Proceeding with the spirit of the sub-title of *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) and taking Maller's comment in *Current Biography* (1948) as the starting point of this chapter that *The Naked and the Dead* is not a realistic documentary; it is rather a 'symbolic' book of which the basic theme is the conflict between the beast and the seer in man. The number of events experienced by the one army platoon couldn't possibly have happened to any one army platoon in the war, but represent a composite view of the Pacific War. The mountain the platoon attempts to climb represent death and man's creative urge, fate and man's desire to conquer the elements — separating and stating so badly:”

It is intended to discuss *The Naked and the Dead* (ND) as a symbolic representation of basic human condition and establish that underlying the political elements in the work, there is a continuous philosophical debate about the nature of man — his needs, drives, heroic potential and his attempts and continual struggle to understand his own leanings and bearings. In the quest for self, the 'seers' are those who struggle most heroically against the forces — nature or otherwise— which try to annihilate the very identity of the individual— those who assert their will-power in opposition to these forces. 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. They are the 'beasts'. This point is made simply clear in the comparison of men with ants, insects, cattle and other forms of animal life; in the opening section, the idea is first introduced in the reference to Pavlov's experiment with dogs, and then in the image of the advancing army as a "nest of ants."
wherever human activity becomes mechanical, it becomes dehumanized, robbed of heroic element, and this point is made in the images of 'darkness', 'blindness', and animality: "then darkness swirled about them again, and they ground the guns forward blindly, a line of ants dragging their burden back to their hole." Only those who are victimized without saying Yes to oppression and who rebel without saying No to life emerge wiser in their quest for self. Though they are not always successful in their quest, they are enlightened and vistas of new knowledge are open to them. They can not only rebel, fight and incite but can also discern. The options are open to them and they once again engage themselves in the everlasting quest for self.

ND, drawing its subject matter directly from the second World War, is set in the mid-Pacific and deals with an army campaign on the mythical island of Anopopei, Mailer concentrates on a division in the midst of a major campaign and on a small unit within that division—the racon platoon. Brilliant and ruthless evangel of fascist power and control, General Cummings commands the division, and ironhanded, hard-nosed Sergeant Croft leads the platoon; they are the book's two antagonists; each seeks mastery within the sphere of his command to realize his selfhood. Opposed to these two men are Cummings's confused young-aide, Lieutenant Hearn and rebellious member of Croft's platoon, Red Valsen, each of whom purses liberal and humane values only to end up defeated by Croft. The other men in the platoon see their lives disrupted, changed and even destroyed by the demands made on them by both the war and Sergeant Croft. But beneath the veneer of the most thoroughgoing representation of brutalities and atrocities of war, there are the fundamental questions as posed in the diary of the dead. Japanese officer: "I ask myself WHY? I am born, I am to die. WHY? WHY? what is the meaning?"
Frank D. McConnel pertinently comments:

The real war in this gigantic war novel, one feels, is not the conflict of Japanese and American troops on a trivial island, but the perennial warfare of political and personal styles of identity, of dullness with vitality, of prejudice with vision, of the existentially naked with the imaginatively dead. The war, indeed, both as historical, political fact and as metaphor, is seen throughout the novel primarily as a precipitating image—almost what T.S. Eliot once called an "objective correlative"—for this underlying critical conflict.

The destruction of the very identity of the individual by war, representative of all repressive political and social systems, Mailer believes, is due to the flawed nature of the individual which engenders and perpetuates the social sickness—the totalitarianism, as is suggested by him in The White Negro:

The second world war presented a mirror to the human condition which blinded anyone who looked into it .... One was then obliged also to see that no matter how crippled and perverted an image of man was the society he had created, it was nonetheless his creation (at least his collective creation from the past) and if society was so murderous then who could ignore the most hideous of questions about his own nature?

In the portrayal of different characters, Mailer uses the war situation to explore man's basic drives and psychic needs. Each man is forced to confront the fact of death and is stripped naked by the experience—forced to confront the most basic questions about man's existence, his relation to himself, the natural world and the social world. He is forced to do this in the context of an unheroic war; to define himself and his potentialities under conditions of physical exhaustion and monotonous hardship. This is referable to the first stage in the direction of quest for self—the 'Bewildered Self.' Different characters in the novel try to come out of the void in their own way. Some involve themselves in the exercise of violence and power; others in acts of perverted sexual gratification and still others by escaping from the immanent danger. This attempt in the direction of undermining the oppressive social systems and understanding the need for independent existence,
referable to the second stage of "Cultured Savage", is often frustrated by the overwhelming forces of society and once again he is face to face with the harsh realities of his wooden existence. For the moment, the frustration of his attempts bring him face to face with the fragile, mortal nature of his own mind and his own body, a point where the props and assurances of his oneness with himself no longer avails to mask himself from himself. Those who realize this are 'the nakeds' as implicitly referred to in the title, they are, even after defeat, more intimate with their conscious self. And those who never dare to see their props and assurances crumble down are 'the dead' of the title and for such persons there is left nothing which can assist them in the construction of a new and stronger selfhood. This is referable to the third stage of "Confrontation" in the quest for self. Only 'the nakeds' further proceed on the path of search for self with their belief in individual effort and courage to be. In this novel, different characters strive to find their true, hidden identity in the context of war situation. Some remain bewildered even after the demonic rebellion as they fail to harness their energy to face the quintessential moment; some do face the consequences of their rebellion but fail to attain to the stage of fulfilment because of some flaw in their character. The book finds "man corrupted, confused to the point of helplessness, but it also finds that there are limits beyond which he cannot be pushed, and it finds that even in this corruption and sickness there are yearnings for a better world".8

ND presents a world which is constantly portrayed as powerful, harsh, alien and impenetrable. Different characters are caught up in this world and find themselves confused, unable to understand themselves and the world around. Each makes effort to wriggle out of his bewildered state and the outcome in
each case varies. Although the novel opens with a phenomenon typical of the war in the Pacific—a large scale beech assault backed up by enormous fire power—Mailer sees this activity in its natural perspective:

Mount Anaka rose out of a bare of maroon-colored smoke. Implacably despite the new purple robes at its feet, the mountain sat on the island, and gazed out to sea. The bombardment was insignificant before it.

The power of Nature makes any effort of man futile and insignificant; all the men in the platoon come to realize that there is always "the lethargic sullen power of the ocean beneath the thin metal dock". Even the heroism of Goldstein and Ridges, who carry Wilson out of the jungle, pales when seen against its natural backdrop; their action has much of the insignificance with which Albert Camus invested Sisyphus's attempts to push his rock to the top of his hill, but it is seen from a universal as well as human scale: "They had the isolation, the insignificance of insects traversing an endless beach." If man is insignificant, human actions viewed in their natural context are useless and pointless. Two of the most important objectives of the platoon are to transport several large guns, during the night, closer to the front lines and to climb Mount Anaka. The first is only partially successful; one gun is lost merely yards away from their goal. But the whole suffering journey turns out for naught; the guns are not needed and not used; the battle they could have been used in is unimportant. The attempt to climb Mt. Anaka is doubly futile; not only is it unsuccessful, but there is no reason, save human pride, to make the effort in the first place. When Polack announces: "We broke out our ass for nothin'!" the platoon finds it "perfectly fitting." Even Cummings realizes what is clear to the reader, "that he had no more to do with the success of the attack than a man who presses a button and waits for the elevator."

This depiction of all powerful nature and futile human action in the novel
is not meant to stress the utter futility and hopelessness of human action. It rather points out that nature and other forces are as they were; individual just cannot ask the removal of that state for that is next to impossible. He can rely only on his will-power, determination and courage and that too are not guarantees of his achieving success in his actions. But still the salvation for him is in the continuous struggle, inspite of failures, just like the cresting, beaching and receding of the wave.

Apart from the hostile nature, war in a large sense explains the nature of reality—reality, almost impenetrable and insurmountable, against which individual has to define himself in order to lead an authentic existence. War is one of "Mailer's basic metaphor for existence; throughout his work he considers all human endeavor as a martial struggle in a divided inviverse."¹⁴ ND shows war brutalizes man and the extreme situations into which they are pushed often deaden their feeling. At one point, men in the racon platoon come across a ghastly and night-marish landscape strewn with limbs and burnt corpses and putrifying Japanese bodies infested with maggots. Over everything hangs the stench of death. Yet the men look for souvenirs, as if the charnel house were Coney Island. Amid extremities of war, brutalization is the price the psyche pays for the continued existence of the individual. It is possible for some men to triumph over the emotions that threaten to overwhelm the psyche, and this war may result in either a disintegration or strengthening of character. Ridges, the poor Southern farmer, is stronger at the end of the novel than before: Roth, the middle class Jew, is stronger, in his pitiful ways just before he died. On the other hand, Minetta, the platoon malingerer, disintegrates, as do Corporal Brown and even Red Valsen, Sergeant Croft's primary antagonist. Red and Wilson discover their insides rotting away, in one case from syphilis,
in the other from nephritis. Other effects of war, also immensely powerful, are anxiety, boredom and physical and emotional exhaustion visible in the whole platoon. Throughout the novel there is a *basso continu* of boredom, exhausation, repetition, meaninglessness, unfulfilment. The platoon realizes in the very beginning of the book that "there was nothing to do but go from one day into the next." This feeling of impotence and futility is not wholly an outcome of their relationship to the natural world; it is more often a result of the military structure in which they are mired; and of the social structure in America which create not only the military but also the characters of the men themselves. To a large extent, the implacability of the social world produces the same effects and stimulates the same emotional responses from men as that of the natural world.

Every character in the platoon appears bewildered as they "knew very little about what was happening in the campaign." They find that "the days repeated themselves without incident." Red Valsen, the most introspective and critical of the men in the platoon, often sums up the emotions that the other men either feel or will come to feel: "Nobody gets what he wants, he said to himself and this deepened his mood of pleasurable sorrow." Again, he says, "Don't kid yourself, a man's no more important than a goddam cow." At another point, where Red was feeling very drunk and very profound, he remarks "I'll tell you guys something... none of ya are ever gonna get anything. You're all goods guys, but you're goona get... the shitty end of the stick. The shitty end of the stick, that 'all you've gonna get." Although the perceived hostility of the natural world is in some way responsible for these observations, they primarily arose out of and refer to the hostility of the social world which men have created for themselves. Struggling against such a world, Mailer
portrays his characters as attaining some success or to their death.

Julio Martínez, a product of the Mexican slums in Texas, is first of the enlisted men. He thinks, "there is nothing more difficult in the world than to be a perfect noncom. Firm and aloof."22 In massive capital letters on Mailer's page, Martínez accepts his identity. "I will BE GOOD NONCOM."23 Martínez has harnessed his energies to the army's purposes, which in war time are connected directly to violence; thus only after Martínez kills his first "Jap" does the platoon accept him as one of its own. Martínez desperately tries to establish his own distinct individuality. After his menial assignment as house boy to officers in the peacetime army, he has been presented with the opportunity, as he sees it, to gain recognition and acceptance through courage and competence. He is the scout of the platoon, constantly exposed to greater danger than anyone else, and he does his job well, with a fierce pride in his ability, and in the sergeant's stripes it has earned him. The price he has paid for this pittance of recognition is exorbitant. His nerves are shattered. Any loud noise frightens him; he cannot sleep or eat normally, and it is only with a sheer effort of will that he continues to function. But he is so committed to what he sees as his one path to success, and to the paradoxical loyalty he feels to a country that has threatened him so shabbily, that he continues to seek out dangerous assignments:

And another part of his mind had a quiet pride that he was the man upon whom the safety of the others depended. This was a sustaining force which carried him through dangers his will and body would have resisted... there was a part of his mind that drove him to do things he feared and detested. His pride with being a seargeant was the core about which nearly all his actions and thoughts were bound ... He was leading his squad and that: was sufficient in itself.24

Martínez lives by a code of desperate courage in an effort to be somebody, and it has almost destroyed him. The path, the style of life he opts for
himself is an outcome of the ladder-structured society—the very society which labels him inferior and has given him less and less. His choice and his actions are nowhere independent of the societal forces. Apart from this, he miserably fails to understand that part of life to which Mailer accords great importance—the sexual life. Martinez has vague notions of his success in the world which revolve about a vision of sexual vindictiveness. Sex is a serious and important concern to Mailer, and it plays a large part in the development of many of the characters. To Martinez, it is an instrument of vengeance, a leveling force. It is also an opiate to the lower classes. Martinez has pursued indiscriminate promiscuity as an escape from poverty and boredom. He fails to understand the true import of sex and hence remains insecure, bewildered and coward throughout.

Joey Goldstein is another character who "dreams about college, of being an engineer," but who then meets Natalie. Joey "graduates from welding school, gets a job for twenty five dollars, and they get married." Soon "the knowledge that she wants him less often than he needs her is bitter and sometimes ugly." A confrontation on the sexual issue marks for Joey "the end or almost the end of one expectation from marriage, and for Natalie it means she must pretend excitement in order to avoid hurting him." Women in the novel must deal with the men who have breathed the fables; being free personally from the obsession as Natalie appears to be, does not free them from its pain. That Joey does not try for an exemption as a war worker demonstrates that he is, in reality, choosing—just as Martinez had. Joey's draft notice comes almost as a relief, and in the army "Goldstein fumbles for a new answer, a new security." Martinez and Goldstein are alike in their ingenuous acceptance of the roles determined by themselves under the influence of American dream.
At one point, Goldstein remarks "I really believe in being honest and sincere in business; all the really big men got where they are through decency." He feels happy and satisfied if he can be friendly with somebody but disappointment in friendship never leaves him disheartened completely. Essentially, he was an active man, a positive man. If his feelings were bruised, if another friend had proved himself untrustworthy, Goldstein would nurse his pains, but almost always he would recover and sally out again. Goldstein is a "positive" man because of his capacity to emerge relatively more intact than others from the campaign and this seems to rest upon a sort of passive resiliency.

Roth is a New York Jew, a despicable man, whimpering, self-pitying, lazy; weak but not particularly kind or gentle, oversensitive to slights but not sensitive to the needs of others. Even his one act of apparent kindness, fondling a crippled bird he discovers in the jungle, is described in terms of pity for himself. Both his motives and his actions in the bird episode are disgusting. He lisps baby talk to it, "makes little kissing sounds" and basks in the attention it draws from the other men. Roth is the most ineffectual man in the platoon and the most dishonest to himself. In a beautifully conceived scene on guard duty, Roth is shown to be governed by a mass of conflicting and debilitating fears. Imagining he hears a voice, he cannot decide whether to fire the machine gun. Then he is unable to remember whether it is cocked, but is too afraid of making a noise to pull the bolt back. He considers throwing a grenade, but is so week from fear that he feels he may throw short and thus be killed. He throws the safety catch on his rifle, and is so frightened by the audible click that he does nothing more. Afraid to awaken any of the men, he broods over his undeserved plight until he falls asleep endangering everyone's life. Because Roth has overslept
his stint, his relief accuses him of having fallen asleep, and he retires to his blankets in massive self-pity at being so unjustly chastised. Although he is quite willing to admit that much of his trouble may have come from being born a Jew, he is annoyed when Goldstein launches a tirade against anti-Semite, and when Gallagher, a blustering Irishman, strikes Roth, shouting." Get up, you Jew Bastard." And suddenly Roth, through his exhaustion and panic, sees new vistas of terror and violence open before him:

All the protective devices, the sustaining facades of his life had been eroding slowly in the caustic air of the platoon; his exhaustion had pulled out the props, and Gallagher's blow had toppled the rest of the edifice. He was naked another way now. He rebelled against it; was frustrated that he could not speak to them and explain it away.34

Naked another way now; few words and a blow have forced Roth to a point of existential nakedness—a point where he comes face to face— not with the cosmic void— but rather with the conditional, fragile, mortal nature of his own mind and his own body. This moment of risk, panic and nakedness not only test and refine the individual in Mailer's world, he is also judged by them; and 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. In case of Roth, moment does not endure and he dies a violent death whereas Goldstein survives. Roth's death proceeds not out of accident, but directly out of his character, aided slightly by the goadings of the anti-Semite Gallagher. Weaker than anyone else on the climb up Mt. Anaka, but not decisive enough to refuse to continue, Roth feebly attempts to step across a gap in the trail while Gallagher cruses and goads him and plunges to his death.

Another moment of nakedness in this complex sense comes to the cowardly sycophantic Sergeant Brown as he is carrying a dying comrade back from
the jungle to the beach. It is an important counterpoint to Roth's confrontation through violence, for Brown experiences his "nakedness" as an access of tender, almost feminine solicitude for the dying man (formerly one of his despised enemies) whom he is bearing. The two men exchange small talks about their families, as men often speak of anything, in the face of death, except death itself. And in a sudden rush of pity and love, Brown whispers, "Just take it easy, boy." to the dying Wilson. In that instant Brown feels the misery and failure of his life open into an exultant sense of participation and unity. It could not last, Brown realizes:

It was as if Brown had awakened in the middle of the night, helpless in the energies his mind had released in sleep. In the transit to awareness, to wakefulness, he would be helpless for a time, tumbling in the wake of his dream, separated from all the experience, all the trivia that made his life recognizable and bearably blunted to himself. He would be uncovered, lost in the plain of darkness, containing within himself and only all his history and all of the present in ebbs and pulses of his body, but he would be the common denominator of all men and the animals behind them, waking blindly in the primordial forests.

Private Roy Gallagher also follows what we now see as a pattern in the novel: material and sexual frustration turns him toward a structure with external props for his identity—a process which leads to controlling him for the structure's objectives. To wriggle out of the mess, he becomes vicious and violent. He feels he will "bust" if the organisation does not initiate violence soon. In Gallagher's life there is a redeeming feature which may help him in finding his identity and this feature is hinted at by his gentle, sincere love for his wife, the only good thing in his frustrating life. Stanley G. Gutnam comments:

What is both sad and frightening is that Gallagher, a man full of hate and warped emotions, alienated from all feelings but that hatred and an empty and perverted political rhetoric, is at his core idealistic, chivalrous, and romantic. His aspirations have been... continually manipulated and assaulted by the society in which he lives.
Gallaher's devotion comes to our attention on the island, where he participates in one of the most horrifying sequences in the novel, and yet one that has nothing to do with combat. Gallaher's wife dies in childbirth and then "a frightening thing happened:"

Gallagher continued to receive letters from his wife.... The first one came a few days after Father Leary had told him about her death; it had been mailed almost a month before.... Gallagher could not accept Mary's death.... Now, as the letters from Mary kept coming every few days, he began to believe that she was alive.... He began to feel happy; he looked forward to her letters as he always had done, and would think about them at night before he wanted to sleep.39

The sequence in the novel becomes excruciatingly painful as the letter written on the date of Mary's confinement approaches, and Gallagher finally receives the one which tells him that her pains have started and that she would not be able to write to him for a few days. The episode reminds us that horror and pain and suffering need not have to do with war. While the military did separate the couple, this separation is merely incidental to Gallagher's profound grief, which is not a limited one related to the war but the universal unavoidable one of the loss of the beloved. He becomes temporarily careless about potential snipers, but otherwise he remains what he had been, a small moving part in a military machine. This shows that Gallaher has the potential to achieve his true self. The death of his wife was a decisive event—the moment of nakedness for him; and he endures it. He continues to serve the army losing none of his crudity or insensitivity.

Another seeker after true self is General Cummings who believes and is guided by the notion that beyond the desire to survive and the sexual urge, instincts which men share with other animals, man's primary drive is toward the achievement of power over other men and the natural world. His belief in the 'fear-ladder' stems directly from this view of man; if man's essential
nature is to struggle for power, then his relation with other men is governed by power principle. Cummings proves this when he forces Hearn to pick up the cigarette which Hearn leaves on the General's tent floor in an act of wildly courageous defiance of power-principle. Cummings, not satisfied with forcing the mutineer to his knees by an exercise of power vested in hate and fear, cannot tolerate the threat to that power that Hearn now represents for him. Hearn is ordered to the patrol and to his death. McConnel remarks:

Cummings is an evil man; and his evil consists, more than in anything else in the deliberation and callousness with which he takes part in the dance of power and death, all the while knowing it to be a crime against the very sources of the human spirit.

But what he does is under the compulsion of his instincts for omnipotence. Only by wielding power over others he can satisfy himself. His dreams, fantasies, hopes and aspirations—all yearn for omnipotence. He feels:

There's that popular misconception of man as something between a brute and an angel. Actually man is in transit between brute and God.

Man's deepest urge is Omnipotence?

Yes... To achieve God.

Only by wielding power over the very soul of his subordinates, can Cummings realize his existence.

The strategy he evolves for realization of his deepest urge is to create fear in the mind of the subordinates. He recognizes the desirability, even the absolute need, of stimulating fear in men and then creating a hierarchy a "fear ladder." He tells Hearn, "The only way you generate the proper attitude of awe and obedience is through immense and disproportionate power." Fear destroys the ego supports and eventually the individuality of men. It breaks down their will to resist authority; they eventually respond immediately
to the stimuli applied to them. Cummings here appears to be a Cultured Savage bent on violence and inflicting atrocities on others for his own personal gains.

Mailer sees the need to wield power over others as a response to a threatened and even perverse sexual appetite. Cummings has an unsatisfactory sexual relationship with his wife. By seeking power and controlling the lives of other men, he wants to fulfill the needs of his psyche. Mailer also explicitly compares sexual fulfilment and the satisfaction which war affords to Cummings. Cummings alludes to the correspondence between artillery fire and coitus. "the phallus shell that rides through a shining vagina of steel." Even more revealing is the marital sensation which, examined and contorted, becomes the basis for Cummings's pseudo-poetic metaphor. Beholding artillery bombardment, Cummings is caught up in sexual excitement: "(War) was all covered with tedium and routine, regulations and procedure, and yet there was a naked quivering heart to it which involved you deeply when you were thrust into it." Though sexual aspect of power appears to make the pursuer of power a neurotic and the desire to control a sexual perversion, Cummings does not appear to be a villain. It is only in him that we can see the heroic activity of seeking to fight and recreate one's environment, so that it is less hostile and more satisfying to one's needs. But unlike Gallagher there is no love left in him. Hence the chances of his full growth appear less.

Undoubtedly Cummings triumphs over other men; it is a sour triumph since he is forced not to live through a moment of nakedness but precisely to miss such a moment and to bear the realization of his failure. The invasion and occupation of Anopopei succeeds, but succeeds despite Cummings's grandiose strategy of attack. On a day Cummings is away, organizing the elaborate naval
support he needs for his operation, his second in command, the bovine Major Dalleson, discovers that American troops have broken through one Japanese position. In a reluctant and confused attempt simply to move up support for the successful troops, Dalleson finds that he has eventually moved up the entire invading army and routed the already starved, ammunitionless Japanese resistance. Cummings pays for his refusal of life in a costly coin: the realization of the terminal, unremitting futility of his best efforts.

Lieutenant Hearn resists the pressures for identifying himself with the power holding structure longer than any other character; but in the positive stage of transformational process, he finds that the opportunity to control others satisfied a deeply felt need and so compensates him for his loss of freedom within the institution's structure. Hearn's conflict with Cummings over the General's order for Hearn to pick up a Cigarette butt initiates the negative portion, stripping the young man of his existential defense.

Hearn, frustrated inspite of his Harvard education and the advantages of being a rich man's son, has decided to live by the motto, "The only thing to do is to get by on style... let no one in any ultimate issue ever violate your integrity," a plan which fits with the Sartrean existential idea that "there is no reality except in action... man... is nothing else than the ensemble of his acts." Through General, Mailer challenges Hearn's resolve when the General order him to pick up the cigarette butt. Hearn obeys out of fear of court martial, feeling sick at his own cowardice and knowing that he cannot deceive himself that he is internally free, even while in the external control of Cummings: this was Hearn realized "an ultimate issue." From an existential point of view, Hearn cannot posit an internal act of will that withholds assent even as one externally complies, for as Sartre says, "A man is involved
in life, leaves his imprint on it and outside of that there is nothing." He knows that "he had done it with a sick numbed suspension of his will." Sartre explains that "when the existentialist writes about a coward, he says that this coward is responsible for his cowardice.... He is like that because he has made himself a coward by his acts." The cigarette incident, thus forms the negative side of Hearn's transformation. The incident shatters Hearn's previous identity, revealing its brittleness, but he does not take on a new one until the chance to control troops in combat provides a positive experience that entices him towards a new identity.

This seductive element of control emerges when Hearn overcame his own paralyzing fear in his first taste of combat, and by virtue of commands that he "roared" and shouted, "his voice shrill furious," and that he "roared again ... his voice bellowing like something apart from him." Hearn led his men in a fight with the Japanese. In a temporary lull, Hearn "wanted to drive them for another hundred yards and another, bawling out his commands, bellowing his rage." Finally blurting out a quiet command to Croft, Hearn found "an emotion in it somewhere, as sweet as anything he had ever known." Later, Hearn realized that he is reluctant to call off the patrol despite the fact that the mission now "no longer had the chance of a snow ball in hell" because he "wanted Cummings to approve of him again." He comes to believe that "divorced of all the environmental trappings, all the confusing and misleading attitudes he had absorbed, he was basically like Cummings." Beyond Cummings, deeper now, was his own desire to lead the platoon. It had grown, ignited suddenly, become one of the most satisfying things he had ever done. He could understand Croft's staring at the mountain through the field glasses, or killing the bird. "When he searched himself, he was just another Croft." Such
complete lack of a leader's anguish demonstrates how far Hearn has drifted from his lost existential mooring; Sartre says that "when a military officer takes the responsibility for an attack and sends a certain number of men to death ... he alone makes the choice ... he cannot help having a certain anguish. All leaders know this anguish." In stark contrast, Hearn realized that his efforts to "get along" with his men had nothing to do with their welfare but had been done only to "increase the chances for the patrol's success ... he didn't give a damn" about the men. In thus placing his identity with the military mission and therefore outside himself, Hearn recognizes his need to control others which his army commission fulfills. Thus, Hearn is vulnerable to the same urges which move Cummings but he does not have the will-power, ruthlessness and stark confidence in his own action as Cummings has. Hence he dies a premature death in his quest for individuation. Hearn's death is no accident, and it is more than circumstance which makes Martinez the instrument by which Croft effects it. After the encounter with the enemy in which Wilson is fatally wounded, Hearn wrestles with his own conscience, and comes to the conclusion that no matter how much he is personally driven to succeed in the mission (as a sort of inverted defiance toward Cummings) the responsible thing is to turn back. It is night, and in order to insure that he will obey his own decision in the morning, Hearn confides it to Croft. The later persuades the Lieutenant to send a scout ahead, and to base the decision to continue or turn back on whether the enemy is present. Armed with Hearn's permission, the Sergeant delegates Martinez for the patrol, and admonishes him to report his findings only to Croft himself. When Croft receives Martinez's report on the enemy's presence ahead, he withholds it from Hearn, promoting the later to order a further advance. Moments before he is killed, Hearn promises the
men that if further enemy resistance is encountered, they will turn back. But when a short distance further on, Hearn steps unsuspectingly from cover and is killed instantly by a machine gun bullet, Croft assumes command and feels no obligation to honor the promise of a dead man.

The sense of sorrow at Hearn's death leads to a desire to see the young officer as an ideal throughout the novel, to want him to have remained uncompromised. Indeed, it is fruitful to see Hearn's death as a warning and a harbinger to what was happening to the American liberal at midcentury, the enlightened characteristics conflicting with the authoritarian self. Even in this context, however, the novel would appear to portray a significant victory for authoritarian side, a victory reflected in his intense joy at controlling the men, in his wanting to please Cummings, and in his subsequent decision not to attempt scaling Mt. Anaka because proper military strategy would veto the climb. Although Hearn's capitulation disgusts him and leads him to contemplate resigning his rank, he nonetheless has moved away from an internal sense of integrity and now bases his identity on his role in the military structure and serves the needs of the army whose aim in war time involve violence. Hearn's death comes from his decision to corporate with the system, not from indomitable rebellion against it. Hearn himself at one point remarks, "The only thing that had been important was to let no one in any ultimate issue ever violate your integrity." He is true neither to his inner self and its needs nor to his professed aims.

The pessimism induced by Hearn's evolution does, however, receive a certain ironic counterpart in the novel from Croft's break away from institutional army discipline, a breakdown of control. In contrast to Hearn's decision to retreat, Croft wants the platoon to scale Mr. Anaka, which notion is obvious military nonsense, since no attack force could take that route—if the remants
of a single platoon with light equipment would encounter a mighty challenge on the mountain, then a heavy attack force with its necessary impediments would surely fail.\textsuperscript{61} Climbing the mountain would, however, satisfy Croft's personal longings: "He could not have given the reason, but the mountain tormented him, beckoned him, held an answer to something he wanted. It was so pure, so austere."\textsuperscript{62} In terms of control, Croft's impulse rates as an assertion of the human against the mechanistic requirement to follow military orders. Croft, unlike Hearn, violates discipline and diverts a military unit from its proper mission in order to satisfy his deepest human longings—and Croft lives, suggesting an element of hope. In "The Time Machine Section" of the novel, he concludes "I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF."\textsuperscript{63} Croft must master everything which is not in himself. He is confident that he can do so far "he had a deep unspoken belief that whatever made things happen was on his side."\textsuperscript{64}

Croft has manipulated the death of Hearn so that he can assume the command, and order the platoon to climb the unclimable Mt. Anaka. Croft can analyze his action and knows that "if they failed, then the thing he had done with Hearn was wrong and he had been bucking the Army, simply disobeying on order,"\textsuperscript{65} but even with this incentive to push him on, Croft became aware of a deep, surprising reluctance to reach the summit. On the climb, he felt a "strain" which had nothing to do with the physical: "the closer he came to the crest of the mountain the greater became his anxiety."

When Croft""at last ..., sensed that the top was near," his anxiety increased: "Each step he took closer to the summit left him more afraid."\textsuperscript{66} Although every thing we have read to this point makes us want to believe that Croft would fear the exhaustion which might prevent him from reaching the top.
Mailer's words indicate that Croft, instead, feared he would reach the top. The existential context suggests an explanation that the unthinking Croft would not have been able to formulate for himself: if the men reached the top, then they would have proved the mountain climbable, but an important element in making the mountain the object of Croft's intense yearnings is precisely its unclimbable quality. Croft's unexpected anxiety at the thought of reaching the summit does not square with the view of Croft as representing a dictator satiated with controlling more human beings and wishing to dominate nature itself. If this were the proper view, Croft would have felt instant vexation at failure and at the retributive act by hitherto passive nature. Croft blunders onto a hornet's nest and accidentally smashes it. The pain of the hornet's stings drives the entire platoon including Croft, far back down the mountain, screaming and discarding rifles and packs. When they finally come to their senses, it is obvious even to Croft that they can never climb back up. And as he leaves the shore of Anopopei, he gazes at the mountain he has failed: "Croft kept looking at the mountain. He had lost it, had missed some tantalizing revelation of himself. Of himself and much more. Of life, Everything." But "deep inside himself, Croft was relieved that he had not been able to climb the mountain," and he is at last temporarily rested "by the unadmitted knowledge that he had found a limit to his hunger," his desire. Both unexpected reactions emerge into greater clarity in the light of the more hopeful context of a man freeing himself from constraints in order to participate in a self-defining existential test.

Croft is the only character who faces the naked moment and endures it meaningfully. Some critics find it hard to accept the hopeful ending but a slight change of focus in these critical views fits well in the context of
existential hope. Paul N. Siegel draws attention to the fact that "in failing to reach the peak of the mountain Croft has failed to attain a grasp of the pattern. It eludes him". Siegel quotes from the text: "Croft kept looking at the mountain. He had lost it, some tantalizing revelation of himself." Siegel is not wrong; the shift of focus merely gives us a further insight, implying that Croft's break with authority would have left him even further from an understanding of "himself", "of life," of "everything," had he reached the summit, for then he would not have tested his desire to the limit. There is no revelation, or rather only revelation is that there are no revelations. Death always wins in the end. The existential project, as Sartre strongly implies, is ultimately impossible; and so in an existential novel, a rebel may climb upon a mountain, but its peak must be unattainable.

Because other characters encounter similar pressures and all succumb, Croft's rebellion over Mt. Anaka enters an optimistic note: one man, at least, did not succumb. Croft, at the novel's opening, had appeared to have succumbed long ago, yet the army, as representative of all oppressive social institutions, was not capable of totally harnessing Croft's hatred for its own ends. Croft, for all of his murderous rage, was still able to conceive and act upon a quixotic yearning: his action to claim its free purity—supports Mailer's claim that even under the most severe conditions in his novel "there are yearnings for a better world," and these yearnings can be translated into reality only by strong individual action as we see in case of Croft.

Reverting back to the spirit of the sub-title, it is clear that unlike the typical proletarian or social novel, ND does not present its beasts and seers in obvious counterpoints. The epigraph to part three is relevant here: "Even the wisest among you is only a disharmony and hybrid of plant and phantom. But do I bid you to become phantoms and plants?" This rhetorical question
implies that man should be neither "plant" nor "phantom" exclusively; neither all body nor all soul; neither beast nor seer. This is certainly true of the major characters in ND, each of whom pursues his life in his own particular way and carries within himself the bestial and visionary forces. The ultimate effect of Mailer's parallel plots is to emphasize this "disharmony" in each character. When Cummings and Croft suffer defeats comparable to those of Hearn and Valsen, we realize that Mailer has rejected a crude contrast between "good" and "evil". All the main characters in the novel face the conflict between the beast and the seer in them as they proceed in their quest. Cummings and Croft, with extreme individualism coupled with a strong sense of personal destiny, appear to be hateful characters. What prevents these characters from being purely hateful is what Mailer calls their "vision." Croft is inspired by a "crude unformed vision," and Cummings is driven by "one great vision". There is nothing mean about their vision. Cummings's greatest urge is for Omnipotence; and Croft is tantalized by "vistas of such omnipotence he must wonder at his own audacity." The common spirit which links Cummings and Croft is unmistakable. In one sense, they are the novel's "seers": confident of the world tractability, they are determined to achieve destinies commensurate with their mighty hunger. Unfortunately, Cummings and Croft are also the novel's principal "beasts." There is nothing so despicable in ND as Croft's calculated destruction of the lame bird discovered by one of his men; and Cummings is subject to the same impulses as we see in cigarette incident with Hearn: "If he had been holding an animal in his hands at that instant he would have strangled it." It is the naked animal in Cummings which finds expression in his power morality, his persecution and finally his execution of Hearn. Thus the urges which move them are both bestial and visionary.
As far as Hearn is concerned, he places the highest value on what Hearn calls "inviolate freedom." He asks nothing more specific from life because he has contempt for what life offers. He believes that "if you searched something long enough, it always turned to dirt," and comes to the conclusion that "there were no answers" in the struggle. Hearn fails to discover any sustaining belief. Hence the qualities of seers have been blunted in him.

Thus the novel presents different characters enmeshed in war, trying to come out of it in their own way so as to find their true self. The novel has an open ending in the sense that nobody reaches the stage of fulfilment. Their visions get expanded but never attain to the stage of completion. Till they achieve that stage, "Only connect," Forster advised, the beast and the seer in man.
NOTES AND REFERENCES.

3. **ND**, p. 39
4. **ND**, p. 115
5. **ND**, p. 212
22. **ND**, p. 66.
24. ND, p.114.
25. ND, p.454.
26. ND, p.489.
27. ND, p.489.
28. ND, p.491.
29. ND, p.492.
30. ND, p.350.
31. ND, p.349.
32. ND, p.446.
33. ND, p.558.
34. ND, p.558.
35. ND, p.454.
36. ND, p.454.
37. ND, p.234.
38. Stanley Gutman, Mankind in Barbary, p.11.
40. McConnel, Four Postwar American Novelists, p.73.
41. ND, p.323.
42. ND, p.176.
43. ND, p.324.
44. ND, p.568.
45. ND, p.566.
46. ND, p.326.
61. Cummings plans to send a larger unit only in case the platoon "got back without trouble" because "it was too expensive, too risky" to send a larger unit. Even then "the timing will be a bitch" and will work only if it could be done without "any delaying incidents" (399-402, 314-16) on a completely unguarded route. The platoon has already encountered the Japanese on the platoon's side of the pass.


72. ND p.156.

73. ND p.323.

74. ND p.40.

75. ND p.318.

76. ND p.183.

77. ND pp. 585, 704.