Introduction

(A) Setting the Limits

The purpose of this thesis is to study the novels of Norman Mailer (1923 - ) with special reference to the concept of "self". In essential terms, "self" is one of those words -- like 'nature' and 'reality' -- which have a slipperiness about them that allow a writer to disguise his failure of reflection. Albert Camus very aptly sums up this idea in "The Myth of Sisyphus and Other Essays": "If I try to seize this self of which I feel sure, if I try to define and to summarize it, it is nothing but water slipping through my fingers."¹ 'Self' is a member of a group of terms which would be nice to keep distinct but which in practice inevitably become muddled. This family includes "individual," 'person,' 'ego, the 'I,' 'mind,' 'will,' 'soul,' 'being," and a litter of hyphenated combinations. No doubt such terms are used partly so that writers can avoid awkward tautology, but they also tend to confine an already confusing subject. It is a subject on which heavy hands have been laid by cultural historians, anthropologists, philosophers and psychologists, and each has his own notion of the truth which is slightly and sometimes radically different from that of his neighbour. Encyclopedia Americana and Encyclopedia Britannica substitute 'identity' for 'self' and equate it with sameness as distinguished from change or difference. It is "what remains the same from year to year."² "It must preserve the same denotations in all its occurrences at least through any one context."³ H.J. Paton's modest claim "for 'self' is quite different from the above complex definitions. He maintains in 'The Good Will' that 'self' is "simply that which knows and wills and feels."⁴
and knowing, willing and feeling cannot be observed. "In all cases of attempted introspection I seem to find myself observing not a mental activity but the object to which it is directed or by which it is accompanied." Three pages later, Paton concludes that "we have no direct or relatively immediate acquaintance with a special object or fact called the self which is capable of being observed in isolation from other objects as sound or colour can be said to be observed in isolation from other objects." The implication is that all efforts to understand the concept of 'self' were attempts to understand and reveal something that might not have been there. Heinz Lichtenstein in *The Dilemma of Human Identity* goes beyond Paton by rendering 'self' certain hereditary endowment. He thinks in terms of "Primary identity," "a zero point which must precede all other mental developments." Created out of heredity and the earliest relationship between a baby and its first caretaker, such an identity is in, even is, that person. Formed before speech, it is a preverbal thing that can never be put precisely into words, can never be known in that sense. Just as we can never know the mind of another person, so we can never know this primary identity which is the essence of that mind, although we can approximate it by phrasings. Norman N. Holland draws into his concept of the 'I' Heinz Lichtenstein's theory. He defines identity as (i) an agency, (ii) a consequence, (iii) a representation. Identity in the first sense, is the agent imitating, the actions that systematically create identity. "One needs therefore to think of identity as a 'system' .... Identity is not only the active, agentic
principle of such a system but also the passive self that that system creates as it interacts with the world. Hence identity is also "a consequence". Identity as representation is a way of putting into words the dialectic of sameness and difference that is human life. In other words, "identity" in this third sense means "the history of a person looked at as a theme and variations. Identity is a "representation" in the sense that a history requires a historian." Holland thus defines identity by an operation or procedure for examining the style in which particular individuals function. Allen Wheelis, on the other hand, explains 'identity' in terms of the experienced quality of life.

In The Quest for Identity, he maintains,

Identity is a coherent sense of self. It depends upon the awareness that one's endeavour and one's life make sense that they are meaningful in the context in which life is lived. It depends also upon stable values, and upon the conviction that one's actions and values are harmoniously related. It is a sense of wholeness, of integration, of knowing what is right and what is wrong and of being able to choose.

The above mentioned and various other connotations of the term may, however, be there but in the context of this thesis the concept "self" is taken as analogous with the idea of 'individuation.' Individuation involves the growing process in the emergence of the individual from his original ties. These ties fastense the individual to the outside world and give him security and a feeling of belonging somewhere. Once the process of severing these ties for the sake of gaining individual freedom sets in, the individual embarks on the path of individuation. Once the stage of complete individuation is reached and the individual is free from these primary ties, he is confronted with a new task: to orient and root himself in the world and to find security in ways other than those which were characteristic of his pre-individualist existence. With this starts the quest for freedom,
independence and self. But the fate of this quest can be fully understood if we realise the dialectic quality in this growing process of individuation.

This process has two aspects: one that the individual grows stronger physically, mentally and emotionally. At the same time, these spheres become more and more integrated. An organised structure guided by the individual's will and reason develops. If we call this organised and integrated whole of the personality the self, we can also say that the one side of the growing process of individuation is self-strength. The limits of the growth of individuation and the self are set, partly by individual conditions, but essentially by social conditions. The other aspect of the process of individuation is growing aloneness. The primary ties offer security and basic unity with the world outside oneself. To the extent to which the individual emerges from that world it becomes aware of being alone, of being an entity separate from all others. This separation from a world, which in comparison with one's own individual existence is overwhelmingly strong and powerful, and often threatening and dangerous, creates a feeling of powerlessness and anxiety. Thus, with the process of individuation the individual becomes more free to develop and express its own individual self unhampered by those ties which were limiting it. But at the same time the individual also becomes more free from a world which gave it security. The process of individuation is, on the one hand, a process of growing strength and integration, mastery of nature, growing power of human reason, and growing solidarity with other human beings. But on the other hand, this growing individuation means ever-growing isolation, insecurity, and thereby growing doubt concerning one's role in the universe, the meaning of one's life, and
with all that a growing feeling of one's own powerlessness and insignificance as an individual? It may result in a new kind of closeness and a solidarity with others if the individual has been able to develop a spontaneous relationship to man and nature, a relationship that connects the individual with the world without eliminating his individuality. This kind of relationship—the foremost expressions of which are love and productive work—are rooted in the integration and strength of the total personality and are therefore subject to the very limits that exist for the growth of the self.

If every step in the direction of separation and individuation were matched by corresponding growth of the self, the development of the individual will be harmonious. This does not occur, however. While the process of individuation takes place automatically, the growth of the self is hampered for a number of individual and social reasons. The lag between these two trends results in an unbearable feeling of isolation and powerlessness, which is modern man's predicament. Erik H. Erikson pithily summarizes the whole process of the individuation in his concept of 'identity'. "A sense of identity means," writes Erikson "a sense of being at one with oneself as one grows and develops; and it means, at the same time, a sense of affinity with a community's sense of being at one with its future as well as its history — or mythology." These words of Erikson give us an authentic and accurate formula of realization of self. If we apply this formula to the people, we find that he has not always been one with himself and that he has not always experienced an affinity with his community's sense of being at one with its future as well as its past. An individual, can locate his identity only in being at one with himself as he grows, in a culture and a country; he can discover his social identity and his ethnic
identity only in his affinity with the community's sense of being at one with its past and future, with its cultural heritage and racial one. And this oneness is possible only when it is translated in terms of reality. A true identity, individual or social, should be discovered only in reality. As Erikson says:

... any true identity is anchored in the confrontation of three aspects of reality. One is factuality, that is a universe of fact, date and technique that can be verified with the observational methods and the work techniques of the time. Then there is an inspiringly new way of experiencing history as unifying all facts, numbers, and techniques into a sense of reality that has visionary qualities and energises the participants in most concrete tasks. And finally there must be a new actuality, a new way of relating to each other in the service of common goals.

Needless to say, the modern man's identity is not anchored in all these three aspects of reality, i.e. the factuality of the physical and territorial expansion of the world; the sense of reality that emerges out of experience and vision of life; and the actuality that result from the interaction between the physical world and the inner world of man and his community, both engaged in creative pursuits and in tasks undertaken to fulfil certain common goals. As such, the quest for self in the context of this thesis opens out with confronting a stage of bewilderment with all the accepted values of life and suffocating institutions, leading an individual to defy all the social norms by taking risks and pushing himself to the limit of experience. This eventually leads him to self-evaluation and self-realization, resulting in the evolvement of a new, authentic style of living by confronting the very society that produces inauthenticity and crisis of identity. As such, the process of quest for self involves five well-defined stages: (a) The Bewildered Self, (b) The Cultured Savage, (c) The Confrontation, (d) The Existential Self (e) The Crystallized Self: Perception.
A Close Look at the Concept.

The quest for freedom and identity is eternal. It is as old as creation. Satan was the first to insist on his freedom. Then followed Adam, Eve and Cain. Even after the advent of religion, especially Christianity, man has always been fascinated by the idea of freedom. In fact, the quest for freedom has been the search for self (identity) and a fight against the limitation of human conditions. Here it is worth pointing out that the terms 'freedom' and 'self' are not synonymous. It is only in the wake of freedom from ignorance of imagination to the light of reason and from clarity of reason to the wisdom of intuitive apprehension that the true potentiality of self can be realized. Hence any meaningful philosophy of quest for self includes the vitalistic imperatives of freedom. Many philosophers, theologians, psychologists, sociologists, novelists and playwrights have grappled with the problem of self. This section affords a brief report of the representative ideologies, noting convergences and differences with a purpose to derive leads for a concept of self that is scientifically based.

History of philosophy reveals that there has been the presence of two distinct tendencies about the nature of being or self. The first tendency emphasizes the transcendental level of being. Its goal is freedom from sense-thinking and empirical existence by the exercise of a higher capacity in man presented differently by different philosopher. This classical tendency had its origin in Plato and was later developed by Augustine and Plotinus, Spinoza and Leibnitz, Fichte and Schelling. The second tendency emphasizes the empirical level of being. It claims to examine and adapt the philosophical concept to the demands of sense-thinking and culminates either in the dogmatism of sense-thinking as we find in the systems of Descartes and Locke or in total skepticism as we find in the system of Hume.
Plato (427-347 BC) accorded a trans-empirical status to self and equated it with soul. He distinguished the rational from the irrational part of the soul and further divided the irrational soul into two parts, the spirited and the appetitive. While reason or 'ratio' is the essential part of the soul, the spirited part is the seat of higher emotions and nobler impulses, obedient to the dictates of reason. Appetite is the animal part of the soul. Plato thus conceived the human self as the victim of conflicting desires, a part craving what another part repudiates. But these aspects of mortal life could disappear with purification by devotion to reason — man's true self, his indestructible essence.

Plato's ideas stimulated thinkers down the ages. In the later part of the seventeenth century, Baruch Spinoza (1632-1677) worked out a philosophy of self rich in ideas of a strangely modern cast. He denies any free will to man, yet he glorifies the homo-liber, the free man. His free man is not a servant to his lusts but is guided by the light of reason. This nobler freedom is attained by degrees in stages. Initially man has only vague and confused ideas which give rise to passive emotions directed to finite and perishable objects. Gradually his mind passes from the sphere of confused ideas to that of clear and distinct ideas and ceases to be a slave of passions. Man masters passions by gaining a clear knowledge of them, by learning how to make reason's active emotions prevail over passive emotions of unreason. An idea is clear when we cognise its object not as an isolated individual object but as related to others in the universe, as a link in the universal chain. The culminating stage, according to Spinoza, corresponds to the highest stage of knowledge, viz., 'scientia intuitiva' or intuitive apprehension. So long as man passes from finite to finite even by link of necessary and unchanging relation, his knowledge is still imperfect. When he rises from the stage of
reason to the sublime serenity of contemplation, he can see all the things as varied expressions of an external order. This vision of the supreme unity underlying the diversity of the finite objects lends empirical self a transcendent-al level.

The spirit of Gottfried Wilhelm Freiherr Leibnitz's (1646-1716) philosophy is identical with that of Spinoza, in as much as Leibnitz emphasizes the necessity for attaining a higher spiritual consciousness or being so as to reflect the universe most clearly. He also emphasizes the element of plurality and distinctness of 'being' in a universe consisting of monads (selves), unlike Spinoza who emphasized the 'identity of essence' in the infinity of modes and parallel attributes. But this difference turns out to be purely theoretical and speculative when we regard their systems from the common standpoint of a trans-empirical spiritual level of being.

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) breaks away with the Platonic tradition and emphasizes the 'transitivity' or object-dependent nature of self. This makes the dualism between the self and the object all important. This dualism would have led Kant to end up his philosophy with the empiricist conclusion that the self is nothing beyond the active subject of experience. But Kant's 'practical reason' demands the 'noumenal' self and consequently, his philosophy culminates in this dualism between the two selves—the empirical and the noumenal, uncorrelated with each, other. Fichte perceives this glaring dualism of two selves as having its genesis in the dualism of self and not-self. As such, both Fichte and Schelling reduce the distinction of ego and the non-ego to a 'projection' out of the original self-consciousness of the absolute ego, which can be perceived by us in an act of 'intellectual intuition.' But they conceive of the absolute ego as pure 'impulse' or 'activity' and consequently, freedom of the individual comes to mean com-
plete loss of individuality due to an identification with the transcendent ego which is of the nature of 'pure impulse' with the 'universal will.'

The 'contrite consciousness' of Hegel implies a definite improvement over the position taken by Kant, and also Fichte and Schilling in their analysis of self. For, Hegel conceives of the self as including within itself not only the awareness of itself in relation to an object but also the awareness of itself as a changeless reality, not determined by any specific experience or all the experiences taken collectively. The self which has awareness of this contradiction within itself is the 'contrite consciousness' of Hegel and this provides the basis for organismic conception of the self. But this does not mean that in the 'contrite consciousness' we find an organic unity in all its clarity and completeness. The 'contrite consciousness' is only an awareness of a conflict between the changeless and changing self, and as such is not a realized harmony. But, being the basis of the conflict, it is potentially an organic unity, of "The unwon unity of the two selves." "It has no nature save in so far as it unites the two. But thus far it knows not yet this, its own real essence; it has not entered into possession of this unity."15 Hegel's theory, thus is an improvement over Kant's stark dualism of the two selves — the empirical and the transcendent, and Johann Gottlieb Fichte's (1762-1814) blending of these two into a unity which robs each self of its essential reality by reducing one to mere 'projection' and the other to 'pure activity'. Hegel's conjunctive dichotomy is no doubt a step more advanced towards an organic unity of the self than the mere disjunctive dichotomy found in Kant's philosophy but the overemphasis on this dichotomy results in the limited conception of freedom. 'Freedom in Hegel's philosophy means a progressive reduction of the empirical self to naught with a corresponding exclusive concentration on the transempirical, silent and immutable self.
Rene Descartes (1596-1650) constructs an anthropocentric or egocentric system of thought by emphasizing the importance of a mere 'thinking self,' a self which can hardly be said to exist when it does not think, that is, self the boundaries of whose existence of reality should necessarily be the boundaries of empirical existence. This confinement of the reality of the self to the purely empirical existence becomes more conspicuous in Descartes' philosophy when he places it on a par with corporeal matter in relation to God by interpreting both of them as 'dependent substances' on God. If the self is, thus, just a party in the dualism of mind and matter, and if it has no being or reality beyond this strife, to talk of its freedom or immortality becomes a glaring self-contradiction and belittles the significance of 'innate ideas' and the existence of God in the philosophy of Descartes. The innate ideas, according to Descartes, are independent of sense-thinking. They are directly created by God within the self and serve as a means of contact between the self and God. But Descartes does not seem to think that their presence endows the self with a reality or being superior to that of its empirical existence; the innate ideas are not regarded as revealing the indwelling of God within the self, and consequently the professed personal relation of self with God lacks the certainty of intimate reality. God remains an alien reality of the self. This is, in fact, the reason why Descartes' God figures only as a 'tertium quid,' a third point on which the dualism of mind and matter is suspended, and his whole philosophy is lost in this triangular dualism and leads to skepticism. Locke removes the last shred of theocentric philosophy by criticising Descartes' 'innate ideas' and Hume works out the empiricism of Locke to its logical conclusions.

In the beginning of the 19th century, Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) gave a new direction to the philosophy of self by revolting against the ancient cult of rationalisation. All traditional philosophers placed the essence of self in
thought and consciousness but Schopenhauer maintained, "Consciousness is the mere surface of our mind, of which, as of the earth, we do not know the inside, but only the crust." Under the conscious intellect there is the unconscious will, a persistent vital force. The unconscious will "constitutes the inner, true and indestructible nature of man." The will, of course, is will to live, to maximum life and the individual is a particular objectification of the will to live itself, its whole nature struggles against the death. It is then in the will that the fear of death resides. We fight with death every moment. Life is only a constantly prevented dying. Once a man comes to know about this stark reality, he realizes that it is meaningless to assert this very life through constant acts of will. He seeks, Schopenhauer believed, total release from the enslavement of the will and it is intellect, said Schopenhauer, that "imparts to the will that knowledge in consequence of which it denies and abolishes itself." Here is Schopenhauer's recognition of freedom and true self which is attained through true knowledge. We may, therefore, say that he distinguished between two kinds of intellect, Viz., the intellect which is a slave of the will and the intellect which triumphs over will. Self is the highest form of will-less knowledge which he called 'Genius.' As the nineteenth century was drawing to its close, a voice of an iconoclast was heard. Freidrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) declared himself the destroyer of old values to clear the way for the new morality. Nietzsche conceived of man as suffering from being caught between his false morality and his deep-seated animal instinct. In order to resolve these conflicts man must cast off all established values and experience within himself the upsurge of all repressed impulses. Hence, according to Nietzsche, true nature of self can be realized only by organizing the chaos of passions, sublimating impulses and giving style to one's character. Yet, for all that, the self remains
a creature of the primary "will or power", corrupted and perverted by the ascetic ideals of the Judeo-Christian tradition which turned man into a "torture chamber," a "pinning and desperate prisoner," sick of himself. Nietzsche thus looks forward to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939) who conceived of the individual (ego, id, super ego) as a largely unconscious entity, in the grip of instinctual drives. Dream, myth, art, slips of the tongue could disclose flickers of the unconscious; sublimation could, in some measures, relieve the instincts; but the self — a term he largely avoided — remained at best a tragic battleground between Eros and Thanatos, eternal "giants that our nurse maids try to appease with their lullaby about Heaven."

The self, we see, has become an essentially contested category, continually revised, devised, supervised, or denied. The denial seems most persuasive regarding an ontological, originary, coherent self. Though the self may find no basis in theoretical analysis, it is very well able to dispense with such basis. The self, as Ihab Hassan argues, finds justification in lived and effective reality. In our lived reality, no power seems more menancing than the power of the other. Hassan Imparts importance to this other because it confirms the functional self. Just as the pronoun 'I' seems to occur in nearly every language, as Marcel Mauss maintains— "there has never been a human being," he says further, "without the sense not only of his body but also of his simultaneously mental and physical individuality" — so also is the idea of otherness ubiquitous. The self lives in its pronoun or name which may invoke totems or ancestors; the other may bear a name or remain unnamable. The self, a persona, may bear a mask, be a mark, the other wears a mask of a different kind or assumes the self-same mask. Through all its evasive or sinister representations, the other endures — in us. Its aspects is always Difference perhaps
not quite so fugitive as fugitive as Derrida's 'differance,' yet still dialogi-
cal, shuttling between terms. In human discourse, every 'I' implies 'Thou'.
But this duality is shifty. Emile Benveniste says: "It is a duality which is
illegitimate and erroneous to reduce to a single primordial term, whether this
unique term be the "I" which must be established in the individual's own con-
sciousness in order to become accessible to that of the fellow human being, or
whether it be, on the contrary, society, which as totality would pre-exist the
individual and from which the individual could only be disengaged gradually, in
proportion to his acquisition of self-consciousness. It is in a dialectic reality
that will incorporate the two terms and define them by mutual relationship that
the linguistic basis of subjectivity is discovered." Self and other, then, can-
not be simply merged; nor can their antinomy so simply reified.

The self, we see, has endured many challenges, both in history and,
crescively, in writing. Such challenges, however, serve only to redefine the
self, as it has been redefined before in diverse movements and cultures. In
the twentieth century, the challenges, proposing a purely textual self, became
more subtle and persistent. Yet these provocations fail, on the whole, to reck-
on with the conative powers of the self, its effective function and experienced
identity. We still do not know where centre and circumference of self may lie,
unless, like Giordano Bruno's God, they lie everywhere, nowhere.

(C) Life of Norman Mailer and the Concept of Self.

Before undertaking the subject proper it seems desirable to trace the
evolution of Norman Mailer's mind and art because such a survey can help give
a peep into the genesis of the idea of Quest for Self. It is astonishing to know
that the man who hit "the longest ball ever to go up into the accelerated hurri-
cane air of American letters"25, "who explored the rebellious imperatives of the
and who sought an authentic entrance into the mysteries of murder, suicide, incest, orgy and orgasm was interested in science and a model of sexual innocence in the early stages of his life. During the quest for realizing his true potentialities, Mailer discovered and tried to attain his true selfhood as a creative writer. At Boy's High School at Brooklyn (1936-39), Mailer spent much of his time in building model aeroplanes and served as honorary president of the Aviation Club. His only literary output till then was his first published piece: A Tomb on the Building of Model Airplanes. He had little literary interest or knowledge; his idea of a good novel was Silas Marner. John Doss Passos and William Faulkner were names he barely new existed, and when asked by teacher at Harvard to prepare list of books he was reading, the young engineering student faked a bibliography he thought was impressive, from The Americanization of Edward Bok to The Rise of Silas Lapha by William Dean Howell. Such was the pattern of his early life which does not prefigure the defiant eccentricities that came later.

The fall of 1939 was a critical period in Mailer's life, a time of personal transformation from a young man absorbed in the sciences to someone becoming insatiably curious about novels. This change was brought about by the works of John Doss Passos, John Steinback, Ernest Hemingway, Scott Fitzgerald, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner. But the one book Studs Lonigan (1935) by James T.Farrell, worked literary magic on the sixteen year old, turned his head and made him want to become a writer. And in September 1940, when he had already written at least fourteen stories, engineering had clearly been superseded by literature. He tried to emulate Hemingway in his writings. Hemingway became, as Laura Adams comments, "Mailer's symbolic father." He adopted his Hemingwaysque pose with enthusiasm. He had actively begun
to sculpt an aggressive image of himself in both writing and life, that was at odds with that of the gentle Jewish boy from Brooklyn. There was no love or affection expressed for people in his writings but a great deal of cruelty. Again, a shift in Mailer's social demeanor occurred during his third year at Harvard. Although he never renounced his Jewish heritage, he stressed it less and less as he grew older, and transcended it to become an American writer. Like his country, Mailer was going through an assimilative process, one that would eventually make him a sounding board for Irish, Black, Latin, WASP and Jewish sensibilities, while always perceiving their distinctly individual and poetic contours. With this in mind, Mailer set out to garner experiences on his own. He worked at a state mental asylum in Boston in 1942 and joined army in 1944 to fight in the second World War. By this time he was obsessed with satisfying what he called that "cold maniacal thing in my heart, sharp as a Shiv"29 —the desire to write the definitive American Novel of Second World War. The massive novel The Naked and the Dead (1948), which became an instant success, was the result. But his celebrity now made it impossible for him to gain the experience he wanted to secure but then Mailer felt that alternatively there existed something that might be equally valuable. He explains:

I was having a form of twentieth century experience that was going to become more and more prevalent: I was separated from my roots. I was successful and alienated and that was a twentieth century condition. This got into all my work after that, in one way or another, and will go on forever at this point. That alienated personality interests me more than someone who is rooted. 30

From then onward, Mailer absorbed himself in finding a solution to this predicament which is none other than "bringing a revolution in the consciousness of our time."31 In conformity with his philosophy of quest for self, which he gradually developed in the process of discovering himself, Mailer never allowed social labels and standards overwhelm him, his writings and his views about life.
Mailer has certainly influenced an entire generation of the young in America and his influence has always been more in terms of his ideas than his creative writings. He is in the intellectual tradition of writers like Herbert Marcuse (1900-1980), Wilhelm Reich (1897-1957) and others who have directed their efforts towards the problem of securing the freedom of self not only from the pressures of external world, but also from the suicidal psychic urges. It is characteristic of these intellectuals that they have laid greater emphasis on sex and violence as means for social change and for self-renewal. And a need for this renewal arises from their basic conviction that the present day society is a collective expression of our murderous monotony, of our death. They not only encourage freeing the 'buried self' but also advocate reconstruction of a radical self, in order to counter the hostile forces of society. Marcuse's "great negation," Brown's "Dionysian Ego", Fromm's "Life-promoting Syndrome," Reich's "Orgone Energy" and Mailer's "Psychopath" (body-artist), are manifestations of a radical self that will release the buried impulses for love and growth, in the context of a repressive society.

Marcuse (1889-1979) hopefully envisions the freedom of the self as co-emergent with changes in socio-economic structure of the society. He is critical of Freud's theory which suggested that experiences of pain and death play a definite role in the development of civilisation. Instead, he suggests the elimination of pain which will lead to the victory over fear of death. This, in turn, would foster possibility of genital sexuality. And development of genital sexuality is a welcome sign for the liberation of self, a liberation through wider relationships: "Under non-repressive conditions, sexuality tends to grow into Eros... toward self-sublimation in lasting and expanding relations to intensify and
Marcuse's treatment of the self remains incomplete because the primary concerns are divided between self-renewal and social change. This is the reason why Marcuse ends where Brown begins: the necessity for reconstruction of a new self.

Norman O. Brown assigns man the task of reconstruction of a 'Dionysian Ego' which is close to Rollo May's 'daimonic'. All their efforts in psychoanalytic term, to reconstruct a new self emerge from the self's experience of 'disease.' Brown declares in the Preface to his book Life Against Death, that his concerns are the same as Marcuse, viz., "to reopen the possibility of the abolition of repression." But unlike Marcuse, he wants to reconstruct a new, healthy self and this is connected with unique moments of self-consciousness. He distinguishes between the two states of self-consciousness in the Neitzschian terms:

"... the Apollonian preserves, the Dionysian destroys, self-consciousness. As long as the structure of the ego is Apollonian, Dionysian experience can only be bought at the price of ego-dissolution. Nor can the issue be resolved by a 'synthesis' of Apollonian, and the Dionysian; the problem is the reconstruction of a "Dionysian ego." Brown's demand for the construction of Dionysian Ego aims at the freedom of self from the prison of ego in order to effect the resurrection of body. But even this kind of freedom is "inauthentic" because it involves experiences that are ecstatic. Moreover, the dignity and grandeur of a common man has never been acknowledged by them. For Marcuse the only revolutionaries are artists, prostitutes and criminals; for Brown, the history-creating man is the Faustian man. Is not a common man fit for achieving integrity and dignity of self? And what are the reasons for a common man not being able to attain self-perfection? These are the questions taken by Wilhelm Reich.
Reich believes that an average man is most often the victim of a common morality and therefore he is the most oppressed. The established morality put limitations on desire to transcend his sexual urges and he falls a victim to neurosis. The only cure for the neurosis of the common man is a direct sexual gratification because his neurosis is the product of "sexual repression and of the states of sexual energy." The change in sex-morality is possible only by sexual awakening of the masses which also implies an end to their economic exploitation. Reich's best contribution to psychoanalysis is his concept of 'character-structure.' Reich believes that the reasons for general suppression, can be studied by analyzing the 'structur' of both the individual and the society, because "every social system is reproduced ideologically in the character-structure of its members," and the "structure formation is essentially, a matter of sexual structure." Reich maintains that the common man is unheroic because of his inability to risk life and property for the freedom of self. The mask of the cultivated morality(surface layer) has to be broken if an access to the genuine self is desired. Reich describes the whole process as the process of 'armoring': "The character-structure of a man of today who is perpetuating a patriarchal authoritarian culture for some four to six thousand years old—is characterized by an armoring against nature within himself and against social misery outside himself." A violent break through this 'armour' may loosen the buried energies, which are the protective layers of the self. This violent release of buried energies may annihilate the self unless properly channelled. Unless done with creative directions, this uprooting of the 'armour' could be suicidal for self. It may even lead to isolation, to impotence. Still, it is a risk that has to be accepted in order to regain the primal energy, which Reich names 'Orgone energy.'
Mailer theorized his concept on self sharing a basic conviction with Marcuse, Brown and Reich, that the genuine human impulses are being curbed by the technocratic society. In order to meet the murderous pressure of the society, a radical self, whose emergence he declares in *The White Negro* (1957), is needed. Mailer's 'hipster' emerged out of the pressures which the Second World War and the German concentration camps had exerted on the individual psyche. In order to meet the challenges of society, this 'New Man' guards himself with personal orgiastic potency, located in the rebellious imperatives of the self. The very existence of the hipster is based on his ability to murder and to create. The hipster murders and accepts the responsibility for his deed. But the important value is that he keeps his cool. The hipster is a philosophical psychopath who manipulates his potential in the manner of a detached observer but he certainly expresses forbidden impulses in a repressive society and actively violates social taboos. He releases his private 'energy' — Reiche's 'orgone energy' — in order to prevent decay, and he never lets his will pervert, falling victim to the standard morality. An important element in this is the gratification of sexual instincts. Sex, to Mailer, is not just an adolescent's excitement for braking taboos, or the releasing of an itch. It rather aims at the achievement of mystery and beauty, locked within the harmony of the buried self. The need, Mailer feels, is to "press the right button, (and) all these people would come up from The Underground," and he would lead them in a revolution aimed at the annihilation of every smug tradition of American life — security, monogamy, organisations, patriotism and capitalism.

(D) Age of Norman Mailer and the Concept of Self.

For any understanding of the literature of America after the Second World War, it seems essential to view the whole culture, to know it was
developing from, what it was revolting against, what it thought it was doing and what the important events and creative achievements were. As such, we shall be better equipped to assess Norman Mailer's individual efforts and his total achievement by closely examining the general phenomena and the climate of creativity prevalent during the time. By so doing we discover and grasp his total context more meaningfully and come to understand his work in relationship to the mainstream of American literature.

The 1930s (period extending roughly from 1929-39) was a period of crisis and new searches in America. The period of contentment had been jostled by disillusionment and criticism. It all started with "Black Thursday" Oct.24, 1929 —when a wave of panic selling of stocks swept the New York Stock Exchange. Once started the collapse of share and other security prices could not be halted. Consequently, the long—cherished belief of the middle class that real estate, urban or rural meant security received a major jolt and shook confidence to the very foundation. Reinhold Niebuhr, a religious leader influenced by Karl Barth, wrote that "the middle class paradise which we built on this continent, and which reached its zenith no later than 1929, will be in decay before the half-century mark is rounded." The house, said Niebuhr, has been built on sand. An article written by the English Archaeologist Stanley Casson occasioned much comment and reflection. Casson saw a tendency on the part of man to retrograde, if a long view were taken. "We are hovering on the brink of a precipice, winding round that dizzy path up which we may ultimately reach the peaks of wisdom, but off which we may be easily topple to destruction." To combat the crisis, Democrat Franklin D. Roosevelt promised a New Deal for the American people and took prompt action to deal with the emergency. The New Deal was also criticized among others
by Albert J. Nock, who favoured a decentralized, highly individualistic culture and feared that the new formula of recovery and reform meant "the absorption of all spontaneous efforts by the state," and consequent degradation. Writing in 1937, the popular columnist Dorothly Thompson concluded that New Deal "has offered us no comprehensible picture of a future in which we can believe. We cannot believe that this vague elemosynary humanitarianism, coupled with ruthless aggrandizement by politicians, is a picture of a new heaven and a new earth." All the upheavalments of depression were expressed by men of letters and they soon came up with The Big Money (1936), USA (1938), In Dubious Battle (1936), The Grapes of Wrath (1939), and For Whom the Bell Tolls (1940). Less emphasis was put on the idea of art for art's sake and literature now expressed a new and vigorous sensitivity to social issues.

The problems at home occupied a secondary position with America's involvement in the Second World War. For this reason, 1940s can be categorized as the decade of nationalism. The Americans were fighting for their country, there was little broadly based patriotic understanding of the larger meaning of the struggle. The average fighting man reconciled himself to performing the undesirable but obviously necessary job of overpowering the enemy. Neither the popular was cartoons by Bill Mauldin nor the novels cast the conflict, in heroic mould. In fiction Norman Mailer's The Naked and the Dead labored the thesis that the war merely revealed the worst that was in man in their earlier civilian life. The slogan, one war is enough, made sense to fighting man who spoke or wrote of the war and its dull aftermath, an aftermath marked by loneliness, thirst for sex and adventure, and indulgence in black-marketeering. All this helps explain why, once the fighting stopped the most
articulate ex-fighters worked, not as professional veterans, but as civilians.

Americans had not yet recovered from the jolts of war, they had to face the anxiety of Cold War. Many Americans came to believe that their Government might have been infiltrated by communist conspirators working to undermine democracy as a political system. Republican Senator Joseph Mc Carthy asserted that the State Department and the army were riddled with communists. As such, 1950s can be labelled as the decade of McCarthyism. McCarthyities, like many disturbed people, did not know what they wanted or why they acted as they did. They thought they were fighting communism, but all along were actually fighting the genteel, aristocratic, intellectual Ivy League Establishment. This explains the mid-century preoccupation of intellectuals with unconscious nonmaterial drives and aspirations.

The intellectuals shocked by efforts at manipulation and by the vast amount of actual irrational behaviour in the world searched for a concept of human nature, a view of man that would be true for all places and to find the permanent beneath the flux, to seek out the true man, to discover some kind of enduring justice that might limit man's inhumanity to man. Many intellectuals turned to religion in the later half of 1950s. In addition to the revival of interest in religion, there were secular expressions of the quest for absolutes. The movement that came to be known as the New Conservatism was the most sophisticated and the most fashionable one. Its spokesperson included Frances Wilson, Russel Kirk, Peter Viereck, and John Hallowell and they derived their thought frankly from Aristotle, St. Thomas, Burke and such later thinkers as George Santayana, Paul Elmer More, Irving Babbitt, and T.S. Eliot. Their beliefs were summed up adequately in Viereck's definition
of conservatism: "The conservatism principles par excellence are proportion and measure; self-expression through self-restraint; preservation through reform; humanism and classical balance; a fruitful nostalgia for the permanent beneath the flux; and a fruitful obsession for unbroken historical continuity."44

Though New Conservatism was the dominant climate of creativity towards the later half of the 1950s, liberalism and democratic faith were by no means dead. The next decade 1960s — the Kennedy and Johnson years— seems to be time of New Liberalism. Charles Frankel in the Case for Modern Man (1956) delineates the features of this new faith. He emphasized the dignity of man, the reality of human freedom and of man's rational capability. He called for a revival of Emerson's open-minded conception of human potentialties. These neo-liberal ideas became true realities in Kennedy and Johnson's era but the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King, the Vietnam War, the turmoil of the 1968 Democratic Convention convinced people that a great deal was wrong. The air was full of paranoia, violence and institutional mistrust. The alarming evidence of juvenile delinquency, expressing itself in drug addiction, sex crimes, and gang murder could not be brushed aside. Interest in sex was nothing new. But preoccupation with its physical aspects, the divorce of sex from love and from the larger meaning it could have for life and human destiny seem to indicate basically sick society. These catastrophes made it clear to Americans that affluence and modernization created their own problem. The prevailing image of an America was now dominated by conformism, an America of the mass man and the mass media, of standardized and interchangeable parts in every segment of the national machine. David Riesman in The Lonely Crowd pointed out that the profound change in American personality types bad gradually taken place with corresponding changes in the culture, the net effect being that the prevailing personality types had come
to be the team-man, the other-directed fellow who took his cue from standard established by his peer groups and perceived through his social contracts, in contrast with an earlier dominated inner-directed American whose behaviour conformed to a set of internalized standard incubated by society through parents and teachers. As a result the intellectuals/writers withdraw themselves from the external world and concentrated their attention on the problems of alienation and identity of the individual and his quest for survival in the alien world. The brutalities of the war, the sufferings of the depression, and the fear of political subversion forced these writers' authentic entry into the mystery of violence and sex as means of private manipulation and aesthetic experience.

Norman Mailer felt deeply influenced by critical atmosphere of ideological shift in America and he used fiction as a medium to express his disapproval of the prevalent social norms. In an interview with Stern, Mailer maintained.

I feel that the final purpose of art is to intensify, even, if necessary to exacerbate, the moral consciousness of the people. In particular, I think the novel is at its best the most moral of the art forms because it's the most immediate, the most overbearing, if you will. It is the most inescapable. Ideally, what I would hope to do with my work is to intensify a consciousness that the core of life cannot be cheated. 45

He diagnosed the illness of the twentieth century as psychic: "Malthus's law has moved from the excessive procreation of bodies to the excessive mediocritization of psyches. The deaths don't occur on the battle field any longer, or through malnutrition; they occur within the brain, within the psyche itself." 46 He denounces Communism, Fascism and Liberalism for their policy of totalitarianism and speaks highly of individual freedom. "One can have Fascism come in any from at all, through the church,
through sex, through social welfare, through state conservatism, through organised medicine, the FBI, the Pentagon. Fascism is not a philosophy but a murderous mode of deadening reality by smothering it with lies.  

"Communism," according to him, is cannibalistic. An ideology that attempts to dominate all of existence has to split into sects and segments, because the moment disagreement exists between members, it cannot be adjudicated or compromised without losing the primitive force of ideology. Compromise impossible, spilt occurs. What you get then is two ideologies equally monotonous, equally total, soon equally at war with each other.  

In an interview with Paul Carroll, Mailer maintains that "the more we wage a religious war against Communism, the more we create the real social equivalent of Communism in America — which will be the total technological society...." In similar vein, he criticizes liberalism. In an interview with Paul Carroll expressing his views about Johnson's Great Society, he said that,  

It's a comedy. The great society is not only not going to come into being but it shouldn't. It's artificial. Any time you find a Great Society, developed from the top, what you've got, in effect, is a test tube baby—artificial insemination of the worst sort. Let's say the Great Society is drug addiction on a huge political scale. It's similar to shooting B12 complex into your butt. The patient may feel healthier for a while, but the fact of the matter is that his ass has been violated.  

It is amply clear from his views that he criticizes modern degenerate tendency of the society to submerge the individual character into the social character; it beheads individuality, vanity, dissent, extreme possibility, romantic faith; it blinds vision, deadens instincts, it obliterates the part; it creates a sort of cancer which is not a disease, but a loss of self, for unlike death by other causes, cancer is a rebellion of the cells. They refuse to accept the will, the dignity, the desire, in short the project of the person who contains them. They betray the body because they have lost faith in it. So, in desperation the man who contains such illness ceases to be existential, ceases to care about a personal choice, about making a personal history and prefers instead to deliver his will to an institution or faith outside him...
identified the conflict at the heart of American life and the literature that has imagined it: that freedom and democracy are basically antithetical. America's attempts to work out a compromise between the two ideals have resulted in a tug-of-war between the proponents of each. The question of how much individual freedom one must sacrifice to the general welfare is as dynamic today as it was at the drawing up of the constitution. As Lawrance sees it, "Liberty in America has meant so far the breaking away from all dominion. The true liberty will only begin with American discover IT, and proceed possibly to fulfill IT. It being the deepest whole self of man, the self in its wholeness, not idealistic halfness." Mailer has also been attempting through his writing to revive the myth of unlimited individual possibility for Americans in terms of uniting its instinctual life to its intellectual one.

Noting the characteristics of the American imagination as found in our best novelists, Richard Chase emphasizes that it "has been shaped by the contradictions and not by the unities and harmonies of our culture." Residing in extremes of experience, unresolved ambiguities, and radical forms in a manner which Mailer would call schizophrenic, the American novel and the imagination which informs it are essentially romantic. Its central myth is that of Adam in the New World Garden and his expulsion after the Fall, the re-enactment of man's encounter with an innocent land and the evil within himself; its characteristic theme that of the American Dream, its virtues, its flaws, and its effects on the American Character. The writers whom we place in the mainstream of American literature have all treated these themes exhibited these tendencies, each bringing his angle of vision to bear on the American experience. To name a few—Emerson, Hawthorne, Melville, Whitman, Dreiser, Dos Passos, Farrell, Faulkner and Hemmingway. In conjunction with
these writers Mailer has taken upon himself the task of making our most basic myth, the Adamic myth, exist on a literal level, in an effort to synthesize the thesis and anti-thesis present in much of American literature. He is engaged in developing the deepest whole self of man which Lawrance prophesied as the way to true liberty for Americans and for the people in general.

(E) Characteristic Features of the Concept of Quest for Self.

Mailer believes that the potentialites of self and a particular image of human personality in modern cancerous society can be understood only through strong individual efforts. No collective effort, no group or social programme can win Mailer's serious allegiance because man in the aggregate, he believes, becomes less than man; he loses his honour, his dignity, his selfhood. In the modern era of mass communication and mass production, we all have become like one another speaking the same language, wear the same kind of clothes and read the same magazines, but for creating a sense of community, we create a crowd of faceless and anonymous men. To qualify this phenomena, David Reisman calls these people "the lonely crowd". Under such conditions, crisis of identity becomes the major issue confronting man. The possible way out from this impending catastrophe, according to Mailer, is to lead a bohemian life—living in ways socially amoral or, unconventional. He places utmost emphasis on human will and human imagination to counteract the forces of constraint. He sanctions unchartered freedom to his characters. They are at liberty to do whatever they like. Undoubtedly such existence, without any significant social reference is bound to lead to the path of destruction and total annihilation. As such, the basic humanitarian impulses of love and intuitive reverence for life in each cajoles them to come out of their barbarian
cocoons and face the social reality in all its grimness. Moving in adverse situations of life, in fact, caught between man's strictly limited horizons and nature's limitless boundaries, they encounter difficulties in asserting their self-hood; all the same they make quite some headway in the direction of really meaningful and authentic life. They move toward this though they do not always achieve it. It is in the context of the totality of situation that Mailer depicts the issue of quest for self. As such, Mailer's formula of search for self consists of five stages: (1) The Bewildered Self, (2) The Cultured Savage, (3) The Confrontation, (4) The Existential Self and (5) The Crystallized Self.

(1) The Bewildered Self

Mailer in the very first stage of depicting the process of search for identity debunks the modern American Society and her technological advancement for creating a sense of uprootedness and lostness in man. He sees society as an epitome of evil which has invaded every aspect of human life. The individual is not even free to take the most private decision of his life such as child-birth. The body is so deadened at its sexual center by contraceptives and pills that we no longer can afford to be as selective as we used to be. In primitive times, it was more difficult to conceive and — as a result — more natural. But now people conceive too easily because they are afraid if they don't, they won't conceive at all. Since they conceive too easily, birth-control measures have to be adopted, reducing the most natural activities to the level of utter artificiality. All the natural chords are gradually being sapped. A man cannot find his identity anywhere. Nor in family — for that institution is breaking down. By winning the right to enter the labour market, women have found a degree of economic freedom that make a marriage less
necessary — the high divorce rate is one price for this liberation. The sudden equality of the sexes create tension in both men and women as they realize that their old roles are destroyed, but they are uncertain what their new roles should be. The big Government is the biggest enemy of the people. Mailer admits:

the shits are killing us, even as they kill themselves... each day a few more lies eat into the seed with which we are born, little institutional lies from the print of newspapers, the stock waves of television and the sentimental cheats of the movie screen. Little lies but they pipe us towards insanity as they starve our sense of the real. We have grown up in a world more in decay.

The sickness of our times has been that everything has been "getting smaller and smaller and less and less important, that the romantic spirit has dried up, that there is almost no shame today like the terror before the romantic. We're all getting so mean and small and petty and ridiculous, and we all live under the threat of extermination." American society is filled with dead air which is sapping the creative energy of the individual. The impulse of the twentieth century seems to be a desire to make society run on rails. Any thing may be tolerated, provided that the dialectic is squeezed out of our nature. The very material of our world suffocates us everywhere.

"A perfect material example— the technological signature of the twentieth century— is plastics : materials without any grain any organic substance any natural colour or predictability .... Plastic is perfect metaphor for twentieth century man..." In an interview with Paul Carroll, Mailer talking about his prognostications about the American political and social scene in general, argued that "the technological society sits upon us like an incubus. It is impossible, for instance, to have any contact with anything in your existence that is encapsulated by this technological society .... The technological society gets between us and existence, in everything we do, the air we breathe, the
buildings we live in with their abstract monotonous forms, the synthetic fibres we wear..."58 The net result of this modern malady, which is often connected with "the plague"59 by Mailer, is the dissociation between self and the physical environment, which leads to the bewilderment of the individual who is at a loss to understand his true leanings and bearings. Mailer reflects all these maladjustments in his novels. The Naked and the Dead (1948) is an experience of the agony of American troops in the pacific campaign. The representative sensitive group of lower class American forms the reconnaissance patrol sent before a proposed attack on the Japanese-held island of Anopopei. The futility which he shows in this novel is that of an island which proves to be of no strategic importance but which crushes everyone by its new power morality. The futility of war has also been expressed elsewhere in his novels through violence, horror, sex and other combat situations. The Barbary Shore (1951) is a nympholeptic experience intended as an allegory of anti-communism which hints as well as comments on the neuroticism of post-war America. Through his The Deer Park (1957) Mailer wants to study debauched life where one tries to find meaning in cynical ways. The novel An American Dream (1965) has a concern not with sex and death with apocalyptic treatment but with evil undisguised as war or power morality. The Armies of the Night (1968) is a detailed account of his own part in historic Washington Peace Demonstration. Why are We in Vietnam? (1967) is a novel with civilian protest against the Vietnam War, a symbol of collective violence. Through all his novels, Mailer has tried to show that self starts disintegrating when it is beset with odd situations of combat on fronts—imaginary or real. It loses its significance due to evil inherent in human conditions and human beings.
(2) The Cultured Savage

The second stage in the development of self implies a hard blow on the hypocritical surface of society and its rotten morality. It suggests a way-out for the bewildered and disintegrating self. Mailer believes that the triumph over the modern maladies of bewilderment, fragmentation and chaos can be affected only by meeting them head-on, by taking risks and pushing ourselves to the limits of experience. As such, he advocates the need for an intellectual attuned to his nonrational being, a "Cultured Savage" who lives on the plane of the barbarian, giving free reins to his instincts. Mailer refuses to sacrifice instincts and sub-conscious needs to a civilisation which is itself so little removed from savagery. He warns: "what is at stake in the twentieth century is... peril that they will extinguish the animal in us." As such, he concentrates on psychical rather than social reality and replaces the imperatives of the society with the vitalistic imperatives of the self. He attacks the entire set of institutions and does not attach any sanctity to them as these are the means to fulfil the biological needs of the individual. These needs must be fulfilled irrespective of any limitation imposed by the society. He advocates free love, free sex and gives unchartered freedom to his characters in the matter of sex, love and woman. Mailer's idea of realization of the true potentialities is thus inextricably linked with his ideas of violence and sex. Violence is one way of keeping the self uncontaminated from the national disease called, 'boredom'. Society pressurises the self into degeneration through regimentation, mass-media and censorship, which are the subtler forms of violence. Violence gives one courage and desire to get out of the totalitarian trap. So the use of violence is primary for the freedom of self, and then follows the question of morality. "The first reaction, the heart of
the violence, is the protection of the self. The second question, the moral question, is whether the self desires to be protected, that is to say — was it honourable to fight? Was the danger true?

Mailer did justify the violence as springing from national disease — as Arthur Miller also concludes in his essay, boredom. He anticipates that the action of this rebel will decide the authenticity of violence apart from any existing social codes. If successful, the new rebel will strive to use his victory to promote personal and human growth. But at this second stage, he is unaware of this private moral responsibility, which he gradually realizes during his quest for self.

Mailer attaches the dignity and the authenticity of the self to the proper channelisation of sex. What is culturally denied as taboo and unsayable becomes, for Mailer a private aesthetic with a definite purpose. Since Mailer's idea of growth and decay of self is tied to his notions of sexuality is very important, as Poirier suggests, because: "The key to any writer's idea of the self and society, of an inner, more or less unarticulated being and of an outer overwhelmingly articulated system is probably best located in what can be deduced about the writer's idea of sexuality." Mailer's idea of sexuality is strongly connected to his idea of creativity, the human potential that saves man from the deadening pressures of sexual futility.

The rebel dares to break through the armour of sexual inhibitions and releases his private energies. Society by providing substitute gratification eliminates one's sense of repression and above all the sense of guilt — which for Mailer is the "existential edge of sex". Guilt in the sexual activity is important because it stands as a challenge to the individual courage. But at this stage again, the individual fails to exalt his sense of guilt to call upon his most primitive resources of courage.
The purpose or intention behind this demonic rebellion is to bring out the real potentialities of self that lays hidden in the layers of obsolete social customs and orthodox norms, and to enable him to evolve a style of living based on his own moral choices with which to reunite the two rivers self and society. But here in the second stage the individual in the role of a savage has not attained this knowledge; he employs all sorts of anti-social tactics to turn away from it instead of boldly facing it. He does all this in order to sustain his own self against the outward encroachment, which can be termed the first stage in the realization of that ultimate knowledge for the attainment of which he is initiated into the rebellious actions.

One may well ask: Does not the deliberate cultivation of perversions amount to insanity, Mailer would agree that it does. But always the suggestive thrust of his writing has been that insanity is unavoidable in contemporary America. That which social tradition deems sanity, he argues, is actually sickness (The Naked and the Dead) political parties (Barbary Shore) and show business (The Deer Park). For Mailer, social realities of our time offer a grim proposition. One's choice is not between sanity and insanity, but between static insanity and creative insanity or what he calls 'psychopathy'. Creative insanity helps the individual at least to free his subconscious from the repressed wishes so that it can invigorate and inform the conscious mind and be brought to bear upon the social institutions.

(3) Confrontation

The third stage in the search for identity represents a confrontation of socio-political and personal styles of identity, of dullness with vitality, of the existentially naked with the imaginatively dead. It underlines the fact that concept of identity is a product of the dialectical interrelationship bet-
ween man's psyche and society, between his inner drives and external compulsion. Man's quest for identity becomes meaningful only when he realizes the integrity and inviolability of the community and is able to have a grip on the forces of life. Allied to this is his awareness of his guilt or sinfulness. The human being becomes himself in the act of becoming aware of his sinfulness. He is what he is shamed of. It is in this sense that crisis of identity become man's quest for identity.

In the search for identity, the naked are those who come face to face—not with the cosmic void—but rather with the conditional, fragile, mortal nature of his own mind and his own body, a point where props and assurances, the style of his normal-at-homeness with himself no longer avails to mask himself from himself. And if he is naked at that moment, he is also more startlingly alive than at any other moment of his life. To be naked, then is to be at once frightened, exalted and intimate with one's own most intensely conscious self. And to be dead, then, truly dead is never to have such a moment, never to have watched the intricate style of your assurances crumble around you and then be forced to recognize what, amid the rubble of that fallen temple of normality, there is to assist in the construction of new and stronger selfhood. These decisive moments of judging present, the present of the "naked moment" admit the possibility of the past only as a preparation for it and the possibility of future only as the infinite repetition of its hieratic form. If the man's past has been one of tiny evasions, small hypocrisies, then the moment will not endure, nor will it issue, as it should, in the creation and fabrication of a new style for living, a more embracing and heroic style of being in the world. This bold search for identity definitely needs courage—the courage to face the consequences of one's action. "A totalitarian society makes enormous
demands on the courage of men and a partially totalitarian society makes even greater demands for the general anxiety is greater. Indeed, if one is to be a man, almost any kind of unconventional action often takes disproportionate courage."65 This courage is definitely an improvement over the courage of the second stage. In the later case, anyone can have the courage to violate social taboos and do whatever he likes but this courage will endure and spring forth only in case of those who dare to face the outcome of their action. It is this fear of facing the consequences of their action performed against the taboos of society that prevent the man from defying social taboos and he succumbs to it. If a man has the guts to face his own hidden, true, meaningful self, he will never be broken down with oppressive socio-political system. Mailer's 'The White Negro' is the courage incarnate. The life-style of Negro, who "has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries,"66 the functional paranoia which enables him to survive and commit him to the present more than the future, have been adopted by the White Negro or the hipster. He "seeks to find those violent parallels to the violent and often hopeless contradictions he knew as an infant and as a child, and "if he has the courage to meet the parallel situation at the moment, when he is ready, then he has the chance to act as he has never acted before ... and so free himself to remake a bit of his nervous system."67 Man must choose whether to die a slow and anonymous death at the alter of conformity in totalitarian world or to strike out into a bold search for individual selfhood. In Mailer's world, different characters are judged by these moments in which different socio-political institutions or the forces of Nature come face to face with individual's most intimate self. Such moments provide the quintessential moment — the destruction of social and political institutions
and the reestablishment of a primordial, visionary system—towards which all
his character, in one way or another, strive. They come out of their cocoon
of closed selfhood in order to grasp a fuller understanding of the real self in
that social set-up.

4. **The Existential Self**

The fourth aspect and stage of Mailer's solution to the tangled issue
of quest for self relates to the result and effect of individual's confrontation
with his own personal void through the agency of destructive socio-political
institutions or mysterious forces of Nature. The net result is that the indi­
vidual perceives himself as he is, not as he imagines himself to be under the
facade of optimistic illusions and euphemisms. It is at this juncture that the
quest for identity takes an existential turn. In this context, existentialism
means the disclosure of oneself and one's situation through self-conscious dread.
Soren Kierkegaard described dread as "dizziness of freedom" that results when
"freedom gazes down into its own possibility, grasping at finiteness to sustain
itself." Mailer uses different terms but finally characterizes the predicament
in essentially the same way. The individual at this stage realizes that he is
not a free chooser, monarch of all he surveys, but benighted creature sunk in
a reality whose nature he is constantly and overwhelmingly tempted to deform
by his own choice of fantasy. And this realization breeds in him feeling of
dread, despair or despondency. One thing must be emphasized here that this
feeling of dread is different from the feeling of bewilderment of the first
stage. In the later case it is the result of encounter between the private
self and the public self whereas in the former case, it is the outcome of
encounter between private self and unmasked inner self. The feeling that he
is not free even to choose (which produces Dread) is the result of the inti­
mation of Death. Death is inevitable: it will knock at everybody's door—
this realization inspires a disproportionate terror, a horror not merely because he is going to die, but to the contrary because he is going to die badly. At each moment, he is making his way along the sharp edge of possible annihilation — this aggravates his existential anxiety.

Mailer goes a step further in visualizing the existential predicament of the individual. French and German existentialists maintain that man must lead his life as if death is meaningful even when man knows that death is meaningless. This revealed knowledge ends the possibility that one can construct a base for the existential ethic. The German philosopher runs aground trying to demonstrate the necessity for man to discover an authentic life. Heidegger can give no deeper satisfaction why man should bother to be authentic than to state in effect that man should be authentic in order to be free. Sartre's advocacy of the existential commitment is always in danger of dwindling into minor aristocratic advocacy of leading one's life with style for the sake of style. Existentialism is rootless, Mailer believes, 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 continuum of Nature. But accepting this hypothesis, authenticity and commitment return to the centre of ethics, for man than 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. It is this degree of alienation that most fascinates Mailer. Protagonists like Rajack, Faye O' Shaugnessy and Lovett struggle most against total alienation. They do so because to be alienated from oneself is to lose the instinct to survive. It is this belief that prompts Mailer to affirm the individual's state of being, not his state of becoming — and to counteract the feeling of dread and anxiety by all possible means.
5. The Crystallized Self

The fifth and final stage relevent to quest for identity enocompasses the surmounting and conquest of barriers of dread, despair and alienation by struggling most heroically against these forces and asserting one's potentialities. The assertions and potentialities include a new psyche, a new vision, away from sanctions and morals of society, dictates of spiritualism and charms of macrocosmic existence. Those who wage such a war are designated as 'Transformed Seers' in Mailer's final analysis. Others who succumb to the forces of nature or to another's will, are the unheroic majority who yield to the merely animal desire to survive at all costs. For the attainment of this stage, Mailer does not advocate the cultivation of cultural values like love, goodwill, faith, charity etc. but contends that the only value which matters is the value which answers one's own psychological needs. He has pertinently stated: "There are no truths other than the isolated truths what each observer feels at each instant of his existence."69 Again, the narration runs to highlight that to judge or view man "from a set of standards conceived a priori to... experience standards from the past"70 is to preclude his right to grow according to whatever measure he sets for himself. For the fuller development of potentialities, Mailer shows the path of Neo-primitivism, a belief that modern man should return to more simplified and more natural existence. And herein comes, his doctrine of Hipster. Hipster believes in what Reich calls one's orgastic potencies. Mailer advocates orgasm as existential, as he writes in The White Negro: "At bottom, the dream of 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 orgasm opens his possibilities and bad orgasm imprisons him."71
Even here the emphasis is never wholly on orgasm, but orgasm is 'therapy' that opens his 'possibilities.' In other words, orgasm to Mailer is a means that opens man's existential possibilities for exalted selfhood. To attain selfhood is to become a "sexual outlaw," to live out one's instincts:

to be with it is to have grace, is to be closer to the secrets of that inner unconscious life which will nourish you if you can hear it, for you are then nearer to that God which every hipster believes is located in the senses of his body, that trapped, mutilated and nonetheless magalomaniaical God who is It, who is energy, life, sex, force, the Yoga' prana, the Reichain's Orgone, Lawrance's blood, Hemingway's Good, the Shavian life force, 'It' 'God', not the God of Churches but the unachievable whisper of mystery within the sex, the paradise of limitless energy.

Mailer equates God with inspiration and instinct, and Devil with institutional knowledge. Mailer's fear that the sexual revolution may turn as corrupt as the revolutionary socialism has lead him to seek an authentic "entrance into the mysteries of murder, suicide, incest, orgy, orgasm and Time." Sexual intimacy can transcend the limits of social morality and attain the cosmic harmony, but this happens only in the intimacy of "sensuous sex": "The dialogue of such sex is tender, it is respectable — it respects the slow conversion of character into mood, it seeks for an artful loss of each separate identity in order to find and give life to the 'mood' which passes from body to body." By giving life to the 'mood' which 'passes from body to body', the body can also be transcended. And the transcendence of the body occurs with the shedding off the separate identity — accumulated encrustations of the self. The life of the body passing into 'mood' relates sex to time and eternity. Thus, there is always an element of adventure and quest in that the ultimate, the true energy is always 'just beyond' every second effort. Nonetheless, it remains man's perennial quest.
This pentagonal pattern constituting the problem of quest for self come to be the weft of Mailer's novels. In the context of this thesis, these pentad elements forming the root and resolution of the problem of quest for self will find illustration and exemplification from his novels in the course of subsequent chapters.
NOTES AND REFERENCES.


3. Encyclopedia Britannica, XXII, p.156.


22. Ihab Hassan, "Quest for the Subject: The Self in Literature," *Contemporary Literature*, 29, No. 3 (Fall 1988), 429.


35. Here reference is to Trilling's brilliant discussion of "authentic unconscious" in his book *Sincerity and Authenticity*, (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1972), where he points out that chief cause of 'distress' of Laing, Marcuse, Brown and others is their inability to comprehend a viable relationship between the self and society.
55. Norman Mailer, ADV, p. 17.


70. Norman Mailer, ADV, p. 374.

71. Norman Mailer, ADV, p. 279.


73. Norman Mailer, ADV, p. 359.
