home. The curiosity is that I was never a gambler, I did not even like the game, but I had nothing to lose that night, and maybe for such a reason I accepted the luck of my cards.32

Having "nothing to lose", Sergius has the quality of existential authenticity required to act boldly. But he soon loses his freedom, trapped in his attachment for Lola Meyers, a beautiful, mindless movie star. Sergius becomes caught in the sexual circle of Hell, though at novel's end there is still hope that he will make it as a writer. Mailer's fear was that having succeeded in his first novel, he was now "burned out", a term with both sexual and artistic significance. Mailer seriously feared that he could not recuperate the creative energies used up in his initial achievement.
By the time he was in the process of rewriting The Deer Park, Mailer's courage and confidence had been severely sapped by the lack of either popular or critical success for Barbary Shore.

I needed a success and I needed it badly if I was to shed the fatigue I had been carrying since Barbary Shore. . . . I knew if The Deer Park was a powerful best seller . . . that I would have won. I would be the first serious writer of my generation to have a best seller twice, and so it would not matter what was said about the book. . . . Through every part of me, I knew The Deer Park had damn well better make it or I was close to some serious illness, a real apathy of the will.33

It would be a mistake, to be sure, to look for a reflection of this desperation in the actions of Sergius. But the consciousness of Sergius reveals many of the terrors which haunted Mailer's concern with his own career at the time of the writing of The Deer Park:

I seemed unable to create a narrator in the first person who was not over-delicate, oversensitive, and painfully tender, which was an odd portrait to give, because I was not delicate, not physically; when it was a matter of strength I had as much as the next man . . . Yet the first person seemed to paralyze me as if I had a horror of creating a voice which could be in any way bigger than myself. So I had become mired in a false style for every narrator I tried. If now I had been in a fight, had found out that no matter how weak I could be in certain ways, I was also steady enough to hang onto six important lines [the "Thumb-sucking" episode in The Deer Park], that may have given me new respect for myself, I don't know, but for the first time I was able to use the first person in a way where I could suggest some of the stubbornness and beligerance I also might have. I was able to color the empty reality of that first person with some real feeling of how I had always felt, which was to be outside, for Brooklyn where I grew up is not the centre of anything.34(italics added)
Sergius is a "portrait" with "some real feeling of how I had always felt".

The first-person problem is a source of "horror" because of the large investment of his own experience the author must make in it. Part of his own drama - the conflict between himself and a reluctant publisher - becomes incorporated in The Deer Park's theme of artistic integrity. As a result I was now creating a man who was braver and stronger than me, and the more my new style succeeded, the more I was writing an implicit portrait of myself as well.

Furthermore, there is a relationship between The Deer Park's treatment of a writer's inability to write - symbolized and actualized in Sergius' sexual impotence - and Mailer's private hell of doubt - the inability to act, documented in Advertisements.

The title The Deer Park comes from the name of Louis XV's fabulous "gorge of innocence and virtue" near Versailles, a garden of debauchery and sexual abandonment whose inhabitants return to society at last, to infect it with the degradations and vices which they have learned there. The parallel is that Hollywood is the centre of a decadent culture, from whence its many sins are transmitted by film and other media to the rest of society. At another level, Hollywood is "Hell", and its demons flicker forth to corrupt a fascinated world. Referred to throughout the novel as "the Capital", Hollywood is the centre of twentieth-century debauchery, while "Desert D'Or" is Palm Springs, its
sun-and-sin playground. From the political purgatory of Barbary Shore, the theme of The Deer Park descends to a sexual wilderness, a hell of endless sensuality in which energies are sapped and good men corrupted.

The book is peopled by a weird but believable collection of Hollywood types: Herman Teppis, the arrogant, stupid apotheosis of bourgeois values, and head of Supreme Pictures; Collie Munshin, his star producer and son-in-law; Lulu Meyers, a glamour star in the image of Lana Turner; Teddy Pope, her inconveniently homosexual leading man, and assorted other hangers-on. At the centre of the story is Sergius' friendship with Charles Eitel, a formerly influential director whose scruples have caused him to be blacklisted by "the Committee". The Committee is the embodiment of the sort of power Mailer most deplores in American society, modelled after the HUAC investigations into communist infiltration of the film industry held in Los Angeles in 1947. In the curious way by which life imitates art in Mailer's world, one of the Committee's original members was Richard M. Nixon, about whom Mailer later has some things to say in Miami and the Siege of Chicago.

A man of moral and artistic pretensions, Eitel is tortured by the realization that blacklisted or not, he may be beyond the point in his career when he is able to produce work of stature. Earlier in his career, he sold out to the necessity for commercial success, and though
his pictures have made a conscionable compromise between art and box-office, he cannot get rid of the obsession that "the big one" remains in him. "An alcholic, a drug addict, a satyr", Eitel is respected and yet hated enough in the film world to be the subject of perpetual talk. His name, which Sergius takes the trouble to point out is pronounced "eye-tell", suggests his ultimate capitulation in telling the Committee what it wants to hear him say. Moreover, he represents the artist who is over the hill, too withered by political, sexual and personal compromises to be capable of authentic work. Eitel's problems as an artist are paralleled by misgivings about his ability to love and make love. This is the first clear appearance of an idea which becomes central in Mailer, Wilhelm Reich's thesis that sexual and other forms of achievement are interdependent. Eitel is conscious of the relationship between his artistic and sexual potency, as early in the novel he discusses the problem of having his newest film produced:

There's a producer I know in London. I don't like him much, but if I have to, I can work with him. We've corresponded. He's wild about my idea, and in Europe I can direct the picture under a pseudonym. All that's necessary is to write a good script." He sighed. "Only, it's not that simple. I feel as if I've been ... amputated. You know, I haven't had a woman in three months."

Eitel's willingness to work under a pseudonym with a producer he hates reveals not only his lack of artistic and political guts, but the "amputation" of his sexuality.
Without existential validity, the artist is both figuratively and literally impotent. Like McLeod, the broken Marxist of Barbary Shore, Eitel's sexual difficulties parallel those of his career. McLeod has given up his political affiliations and his marriage, and lives alone in the attic, waiting for inevitable death, just as Eitel looks back on a life of broken marriages and mediocre films. But whereas McLeod's time has passed before Barbary Shore begins, there is still the possibility that Eitel can make it both as an artist and as a lover. Faced with the choice of capitulating to the Committee in order to get off the infamous Hollywood blacklist or striking out into the existential void alone, Eitel opts for compromise. The statement he makes to the Committee is ignominious and without redeeming value:

It has taken me a year of wasted and misplaced effort to recognize the useful and patriotic function of the Committee, and I testify today without duress, proud to be able to contribute my share to the defense of this country against all infiltration and subversion. With a firm knowledge of the democratic heritage we share, I can only add that it is the duty of every citizen to aid the Committee in its work with whatever knowledge he may possess.39

The Orwellian overtones of this statement finalize the capitulation of liberalism, represented by Eitel, to the overwhelming power of institutional totalitarianism, which the Committee, drawn from life, not merely represents, but is.
Eitel's surrender occurs at the climactic point of the novel, coinciding with the end of his affair with Elena, and with the resumption of his co-optive Hollywood career.

In Sergius, however, there remains the potentiality of genuine artistry, for he has spurned Teppis' corrupting offer to buy the rights to his life's story. Repeating the pattern of *Barbary Shore* whereby the old generation passes on the challenge to the new, Eitel says in an imagined last conversation:

> So do try, Sergius, 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, your small trumpet of defiance.41

The "other", "real world" is that of the artist imagination, and such concrete forms as may make it manifest. This revelation throws light back on a pattern of shadow and "real" worlds that permeates *The Deer Park*, a contemporary version of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave". Like a Resnais film, it moves back and forth in an interplay of the perceived and the imagined at various levels: the phoniness of Hollywood columnists and movie folk; life as it is and as it appears on the screen; the world of the artist's imagination just mentioned; the many masks of the narrator, Sergius O'Shaughnessy; and various motifs of projected and reflected reality.

The mood of the novel is set early by Sergius' description of the stereotyped neighbourhood and house in which he lives. *Life in Desert D'Or* is "like like living in a room whose walls are mirrors. In fact, my house had a twenty-foot mirror which faced the wall of plate-glass window."40
This "Hollywood" novel is nevertheless set in Hollywood's desert resort, a place of mirages, swimming pool reflections, and every kind of dishonesty. Even the titles of Eitel's recent movies hint at the illusory, self-indulgent quality of life in the film capital: *Love is But a Moment* and an innocuous musical called *Clouds Ahoy*. The hypocritical Herman Teppis' comment on the relationship of his pictures to reality is typical of Hollywood's superficial commitment to even the most elementary of artistic truths:

Real things? We bring real things to them. Realism. But because a fellow in an Italian movie vomits all over the place and they like it in some art theatre that doesn't even have air cooling, we should bring them vomit?

There is an unwitting touch of surrealism in Teppis' comparison of Italian neo-realism with the - for him - higher reality of air-conditioned theatres.

The novel's mood of unreality is typified by a description of a poolside party, where charades are played and a drunk is scolded for climbing onto a decorative paper mache camera. In a business where public image is everything and private reality an embarrassment, Teppis has photographs taken of his two leading stars, the mindless Lulu and homosexual Teddy, in order to promote their public image as "America's Royal couple of entertainment".

... for a while the scene was busy with the flashbulbs of the cameras, the shifting of positions, and the directions given by the photographers. I saw Teppis in place between Teddy and Lulu, Lulu between the two men
Teddy and Lulu together, Teddy and Lulu apart, Teppis holding Lulu's hand in a fatherly way, Teppis photographed with his hand on Teppis' elbow. I was struck by how well they did it, Teddy smiling, happy, healthy, and Lulu sweet, Lulu demure, Lulu ready, all with an ease that balanced the pride of Herman Teppis.43

Reality is simply another commodity, engineered by pimps like Teppis and Marion Faye for mass consumption.

The connection between this overall theme and the identity search of the narrator is made explicit as Sergius muses over the roles open to him:

Among the different people each of us has in himself is the gossip columnist I could have been. Maybe I would have been a bad columnist - I'm honest by inclination - but I would have been the first who saw it as an art. Quite a few times I have thought that a newspaperman is obsessed with finding the facts in order to tell a lie, and a novelist is a galley-slave to his imagination so he can look for the truth. I know that for a lot of what follows I must use my imagination.44

Meanwhile, Sergius (and Mailer) makes a convincing, if solipsistic point. Sergius faces a dual problem as a writer; he must decide not only which of many roles open to him he will play, but what measure of imagination, or even "lies" he must tell in order to describe the interior truth of a situation. What is truth? How may it be captured and expressed in a limited medium? These questions bother not only Sergius, but Mailer. There is an interplay, a dialectic between a reality and the words used to describe it. To do justice to that reality, the writer must somehow be able to move through the infinite points of view surrounding it, without becoming fixed by one point of view. As a
young writer seeking to resolve the paradox of objective and subjective reality, Sergius has advanced to the point of realizing that imagination must form a part of truth. Mailer's final solution of the problem is found in a letter he wrote in response to a hostile reader in the Village Voice in 1956. That solution rests on the ability to play all roles, to be able to take all points of view of a position:

I have used the word "dialectic" - dialectical process has been going on: - the Thesis of last week about my fictional character becoming the Antithesis this week. (That is: Mailer, the empty, arrogant stupid snot of Jan. 25 is now as of Feb. 1, being considered as a tortured, agonized artist.) Where we go from here I am curious to know. But that we will go in some unpredictable direction, I would venture to guess, for after all, I am on fairly intimate terms with Norman Mailer.

Reflectively,
Norman Mailer
(VV Feb. 1, 1956, p.11)

The self-ironic end of this letter, especially the punning close, "reflectively", epitomize Mailer's ability to laugh at his own masks, and more importantly, his awareness that his persona is simply that: a mask which he can put on or take off at any time, whether he lets the reader in on the secret or not. Mailer's position is no position: truth is relative and dynamic, and so is identity. The essential thing is to remain in "process", to keep trying on new masks, and new models of an infinitely complex experience.

Whereas Mikey Lovett remains more or less frozen in inaction throughout Barbary Shore, Sergius has managed to
begin growing towards the complete awareness of Rojack and Mailer. This is emphasized by Sergius himself, who from the vantage point of the maturity gained through the experiences of _The Deer Park_, is able to reflect upon his own progress towards existential consciousness:

I have picked up something of an education since I was in Desert D'Or, but Eitel is very different from me, and I do not know if I can find his style. Yet, imagination becomes a vice if we do not exercise it. One of these days I am going to write a book about a town I visited for twenty minutes, and if I do it well enough, everybody will believe I lived there for twenty years. So there is no use in making apologies - I have the conceit that I know what happened . . . 45

Not only is Sergius more mature than during the events of the story, he has the novelist's and existentialist's knowledge that reality is something you create for yourself: "I have the conceit that I know what happened".

But to learn to know, he has had to experience despair, the fear that he has no talent as a writer:

I touched the bottom . . . I wallowed in it, I looked at myself, and the longer I looked the less terrifying it became and the more understandable. I began then to make the first painful efforts to acquire the most elusive habit of all, the mind of the writer, and though I could hardly judge from my early pages whether I were a talent or a fool, I continued, I went for a little while, until I ended with an idea that many men have had, and many will have again - and indeed I started with that idea - but I knew that finally one must do, simply do, for we act in total ignorance and yet in honest ignorance we must act . . . 46

The artist's rebirth in the dark night of the soul in which nothing is certain, neither reality or his own ability, occurs when he is ready to take the existential leap: for
the artist, action - writing, - is the necessary act of self-definition. "Finally, one must do, simply do", simply because action is better than no action. One more of the motifs of shifting reality and its temporary nature needs to be mentioned. It is the myriad of names given to Sergius at various points in the story: Gus, Spike, Mac, Slim, all childhood nicknames; John Yard, Teppis' suggestion for a stage name; Silgius McShonessy and Shamus Something-or-Other, the errors of the Hollywood ignorant; and even "Mr. Meyers", when it is speculated by gossip columnists that he may marry Lulu. In addition to its connection to The Deer Park's concern with "reality", Sergius' many faces provide us with a clue to the riddle, posed in the title of a recent film, "Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up".

Although he shows signs of beginning to make it as a writer - he is a step farther along than Mikey Lovett - Sergius is not being offered as an existential hero, though his potential is later developed in several short stories narrated by him, notably "The Time of Her Time". Sergius is growing and he will achieve hipness as Rojack in An American Dream. Closest to Mailer's prescription for "heroic" existential consciousness is Marion Faye, with Sergius, Eitel and Elena, the last of the main characters. If Barbary Shore is Mailer's purgatory - its victims drifting near a shore between barbarous totalitarianism and barbarous chaos - then The Deer Park is Hell, and Faye is its
presiding Devil. The reference to Hell is made explicit by Faye in the stage version of *The Deer Park*. Sex is the chief instrument of torture in this hell, and as a pimp, Faye gets to toy with his victims by providing them with the partners with whom they think they will find love and the multisensual delights of Babylon. "Do you think we choose our mates?" Eitel asks Sergius, in recognition of man's powerlessness to control his own fate in such a wilderness.

Faye is ruthless, bisexual, highly intelligent, and in the system of Mailer's mythos of the existential hero, possesses supernatural powers, symbolized by his use of the Tarot and his dabbling in black magic. Like Croft in *The Naked and The Dead*, he is a prototype of the hipster, and has discovered the secret of power; he knows that "he could be impregnable if sex was of disinterest to him and that was how to be superior to everyone else". But while he does not lust for sex, Faye lusts for power, and so is corrupt.

As the Beelzelbub of sexual politics, Faye looks forward to annihilation and apocalypse, conceived in atomic terms which remind us that the profound guilt of Hiroshima remains to be expunged:

So let it come, Faye thought, let this explosion come and then another, and all the others, until the Sun God burned all the earth. Let it come, he thought, looking into the east at Mecca where the bombs ticked while he stood on a tiny rise of ground trying to see one hundred, two hundred, three hundred miles across the desert. Let it come, Faye begged, like a man praying for rain, let it
come and clear the rot and the stench and the stink,
let it come for all of everywhere, just so it comes
and the world stands clear in the white dead dawn.

And yet in this psychopathic longing for the resolution of all
difficulties in chaos, Faye, like Croft, falls short of sheer
demonism: "he had his drop of mercy after all", and he pulls
back from the abyss which his near-murder of Elena represents.
His last words indicate that the complete existential hero is
not quite ready to appear: "'To make it, maybe I need a year
in prison. More education!' he tried to say, but a spasm
of pain was carrying him into a coma."

The figure of Faye, the prophet of apocalypse, re-appears
in the full adolescent glory of DJ Jethroe in Why Are We In
Vietnam?
Chapter 4

In order to comprehend the unique importance which Mailer's own career has in relation to his philosophical outlook, it is essential to examine the tenets of being and action laid down in his seminal essay "The White Negro". First published by City Lights Bookshop in 1957, it appeared in the 1957 summer issue of Dissent, (to which Mailer has contributed regularly) and was reprinted with a long prefatory advertisement in Advertisements for Myself.

"The White Negro" represents the working out of several problems - politics, sexuality, and their relationship to his art - that Mailer wrestled with in the years after writing The Naked and The Dead, and which struggle he describes elsewhere in Advertisements. Politically, he had moved from the hopefulness implicit in his association with Henry Wallace's campaign for president in 1948, through a disenchantment with communism reflected by McLeod and Lovett, to a kind of responsible anarchism, evident in the wildly romantic yet always sensible political writing he did for Dissent and The Village Voice. He proposed Ernest Hemingway as the Democratic Party's candidate for president in 1956 for the reason that "the American people tend to vote for the candidate who gives off the impression of having experienced some pleasure in his life...", suggesting that Hemingway's personal bravery, his articulateness and
and especially his hipsterism made him the ideal candidate. Recognizing that revolution in individual consciousness must precede fundamental political change, Mailer's radical political proposals are usually feasible, unlike those of less thoughtful elements of the New Left.

Sexually, there is a parallel to the increasing maturity of his first-person narrators in Mailer's own attitudes. In 1954 he wrote a short piece for the homosexual magazine One, in which he makes the painful admission that he had been a "bigot" in his attitudes towards homosexuals. He frankly describes the lack of human sympathy which caused him to ascribe more or less sinister connotations to homosexual figures in his novels, like Cummings in The Naked and The Dead, whose latent homosexuality is used as part of his unsavory moral stance. After reading Donald Cory's The Homosexual in America,

I began to face up to my homosexual bias. I had been a libertarian socialist for some years, and implicit in all my beliefs was the idea that society must allow every individual his own road to discovering himself. Libertarian socialism (the first word is as important as the second) implies inevitably that one have respect for the varieties of human experience. Very basic to everything I had thought was that sexual relations, above everything else, demand their liberty, even if such liberty should amount to no more than compulsion or necessity. For, in the reverse, history has certainly offered enough examples of the link between sexual repression and political repression. . . . for the first time I understood homosexual persecution to be a political act and a reactionary act, and I was properly ashamed of myself.53

Not only is Mailer making clear in 1954 the nature of sexual politics; he is also characteristically documenting another
important change in his personal value system, paralleled by the change in Lovett-Sergius-Rojack. Although there is nothing particularly hip in revealing the intimate details of one's own spiritual progress - that is connected rather to his attempt to alter the reader's consciousness - what is hip here is the ability, awareness, and finally, the courage to change. The essence of hipness is the potentiality for change. The Square is trapped in a value system which makes particular kinds of growth impossible. So the Square begins to fall away from life, since one can never merely stay the same, but either grow towards the unknown, or sink into less-ness in the failure to try.

"The White Negro" begins with a reminder of the apocalyptic realities of atomic bomb and gas chamber upon which mid-twentieth century consciousness rests, however uneasily. We are forced to live with the realization that death may come at any moment as an absurd deus ex machina, contradicting the Faustian domination of nature which has characterized Western science. This results in "the intolerable anxiety that death being causeless, life was causeless as well". Moreover, the possibility of the instant death threatened by the warmakers is complemented by the "slow death by conformity, with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled", leading to individual and collective cancer. The hipster is he who first accepts the terms of contemporary death-in-life, and then sets out into an unknown wilderness,
into the rebellious imperatives of the self . . .
whether the life is criminal or not, the decision is
to encourage the psychopath in oneself, to explore that
domain of experience where security is boredom and
therefore sickness, and one exists in the present,
in that enormous present which is without past or
future, memory or planned intention, the life where
a man must go until he is beat, where he must gamble
with the energies through all those small or large
crises of courage and unforeseen situations which
beset his day, where he must be with it or doomed not
to swing.

The unstated essence of hip, its psychopathic brilliance,
quivers with the knowledge that new kinds of victories
increase one's power for new kinds of perception;
and defeats, the wrong kind of defeats, attack the body
and imprison one's energy until one is jailed in the
prison of other people's habits, other people's
defeats, boredom, quiet desperation, and muted icy
self-destroying rage.56

The "energy" Mailer is talking about is related to Lawrence's
"blood" and Reich's "orgone, the flow of psycho-sexual powers
through life, and the ways in which they must not be thwarted.
In America (and it is important to remember that Mailer is
talking about a specifically American existentialism), it is
the Negro who virtually alone among cultural sub-groupings has
not lost the relationship between everyday life and a healthy
sexuality. In the uneasy alliance between the bohemian, the
juvenile delinquent and the Negro which is the hipster, "it
was the Negro who brought the cultural dowry",57 his unin-
hibited sexuality.

While the Negro has retained the spontaneous primitiveness
of his ancestors, white society has long since given in to the
puritanical forces of anti-life which lead to frustration, per-
versity (Herman Teppis' kind) and cancer. But the hostile environ-
ment in which the Negro finds himself forces him to take
meaning where he can find it, and he survives on the synapses of sex and violence. To the Negro, "life was war"\textsuperscript{58}, giving him the sense of alienation and confrontation vital to hipness.

To be hip is to be in tune with the primeval depths of one's being, the pre-conscious intimations of the flesh and the id. Hip is primitive, impulsive, hyper-aware at each moment of existence, and even religious, in that the hipster is committed—however mysteriously—to the hope of spiritual improvement, by his recognition that life demands action.

Although the atheist too has accepted the fact of death, the hipster-mystic has "finally chosen to live with death", since he retains a sense of the ultimate unknowability of existence and the future which the atheist's belief in the emptiness of death negates. By retaining the sense of eternity in the face of death, the sense of God, Devil, Heaven and Hell as actual possibilities, the mystic places himself on the edge of a void which is forever dangerous and forever real.

So, too, for the existentialist. And the psychopath. And the saint and the bullfighter and the lover. The common denominator for all of them is their burning consciousness of the present, exactly that incandescent consciousness which the possibilities within death has opened to them. There is a depth of desperation to the condition which enables one to remain in life only by engaging death, but their reward is their knowledge that what is happening at each instant of the electric present is good or bad for them, good or bad for their cause, their love, their action, their need.\textsuperscript{59}
Intrinsic to the notion of hipness is a sense of rebellion, a theory of Mailer's friend Robert Lindner, author of *Rebel Without a Cause - The Hypoanalysis of a Criminal Psychopath*. The psychopath's goal is a totally personal one, an infantile impetus to satisfy his immediate wishes and desires, through rape, murder, or whatever other asocial behavior his inner needs dictate. Mailer sees the psychopath as the potential forerunner of a new order of consciousness in the twentieth century, for he is better "adapted to dominate those mutually contradictory inhibitions upon violence and love which civilization has exacted of us".

In his attempt to live in the eternal present, the psychopath-hipster finds he must "create a new nervous system for himself", for the one society would impose on him is debilitating and stagnant. The psychopath realizes that to stymie his impulses shrinks his being, and rather than hate himself for his cowardice, he will act out his fantasies, in order to free himself of the accumulated poisons of frustrated desires. By purging the evil within him, he becomes free to experience the good.

At bottom, the drama of the psychopath is that he seeks love. Not love as the search for a mate, but love as the search for an orgasm more apocalyptic than the one which preceded it. Orgasm is his therapy - he knows at the seed of his being that good orgasm opens his possibilities and bad orgasm imprisons him.

Like the Negro, the hipster-psychopath uses orgasm in order to externalize the intimations of his guts, to bring to consciousness and action the impulses, needs and desires of
the primitive reaches. But how can one love one's organism when it is teeming with impulses that offend his ingrained taboos and social strictures? The psychopath's answer is contained in the knowledge that
to change one's habits one must go back to the source of their creation, and so the psychopath exploring backward along the road of the homosexual, the orgiast, the drug-addict, the rapist, the robber and the murderer seeks to find those violent parallels to the violent and often hopeless contradictions he knew as an infant and as a child.62

This is psychoanalysis raised to the level of action. For to be hip it is not enough simply to know the source of one's psychic disabilities. The twofold nature of hip is awareness followed by action: the Word become Flesh.

Some of Mailer's readers seem to be confused by the term "the white Negro", and it should be made clear that the hipster is not some kind of bleached Uncle Tom, but anyone who has successfully discovered the Negro's normally intense state of awareness. In fact, Mailer has seemed somewhat inept in his handling of Negroes, both in fiction and real life. The only Negro figure of any importance in his four novels is Shago Martin, the pop-singer in An American Dream. But Shago does not possess all of the qualities Mailer attributes to the black: sexual and existential invincibility. The name Martin (good ol' Dean, another singer), suggests that Shago has had to become more than a little white to make it into the big time, so Rojack is able to overcome the "Negro's
natural superiority" in the fight for Cherry's affections.

In Mailer's entertaining essay on the first Liston-Patterson fight, one is struck by Mailer's abject humility in the face of black power, tellingly symbolized by the massive Liston. Mailer recognizes that he can never fully participate in the knowledge of being black, yet he dances fascinated, a clumsy moth around the mystery of black light. On a television show with Mohammed Ali in August, 1970, Mailer humbled himself in a way unbelievable to those familiar only with the supposedly ego-maniacal posturings of Advertisements. In the face of Ali's defiant refusal to acknowledge Mailer's avowals of admiration, Mailer persisted in making a fool of himself and apparently relished the role. Though Mailer denies himself the vanity that he participates in the deepest parts of black consciousness, he is nevertheless eager to play the part of scapegoat for the accumulated sins of white America.

The concept of hip may be clarified by some of the dualities it generates in its dialectic with the world of the Square. Mailer provides such a list in "The Hip and the Square", which, with "The White Negro", "forms the intellectual core of the primitive foray into the more formal aspects of Hip". The list is long, and I have selected representative pairs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hip</th>
<th>Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>wild</td>
<td>practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>romantic</td>
<td>classic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>instinct</td>
<td>logic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negro</td>
<td>white</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
spontaneous   orderly
nihilistic    authoritarian
associative   sequential
self          society
saint         clergyman
free will     determinism
Catholic      Protestant
D.H. Lawrence Aldous Huxley
hipster       beatnik
the present   the past and/or the
               planned future
dialectical   linear
barbarians    bohemians
illegitimacy  abortion
sex for orgasm sex for ego
sin           salvation
doubt         faith
grace         forde
murder        suicide
psychopathic  schizophrenic
orgy          onanist
murder or homosexuality  cancer
to seduce by reasoning
nuance        to seduce by touch
               to listen to the sound
meaning from there
               of the voice and take one's

Why should Catholic be hip and Protestant square?

In spite of Protestantism's traditional position on the side of freedom of conscience, "American Protestantism has become oriented to the machine" while Catholicism, for all its institutionalism, still values, like Hemingway, the concept of grace. Flesh is central in Mailer's world view and Catholicism has retained, however perversely, the notion that one's flesh is intrinsically related to one's salvation. Protestantism's separation of intellect and flesh, (which, incidentally, precipitated the rise of science and technocracy) its schizophrenia, is less existential than Catholicism's pathological bottling up of the body's impulses. Unlike the
sterilities of Protestantism, Catholicism perpetuates mystery, and though it is psychopathic, its psychopathy has worthwhile manifestations, like the infernoes of Bosch and Dali. Mystery, and the respect and daring of mystery, the refusal to "know" anything in advance, is what the hipster values above all else.

This being so, illegitimacy is superior to abortion, (a genius or a freak?) the apocalypse of orgasm better than the rigidities of ego-gratification, the uninhibited frenzies of the orgy happier than the sterilities of solitary masturbation. Spilt seed like life's energy, must be able to grow, not die.

But where does all this leave the artist? More to the point, where does it leave Norman Mailer? Is the ability to articulate these notions enough for a philosopher? No, it is not. The seed must find growth in the womb of his own life, and his life-style must reflect the reality of awareness becoming actualized. So if "The White Negro" is the "intellectual core" of Advertisements, the advertisements themselves are the actuarial core, the proof of Mailer's gut-pudding. The introductory statements to the various pieces of fiction and essay in Advertisements, and the later works in the confessional-developmental mode developed there, document Mailer's own odyssey: existentialism must go beyond the theory to have validity. The intimate details of his ambitions, fears, failures, fakes and futilities are the internal gospel of a savior whose own revolution in consciousness may elicit sympathetic revolutions in the reader.
What offends many readers, of course, are precisely those involutions of ego, gut-awareness and megalomania which are essential to his method of radicalizing our consciousness. His audacious identification with literary greats, assumptions of power in the writings on John and Jackie Kennedy, and the apparently infantile meanderings in the muck of his own career all involve the reader in a process of confirming, to use religious form, existential baptism. Take as an example, the five-page "Sixth Advertisement For Myself" which precedes "The White Negro" and is listed in a note at the beginning of Advertisements as among "the best pieces in the book".

The "Sixth Advertisement" is part of a ten-year saga in which the odyssey of a young writer who has "made it" is followed through various perils of public and private confrontations, as much interior as with the world. The point, of course, is that he has not "made it", but must continuously prove himself in new ways every day. Even such details as quitting cigarettes becomes part of the struggle. Having returned to New York after a time spent in Paris,

I decided to cut out cigarettes. I had made an attempt of two in New York, yet always went back after a few weeks - when one smokes forty cigarettes a day, it is not much easier to quit cigarettes than heroin. But I was doing some boxing now. My father-in-law had been a professional; he was always putting on the gloves with me. I thought it might not be so bad to get into condition. So I fought with ambition, greed, tension, new violence, new passivity, and did without cigarettes for four months. In that time, I blew up to one hundred and seventy-five pounds, but I was in nice
shape, and my senses were alert, I was liking a hundred things I had not liked before; it was the first time in the two years I had been travelling on marijuana that I could feel as if I might be gathering force instead of dissipating it. The existential confrontation, the reminders that one is still alive, are sources of life energy. 

Even in the trivial battles of cigarettes and fathers-in-law, the either-or decision courageously made enables one to get more out of existence, to like "a hundred things I had not liked before". But small battles may not be enough for a Mailer-sized ego, and the passage continues: "Everything was good, except that I could not write; my mind would have fine moments, but its powers of connection were dim; my brain seemed stuffed in cotton."

Suffering from creative constipation, Mailer is challenged by a journalist friend to write something which he feels is outrageous, to determine just how willing the newspapers are to print the unseemly. He responds with a short, "thick-tongued" piece postulating the idea that because of his natural sexual superiority, the Negro, if given political and social equality, would emerge with a net supremacy over the still-frustrated white masses.

His friend sends the few paragraphs to William Faulkner, who replies that the idea is characteristic of menopausal white women, and that perhaps Mailer should see a psychiatrist. This is the trigger that Mailer has been waiting for, and he answers Faulkner:
Like many novelists who have created an extraordinary body of work, Mr. Faulkner is a timid man who has led a sheltered life. So I would not be surprised if he has had his best and most intense conversations with sensitive middle-aged ladies.

I think it is interesting and attractive that they hold such ideas because I heard "my" ideas expressed in one form or another by a most intelligent Negro car-washer in Queens, a mulatto sneak-thief and pimp who was a friend of some friends of mine, and lastly by a rather remarkable woman who had been the madam of a whore-house in South Carolina, had sold dope in Harlem to keep afloat, and somehow succeeded in raising her family and passing into a life-loving middle age.

She was no saint, this woman, she was even downright treacherous upon one occasion, but I would tend to trust her sense of Negro-White relations in the south sooner than Mr. Faulkner's.

I'm a bit surprised that William Faulkner should think a psychiatrist could ever understand a writer. If this speech is somewhat bullying, it is because Mailer is acutely aware of the inferiority of his own literary reputation in relation to Faulkner's, (he has sufficient respect for that to model Why Are We in Vietnam? on Faulkner's "The Bear") and senses that he must overpower his better-established combatant. The heats of confrontation are stimulating too. But the most fascinating aspect of this one-sided clash is the mustering of Mailer's black allies; he must prove that he knows what he is talking about first-hand. And the adolescent, boasting tone of his acquaintance ship of the black madam, the giveaway that "on one occasion" he knew her well indeed, is for Mailer what sets him beyond the mere theoretical knowledge of Negroness which he assumes limits Faulkner.
But Mailer is dissatisfied with the oversimplified relationship between sex and the Negro which those first paragraphs made, and he begins writing "The White Negro" in the knowledge that:

I would have to do better, I would have to do a good deal better, because if I did not, I might lose one emotion and gain another, an exchange I was in a fever to avoid, since the first emotion included no less than my faith that I was serious, that I was right, that my work would give more to others than it took from them. 67(italics added)

So the dynamic of an idea's development is itself the result of the eternal paradox of "I" and "Other": Mailer's best efforts come not straight out of his mind, but out of a dialectic in which his being is pitted against a defining otherness. Yet finally he hopes that his "work would give more to others than it took from them", which is as good a definition of love as any. Mailer seeks to redeem us, to save us from ourselves, to give to society more than he takes out of it. He wants to give us love, and if this is sincere, then his Messianism transcends the more objectionable aspects of that role.

But the problem of the lover is to know how much of his love - seed - energy, he can give to the beloved, and remain potent. Can he tell us all and have something left to give?

It is costly to strip such memory of its detail, for one loses the power to project the best of one's imagination out into a creative space larger than one's life.68
Any expenditure of energy is in some sense "costly", and the further details of how "The White Negro" came to be written are passed over, for

to give any more of what happened to me in the last few years might make for five thousand good words, but could also strip me of fifty thousand better ones. 69

Like the lover, the writer must nurture his energies and save his powers, in the hope of an even better orgasm next time.
Chapter 5

The energies which Mailer, in the person of his narrators, has been accumulating through the first four books of his career, come to a full flowering in *An American Dream*. It is a novel of psychic and sexual energies expended by the fully-realized existentialism of Mailer's first genuine "hero". *An American Dream* follows Stephen Rojack's search for power and love, as the hippest of Mailer's protagonists steals life-giving energy from its various niches: the corridors of politics, the bedrooms of Harlem, the cunt of The Great Bitch, the methodology of the police, the Mafia, and the secret American fountains of love. The novel is a mythic tale, an existential fairytale, a "dream" of the blissful state of being which awaits those who are able to break through the confines of social and ethical systems into the heady utopia of revolutionized consciousness.

In probably the best critical piece on Mailer to date,70 Diana Trilling argues that the locus of power in society is Mailer's overwhelming concern. But this location is, I think, only half of the question, for once having discovered the sources of power, it remains for the hipster to tune in to them, and to harness his newfound energies towards the romantic goal of increased human awareness to which Mailer stubbornly clings.

*Advertisements for Myself* is the theoretical working out
of Mailer's ideas on sex, love, cancer, religion, hipness and the Negro, and its chief virtue, diversity, is also its chief vice as a handbook to a coherent philosophy. In *An American Dream*, the immensely complex ideatic stuff of *Advertisements for Myself* coalesces into a unified and systematic working out of Mailer's most serious concerns.

Chief of these concerns, of course, is the question of how the individual can find salvation and even sanctity in a corrupt society, all the while fighting off the dragons and demons which will surely beset him on the way. Stephen Rojack, the narrator-protagonist of *An American Dream*, is Mailer's authentic existential hero. It is significant that unlike the somewhat immature narrators of the two previous novels, all the action centres on him, as he embarks on a temporally and spatially unified holy quest. (The action occurs in one day in New York.) Rojack advances along heroic-mythic path strewn with Maileresque metaphors: sex, the origins of cancer, the struggle between good and evil, magic, mystery, and the interior struggle for transcendence.

Somewhere in *Advertisements*, Mailer confesses in his usual grandiose way that high among his ambitions is the wish to unify the doctrines of Freud and Marx, in a profound harnessing of the energies of the psyche to the necessities of material existence. *An American Dream* represents the working out of this ambition, the analogies of sex, mystic power and concrete action becoming a kind of Holy Trinity by which Rojack
is infused with the power to go beyond his humanity into God-ness.

In The Deer Park Mailer persistently uses the motif of masks, alter egos and mirrors as a reflection of his concern with the role of the creative personality. The dominant motif of An American Dream is magic, ghosts, charms and spells, witches, vapours and mysticism: concern with the face (i.e. the ego) in the earlier work has shifted to an investigation of the deeper, subtler recesses of the human personality: the id. Mailer is into deep mysteries indeed. Thus the movement in the trilogy is completed: from Barbary Shore's politics, which is external, to the sexual, body-level emphasis of The Deer Park, to the internalized metaphor of one man who contains a full complement of human energies of An American Dream. But what is the source of transcendental energy? An American Dream attempts to uncover "the sweet mystery" of life itself.

The title is worth commenting on. Its obvious connotation of Dreiser's An American Tragedy is born out not only in the similarity of both author's attempts to uncover the American personality of their respective times, but by Mailer's penchant for inviting comparisons between himself and established American masters. Then too, "American" reminds us that in this most existential of all his novels, Mailer's existentialism is peculiarly American, and not to be confused with the European of Sartre et al. One might be inclined to take the word "dream" ironically: certainly there is much that is
nightmarish in this odyssey of bloodlusts, incests and death. But if there is some intended irony, the main denotation can nevertheless be taken at face value. Rojack's 24-hour saga begins and ends in ecstatic glimpses of a divine city, and the key scenes are loaded with the ecstasies of white magic, good orgasm, personal bravery and romantic love.

The beatific, almost joyous tone of the novel is typified in a passage immediately following Rojack's murder of his estranged wife, Deborah. The scene invokes the psychedelic experience to describe the ecstatic level of consciousness achieved by Rojack as his reward for having the courage to act.

I felt very good but I had an intimation I must not think of Deborah now, certainly not now, and so I got up from the floor and went to the bathroom and washed my hands. Have you ever taken peyote? - the bathroom tile was quivering with a violet light, and at the edge of my vision was a rainbow curving out to the horizon of the tile. I had only to close my eyes and a fall of velvet rain red as the drapery in a carmine box ran back into my retina. My hands were tingling in the water. I had a recollection then of Deborah's fingers on my shoulder and I stripped my shirt and washed my upper arm. As I put down the soap, it's weight in my palm was alive; the soap made a low sticky sound as it settled back to the dish. I was ready to spend an hour contemplating that sound. But the towel was in my hand, and my hands could have been picking up the crisp powder of autumn leaves as they crumbled in my fingers. So it went with the shirt. Something was demonstrating that I had never understood the nature of a shirt. Each of its odors (those particular separate molecules) was scattered through the linen like a school of dead fish on the beach, their decay, the intimate whiff of their decay a thread of connection leading back to the hidden heart of the sea. Yes, I returned this shirt to my body with the devotion of a cardinal fixing his hat - then I fixed my tie. A simple black knit tie . . . my fingers ran in and out of the interstices of this Windsor double hitch like mice through the rigging. Speak of a state of grace - I had never known such calm. 71(italics added)
It is significant that this description, reminiscent of Huxley's account of a mescaline experience in The Doors of Perception, is associated with religious imagery. The simple act of dressing becomes a religious ritual, compared to the vesting of a cardinal. The "state of grace" into which Rojack has entered through the murder of Deborah continues, with occasional lapses, throughout Rojack's confrontations with evil in various masks: with German evil, Mafia evil, and political evil; and with the power of the police, the media, the Negro and Las Vegas. The whiff of "dead fish on the beach", sex, is the "thread of connection" which leads directly from the state of grace to the Conradian "hidden heart of the sea", the centre of all mysteries.

But how is this state of grace attained? We have seen how in "The White Negro" Mailer prescribes a formula of awareness, courage and action, and that murder is a hip alternative to cancer. It would be simplistic to conclude, though, that Mailer is recommending a program of blood-letting as a cure-all for social and personal disease.

The origin of existential courage rests in mystery, symbolized by the moon, which full on the night in WW II when Rojack killed four Germans in a daring machine gun raid, for which he received the Distinguished Service Cross. The flow of cosmic energies which Rojack becomes tuned with coincides with the full moon:
I have travelled up and I have voyaged down and I've gone up and down, but I remember a full moon the night we Rojack and Jack Kennedy had our double date, and to be phenomenologically precise, there was also a full moon on the night I led my patrol to the top of a particular hill in Italy, and a full moon the night I met another girl . . . and a full moon . . . (Mailer's ellipsis)

The inclusion of Kennedy in the passage is one of many links between Rojack and power, in this case political, and in true Mailer fashion, the association is at the highest level. Rojack goes on to compare his own form of moon madness (lunacy) with Kennedy's savvy:

The real difference between the President and myself may be that I ended with too large an appreciation of the moon, for I looked down the abyss on the first night I killed: four men, four very separate Germans, dead under a full moon — whereas Jack, for all I know, never saw the abyss.

Stephen Rojack is the closest figure in Mailer's fiction to Mailer's own first person. Both are Harvard graduates in their early forties at the time of An American Dream; both served, like Sergius and Lovett, in World War II; both are professional existentialists (Rojack is a full professor of Existential Psychology) and both have a certain amount of public notoriety. Rojack's friendship with Jack Kennedy reminds one of Mailer's own admiration for Kennedy, and of the relationship with Kennedy he assumed in the conceiving of The Presidential Papers. Rojack represents the maturing of the potential hipsters who narrate the two earlier novels. In the overall structure of Mailer's fiction and non-fiction, Rojack is man at the knife-edge of experience, the self-redeeming existential hero. But like the author of The Naked and The
Dead, Rojack finds that he cannot rely on past successes. At the time the story begins, Rojack feels himself to have become stale and dissatisfied by the securities of his academic, political and television success: "I had come to decide that I was finally a failure."

Rojack has just gone through a "very bad" year. His marriage to Deborah has broken down, and he has been frustrated in his ambition to write a great, twenty-volume work on existentialism, clearly a reference to Mailer's own "great work". Rojack has come to the point where "For the first time in my life I had come to understand that there was suicide in me."
The forces of Square - security, logic and suicide - threaten to overpower Rojack once and for all.

In a state nearing despair, Rojack converses with the moon, and at last begins to understand the nature of the mystery of existence: The energy of the universe - grace? - flows out of the moon and into him.

So I stood on the balcony by myself and stared at the moon which was full and very low. I had a moment then. The moon spoke back to me. By which I do not mean that I heard voices, or Luna and I indulged in the whimsy of a dialogue, no, truly it was worse than that. Something in the deep of that full moon, some tender and not so innocent radiance travelled fast as the thought of lightning across our night sky, out from the depths of the dead in those caverns of the moon, out and a leap through space and into me. And suddenly I understood the moon. Believe it if you will. The only true journey of knowledge is from the depth of one being to the heart of another and I was nothing but open raw depths at that instant alone on the balcony, looking down on Sutton Place, the spirits of the food and drink I had ingested wrenched out of my belly and upper gut, leaving me in raw Being, there were clefts and rents
which cut like geological faults right through all the lead and concrete and kapok and leather of my ego, that mutilated piece of insulation, I could feel my Being, ridiculous enough, what! I could feel lights shifting inside myself, drifting like vapours over the broken rocks of my ego. (italics added)

A few moments before this, Rojack mentions the impact a book called Zen in the Art of Archery has had on him. Rojack's communication with the moon is nothing less than Zen's satori, the moment of enlightenment, of tuning into the state of pure "Being" which, if it is deep enough, radically alters the consciousness of the individual. But philosophy alone is not enough: enlightenment connects to the activity of archery. Nor is this inconsistent with the teachings of Zen; Philip Kapleau states in The Three Pillars of Zen,

Satori-awakening is not the be-all and end-all. Rather, it is the foundation for a magnificent edifice whose many-storied superstructure would correspond to the perfected character and personality of the spiritually developed individual, the man of moral virtue and all-embracing compassion and wisdom.

Despite this tight connection with Zen, however, An American Dream reverts to an imagery which is Western and religious, the motif of Catholic ritual and theology.

What is the nature of Rojack's enlightenment? Unlike satori, which is generally the result of years of concentrated effort, Rojack's reception of grace from the moon is entirely gratuitous: it just happens, perhaps because he is "ready" in some way, but in no way to which he has deliberately moved. This is the Catholic notion of supernatural grace as the "freely-given gift of God". For Mailer, mystery is preferable
to intention, and his fascination with Catholicism rests in its respect for mystery.

But if God's gift is grace, the Devil's is despair, and the negative principle waits behind the transcendent moment, ready to take advantage of the susceptibility of its prey. Magic is as dangerous as it is real. Standing on the balcony, he is tempted to the Square (but always seductive) way out: suicide, by the other half of the moon:

I looked out deep into that shimmer of past death and new madness, that platinum lady with her silver light, and she was in my ear, I could hear her music: "Come to me," she was saying, "Come now. Now." and I could feel my other foot go over the balustrade, and I was standing on the wrong side of the railing, only my fingers (since my thumbs were up and pointing like horns at the moon) only my eight fingers to hold me from the plunge... And I actually let one hand go. It was my left. Instinct was telling me to die.

Which instinct, and where?
The "horns" made by his thumbs are those of the cuckold, for Lady Moon is out to betray him even as she has just saved him. The left hand (the Devil's) represents the impulse to death. Suicide is rejected because it is a coward's act, it is square, not hip. Nevertheless, the death wish is real and powerful, and the body demands a price for the denial of those of its cells which wish to die from those which would remain alive. The denial of impulse is the beginning of cancer, the inescapable paradox is that even in choosing life we are condemned to death:

Will you understand me if I say that at that moment I felt the other illness (cancer) come to me, that I knew then that if it took twenty years or forty for
my death, that if I died from a revolt of the cells, a growth against the design of my organs, that this was the moment it all began, this was the hour when the cells took their fatal leap?79

But in his earlier encounter with the moon, Rojack has discovered the mysterious energy of grace and he is ready to begin the series of confrontations which are the measure of his enlightenment. The book becomes a chronicle of contemporary man's encounters with the counter-forces which would turn him into a mere object: he successfully challenges "the great Bitch", the police, the Mafia, Harlem, corrupt politics and most important, his own fear. First and most disturbing from the point of view of external morality, is the murder of his estranged wife Deborah. Feeling a need to be with someone after his brush with suicide, he goes to her luxurious apartment to find her in a foul mood. Many critics have been shocked by what they regard as a wanton murder, overlooking the fact that there is, in fact, serious provocation for it. Drunk, and delighting in her role of Bitch-goddess, Deborah maliciously tortures Rojack with reports on her lovers' reactions to her sexual virtuosity.

One of them said: "Where did you ever learn to root about like that? Didn't know such things went on outside of a Mexican whorehouse."

"Shut your fucking mouth", I said.

"Lately I've had the most famous practice."

I struck her open-handed across the face. I had meant - some last calm intention of my mind had meant - to make it no more than a slap, but my body
was speaking faster than my brain, and the blow caught her on the side of the ear and knocked her half out of bed. She was up like a bull and like a bull she charged. Her head struck me in the stomach (setting off a flash in that forest of nerves) and then she drove one powerful knee at my groin (she fought like a prep-school bully) and missing that, she reached with both hands, tried to find my root and mangle me.

That blew it. I struck her a blow on the back of the neck, a dead cold chop which dropped her to a knee, and then hooked an arm about her head and put a pressure on her throat. She was strong, I had always known she was strong, but now her strength was huge. It is important to realize that Deborah is a formidable and worthy enemy, strong as a bull, a "prep-school bully". Moreover, she attacks Rojack in his most sacred place, his sexuality. At both the literal and social levels, she is threatening his manhood, and there is no doubt that if she can find his genitals she will "mangle me". As a Mailer hero Rojack's very existence rests in his manhood, and in defending himself from her attack, he is saving his own life. Deborah is inflicting psychic violence to begin with, and the escalation of the conflict is arguably self-defence.

As he slowly strangles her, Rojack passes the point of no return, and for obeying his darkest instincts he is rewarded with the first of several glimpses he is to have of the City of God. Nevertheless, it is not murder per se, but accord with his primeval nature which admits Rojack to heaven. . . . crack the door flew open and the wire tore in her throat, and I was through the door, hatred passing from me in wave after wave, illness as well, rot and
pestilence, nausea, a bleak string of salts. I was floating. I was as far into myself as I had ever been and universes wheeled in a dream. To my closed eyes Deborah's face seemed to float off from her body and stare at me in darkness. She gave one malevolent look which said: "There are dimensions to evil which reach beyond the light," and then she smiled like a milkmaid and floated away and was gone. And in the midst of that Oriental splendor of landscape, I felt the lost touch of her finger on my shoulder, radiating some faint but ineradicable pulse of detestation into the new sense of grace. I opened my eyes. I was weary with a most honorable fatigue, and my flesh seemed new, I had not felt so nice since I was twelve. 82 (italics added)

Rojack is here on the side of good, his dying wife, "daughter of the Devil" as she is later characterized, the force of evil. As the Great Bitch, Deborah symbolizes those forces in life which drain creativity and stunt growth. As "the bleak string of salts" pass out of Rojack, he is purged, and his flesh is made new. The accumulated illnesses of repression pass out of him - the energy gained from the moon has now been purified, and his power is almost supernatural in his remaining encounters. Moreover, he has taken the witch's own magical powers for his own, as we shall see.

But though he is now freed from his own "rot and pestilence", murder has made Rojack a social and legal outlaw, and society demands that he pay for his crime.

As a hero of mythic proportions, Rojack will emerge from his battles unscathed and purified, but the energies released by Deborah's death are powerful ones. Rojack's liberation will be paid for by the blood of others, a kind of Law of Conservation of Energy at the invisible levels on which the
story operates.

Deborah's last look communicates a thought that is to haunt Rojack through the next twenty-four hours: "There are dimensions to evil which reach beyond the light". In daring the forbidden Rojack has been hurled into a world of unknown psychic powers, of extra-sensory perceptions, hauntings by Deborah's ghost, and the flux and transfer of mystic energies.

The medium by which the energy of grace flows from person to person is primarily sexual, and immediately after killing his wife, he seeks a new transfusion of power by searching out the maid, Ruta. Her name suggestive of animal lust, Rojack finds Ruta masturbating in her bedroom and silently gets into bed with her. In the most intense sexual scene in any of Mailer's works, the forces of goodness and life reside in the vagina, while only sterility and "the Devil's feast" dwell in the anus. He goes back and forth from cunt to asshole, unable to decide which holds the greater delight. The anus in Mailer's sexology is unhip, even though it inspires great lust: it is literally and figuratively, a dead end.

I had a desire suddenly to skip the sea and mine the earth, a pure prong of desire to bugger, there was a canny, hard-packed evil in that butt, that I knew . . .

Once in her anus,
a host of the Devil's best gifts were coming to me, mendacity, guile, a fine-edged cupidity for the stroke which steals, the wit to trick authority. I felt like a thief, a great thief. And like a thief returning to church, I see-sawed up from that bank of pleasures up to her deserted warehouse, that empty tomb.
So that was how I finally made love to her, a minute for one, a minute for the other, a raid on the Devil and a trip back to the Lord, I was like a hound who has broken free of the pack and is going to get that fox himself... I had one of those splittings of a second where the senses fly out and there in that instant the itch reached into me and I drew me out and I jammed up her ass and came as if I'd been flung across the room. She let out a cry of rage. Her coming must have taken a ferocious twist. And with my eyes closed I felt low, sullen waters wash about a dead tree on a midnight pond. I had come to the Devil a fraction too late, and nothing had been there to receive me. But I had a vision immediately after of a huge city in the desert, in some desert, was it a place on the moon? For the colors had the unreal pastel of a plastic and the main street was flaming with light at five a.m. A million lights lit the scene.83

Ruta is on the side of evil: a German, perhaps a Nazi, and the mistress of the embodiment of the Devil in the novel, Deborah's father, Barney Kelly. So Rojack's moment of visionary ecstasy with her is a glimpse not of heaven but of hell, a "plastic" American city of the desert. Nevertheless, Rojack's encounter with Ruta is profitable to him because it gives him her Nazi's "mendacity, guile" and above all, the "wit to trick authority", all necessary for his upcoming encounters with the representatives of institutionalized evil.

Part of the dreamlike quality that pervades An American Dream is the sense of suspended reality. Rojack's whole world has been liberated from the laws of gravity and ordinary human restrictions; he is floating free from all restrictions into a breathless single action. At the literal level, the plot is highly unrealistic, the magic which touches Rojack's every act testing credulity. Unrealistic too, are the cir-
cuitous and devious coincidences in which almost every major figure is sexually connected with everyone else. A brief summary will illustrate the point.

Tossing Deborah's body out the apartment window, Rojack returns to fornicate with Ruta a second time. It later turns out that she is Barney Kelly's mistress, and that he has planted her in his daughter's apartment to keep an eye on her activities, which may include international espionage. Meanwhile, Deborah's body lands on the busy street below, causing a series of minor car accidents, which involve Eddy Ganucci, a Mafia power, accompanied by the blonde singer Cherry. It just so happens that the police have been trying to get their hands on Ganucci for a long time, and their anxiety to work on him that night takes some of the pressure off Rojack, whom the police suspect of murder, though they have slim evidence. At the police station, Rojack talks with Cherry and initiates the liason which is to represent Rojack's discovery of real love. Cherry in turn has once had a serious affair with Barney Kelly and her ex-boyfriend Shago Martin, had had a nearly-consumated relationship with Deborah. The sexual links are completed when Rojack learns that Barney Kelly had an incestuous relationship with his daughter when Deborah was fifteen. The two central figures, Rojack and Kelly, representing God and the Devil respectively, have thus each possessed Deborah, Cherry and Ruta. By following the respective exchanges of energy in these relationships, the paths of good and evil in the world can be traced.
Rojack’s role as the instrument of God — indeed, his powers suggest at times that he is God — is shown most clearly in a scene where he has followed Cherry to the nightclub where she is a singer, after having successfully evaded the wily traps laid for him by the suspicious, but sympathetically portrayed detective Roberts. That some deep change is occurring in him is made clear in the chapter preceding the nightclub scene, when having successfully held off the police, he undergoes a mysterious metamorphosis, back to the primitive inner man which contains the essence of godliness. Rojack is evolving a higher state of consciousness, into a higher order of being:

I had the impression now that I was letting go of some grip on my memory of the past, that now I was giving up my loyalty to every good moment I had had with Deborah and surrendering the hard compacted anger of every hour when she had spoiled my need, I felt as if I were saying goodbye to that night on the hill in Italy with my four Germans under the moon, yes, I felt just as some creature locked by fear to the border between earth and water (its grip the accumulated experience of a thousand generations) might feel on that second when its claw took hold, its body climbed up from the sea, and its impulse took a leap over the edge of mutation so that now and at last it was something new, something better or worse, but never again what it had been on the other side of the instant. I felt as if I had crossed a chasm of time and was some new breed of man.84

Rojack is some new order of man, a higher being, and he has achieved it through the existential moment, the "instant" where "impulse took a leap over the edge of mutation"; when ancient cellular wisdom again shows its hand in the game of evolution.
So it is a man "very like a god" who sets out to hunt for Cherry, and his powers are virtually irresistible. Slowly becoming aware of his new powers, Rojack practices some psychic fisticuffs. As he sits alone in the nightclub where Cherry is a singer, he attacks the tough mobsters who consider Cherry "theirs": "My brain had developed into a small manufactory of psychic particles, pellets, rockets the length of a pin . . . a battery of bombs smaller than seeds of caviar but ready to be shot across the room." After vanquishing the late night hangers on who compete for her attention, Rojack tries a little magic on Cherry:

I shot an arrow into her big toe, into the fat bullying certainty of that toe, and saw it twitch on the beat. I shot three more arrows into the same spot and saw the foot retreat beneath her long skirt. Then, as if a curse were on me (and so I must do the opposite of what I intend) whatever, from a motive I did not know (I wished only to call back the move) I shot one needle of an arrow into the centre of Cherry's womb, I felt it go in. I felt some damage lodge itself there. She almost lost her song. One note broke, the tempo shuddered, and she went on, turned to look at me then . . .

Once again, energies are exchanged, this time at the psycho-sexual level. Immediately, the accumulated poisons of Cherry's own life pass into Rojack, and he is forced to go to the bathroom to discharge these new negativities:

I vomited with all the gusto of a horse on a gallop, cruds, violations, the rot and gas of compromise, the stink of old fears, mildew of discipline, all the biles of habit and the horrors of pretense - ah, here was the heart of the puke!87

"Fears", "discipline", "horror", this is a catalog of all that is oppressive to human activity in society, a list of the
internal forces which hold us back from leading spontaneous lives. But within this moment of pain is the realization of his new strength, and the consciousness that he is able to be a scapegoat - the Christ-figuring is becoming clear now - for the sins of others:

I was draining the poison from the wound I had inflicted in Cherry's belly, and yes in confirmation her voice came rowdy-dah, rooty-toot, ringing through the mens'-room walls, loud and laughing and triumphant, When the Saints Go Marching In, (Mailer never chooses a song idly) soaring like a golden bird free at last from the cage of her throat, laughing happily at the antique of the song, and I held to the bowl and shook with sickness, and thought that if the murderer were now loose in me, well, so too was a saint of sorts, a minor saint no doubt, but free at last to absorb the ills of others and regurgitate them forth . . .

This passage bears a fascinating resemblance to the episode in Armies of The Night, where Mailer relates the release of a host of bad spirits in the urinal before going on to give his speech the night before the march on the Pentagon; the similarity is yet another link between the various masks of Mailer's first person. Those who accuse Mailer of Messianism are on the right track, but they should examine the purity of motive in the just-quoted passage before making any damning conclusions.

Nor is the magic practised by Rojack only some hallucinogenic projection of his mind. After he has easily intimidated the toughs whom Cherry has been drinking with, the reality of his power is acknowledged by the bartender, who says in reference to Cherry's singing:

"He (Rojack) gave me the evil eye every time I rattled a glass."
"Mr. Rojack is indiscrimate in his use of the evil eye," said Cherry, "Whoops!" And the glass on which she was sipping flew out of her hand.89

Rojack's Christliness is made explicit as Cherry, already seduced by his power, sings one last song before quitting the bar with him. She astonishes the late-night boozers with a hymn:

"Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before. Everybody sing." said Cherry, and as if I were a middle-aged prep-school type come to reunion after all those years of waiting, I got to my feet and sang the lines with her, moving my highball glass in great sweeps of my arm like a beer stein used as a pendulum, sweeter than the day before.90

For the existentially saved, the days get sweeter and sweeter.

But though powerful, Rojack is not without doubt. He is fearful, potentially cowardly at every moment of confrontation, haunted by Deborah's ghost at every turn, and above all, afraid of the immense powers of destruction which woman represents. Even Cherry possesses the same characteristics of feminine destructiveness that drove him to kill Deborah. In the bar, just before his successful confrontation with the thugs from whom he must take her, he realizes that Cherry has been playing him against the others: "She had been using me - so I understood it now. And felt an icy rage against all women who would use me." This is not merely a specific reaction to an unpleasant moment, but part of the larger metaphoric pattern of sexuality. As he leaves the bar with her, Rojack reflects on the "dread" - and the word is used here with the greatest intention - at the heart of his relationship to women, and metaphorically, to the
rest of existence:

... when I was in bed with a woman, I rarely felt as if I were making life, but rather as if I were a pirate sharpening up a raid on life, and so somewhere inside myself - yes, there was a large part of the fear - I had dread of the judgement which must rest behind the womb of a woman.91

"The judgement" here is the judgement of unborn generations, the painful knowledge of the necessity to conceive superior children, if one is to participate fully in the creation of a better world.

Proceeding to Cherry's secret hideaway in a Puerto Rican slum, the session of lovemaking begins as an animal rut, not much better than the fruitless one with Ruta; again, the ass is the symbol of lovemaking without love:

Her ass was indeed a prize - with my hands on her, life came back to me again across all those glaciers of my fatigue. But we did not meet as lovers, more like animals in a quiet mood, come across a track of the jungle to join in a clearing . . .92

This is the love-making of the ego, of the mind, held down by the inability of either to commit themselves to something more:

I travelled (eyes sealed) through some midnight of inner space, aware of nothing but my will, that casing of iron about my heart, and of her will anchored like a girdle of steel about her womb. . . . soon we would be nothing but a rhythm which was nothing but a rhythm which would pump on to a climax I knew would never come . . . 93

Cherry's inability to achieve orgasm, and the diaphragm she is wearing complete this image of barren intercourse. Dissatisfied, Rojacket removes her diaphragm, the symbol of infertility, death, and control over the forces of life. Now the potential for love which has existed between the two lovers
flowers into some higher kind of fucking, as Rojack again has a transcendental vision of the City of God:

I searched for that corporate rubbery obstruction I detested so much, found it with a finger, pulled it forth, flipped it away from the bed. Like diving on a cold winter day back to a warm pool, I was back in her, our wills now met, locked in a contest like an exchange of stares which goes on and on, wills which began at last in the force of equality to water and to loose tears, to soften into some light which is shut away again by the will to force tears back, steel to steel, until steel shimmers in a mist of dew, is wiped, is wet again. I was passing through a grotto of curious lights, dark lights, like colored lanterns beneath the sea, a glimpse of that quiver of jewelled arrows, that heavenly city which had appeared as Deborah was expiring in the lock of my arm, and a voice like a child's whisper on the breeze came up so faint I could hardly hear, "Do you want her?" it asked. "Do you really want her, do you want to know something about love at last?" and I desired something I had never known before, and answered: it was as if my voice had reached down to its roots; and "Yes," I said, "of course I do, I want love", but like an old urbane gentleman, a dry tart portion of my mind added, "Indeed, and what has one to lose?" and then the voice in a small terror, "Oh, you have more to lose than you have lost already, fail at love and you lose more than you can know." "And if I do not fail?" I asked back. "Do not ask," said the voice, "choose now!" and some continent of dread speared wide in me in that rainy morning, her eyes were golden with light, and she said, "Ah, honey, sure," and I said sure to the voice in me, and felt love fly in like some great winged bird, some beating of wings at my back . . . 94 (italics added)

The moment of love is the moment of existential commitment is the moment of mystical union with the Power of the universe.

And energy is not leaving him, but flowing into him, the paradox complete:

and felt her will dissolve into tears, and some great deep sorrow like roses drowned in the salt of the sea came flooding from her womb and washed into me like some great honey of balm for all the bitter sores of my soul and for the first time in my life without
passing through fire or straining the stones of my will, I came up from my body rather than down from my mind, I could not stop, some shield broke in me, bliss, and the honey she had given me I could only give back, all sweets to her womb, all come in her cunt.95

This is not only the climax of the novel, but of Mailer's whole metaphoric plan. Only when sex transmutes into love can the isolating bonds of existence be broken, and liberation be complete. Spiritually and physically renewed, Rojack leaves Cherry's apartment to engage in the only two encounters of the dozen or so in the novel which he does not win: telephone conversations with his department head at the university, and the producer of his television show.

Although he has achieved love with Cherry, Rojack still remains alienated from the rest of society. It is significant that Rojack loses by telephone, symbol of dehumanized communication.

The conversation with the department head, Frederick Tharchman, is a classic insight into the hypocrisies, paranoias, economic realities and personal obscenities of academia. Having informed Rojack that he must take a semester off until the "dreadful ambiguities" of the case have blown over, Tharchman then has the audacity to ask him what Deborah's last meal had been, a tidbit he will feed his wife, who believes that "the last meal a person eats before they die determines the migration of their soul".96

In the phone call to his producer, Arthur, Rojack is
informed that his TV slot is being filled by Shago Martin, whose place as Cherry's lover he has just taken, in yet another link in the pattern of retribution and cycles which structures the novel. TV show and university represent those aspects of America within which the intellectual (Rojack, Mailer, the intellectually "established") earn a livelihood while maintaining the illusion of intellectual freedom. The message is clear: the liberated intellectual must cut himself off, both economically and spiritually, from his dependence on the "acceptable" forms of intellectual prostitution. In the dream, if not in the reality, it is preferable to make one's living existentially, for example, on the gambling tables of Las Vegas, where Rojack goes after leaving New York.

In the sense that the breaking of ties with academia and the media are necessary to the completion of his alienation from society begun by the murder, even these are victories. The confrontation with the Negro singer Shago Martin is much more concrete, and the victory more literal. Within the pattern of sexual mutuality pervading the novel, Shago (his name a play on a vulgarism for intercourse) has studded not only Cherry, but has cuckolded Rojack in spirit, having once turned down the advances of Deborah: "'So, I told her what to do. Puss and dandruff to you, Peter the Great - Shago Martin ain't adding his tit to your milk and charity.'"

Now Rojack has had his retribution, having taken Cherry's love away from Shago. As a Negro, Shago embodies the attributes of blackness discussed earlier, and in the process of becoming
the hipster, it is essential for Rojack to receive blackness from Shago, via Cherry's cunt.

Seven years after "The White Negro" was written, Mailer summarized his theory of Negro power in a column in *Commentary*:

> The Negro, secretly fixed upon magic - that elixir of nature which seems to mediate between God and Devil - has never made his peace with Christianity or mankind. The Negro in the most protected recesses of his soul still does not know if he is a part of mankind, or a special embodiment of nature suspended between society and the gods. As the Negro enters civilization, Faust may be his archetype, even as the Jew has fled Iago as the despised image of himself.98

Since this was written at the same time as *An American Dream*, it is reasonable to conclude that Mailer connects Shago, the only Negro prominent in the novel, to this Faustian conception of the role of the Negro. Thus the Negro has a superior, extra-sensory quality of human understanding.

Without knowing any of the details of Deborah's death, Shago perceives the truth of the murder which almost everyone else is uncertain of: "He hugged his wife so hard she fell down dead. Ha, ha. Ho, ho. Then he push her out."99 But despite his black's magic, Shago is as vulnerable as any other man to the ebbing and flowing of energies through sex. When he discovers the depth of Cherry's new feeling for Rojack, the balance of power shifts away from him:

> "You preg's again?" he asked. And at the expression on her face, he whistled, laughed, made a small demonstration. "Shee-it," he cried out, "you can't tell, you can't tell that fast. That's a mistake made by many. You don't know, girl." But the shaft
was in. I saw something in his eyes as the mari-
juana took hold, he had not been ready for this.
He had the expression of a big fish just speared . . .

Weakened by the realization that he has lost Cherry, Shago
collapses totally. For the energy that has flowed from Cherry
to him was white energy, and it has corrupted him. Again
retributively, Rojack has taken black, while Shago has given
up his primitive heritage:

"Listen, baby, you don't leave me," he said. "I'll
cut out your heart. You got nothing but spade in
you, and I'm left with all that Southern shit. I'm
a captive of white shit now," he said looking at
me, his eyes blank as a prison wall. "I bathe in the
flesh, you ass", he said again, "I keep it for my-
self, all that white stinkeroo, all of it, but she
ain't white, no she ain't, not my girl, she got my
black in her."101 (italics added)

So the "sweets" that flowed from Cherry included Negri-
tude, and Rojack easily disposes of "the Negro white", Shago,
beating him badly, then throwing him down the tenement stairs.
Yet even in defeat the Negro has a nobility that cannot be
overlooked, as completely vanquished, Shago says:

"Tell you something, man, I don't hate. Never.
That's it."

"That's it."

"Tell Cherry, her and you, I wish you luck."

"You do?"

"I swear. Yes, I swear. Luck, man."102

This is the first time Shago has called Rojack "man", and the
measure of his black nobility is that he is able to confer the
title, a "prince" who passes on his royalty to his victor.
Having thus completed his voyage into hipness, Rojack is finally ready to meet his last and greatest challenge, the meeting with Barney Kelly, Deborah's rich and politically powerful father. Kelly lives atop the Waldorf Astoria in a luxurious penthouse, the image of a corrupt and powerfully wealthy ruling class. He has contacts at the highest levels of business, the Mafia and the CIA. While he is talking, Jack Kennedy phones to offer his condolences on Deborah's death, Kennedy's name and that of his wife having been invoked several times, as yet another source of energy. As he begins the ascent to the parapet, the Christ-figure, Rojack, realizes just who he is up against, for Deborah "was the Devil's daughter".

For this last, greatest battle, Rojack carries with him the umbrella which Shago left behind after their fight. It is a multi-level symbol, a badge of power recalling the mythic dimensions of this odyssey; a phallus, representative of Negro sexuality and the newly discovered power of love; a literal weapon; and a magical medium:

Up we went, rocketing the stories of the Waldorf, while the umbrella in my hand quivered like a dousing rod, as if here, here, we had just passed some absolute evil to the left, and there to the right an unknown concentrate.104

By now, Rojack's psychic powers are enormous, and the umbrella speaks to him, intimating that death is even now threatening Cherry:

that voice which I could no longer deny spoke again through the medium of the umbrella. "Go to Harlem", 
said the voice, "if you love Cherry, go to Harlem - there is time."105

But aware of the utter necessity to confront evil, Rojack refuses even this copout and continues to the top of the tower. The theme of flowing energies continues as Kelly sees Rojack for the first time since the murder:

he put one look into my eyes, like a tracer of light it leaped into me, and he had the secret - if there had been a doubt in his head, there was none now: he knew what I had done to Deborah.106

Although Kelly is the Devil, the Devil within is as real, and throughout the whole final scene, Rojack must resist both internal and external attempts to hurl him to death from the balcony of the apartment. The will to suicide is something which even the saved will have to deal with time and again, for the nature of the existential dilemma is that the coward's option is always open, capitulation is possible at each moment. Alone on the balcony, Rojack is again tempted towards suicide by a voice that may be his own devil or Deborah's ghost: "The wish to jump was clean, keen and agreeable, nice as the nicest thing I had done . . ."107

As with Christ's temptation in the desert and Sisyphus' struggle with the boulder, it would be easier to simply let go. But unlike Camus - and the distinction is a critical one - Rojack has something to hang onto, distasteful as it may be to contemporary atheists:

I stood on the ledge, my legs a jelly, and felt some part of the heavens, some long cool vault at the entrance, a sense of a vast calm, altogether
aware of me. "God exists," I thought, and tried to steal a look down the fall, but was not ready, not so much of a saint was I...108(italics added)

Rojack's newfound grace saves him. Having discovered love, the saint can also discover God, but as always, the existence of a concept implies its counterpart, and it is impossible to say that the Devil may not ultimately prove stronger than God.

In the long, soulful conversation that follows, Rojack admits his guilt to Kelly, while Kelly reciprocates with a tale of his complicity in Deborah's seduction of him when she was fifteen. Again, sex is the channel of life's powers. Kelly says: "Incest is the gate to the worst sort of forces, and I'd had my belly-full early".

Finally, Kelly's evil reaches deeper than Rojack's, as in a heat of passion revealing the significance of his first name, Barney, he demands orgy of Rojack as the price for having murdered his daughter. If sex is the gateway to all powers, how far can it be taken?

suddenly I knew what it had been like with Cherry and him, not so far from Ruta and me, no, not so far, and knew what it had been like with Deborah and him, what a hot burning two-backed beast, and I could hear what he offered now: bring Ruta forth, three of us to pitch and tear and squat and lick, swill and grovel on that Lucchese bed, fuck until our eyes were out, bury the ghost of Deborah to the tar pits of the moon. Now he had a call to bury her raw..."Come on," Kelly murmured, sitting on his throne, "shall we get shitty?"110

For Rojack, the ecstasy of sexual and magical powers has gone too far; something deep within him balks, and he longs to give
up the psychopathy in which he has dwelt for a day:

I wanted to be free of magic, the tongue of the Devil, the dread of the Lord, I wanted to be some sort of rational man again, nailed tight to details, promiscuous, reasonable, blind to the reach of the seas. But I could not move.

I bent to pick up the umbrella, and then the message came clear. "Walk the parapet," it said. "Walk the parapet or Cherry is dead." But I had more fear for myself than for Cherry. I did not want to walk that parapet. "Walk it," said the voice, "or you are worse than dead." And then I understood ... 111

What he understands is that he will have to risk his life once more in order to save it. In a scene which is virtually a parable of Mailer's prescription for existential action, Rojack walks around the long balcony ledge with the malevolent Kelly looking on. The walk is a microcosm of the act by act, step by step necessity to live in an eternal "electric present":

I had left my life behind me. Just as a man in dying might have a moment when he passes into the mantle of some great cloud, and helpless, full of fear, knows nonetheless that he is in death already, and so can wait for it, so my force ceased, and again I felt death come up like the shadow which is waiting as one slips past the first sentinels of consciousness into the first islands of sleep. "All right," I thought, "I guess I am ready to die."

...  

My fingers scraped on the wall, one nail broke and came half off, and I was up, up on that parapet one foot wide, and almost broke in both directions, for a desire to dive right on over swayed me out over the drop, and I nearly fell back to the terrace from panic of that. I stood there, pure cowardice again, my right hand shivering out of control as I took it from the wall, and stood naked, supported by nothing.

...
I took one step, one full step, my foot like a forty-pound boot of lead, and brought my rear foot up to meet it, and took another step forward on the same heavy foot like a child climbing the stairs I took a step, and took a breath, took a step and took a breath: this way I took ten steps along the twelve inch width of the parapet . . . 112

Now, in addition to his fear and the wind and rain, Rojack must contend with Kelly's very real psychic power and Deborah's ghost:

Then I almost fell to one knee for a blow came at me from nowhere, a fist on my back, and yet Kelly was ten feet away. I had to keep moving, everything was getting worse the longer I stayed still, but my feet were bad again. I pushed on forward; then the worst gust of wind came - Deborah's lone green eye flew into my eye. Hands came to pull me off, her hands, I smelled a breath - was it real? - it was gone.113

To free himself of her ghost, he must do penance, the motif of Catholic theology reverberating again:

... the most quiet of voices saying, "You murdered. So you are in her cage. Now earn your release. Go around the parapet again."114

But the Devil does not wish this expiation, and prefers Rojack's death. Kelly walks up to Rojack carrying the umbrella of power:

"You're not bad, Stephen," he said, "it's just" - his smile was pleasant - "I don't know that I want you to get away with it," and he lifted the tip of the umbrella to my ribs and gave a push to poke me off. But I turned as he pushed, and the tip was diverted, turned just enough to grip the umbrella as it went by, which brought me back from going off, and I jumped down to the terrace even as he let go, and struck him with the handle across the face so hard that he went down in a heap.115

By seizing power, the umbrella, away from his adversary, Rojack is able once more to emerge victorious. But a price must be paid for the energies that have been unleashed on the world, and he returns to find Cherry - "She's my wife, officer," -
dying from a beating mistakenly administered by one of Shago's friends. Rojack ends up alone, but he is still in possession of the secrets of his own being.

In the short epilogue, "The Harbours of the Moon Again", Rojack is in Las Vegas, winning the money he needs to pay his debts and conversing with Cherry's ghost on a broken telephone. Finally he leaves America, heading for the Jungles of Guatemala and Yucatan, perhaps implying that revolutionized consciousness is best suited to countries where political revolution is an immediate possibility.
Why Are We in Vietnam? is Mailer's apocalypse, a chaotic counter-thrust against the purgatory-hell-heaven sequence in Barbary Shore, The Deer Park and An American Dream. It is a vision of energies gone mad, genius run amok, a Manichean's explanation for the dominance of evil in contemporary American society.

Its chief theme is the perversion of Mailer's own theories by the twisted genius of DJ Jethroe, and it is essential to an understanding of the book to realize that DJ's consciousness is not Mailer's. In the supra-figure of Mailer's first person, DJ is the id, the formidable but chaotic place of ideas which may or may not have a desirable outcome. DJ is the heir to power in America, and one of the reasons why we are in Vietnam is that the hope he represents is lost in the welter of LSD-flavored pseudo-insights.

As Mailer's most specifically Manichean work - "DJ is here to resurrect . . . Mani the Manichee", Why Vietnam? sets up a host of dualities. First, and most significant to the social and political criticism which Mailer intends is the polarization of America symbolized by Dallas and Alaska, as the events of a grizzly bear hunt in the north are remembered at a dinner at DJ's father's "Dallas ass manse".

Dallas represents simultaneously the civilized and decadent aspects of society: big money, traditional Southern corruption, the giant corporation, incestuous jet-set sexuality,
plastic and technology, the home of LBJ and Lee Harvey Oswald. Alaska is its geographic and societal antithesis: unpeopled and therefore relatively uncivilized, primitive, still dominated by Nature, a place where man can still prove himself with just a rifle, or better yet, with his bare hands.

Alaska is the North Pole and Dallas is the South Pole in the self-contained world that for Mailer's purposes is America. Yet even the last outpost of America's frontier is showing signs of the corruption and technological sickness which besets "Death Nation". Indicative of this technological corruption is the use of helicopters in the hunt, depicting not only the unsporting use of sheer power in violation of all hunter's ethics, but the parallel use of helicopter gunships in Vietnam to flush out severely outpowered jungle fighters and others. This is one of many analogies to Vietnam along the theme of technological, psychic, sexual and intellectual power gone berserk.

Most of the other thematic concerns of Why Vietnam? are recognizable from Mailer's earlier fiction, and Barry Leeds takes serious objection to this in his generally perceptive comments on the novel. Speaking of the "failure" of Why Vietnam?, Leeds says:

although its political message is a valid and justly well-received one, its artistic value is small. [Its] system of metaphor is too little changed from that in An American Dream to be rendered integral to its entirely different fictional situation and narrator. [Moreover,] the narrative voice and structural form of the novel are not credibly linked.
It seems to me that the style and structure of *Why Vietnam?* are directly in keeping with DJ Jethroe's narrative stance. DJ is "Disc Jockey to all America", and his hyper-paced, super-associative, extrovertly obscene dialogue is the perfect vehicle for the portrayal of turned-on genius powers which Mailer sees becoming perverted and frustrated. For among the many answers which the novel provides to the question of its title, the most profoundly depressing one is that the brilliant and idealistic energies of American youth, represented by DJ and Tex, are being diverted from service of God to the service of the Devil by the distorting influences of technology like electronic media and drugs.

The chief characteristic of both DJ's mind and the style of the novel is an electronic-psychedelic free-flow of energies in the form of ideas. Early references to Edison, McLuhan and media technology culminate in DJ's statement of the book's purpose: he is "here to sell America its new handbook on how to live, how to live in this Electrox Edison world, all programmed out . . ." The media theme is enhanced by the structure of the novel, with each chapter preceded by a short, stream-of-consciousness style "Intro Beep" reminding us that the consciousness of young America is electronic and instantaneous in its connections and that it is cursed with all the accumulated intellectual knowledge of the ages without the redemptiveness of Negro primitivism.
DJ's continual name-dropping - Shakespeare, Freud, Joyce, Kierkegard - not only parodies Mailer's own habit of comparing himself to great writers, but reminds us of the tragic irony of America's inability to solve her social problems in spite of the availability of the accumulated wisdom of the ages. The parody is given away by DJ's references to Joyce and Shakespeare, with whom not even Mailer has had the temerity to compare himself.

Why Are We in Vietnam?, then, is an explanation of what's wrong with America in terms of wasted powers. The energies which reverberate in it are undisciplined, obscene, phlegmatic, touched by genius, confused and finally perverted to evil ends: "Vietnam, hot damn" is the ominous last line of the book. The style of the book is a reflection of DJ's consciousness, and that of young (as opposed to menopausal) America. The sheer force and flow of the language is a new and I think, successful experiment for Mailer. As far as DJ's credibility goes, he clearly has, as he says, "more than a finger in Madam Muse's cunt", and so is reasonably able to produce some rather astounding noise, though mostly it is merely high-energy static.

The persistence of themes from An American Dream obscures the fact that there is a very real change in emphasis: whereas An American Dream concentrates on genital and heterosexuality, Why Vietnam? deals mainly with anal and homosexuality. It shifts from male-female relationships of Rojacket Deborah,
Ruta and Cherry, to male-to-male relationships of DJ to Tex and his father Rusty (in his middle age). Magic and mystery become the pseudomystery and technology of television and helicopters; love turns to sexuality; ecstatic religiosity becomes choking ritualism; and a loving and benign God becomes one whose admonition is death.

DJ is not an inconsistent narrative voice, but an adolescent false-Messiah whose message is consistent with his faulty but nevertheless brilliantly associative view of contemporary America. Part of the answer to why we are in Vietnam is that the programmers who would "sell America its new handbook on how to live" are dead wrong. If Rojack is the Christ whose action is redemptive, then DJ is anti-Christ, whose action is destructive.

In spite of DJ's constant spouting of Mailer-esque views on cancer, sex, feces and violence, he lacks an essential quality of Mailer's in that he does not recognize the uncertainty of the existential moment. For Mailer, the essential unknowability of anyone's "good" or "evil", and of the results of a given act, retain the quality of mystery indispensable to the notion of existentialism. But DJ has an arrogant, adolescent certainty in the rightness of his own views; by judging Rusty, Tex and the Medium Assholes, DJ invalidates his claim to super consciousness. Moreover, he cannot recognize the potential social evil of his own acts, and so goes off blithely to fight a fiendish war in Vietnam.
A further distinction between DJ and the previous narrators is that only his war is in the future. Lovett, Sergius and Rojack all look back on their war experience, and have in some sense been purified by the experience. But DJ still believes that war - and violence - contain answers; and his purification ritual, the trip into the wilds, attunes him to the negative energies of repressed impulse and a destructive god.

The plot, such as it is, is episodic and slight, documenting a series of confrontations on a hunting trip to Alaska: DJ versus his father, Rusty; Rusty versus their big-time guide, Big Luke; father-and-son versus bear; DJ versus his friend Tex, and boys versus Nature. As a string of encounters, the book bears a structural resemblance to An American Dream, but they are less exciting than Rojack's odyssey, even though richer in mythic overtones. The meeting, struggle, and outcome of each encounter, gives an additional clue to what's wrong with America, culminating in a "mystical" experience under the Northern Lights.

In the first place, what's wrong is the immense unchecked power of the corporation, and the fact that it tends to be run by what DJ calls "Medium Assholes", even though his father, near the top of the corporate structure, is characterized as a "High-Grade" asshole. Rusty's problem is that he got a corporation mind. He don't believe in nature; he puts his trust and distrust in man. 5% trust, 295% distrust.120
The corporation mind is the ruling class in America, and its
dull efficiency and brutish use of technical and economic
power to solve any problem characterize the contemporary use
of power, whether business, governmental or military. Typical
of corporate stupidity is the way in which Rusty's company,
Central Consolidated Chemical and Plastic, changed its name
when someone suddenly realized that the initials CCCP had
another referent. Rusty looks "like a high-breed crossing
between Dwight D. Eisenhower and Henry Cabot Lodge", is a
sometime CIA agent, and has a $58 million contract in the space
program, implicating him in all aspects of the American power
structure. The list of Rusty's memberships completes the
picture of corrupt control mechanisms of the country:

the FBI, the ADA (yeah, he gives contribs there too,
right under the table - Rusty Jethro and Letterhead
America are Up Tight) the Policeman's Benevolent
Society, the John Birch, natch, . . . the Warren
Commission Boosters, the President's Thousand
Dollar Club . . . 122

DJ is accurate in his assessment of the nature of corpor-
ate control, and relates it to existential dread:

But it's Rusty's eyes kick off the old concept of
dread in DJ Fyodor Soren Kierkegaard Jethroe because
they remind him of his favorite theory which is that
America is run by a mysterious hidden mastermind, a
secret creature who's got a plastic asshole installed
in his brain whereby he can shit out all his cor-
porate management of thoughts. I mean that's what
you get when you look into Rusty's eyes. You get
voids, man, and gleams of yellow fire - the woods is
burning somewhere in his grey matter - and then there's
marble aisles, better believe it, fifty thousand
fucking miles of marble floor down those eyes, and
you got to walk over that to get to The Man . . . 123
The imagery here is unevenly brilliant, the product of DJ's, not Mailer's insight. Nevertheless, the endless marble corridors and dictator with a plastic anus to dispense his thoughts, are terrifying images of the malaise of America.

Big Luke, the top-notch and ethical guide who has been hired to take the Jethroe entourage to grizzly bear, is the antithesis of Rusty's Texas tycoonism. Luke "was a man!", not only a superb hunter and guide, but a consumate cook, bartender and assessor of his clients' real desires and hidden relationships. Luke is so good, in fact, that he has an agent, who explains in a plush Fairbanks bar that looks just like bars in Seattle and Hawaii, the highly ethical nature of Luke's operation:

we have the best guide in Alaska, and the finest clientele. We're here to take you around and give you proper hunting. We're not in competition with the counters. 123.1

When Rusty reveals himself to be one of "the counters", and raises the question of a guarantee to get the grizzly bear so necessary to his social status back in Dallas, he is told that his kind of predetermined kill has already begun to ruin the wilderness: "Brooks Range no wilderness now. Airplane go over the head, animal no wild no more, now crazy." American super-technology takes the sporting fairness out of the game, whether in Vietnam or Alaska. But Rusty pushes the point and Luke's integrity is revealed in a showdown indicative
of the two poles of American manhood which the men represent, Rusty the technocrat, and Luke, the Great American Frontiersman:

Big Luke hints that Rusty can have his rebate now, his deposit, his contract and his week, and that is the end of the first contest, for if there is one thing worse than coming back with no bear, it is coming back a rejectee and rebatee from the Moe Henry and Obungekat Safari Group. If they could satisfy old General George C. Marshall in his hunting days, who is Sir Jet-Throne to complain? Now he saves face. He compromises, he agrees Luke will give the word when they go for grizzer.125

In terms of ethics, the hunt is doomed from the beginning. A long evaluation of the Texans' firepower comprises all of Chapter Five, analogical to the Vietnam war, where more and more powerful and sophisticated weaponry (Napalm B, B-52's, end-over-end bullets) is introduced in a cycle of reflexive destruction. A man like Luke can take out a grizzly bear with a gun as light as .245 calibre, but the impotents of Texas and the Pentagon need super-weapons to compensate for their personal frustration:

Medium Asshole Pete is so squash-breathed at the ups and downs of careermanship and sudden death which now confront him that he buys - get in line to look at it - from a white-haired r verboat string-tie type of an ex oil well promoter, some friend of his wife's shiftless uncles' boss, a third-string Dallas Mafia type . . . this gun being used, indeed banged up, African rhinoceros-hippo-elephant-soften-the-bullet-for-the-lion double-barreled .600-.577 custom, only-one-of-its-kind-ever-built Jeffrey Nitro Express carrying a 900-grain bullet for Shot #1, a 750 grain for Shot #2, and a recoil guaranteed to knock a grand piano on its ass. . . . Yeah! This was the gun F. Lap-Ass Medium Asshole Pete brought to Alaska for grizzly. When he saw it, Rusty had a pure shit fit. If it hadn't been a Jeffrey he'd have laughed his nuts off. But, fix on this, Rusty thought he had the only big bore Jeffrey in the state of Texas, and here was his flunky with a bigger, and double! . . . 126
The hunt takes on ludicrous proportions as Pete blasts a Caribou in the backside with his supergun, but succeeds in only wounding it! Luke reluctantly calls in a helicopter to aid in tracking it down and the pretense at ethical hunting is over.

He was forever enough of a pro not to use it with real hunters, no, man, but he had us, gaggle of goose fat and asshole, killers of bile-soaked venison, so the rest of the hunt, all next seven days, he gave what was secretly wanted, which was helicopter heaven and it was curious shit, all rules and regulations, for of course we did not hunt from the air, no freak-men from TV land us, but rather noble Dallasassians, hopping to the top of a mountain on copter wings to shoot down on goats. 127

"Dallasassians" further connects the hunters to pathology, that of Lee Harvey Oswald.

As the hunt goes on, it becomes clear that the two adolescents, DJ and Tex, do not subscribe to the values of their elders. Says Rusty: "I like the feeling that if I miss a vital area I still can count on the big impact knocking them down, killing them by the total impact, shock!"

He believes in blitzkrieg, German-American style war:

it's like aerial bombardment in the last Big War . . . you don't pinpoint vital areas in a city, you blot it all out, you bury it deep in fire, shit and fury . . . It's just like if you get in a fight with a fellow, you're well advised to destroy him half to death. If y'get him down, use your shoe on his face, employ your imagination . . . that man is your friend afterward, you've made him sane . . . 129

If you "employ your imagination", you may qualify for the American way of death.
DJ's revulsion to all this is shown when he and his father leave the main hunting party, and go off by themselves to look for Rusty's desperately needed bear. The episode is loaded with mythic connotations - the initiation into manhood, the Oedipal struggle between father and son, the passing on of wisdom from one generation to the next, reminiscent of the end of Barbery Shore, and Faulkner's "The Bear". The idea of the passing on of knowledge is important in Mailer; the pattern occurs elsewhere in the relationships of McLeod and Lovett, and Eitel and Sergius. Here, however, the information is trivial, the wisdom false: "I learned a lot from my daddy, he taught me one thing I'm going to teach you now - the only time a good man with a good rifle is in trouble is when he steps from sunlight into shadow." Like the supposed wisdom of DJ, his father's insight is pathetic and limited.

As the two tramp through the heavy bush, DJ becomes alert to the underlying psychology of the situation of the two of them alone: "DJ for the first time in his life is hip to the hole of his centre which is slippery desire to turn his gun and blast a shot into Rusty's fat fuck face . . . " Instead, the bloodlust between the two is sublimated to the hunt, the psychological necessity for Americans to kill yellow men is related to their frustrated, inter-generational conflict: "murder between the two men came to rest, for murder was outside them now, same murder which had been beaming in to DJ while he thinking of murdering his father, the two men turned to contemplate the beast."
Denying the impulse to confront the real conflicts of his inner being, the contemporary American must find Golding's "beast" in external bogeymen: communism, the Negro, the Viet Cong, and moral radicalism.

Nevertheless, DJ is superior in many ways to his father: he is aware of his predicament, conscious of nature, and has a natural integrity as yet uncorrupted by corporationland.

DJ contains the potential to become an existential hero on the order of Stephen Rojack. His intense awareness is the primary prerequisite for enlightenment, and he savors the prospect of encounter: DJ

was in the vale of breath, every small smell counted; it was the most fucking delicious moment of his life up to that point, for there are those who know and those who do not know when a very bad grizz is near to you (a final division of humanity) and DJ knew, and DJ was in love was in love with himself because he did not wish to scream or plead, he just wished to encounter Mr. D. (Death), big-ass grizz . . .

DJ has some of the magic that characterizes Rojack's godliness, but he is not good enough to make the final leap into the void, and his perception that "those who know and those who do not know" are a "final division of humanity" is a wrong one. For Mailer, the final division is between the saved and the not saved, those who dare to act and those who do not; and when the moment of truth finally comes (with Tex), DJ does not act.

Yet when the time comes for the kill, it is DJ who shows superior courage to his father, as the two creep up on the wounded extremely dangerous bear:
They came on him from a hundred feet above, and Rusty was for pouring in some lead just to make shit-and-sure, but peace was coming off that bear... 134

DJ has the brashness of youth:

Rusty raised his gun, but DJ touched the rifle slightly with a little salute, and started walking down toward the bear. 135

Walking right up to the dying animal, DJ communes with it, and the bear tells where DJ really is in relation to existential heroics: "Baby, you haven't begun". DJ is still a baby, and despite his high level of awareness, he has not realized what existential salvation is all about. The verification comes when father and son return to camp with the news of the kill. Both know that DJ's first shot was the telling one, but in his raw need to impress his stooges, Rusty takes the credit:

"Yeah, I guess it's mine, but one its sweet legs belongs to DJ!" Whew. Final end of love of one son for one father. 137

DJ's unwillingness to challenge his father indicates that he will not discover the "eternal present"; he is capable of courage in some but not all of his confrontations.

By exposing his father's hypocrisy, he would complete his initiation ritual, but he fails to take the necessary step of existential daring.

This would seem to be the climactic scene of the novel, but a capper is to come, and DJ makes it clear on the very next page:
The hunting over? This fine narrative of native Texas pluck and grits now to be laid back into its rifle case while DJ's mind opens up another box of strict inside goodies? Screw. The climax within Alaska is yet to come - you will get rocks off you thought were buried forever.138

A contrast is evident here, between the grandiosity with which DJ views himself and the megalomania which Mailer is so often accused of. There is a very real distinction in their talents, and DJ is inferior as an artist in nearly every respect. When DJ compares himself to Joyce et. al, it is without the compensating self-irony and anti-vanity that characterizes the Mailer of Advertisements.

The climax to the novel occurs after DJ and Tex set out alone into the wilderness leaving behind not only guns, but also sleeping bags, food and compass, in another of the pseudo-pure actions that characterize their behavior. It is a mistake to see the boys, both aged sixteen, as admirable, even though their appreciation of nature and the nuances of the hunt is superior to that of their elders. The son of a Texas undertaker, Tex is the personification of the American killer, reminiscent of the Croft in The Naked and The Dead. "Tex is a killer, baby, got one of those dull Texas faces to prove it". 139 It is on this expedition that the boys "got their powers" 140 but these powers are on the side of evil and death.

In the time between the hunt and their departure for Vietnam, DJ and Tex have been practising "ghoul surgery on corpses which is demonological you may be shit-and-sure, and derives from their encounter with all the human shit and natural
depth of their Moe Henry hunt two years ago. By contrast, Rojack rejects the temptations to sheer evil offered by Barney Kelly.

Part of DJ's curse is an overabundance of consciousness. Thus the rite of redemption which the boys are undertaking is seen as such before it starts, and so loses spontaneity: Tex "gets the purification ceremony clear in his head" before they begin, tainting the whole enterprise with anti-existential premeditation. Trekking off into the wilderness, they elude a helicopter and find themselves in a natural setting attuned to the vibrations of all North America: "those mountains are a receptacle, man, a parabolic reflector, an avatar, a bowl of resonances..."

Finally free of the entrapments of civilization, they attain a hallucinogenic state of consciousness, and tune in to the natural splendor around them:

they were wired up by the mixture of fatigue, cold, and the first good rest they'd got, and by the life of the day they had just passed, and by the clean in them free of mixed shit, and lying without a gun or knife which was like travelling naked at night now weaponless in near unmarked mountains watching wolf and griz, mother caribou, the cranes never forgot their hearts starting to beat at the mystery sound of a thousand cranes' wings near enough lift your heart out of your body, make it fly after. So breathing hard with all this, lying next to each other like two rods getting charged with magnetism... the Arctic Lights began, Aurora Borealis was out like she had not been any night in September this trip... the lights were talking to them, and they were going with it, near to, the lights were saying that there was something up here, and it was really here, yeah God was here, and He was real and no man was He, but a beast, some beast of a giant jaw and cavernous mouth..."
The time for transfiguration is near, and sexuality, always Mailer's critical metaphor, enters the picture, as the boys lie side by side "like two rods", shivering at their communion with the universe and with the desire to possess each other sexually. As in An American Dream, mystical union and the courage to love are identified with existential heroism:

DJ raised his hand to put it square on Tex's cock and squeeze and just before he did the Northern lights shifted on that moment and a coil of sound went off in the night.145

The gods are ready to smile on this union; but there is fear and murder in their hearts, the old competitive belief, heritage of Texas, that one must win and one die, one fuck and one be fucked. So, they lose at love, and instead of God, find only the Devil disguised as God:

Tex Hyde he of fearless Eenyen blood was finally afraid to prong DJ, because DJ once become a bitch would kill him, and DJ breathing that in by the wide-awake of the dark with Aurora Borealis jumping to the beat of his heart knew he could make a try to prong Tex tonight, there was a chance to get in and steal the iron from Texas' ass and put it in his own and he was hard as a hammer at the thought and ready to give off sparks and Tex was ready to fight him to the death, yeah, now it was there, murder between them under all friendship, for God was a beast, not a man, and God said, "Go out and kill - fulfill my will, go and kill", and they hung there each of them on the knife of the divide in all conflict of lust to own the other yet in fear of being killed by the other and as the hour went by the lights shifted, and something in the radiance of the North went into them, and owned their fear, some communion of telepathies and new powers, and they were twins, never to be near as lovers again, but killer brothers.146

Fear keeps DJ from action - the action which would liberate him just as Rojack's action in overcoming the fear of murdering is
his salvation. So the fear which kills love brings forth a false God whose message is death instead of life: "fulfill my will, go and kill". The would-be lovers are related instead as "killer-brothers", antithetical versions of the "good man" which Rojack hopes to become through his love for Cherry: "God, let me love that girl, and become a father, and try to be a good man . . ."147

Having failed to have the courage to love -for it can require greater courage to love than to kill - Tex and DJ become the inheritors of technological evil. The last sick invocation reflects the mentality of their inability to break the "hot dam" of flesh and emotion which separates them: "Vietnam, hot dam."
Chapter 7

Since *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, Mailer has not published any fiction as such, but has come out with two full-length political pieces, *Armies of the Night* and *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, and has published a large part of a third work, *Fire on the Moon*, in *Life*. This would seem to indicate a swing in his interest away from fiction. It may be productive, however, to consider these "non-fictions" and the two collections preceding them, *The Presidential Papers* and *Cannibals and Christians*, as fictional in some important respects. In order to discuss these works as fiction, it is necessary to make two assumptions: that Mailer uses his own first person as the existentialist hipster hero of much of his non-fiction, the chief but not the only fictional device to be found in these works; and that the totality of his writing forms the "long-delayed great work" to which he has referred often since *Advertisements*.

In the extremely important preface to "The White Negro" in *Advertisements*, Mailer describes the anguishes of self-doubt which besought him through the writing of *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park* in both novel and play forms, and the journalistic writings which comprise much of *Advertisements*. Fighting near-addiction to benzedrine and cigarettes, a sense of deep alienation from the literary mainstream after the critical
rejection of his second and third novels, and worst of all, the stagnation of a "new passivity", he seems to have arrived at a realization of his own dimensions not simply as a literary figure, but as the vital link between theory and actuality in his existential program.

A passage in *Advertisements* shows the connection:

In "The White Negro", in "The Time of Her Time", and in *Advertisements for Myself on the Way Out*, can be found the real end of this muted autobiography of the near-beat adventurer who was myself. With these three seeds let us say the book has its end. Seed is an end, it is the end of the potentialities seen for oneself, and every organism creates its seed out of the experience of its past and its unspoken vision or curse upon the future.148

By referring to these three pieces, two of them fictional, as the "real end of the muted autobiography", and as the seeds for future work, Mailer completes the identification with his fictional narrators which is hinted at the characters of Mikey Lovett and Sergius O'Shaughnessy. In fact, a certain sympathy and a similarity may be found to exist between all of Mailer's narrators and their author. Lovett, O'Shaughnessy, and Rojack are all themselves writers, are all war veterans, are all more or less alienated from their culture, are all concerned - one might even say - obsessed - with their sexual well-being and its relationship to their work. DJ is another kind of communicator, "disc jockey to America" and his connection to Mailer is that almost all of his ideas are a parody of most of Mailer's publicly stated ideas. Of all his fictional narrators, though, the mysterious narrator of "Advertisements For Myself on the
Way Out" provides the best insights into Mailer's peculiar method and madness as a writer, and proves to contain the "seeds" for the "unspoken vision" of his later works.

Subtitled "Prologue to a Long Novel," "Advertisements for Myself on The Way Out" is not only a short story but a psychological chart of his first person, the persisting underlying consciousness of Mailer's collective work. It begins with and ends with a philosophical speculation on the identity of the narrator, Mailer's favorite riddle:

The mark of a philosopher is that he puts his name to his work, he wants his ideas to carry the connotation of the syllables (those primitive sounds) which make up the armature of his character. So, properly, if I were able, but my name eludes me and at present would slip by without meaning to you - I am virtually married to Time unless she has already divorced me (of which indigestible statement, more explanation later) and so my name alters as time turns away from me, and it is not all that natural to explain who I am. Let it go. Only a dreary mind cannot bear mysteries.

Yet I do not know if I should evade your questions. It is possible I am a kind of ghost, the ghost of exhausted passion, but I prefer to believe this is completely untrue. How much less disagreeable to be some breath in the caverns of the unconscious of one of the figures in this unnatural mystery, or indeed to be the consciousness brought into being by the relations or the mutilations of the exceptional characters I will introduce.

Only to say this is to deny it, for if I am the creature of relationship, I must not be so much consciousness as corporeal, containing a blastopore whose nucleic proteins limn a signature, the given first half of my destiny. Yes, I must be a breath of the present present, a point of size swimming in my un glimpsed mother's first freshets of amniotic fluid, an embryonic two-cell, me, engaging no less than the fluid consciousness of God, His comprehension still in mine, as I believe is true of all things not yet born but budding in the belly. So I could be an
embryo eight instants old, a work of gestation away from noise and pain, and yet knowing more than I ever will know again because I am part of Him. (Or is it Her?) 149 (italics added)

Ghost, god, God, embryo, Devil, fragment of unconsciousness, the final nature of this narrator — and Mailer is speaking for himself here — is ineluctable, as non-knowable as whether one is on God’s side or the Devil’s. The mystery recurred in *Why Vietnam?* where DJ constantly and facetiously dangles the possibility that he is a "crippled genius of a Harlem spade". Shago Martin says "I got twenty faces" and Cherry is described as "a nest of personalities". The multiple names of Sergius O’Shaughnessy have been noted earlier, all variations on the same theme of the mystery of human identity. In *Armies of The Night*, speaking of himself in the third person, we learn that:

Mailer had never had a particular age — he carried different age within him like different models of his experience: parts of him were eighty-one years old, fifty-seven, forty-eight, thirty-six, nineteen, et cetera, et cetera . . . 152 (italics added)

Personality itself becomes a "model of experience", not tangible but plastic and capable of infinite variation, and to the man who is aware of it, of unlimited possibilities.

Possibility is always a key word with Mailer, the potentiality for self-actualization. When personal realities become fixed, or when one has the illusion of their fixity, the possibilities for change and therefore, existential growth, are diminished and man slips towards death, in this case the
death of his personality. Thus it is essential to the writer
that he experiment not only with form, as Mailer does con-
stantly, but with the nuances of the authorial personality.
Even since he has moved away from first-person narratives
after Why Vietnam?, Mailer adopts constantly changing ways of
referring to "himself" in the third person: "Mailer" in
Armies of the Night, "the reporter" in Miami and the Siege
of Chicago, "Aquarius" in Fire on the Moon.

The mystical and religious nature of the mutability of
human identity shows up later in "Advertisement for Myself On
the Way Out":

Now I know it is not in the mode of our pompous
obilitation-conscious years to encourage such pathetic
fallacies as the animism of the wind and an old house,
but since (be I ghost, geist, demiurge, dog, bud,
flower, tree, house or some lost way-station of the
divine, looking for my mooring in the labial tortures
and luguors of words) be I whatever, it must be
evident that I am existentialist and would propose
that when the wind carries a cry which is meaning-
ful to human ears, it is simpler to believe that the
wind shares with us some part of the emotion of Being
than that the mysteries of a hurricane's rising murmur
reduced to no more than the random collision of insen-
sate molecules. Yes, if I were to meet that saint with
the body of an ox, Saint Thomas Aquinas, a gentleman
with whom I agree about very little, I would still be
obliged to nod in obligation to his exceptional phrase,
"the authority of the senses", exactly because I now
feel the frustration of a wind which knows so much and
can tell your ears so little.153

If "the wind shares with us some part of the emotion of Being",
it is because all existence is ultimately one. We have become
dead to the realization of oneness because of the technological
deadening of the senses which provide our most reliable avenue
into that mystery:
As our century moves toward its death, and the death of all of us, so our senses die first, and who has ears to hear the wind when the smoke of mutual hatred is thick on commuter trains, and the subway rails of an evening's television batter into stupidity the sense of the sensual, leaving us null and dumb to the almost ineffable sounds which touch beyond the vanity, the will, the force and the imprisonment of the ego, grim and God-murdering ego, champion of the practical and peasant divinity of the Reformation, that Faustian burgher who built our mills of steel on the stern, the palpable, and the self-evident notion that through a point only one line can be drawn parallel to a given line, when already we are travelling through the non-Euclidean present of space-time. Sooner than we think, lo, the line parallel to the given line will prove to be nothing other than the same line once around the route in the expanding spiral of Being.

Yet another set of dualities has been postulated here, in which will ennervates sensuality, ego destroys God, Protestantism vanquishes the nuances of Catholic mystery and a false rationalism destroys any remnant of relativity in human existence. The analogy of the line in space operates on several levels here, including the one that says man only seems to be individual and separate, that the line of a human life is not distinct from all others, but part of a widening spiral, Yeats's gyre, of reality and mystical oneness.

At the end of the "story", after relating briefly the people and events of a party at a large country house, the narrator reveals his "true identity". The metaphorical implications are at least as important as their literal meaning. Mailer is talking about the death of his own ego, the villain referred to above, as the prerequisite to an artistic endeavor which hopes to enter the consciousness of others on the subtlest levels:
... I turn the key into the category of my own secret, for as some of you may have sensed by now, the list I offered up to your amusement is from me, and I am, oh yes, now I know who I am or was, I am the dead man on the floor, for so I am, yes, (what a pure moment of grief at all that has not been done) I am in the endless deliberate instant of the vision given by death, the million dying spasms of the radiating consciousness of words, this last of me, wailing within, turbulent with the terror that I no longer know where I am, nor if there are voices to hear me and answer back. 155

Death and eternity are the symbols of self-immolation and the stepping into the existential abyss whose horror and source of virtue is that one can never know "if there are voices to hear me and answer back". The "endless deliberate instant" is the perennial existential quandary of either/or, the courage to die and be born again in a never-ending process.

And as he dies, he wonders where death and new life will take him:

... for in an instant - will it be eternally long? like some cell at the crisis of its cellular destiny, I race into the midnight mind, the dream-haunted determinations of that God of whom I was a part, and will He choose me to be born again? have I proven one of his best? am I embryo in some belly of the divisible feminine Time, or is the journey yet to make? Or worst of all am I - and the cry which is without sound shrieks in my ears - am I already on the way out? a fetor of God's brown sausage in His time of diarrhea, oozing and sucking and bleating like a fecal puppy about to pass away past the last pinch of the divine sphincter with only the toilet of Time, oldest hag of them all, to spin me away into the spiral of star-lit empty waters.156

Again, it is doubt and possibility which is of value: is he like God, or like His shit? To know who you are is to destroy the possibility of what you may become.
That life after death is both metaphorically and literally possible is a key distinction to be made between Mailer's existentialism and that of Sartre and Heidegger.

In real life, Mailer pursues the journey into death begun in the passage just quoted, in a superb piece of writing on the first Liston-Patterson fight, called simply "Death". The piece is reprinted in The Presidential Papers, a book dedicated to the elucidation of then President Kennedy, on the general theme of existential politics, at the core of which is the idea that "political rights like human rights are best won by a face-to-face confrontation". Mailer argues that European existentialism flounders on its unwillingness to perceive death as a potentiality as great as life, "that there is a life after death which can be as existential as life itself". Without meaningful death, that is, death which retains at least the possibility of life through, say, transmigration, life becomes existentially absurd, trapped within Heidegger's search for authenticity and Sartre's dependence on style for its own sake.

Existentialism is rootless unless one dares the hypothesis that death is an existential continuation of life, that the soul may either pass through migrations, or cease to exist in the continuum of nature (which is the unspoken intimation of cancer). But accepting this hypothesis, authenticity and commitment return to the centre of ethics, for man then faces no peril so huge as alienation from his own soul, a death which is other than death, a disappearance into nothingness rather than into Eternity.

But how does one - in this case, Mailer - test his reality when he is a mere recorder of action, a reporter of the activities
of the great, whether Kennedy, Jackie, or Sonny Liston? The answer is that he must somehow implicate himself in the power of those whom he is observing, must in some way share in the protagonism which our political, cultural and popular heroes wield for us. It is not enough merely to report excellently on their activities: thus, in dedicating The Presidential Papers to Kennedy, Mailer usurps the power of the presidency in a partial way by claiming that his piece in Esquire on Kennedy's presidential nomination was instrumental in giving Kennedy the slim edge with which he won the 1960 election.

This insinuation of himself into the cogs of power is precisely what so many of his critics cannot stand in Mailer. It is somehow considered "unethical" for a writer to be so audacious as to suppose that he may in fact have some small hand in the directions which power may take in a city or in a nation. By the same token, Mailer's frequent attempts for various political offices, most recently mayor of New York, are distasteful to those who think that a serious writer should stay away from the degradations of direct political involvement. The mistake here is to assume a distinction between Mailer the writer and Mailer the citizen. In fact, all of his faces are part of a well-unified whole, for whom any conceivable possibility is worth at least the trying.

While this approach is not calculated to endear him to many hearts, it is for Mailer the only way to overcome the
danger of "disappearance into nothingness rather than into Eternity". And even though the energies thus expended may be wasteful, disruptive, and arrogant, they are never without the saving grace of consciousness. When he tells us that he is this or that kind of fool, we must retain the sense of irony and self-awareness in which the revelations are made, or lose the nuances of redemption which are being offered.

For it is redemption which Mailer is about, the redemption not merely of his own battle-scarred soul, but those and that of America. Thus, the "death" of the Liston-Patterson piece takes on the connotations of salvation via the sacrifices of one man, just as the audacity to identify with Kennedy implied that Mailer himself was the figure of social microcosm, the personification of our own multitude of sins and virtues.

"Death" begins with a speculation on the relationship between poets, reporters and novelists, as respectively, the upper, middle and working classes of writing society. As the bourgeoisie of the writing profession, the reporter is committed to half-lies, discreet mediocrity and practical survival. Enslaved to the service of the insatiable media which they serve, reporters live in a Limbo of partial reality: for the most part they are shabby, worried, guilty, and suffer each day from the damnable anxiety that they know all sorts of powerful information a half hour to twenty-four hours before anyone else in America knows it.160

There is a time-lag in the reporter's self-realization that frustrates him. Faced with this realization of his own role
as reporter, Mailer decides that only by reaching into the unknown can he be liberated from the anti-life forces which beset him:

Writing is of use to the psyche only if the writer discovers something he did not know he knew in the act itself of writing. That is why a few men will go through hell in order to keep writing - Joyce and Proust, for example. Being a writer can save one from insanity or cancer; being a bad writer can drive one smack into the centre of the plague. (italics added)

Sentimentally attracted to Floyd Patterson's apparent goodness, vis-a-vis Liston's radiation of Mafia-style evil, Mailer bets money on a knockout for Patterson in the sixth round. When Liston knocks Patterson out at 2:06 of the first round, Mailer shares the general sense of astonishment at first, but eventually comes up with an explanation:

Sex had proven superior to Love still one more time, the Hustler had taken another pool game from the Infantryman . . . and the Devil had shown that the Lord was dramatically weak. So Liston is revealed as the Devil, representative of the powers of death, the Mob, the bully, the fascist, and like Rojack before him, Mailer must confront the enemy in order to maintain his own powers:

out of a desire to end some war in myself . . . I began in the plot-ridden, romantic dungeons of my mind . . . to see myself as some sort of centre about which all that had been lost must now rally. It was not even simple egomania, not simple drunkenness, it was not even simple insanity: it was a kind of metaphorical leap across a gap. To believe the impossible may be won creates a strength from which the impossible may indeed be attacked.

The charge of megalomania is as valid here as it is anywhere:
I would do the publicity for the second Patterson-Liston fight. I was the only man in America who could save the second fight because I believed that Patterson had a true chance to beat Liston the next time they met.164 (italics added)

Yet, the ridicule we might feel for a man with such delusions of grandeur is mollified by two things: first, it is clear that nothing short of the ultimate challenge, no matter what the battleground, will do for Mailer. Life's epithet "shoot-for-the-moon Mailer" is an apt one. Moreover, Mailer's fantasies have a way of becoming realized. On the day after the fight, Mailer obnoxiously takes the microphone at Liston's press conference, and after a dogged exchange with the star of the show, is called a "bum" by Liston. "Once more I had tried to become a hero, and had ended as an eccentric. There would be an argument later whether I was a monster or a clown."165 But Mailer is redeemed not only by the awareness of the dimensions of his actions, but by the courage to try the impossible (in this case, the winning over of Liston in front of a full complement of media-minders) and by the fact that this time at least, he succeeds:

"Listen", said I, leaning my head closer, speaking from the corner of my mouth, as if I were whispering in a clinch, "I'm pulling this caper for a reason. I know a way to build the next fight from a $200,000 dog in Miami to a $2,000,000 gate in New York."

Out of Liston's eyes stared back the profound intelligence of a profound animal. Now we understood each other, now we could work as a team. "Say", said Liston, "that last drink really set you up. Why don't you go and get me a drink, you bum."

"I'm not your flunky," I said.
It was the first jab I'd slipped, it was the first punch I'd sent home. He loved me for it. The hint of a chuckle of corny old darky laughter, cottonfield giggles, peeped out a moment from his throat. "Oh, sheet, man!" said the wit in his eyes. And for the crowd who was watching, he turned and announced at large, "I like this guy." 166

But Mailer's honesty is too thorough-going to leave things at this apparent victory, and the piece ends with a speculation echoing the theme of energies expended and prices paid in An American Dream. The final paragraph is in the style of an epilogue, and the fictional qualities of the preceding narrative are emphasized by a switch from the first-person voice to a more reflective third-person:

... later one was called in to see a high probation official and was told that probation, [for stabbing his wife] about to end, would now be extended further. One would have to pay this bit for the caper. I did not mind so much. I had learned a lot and educations were paid for best in cash. But what I lost was also nice, I was sorry to see it gone. Some ghost of Don Quixote was laid to rest in me and now I could never be as certain as that morning on the walk whether Patterson indeed could ever bring in his return. To shake the hand of the Devil must quiver the hole: who knew any longer where Right was Left or who was Good and how Evil had hid? ... 167

By pointing out the karmic price for his role-playing, Mailer reminds us that his public and private lives are continuous.
Chapter 8

The Armies of The Night culminates the process begun in Advertisements and continued in "Death", whereby Mailer places himself in the centre of his narrative action. The success of The Armies of The Night bears out his ability to incorporate his various selves - hero of radical youth, lion of the literary establishment, friend of poets and statesmen - into the heart of both political and literary reality. Mailer's self-defined role of scapegoat and saviour begins to make sense on a grand scale when we realize that with all of his contradictions and ambiguities, Mailer is, like Whitman, attempting to become the personification of America itself; what can be said of Mailer can be said of the United States. As Diana Trilling puts it:

it would be hard to name a writer of our or any time whose work reveals a more abundant or urgent endowment which is yet so little consistent with itself - so much moral affirmation coupled with so much moral anarchism; so much innocence yet so much guile; so much defensive caution but so much headlong recklessness; so much despair together with so imperious a demand for salvation; so strong a charismatic charge but also so much that offends or even repels; so much intellect but such a frequency of unsound thinking; such a grand and manly impulse to heroism but so inadequate a capacity for self-discipline; so much sensitiveness and so little sensibility; so much imagination and such insufficient art. Contradictions like these no doubt contribute to Mailer's appeal; but they also make for his limitations. And they describe a talent which necessarily lives on the sharp edge of uncertainty.168

One might quibble with a few of Miss Trilling's reservations about Mailer, especially that he has artistry insufficient to
his imagination. But since this was written in 1962, Mailer has published probably his two best works, *An American Dream* and *Armies of The Night*, and in them has reconciled if not eliminated the paradoxes of his being.

Nowhere is the sensation of single, finite man adrift in an adverse but perhaps benificent cosmos stronger than in *Armies of The Night*. The subtitle - History as a Novel, the Novel as History - identifies the two books that comprise the work, and emphasizes the fictional reality of this apparently reportorial style. As novel rather than history, the first section is of greatest literary interest, and is where Mailer's artistry (rather than reporting ability) is more apparent. By abandoning the first person narrators of the previous four novels, the longer stories and "Death", he neatly inverts the reality of author/narrator/story and affirms his own coming of age as a worthy protagonist of his own existential creed. *Armies of The Night* represents the finding of the saviour in real life, its hero the Messiah of his world in just the same way that Rojack is in the world of fiction. Although this is a novel, yet its events are those of history and the television screen, and we may even find ourselves, as Robert Lowell and Dwight MacDonald do, among its minor characters. What we have is really a new medium, a *cinema verite* piece of "reality", a fictional documentary whose author contends that his truth is superior to, not just equal to, anybody elses'. Telling your own novel has
the advantage of being able to make your own critical definitions, as Mailer does at the beginning of Book II:

The Novelist in passing his baton to the Historian has a happy smile. He has been faster than you think. As a working craftsman, a journeyman artist, he is not without his guile; he has come to decide that if you would see the horizon from a forest, you must build a tower. If the horizon will reveal most of what is significant, an hour of examination can yet do the job - it is the tower which takes months to build. So the Novelist working in secret collaboration with the Historian has perhaps tried to build with his novel a tower fully equipped with telescopes to study - at the greatest advantage - our own horizon. Of course, the tower is crooked, and the telescopes warped, but the instruments of all sciences - history so much as physics - are always constructed in small or large error; what supports the use of them now is that our intimacy with the master builder of the tower, and the lens grinder of the telescopes (yes, even the machinist of the barrels) has given some advantage for correcting the error of the instruments and the imbalance of his tower.169

The novel is then, a viewing platform, carefully and fully constructed so that we might look at the historical "horizon" from a particular framing consciousness. The novel section of Armies of The Night consists of the construction of a perceptual framework, a picture of what it is like to be Norman Mailer during certain events.

Mailer has said that confrontation is the essence of existential politics, and he begins the novel with an insulting inclusion of Time's report of his own involvement in the march on the Pentagon, ending "Now we may leave Time and find out what happened." Having thus in one stroke both scorned the liberal establishment and revealed his sense of relation to it, he goes on to reveal the misgivings, hopes, fears, corruptions
and timidities surrounding his involvement in The Movement. The curious thing about this involvement is that Mailer is finally uncertain in his commitment to the radical change now taking place in America. Brought at last to the brink of the Revolution, Mailer steps back from the edge, as if, now that the aims of radicalism are in sight (if not yet in range) he cannot bring himself to join the hippies, Yippies, Fugs and other heralds of the New Age. Whether this is the result of hardening in his revolutionary arteries or a fundamental perversity of character which compels him to be forever the outsider becomes the central question of the novel, and results in the final ambiguity of The Armies of The Night.

It is revealing and not so surprising, that Mailer has selected those details which describe his relationship to the American literary and intellectual establishment of the Left. As in American Dream, the plot follows the various confrontations between the protagonist (to whom I shall refer, to avoid confusion with the author, as "Mailer", with quotes) and his real-life acquaintances. Barney Kelly, Roberts, Shago, and Deborah are replaced (irrespective) by Robert Lowell, Dwight MacDonald, Mitch Goodman, and the stalwarts of the defence of Washington and the Pentagon. But as in An American Dream, the hero's chief enemy is himself, and "Mailer's" main battlefield, like Rojact's, is within himself.

The motif of reality and unreality noted earlier in the discussion of Barbary Shore and The Deer Park recurs here with
new variations. First is the underlying contradiction and mirror-imagery of a novel whose protagonist bears the author's name. The role-playing aspect is suggested early in the story, as is the difficulty that "Mailer" has in knowing which persona to adopt in a particular situation:

The thought that he was beginning to sound like a righteous old toot came just as suddenly into his head. Mailer had never had a particular age - he carried different ages in his head like different models of his experience: parts of him were eighty-one years old, fifty-seven, forty-eight, thirty-six, nineteen, et cetera, et cetera - he now went back abruptly from fifty-seven to thirty-six.171

Unlike Sergius, who is unsure that he is anybody, "Mailer" carries too many different roles around. Like Herman Hesse's Steppenwolf, he stands in a hall of doorways overwhelmed by the choices which he has. In a sense, he is too free, too relativistic, too liberated from specific points of view.

A little later on, the identity crisis of Why Are We in Vietnam?, in which DJ is obsessed with the Jekyll and Hyde aspects of his personality, proves to be one of "Mailer's" problems too. And in the same paragraph, he harks back to his dramatic confrontation with Sonny Liston in Cannibals and Christians:

But as Mailer had come to recognize over the years, the modest everyday fellow of his daily round was servant to a wild man in himself: the gent did not appear so very often, sometimes as rarely as once a month, sometimes not even twice a year, and he sometimes came when Mailer was frightened and furious at the fear, sometimes he came just to get a breath of air. He was indispensable, however, and Mailer was even fond of him for the wild man was witty in his own wild way and absolutely fearless - once at the edge of paralysis he had been ready to engage Sonny Liston. He would have
been admirable, except that he was an absolute egomanic, a Beast - no recognition existed of the existence of anything beyond the range of his reach.172

Once again, it is the utter existentialism of his "Beast" that defines his reality.

In treating Armies as a novel, we run the risk of obscuring the fact that "Mailer's" perceptions and Mailer's may at times be precisely the same. But since it is impossible (and probably fruitless) to make such a distinction, it is perhaps best simply to state that we are dealing with a minimum of two, and often more, roles, and that by keeping the concept of roles in mind, we will be most sympathetic to the mental mode of the consciousness which is presenting itself to us. One may adopt a "role", but the public sees an "image", and this aspect of himself is important to "Mailer".

Mailer had the most developed sense of image; if not, he would have been a figure of deficiency, for people had been regarding him by his public image since he was twenty-five years old. He had in fact learned to live in the sarcophagus of his image - at night, in his sleep, hem might dart out, and paint improvements on the sarcophagus. During the day, while he was helpless, newspapermen and other assorted bravos of the media and the literary world would carve ugly pictures on the living tomb of his legend. Of necessity, part of Mailer's remaining funds of sensitivity went right into the war of supporting his image and working for it . . .173

The insecurity and uncertainty of his place in American letters revealed in Advertisements has been replaced by a sure sense of the validity of his status there. Yet tension remains, the tension of residing within a "living tomb" of his public image which he can alter but slightly, as with paint, while the
media-manipulators do the real carving, in both senses. But Mailer is not specially given to whining, and beyond occasional digs at Time-men, he would rather move on to his relationships with his peers in the literary firmament.

Mailer has several purposes in his rather unkind and certainly un-gamesmanly drawing in of his friends Robert Lowell and Dwight MacDonald. First he would measure his own status with theirs, and characteristically makes the point explicit:

"Let Global Village hear today that America's best poet? and best novelist?? and best critic?? had been arrested in protest of Uncle Sam's Whorehouse War."174

By revealing his renowned friends as they embark upon a potentially dangerous political and moral act, Mailer hopes to delineate the crucial division between merely liberal and truly radical action. As in the earlier novels, it is action which finally determines the moral responsibility of the individual.

Mailer's abiding mistrust of Liberalism reverberates back to Hearn and Eitel, as he surveys the home of "an attractive liberal couple" who are hosting the celebrities at dinner before an evening of speeches at the Ambassador Theatre:

His deepest detestation was often reserved for the nicest of liberal academics, as if their lives were his own life but a step escaped. Like the scent of the void which comes off the pages of a Xerox copy, so was he always depressed in such homes by their hint of oversecurity. If the republic was now managing to convert the citizenry to a plastic mass, ready to be attached to any manipulative gung ho, the author was ready to cast much of the blame for such success into the undernourished lap, the oversychologized loins, of the liberal academic intelligentsia. They
were of course politically opposed to the present programs and movements of the republic in Asian foreign policy, but this political difference seemed no more than a quarrel among engineers. Liberal academics had no root of a real war with technology land itself, no, in all likelihood, they were the natural managers of that future air-conditioned vault where the last of human life would still exist

Seeking escape from the monotonies of the assembled academics, Mailer involves himself in a conversation with Robert Lowell, the while speculating on the extent to which Lowell may indulge in "literary logrolling". Suspicious of Lowell's compliments, Mailer cruelly twists his flattery:

"Yes, Norman, I really think you are the best journalist in America."

The pen may be mightier than the sword, yet at their best, each belong to extravagant men. "Well, Cal," said Mailer, using Lowell's nickname for the first time, "there are days when I think of myself as being the best writer in America."

The effect was equal to walleping a roundhouse right into the heart of an English boxer who has been hitherto right up on his toes. Consternation, not Britannia, now ruled the waves. Perhaps Lowell had a moment when he wondered who was guilty of declaring war on the minuet. "Oh, Norman, oh, certainly," he said, "I didn't mean to imply, heavens no, it's just that I have such respect for good journalism."

Mailer has scored a telling punch, but his sense of confrontation will not be satisfied until his unwitting "opponent" has been demolished entirely:

"Well, I don't know that I do," said Mailer. "It's harder to write" - the next said with great and false graciousness - "a good poem."

"Yes, of course."

Chuckles. Headmastermanship.

Chuckles. Fellow headmastermanship.
This encounter does not function so much as a putdown of Lowell, (his value as a poet was quoted earlier) as an illustration of Mailer's impulse to be the outsider even among his peers. Having already rejected those at the party who lack reknown, he now systematically offends those with whom he feels he has something in common, as if any sustaining friendship would corrupt the sense of apartness which he uses in analyzing everything. He is, in fact, the quintessential rebel, functioning best in opposition to others.

Although Mailer's habit of antagonizing others might be merely perverse, I think it essential to his peculiar and alienated sense of identity. By making himself separate, he makes more acute his own sense of reality, thus cornering the energies needed for more challenging confrontations.

The next confrontation comes as "Mailer" addresses 600 assorted demonstrators assembled in a rock hall on the eve of the march. In a drunken, inspired mood, he insults his audience, botches the introductions to Lowell, MacDonald et al., and generally earns the scorn of the media covering the event. Taking on yet another role, he describes himself as the "dwarf alter-ego of LBJ", and launches into an obscene parody of Johnson's Texas vulgarity. In the end, he wins moderate applause from his listeners so that the evening's scoreboard ends more or less a draw, Mailer 1, World 1.
Mailer is unwilling, for once, to state openly his fear that the march may be futile. In the frequently recurring imagery of games and entertainment, we may read Mailer's sense of impotence in the face of a political system maintained in power by an immense and sophisticated technology:

After fifteen minutes of pushing, eddying, compressing and decompressing from ranks, the March at last started up in a circus-full of performers, an ABC or CBS open convertible with a built-on camera platform was riding in privileged position five yards in front of them with TV executives, cameramen, and technicians hanging on, leaning out, off on their own crisis run as they crawled along in front. Two monitors kept working like cheerleaders through portable loudspeakers to dress the front rank, . . . and a troop of helicopters, maybe as many as eight or ten, went into action overhead, while ten to twenty cameramen, movie and still, walking backward, wheeling, swinging from flank to flank, danced in the hollow.177 (italics added)

The March may be nothing but an immense entertainment, virtually staged for the benefit of the various media whose customers it will entertain on tonight's news and in next week's issue.

As the March itself draws closer, Mailer relates more and more details of the gentility, the organization, the predictability of the whole affair. In retrospect, the best he can say about it is that its influence will be difficult to measure: "The March on the Pentagon was an ambiguous event whose essential value or absurdity may not be established for ten or twenty years, or indeed ever." What makes the event ambiguous is, of course, the huge context in which it occurs. The futility of demonstrations in determining public policy in the U.S., is by now evident to all.
And the recounting of the final moments of the March indicate Mailer's sharp sense of the futility and indeed, the absurdity of the proceedings. The description of the attempted levitation of the Pentagon is a gem of fantasy literature, rendered straight-faced. But it is in a personal fantasy where Mailer's real sense of the Revolution is revealed. He describes a mock-battle somewhere in the future, when the ludicrously underpowered forces of the Revolution will take on the might of America, all witnessed, of course, by network television:

Mailer, General Mailer, now had a vision of another battle, the next big battle, and these helicopters, press, television and assorted media helicopters hovering overhead with CIA-FBI - all others of the alphabet in helicopters - and into the swarm of the choppers would come a Rebel Chopper in black, or in Kustom-Kar Red, leave it to the talent of the West Coast to prepare the wild helicopter; it would be loaded with guns to shoot pellets of paint at the enemy helicopters, smearing and daubing, dripping them, dropping cans of paint from overhead . . . Until then - insufferable arrogance of these helicopters swinging and hovering and wheeling overhead, as if to remind everyone below of their suffer nce, their possession, and the secret of who owned the air-corporation land.179

The frustration, futility, resignation coloring this passage is unmistakable, and frightening from as gutsy a radical as Mailer. The two opposing forces are the "armies" of the night, for there may be as much to fear from a naive army of would-be liberators as from the evils they would oppose. In its social outlook, _The Armies of The Night_ is perhaps the most pessimistic of Mailer's works, for where the earlier novels ended with at least the possibility of successful
revolution, the last page (always crucial in Mailer's work) is a fearful reworking of Yeats' "The Second Coming", including the frightening possibility that "the will of the people was the will of the Devil".

Yet, on the individual level at least, Mailer stops short of a nihilistic view of man's powers. Even after finding the same kind of absurdity in his personal actions as in the crowd scenes cited earlier, he finds that certain personal actions remain meaningful and contain the old possibilities of redemption. His own feeling of futility is epitomized by a line from Lowell which occurs three times in the book: "the chinook salmon ... nosing up the impossible stone". And yet, and yet.

He has decided beforehand that only by acting in violation of the law can he contribute meaningfully to the demonstration. At least he will have shown the liberals that mere legal protest is insufficient to censure an ammoral war. With Lowell and MacDonald, he walks to the front line, where two ranks of MPs face the demonstrators. He and Lowell have disagreed as to the best place to be arrested, and this too, has contributed to the over-conscious and ritualistic mood of what would ideally be a spontaneous act of courage. But the existential moment arrives, and he plunges over the rope, towards the nearest MP:

It was as if the air had changed, or light had altered; he felt immediately much more alive - yes, bathed in air - and yet disembodied from himself, as if indeed he were watching himself in a film where this action was taking place.
The hallucinogenic quality of this description is strongly reminiscent of the moment in *An American Dream* when Rojack strangles Deborah and is granted a vision of bliss. The parallel is clearly intentional: both "Mailer" and Rojack reach moments of illuminative intensity - epiphanies - when they take the existential final step beyond the bounds of social and legal mores. Indeed, for the existential hero, "the air had changed" and he is "disembodied", for action, by which the moment is fully participated in, precipitates the genuinely mystical enhancement of consciousness which he seeks.

The passage just quoted represents the completion of a journey begun in *Advertisements* and continued in *An American Dream*. At last, Mailer is participating fully in the myth of himself. The strictly autobiographical Mailer of *Advertisements*, so anxious to reveal his innermost experiences, has fused with the fictional reality of Rojack. The final significance of "Mailer" and *The Armies of The Night* is the melding of the real and the ideal, the program and the life, the mask and the face. The novel section of *The Armies of The Night* is the testing ground of Mailer's theories of personal action in the arena of his own person. Where does it leave him? Does it work? Can mid-twentieth century man maintain a semblance of integrity and even hope amidst the brutalities and absurdities that surround him?

The answer, and Mailer's final position, is one of carefully qualified hope. If man is humiliated by the forces that
threaten to overwhelm him, he is nevertheless ennobléd by his attempts and successes in overcoming them. Looking back on the events of the March - his arrest, time in jail, trial, conviction, and release on his own recognizance - "Mailer" sums up his own feelings on the success of his own involvement: the air was good in his lungs - not often could Mailer count on such sweet air. He felt a liberation from the unending disciplines of that moral ladder whose rungs he had counted in the dormitory . . . no, all effort was not the same, and to eject oneself from guilt might yet be worth it, for the nausea on return to guilt could conceivably prove less: standing on the grass, he felt one suspicion of a whole man closer to that freedom from dread which occupied the inner drama of his years, yes, one image closer than when he had come to Washington four days ago.183

In coming "one image closer" to "freedom from dread", by adding a dimension to his repertoire of personalities, the existentialist gives meaning to life.
Since winning the Pulitzer prize in 1967 for *The Armies of The Night*, Mailer has published *Miami and the Siege of Chicago*, a document of the 1968 presidential nominating conventions, and part of *Fire On the Moon*, a study of America's manned moon flights. Although both extend Mailer's use of masks, they do not represent significant advances beyond the narrative technique of *The Armies of The Night*.

*Miami and The Siege of Chicago* is told in the third person by "the reporter", who is similar to "Mailer", the carefully constructed "viewing platform" of *The Armies of The Night*. In fact, the Miami and Chicago sections are continuations in the mode of the "history" section of *The Armies of The Night*, and while they contain insights into the nature of big-time politics as good as anything Mailer has done, they contain little discussion of the author. Instead, he is content to let the carefully constructed narrative figure of the first half of *Armies*, continue as a stable viewing point.

*Fire On the Moon*, of which three sections have appeared in *Life*, continues the third-person narrative device in the figure of "Aquarius":

If we approach our subject via Aquarius, it is because he is a detective of sorts, and different in spirit from eight years ago. He has learned to live with questions. Of course, as always, he has little to do with the immediate spirit of the time. Which is why Norman on this occasion may call himself Aquarius.
Born January 31, he is entitled to the name, but he thinks it a fine irony that we now enter the Aquarian Period since he has never had less sense of possessing the age.184

The "fine irony" is that as the United States embarks on perhaps its greatest achievement, the conquest of the moon, the country may be about to disintegrate. Again using himself as the metaphor of a society in the grips of existential doubt, Mailer recounts his own recent battles, the unsuccessful one for Mayor of New York, and the financial pressure which led him to accept a lucrative offer from his old enemy, Time-Life. Fire On the Moon goes on to discuss NASA and the astronauts in familiarly Maileresque terms: smell, fear, digestion and the comparison of the Apollo rocket to Moby Dick. The writing is keen, the metaphors rich, and the final work (it is already six months late for hard-cover publication) may prove to be as good as anything Mailer has written.

In the meantime, where does Mailer's ambition to "revolutionize America's consciousness" stand in relation to what he has accomplished? Does he rate as a "serious" writer? Does his technique of involving the reader in the processes of his own identity and of the actual writing, work?

I think it is fair to say that Mailer has had at least as great an effect on contemporary American radical thought as any of his literary peers. How profound this influence is, in a time of many non-literary and anti-intellectual forces it is impossible to assess. But by providing a hero-scapegoat
whose merit may be assessed by the same criteria as the country: complexity and diversity, courage and the capacity for love, Mailer offers a unique gauge for the temper of the times. He offers his outer and inner being as the stuff of an existential guerilla theatre of now.

Alex Comfort suggests that the modern writer, confronted with a disintegrating and disintegrative environment, has four options, of which the first three are "escapes". The writer can make his escape into the contemplation of pure form, into lunacy, into a policy of making terms with barbarism; or he can consciously assume responsibility for his work and his times, and interpret what he sees in the light of his humanity. 185

More than any American writer I can think of, Mailer accepts this responsibility, for he is willing to risk his own substance and to dare the impossible. And for all his existentialism, Mailer never stumbles into the dead end of absurdity. The measure of Mailer's humanity is that though he is painfully aware of the absurdities of the human condition, he never gives in to the temptation to see man as finally absurd. He is concerned with that which ennobles man, and his message is finally one of life, hope, and the ever-mysterious possibilities of change and growth: 186

So long as you use a knife, there's some love left.
FOOTNOTES


2 Advertisements for Myself, (Signet reprint), p. 224.

3 "Interview with Norman Mailer", Playboy, January, 1968, p. 84.

4 Ibid., p. 84.

5 Advertisements for Myself, p. 345.

6 Ibid., p. 304.

7 The Naked and The Dead, (Signet reprint), p. 556.

8 Ibid., p. 538.

9 Ibid., p. 539.

10 Ibid., p. 541.

11 Ibid., p. 542.

12 Ibid., p. 546.


14 Barbary Shore, (Signet reprint), p. 11.

15 Ibid., p. 23.

16 Ibid., p. 45.

17 Ibid., p. 122.

18 Ibid., p. 145.

19 Ibid., p. 186.

20 The Armies of the Night, (Signet reprint), pp. 60-61.

21 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

22 Barbary Shore, p. 146.

23 Advertisements for Myself, p. 85.

24 Barbary Shore, p. 5.


28 *Advertisements for Myself*, p. 86.

29 *Barbary Shore*, pp. 52-53.

30 *Advertisements for Myself*, p. 212.


33 *Advertisements for Myself*, pp. 217-218.


36 A recent account of the Committee's work is "HUAC-adoo: Testimony before the Committee on Un-American Affairs, Oct. 20-30, 1947" *Take One*, Vol. 2 No. 5, pp. 6-14.

35 *Advertisements for Myself*, p. 215.

37 *The Deer Park*, p. 43.


50 Ibid., p. 290.
51 Ibid., p. 291.
52 Advertisements for Myself, p. 281.
53 Ibid., p. 203.
54 Ibid., p. 303.
55 Ibid., p. 304.
56 Ibid., pp. 304-305.
57 Ibid., p. 306.
58 Ibid., p. 306.
59 Ibid., pp. 307-308.
60 Ibid., p. 310.
61 Ibid., p. 312.
62 Ibid., p. 311.
63 Ibid., p. 378.
64 Ibid., pp. 379-380.
65 Ibid., p. 298.
66 Ibid., p. 300.
67 Ibid., p. 301.
68 Ibid., p. 302.
69 Ibid., p. 302.
71 An American Dream, (Dell reprint), p. 41.
72 Ibid., p. 10.
73 Ibid., p. 10.
74 Ibid., p. 15.
75 Ibid., p. 15.
76 Ibid., p. 18.
78 *An American Dream*, p. 19.
79 Ibid., p. 20.
80 For the extreme reaction to Mailer's alleged advocacy of violence, see "Norman Mailer's Yummy Rump" by Stanley Edgar Hyman in his *Standards*.
81 *An American Dream*, p. 69.
82 Ibid., p. 70.
83 Ibid., pp. 47-49.
84 Ibid., p. 80.
85 Ibid., p. 95.
86 Ibid., p. 97.
87 Ibid., p. 98.
88 Ibid., p. 98.
89 Ibid., p. 106.
90 Ibid., p. 106.
91 Ibid., p. 115.
92 Ibid., p. 120.
93 Ibid., p. 121.
94 Ibid., pp. 122-123.
95 Ibid., pp. 122-123.
96 Ibid., p. 138.
97 Ibid., p. 179.
123 Ibid., p. 37.
124 Ibid., p. 68.
125 Ibid., pp. 69-70.
126 Ibid., pp. 84-85.
127 Ibid., pp. 103-104.
128 Ibid., p. 88.
130 Ibid., pp. 138-139.
131 Ibid., p. 144.
133 Ibid., p. 148.
134 Ibid., p. 154.
135 Ibid., p. 155.
136 Ibid., p. 156.
137 Ibid., p. 157.
138 Ibid., p. 158.
139 Ibid., pp. 169-170.
140 Ibid., p. 166.
141 Ibid., p. 166.
142 Ibid., p. 187.
143 Ibid., p. 189.
144 Ibid., pp. 216-217.
145 Ibid., p. 218.
146 Ibid., p. 219.
147 An American Dream, p. 153.
148 Advertisements for Myself, p. 302.
149 Ibid., p. 458.
150 Why Are We In Vietnam?, p. 178.
151 An American Dream, p. 95.
152 The Armies of the Night, p. 20.
153 Advertisements for Myself, p. 465.
154 Ibid., p. 465.
155 Ibid., pp. 475-476.
156 Ibid., pp. 476-477.
158 Ibid., p. 231.
159 Ibid., p. 232.
160 Ibid., p. 237.
161 Ibid., p. 237.
162 Ibid., p. 276.
163 Ibid., p. 282.
164 Ibid., p. 283.
165 Ibid., p. 287.
166 Ibid., p. 287.
167 Ibid., p. 288.
168 Trilling, p. 149.
169 The Armies of the Night, p. 245.
171 Ibid., p. 20.
172 Ibid., pp. 23-24.
173 Ibid., p. 16.
175 Ibid., pp. 33–34.
176 Ibid., pp. 38–39.
177 Ibid., p. 126.
178 Ibid., p. 67.
179 Ibid., pp. 133–134.
180 Ibid., p. 320.
181 Ibid., p. 318.
182 Ibid., p. 149.
183 Ibid., p. 238.
186 The Presidential Papers, p. 159.
Works By Norman Mailer:

The Idol and the Octopus (mostly reprinted from The Presidential Papers) New York: Dell, 1968.

Secondary Material:


