



## Blantyre

3 ITEMS =

MAIL on film version  
of NAD,

Trade Editorial report  
on NAD Sept. 1946

copies of NAD poster

"There are two ways of spreading light:  
to be the candle or the mirror that reflects it."

EDITH WHARTON

Addy Naiman  
C. Lubell

Copy

Trade Editorial Report, Little, Brown & Company

This is the first quarter of what is going to be a too long, but damned good book. If the rest of the ms. keeps up to par, I am going to recommend that we accept pending revision, or at least take an option on it.

It is not, strictly speaking, a novel, any more than most of the fictional pieces in the New Yorker are short stories. That is, it relies less upon plot and character development, than upon imaginative, real depiction. It's that compromise between reporting and novelizing which we had such difficulty defining with Aldridge's OF MANY MEN.

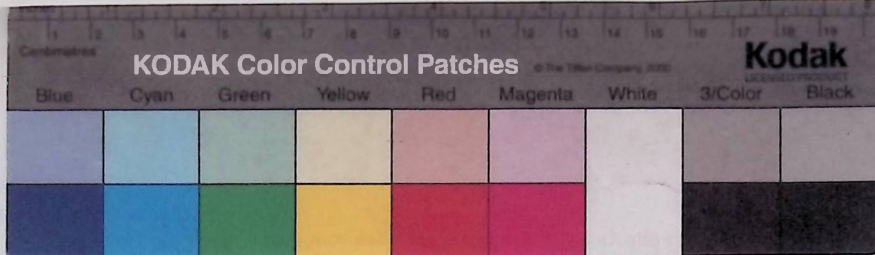
In other words, this is life as actually seen and experienced. The characters are real and typical, though fictional. This is realistic writing in its best strain, rich, detailed, imaginative, impacting in its sincerity and validity.

The action concerns a platoon of men in combat, but where Henry Brown's A WALK IN THE SUN was a dramatic fake, a romanticized and synthetic piece of fiction, over-heightened and slight in importance, this is a slow, thick textured reportage of actual experience, with more variety and perspective than I would have expected from anyone so young. When Mr. Cameron and Mr. Blanchard and I discussed T.E. Doremus's book, it was remarked that there was a brilliance of insight, and amazing maturity of skill and intelligence, and a sameness of character. Here Mr. Mailer has worked introspection in with the interaction of characters. He knows men, their individual personalities, their motivations, their varying speech patterns, and their effect on one another in combat life. He has brought everything in with no strain, and a tremendously real cumulative effect. The evaluations are never intrusive.

The book is going to be too long, a Wolfian mountain of material, all good, but all of equal weight. There are occasional changes of pace in small intruded sections which enrich the book as the interlarded fragments do in Dos Passos' USA, without loosening the texture and confusion the pattern of development as certain parts of that trilogy do.

There is a feeling for description here, which I find striking, placed as it is against the language of the men. I like the color of the author's language and don't find him over-adjectival, though some readers may.

I am asking to see the finished book, and looking forward to it. If it is as good as I expect, we'll just have to forget our prejudice against war books, and realize that life went on during the war as it did before, though with greater intensity and accelerated conflict. This is life, not a war story. I think it's one of the best books of men in war I have read, the best from this war, and certainly as good as Hemingway's and Dos Passos's books out of the last war, though less slim and ordered as yet.



Well, I got what I deserved. Paul Gregory  
After this answer to Gregory was published in the New York Post,

it occurred to me that I had unwittingly achieved some critical selection.

and Raoul Walsh made a movie about The Marine Corps  
For Messrs. Walsh and Gregory, out of the fullness of their creative  
after all (get it)

~~Powers succeeded in making a movie about the Marine Corps,~~ <sup>very</sup> a bad Marine

Corps movie, in certain ways perhaps the best of the bad Marine Corps movies. <sup>very</sup> 1

certainly the bloodiest, if one accepts the burning of Japanese troops by

fire grenades as bloody. (These fire grenades are parenthetically an

anachronism -- they were not in use when I was a soldier in the Pacific).

But then, the fire grenades are a trick -- the working precept of the Hollywood

hack is that when you've blundered into a quagmire of conflicting tastes,

trot out a trick.

This lack of taste and tongue for tricks of the director seemed to

be equalled only by the bad taste of the producer, and the result was a

gargoyle of war, surrealism, sadistic homosexuality and pure fecal funk.

But it's bad to have the faeces flying in a picture -- the audience gets so

covered with it they become depressed and so one must call on God,

sentimentality, and the love of man for his fellow man to get out from all

that flying flop. This the picture also does, shamelessly ~~it has been~~

~~shameless every other way -- it will be Hellbound in its cheap determination~~



dopers. Matthew had the longest hair of anybody at school, a droopy blond George Custer mustache, little round John Lennon glasses, and he walked with an odd bounce up onto his toes with every step that reminded me of Bugs Bunny. They of course smoked pot, which was still exotic to most of the kids, and owned a head shop called *The Family Hand* which had a black light room with psychedelic posters of Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin, the Grateful Dead and others on the walls. In the middle was a giant waterbed where you could lie and float and pass some groovy hours. They felt sorry for me, since my husband was in the hated war, and adopted me and brought me milk to class so I'd be healthy. If I had a couple of hours to kill, they insisted I go over to the shop and take a nap on the cool, undulating waterbed. I liked it so much I later got myself one.

I was hungry all the time and nervous with the strain of the war and the pregnancy. By the end, I had gained sixty five pounds. Once in a Taco Bell, a guy who had been in one of my classes the previous year came up and asked me if I had a sister. I said no, and he said, 'Are you sure? This girl looks a lot like you, except she's thin.' I wanted to smear his face with my enchilada. 'I am her! I'M PREGNANT! Not just fat!' I yelled at him. What a moron. But it sadly brought home to me that I *was* fat. As school let out and the summer hit like opening an oven door, I was huge and miserable. No air conditioners back then. At least not in our house. I was obsessed with the war, and I knew that every letter I got from Larry had been written earlier, two weeks or more, so I had no idea how he was doing or where he was. They weren't allowed to say, exactly, but he named places like the Pineapple Forest, Arizona Territory and Da Nang. He was also



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to call on the Lord. "If there's a God in heaven, and I believe there is,"

breathes a tall, handsome actor doing his honest best to play a short dumpy

plain and religious character named Ridges, "why then He'll get the boat to

us in time, and Lieutenant Hearn whom we <sup>kinda like and respect</sup> like so much will be saved."

And then we look out across the waters in ~~a spiritual way~~ and bzzz, bzzz, --

there, like a fly, like God, like the U.S. Cavalry arriving on time, is

a little ole boat on the horizon, -- a dot of the Divinity -- God has spoken,

corn is king: ~~if you have to tell a lie, get out of all that brown, and~~  
~~make it yellow, make it gold, the good old clean American t-ma-corn of gold.~~

aa

aa In a calm mood, given the talent, I believe I could write an essay

on the relations between the death of Hollywood and the disembowelling

naked greed which gutted this movie of its promise. That it will probably

make money merely aggravates the boil. How could it fail to make money?

The book was read by 7,000,000 readers the movie ads inform me (not

really that many, but let it go -- all estimates in the millions of other

books are equally false); it has a title which is almost as familiar as

Lucky Strike cigarettes, and it is a rebellious story, full of anger.

With such a combination one cannot miss, one has to make money, one has a plum.

But only a cheap, scared, and greedy gambler will cash in his chips for a

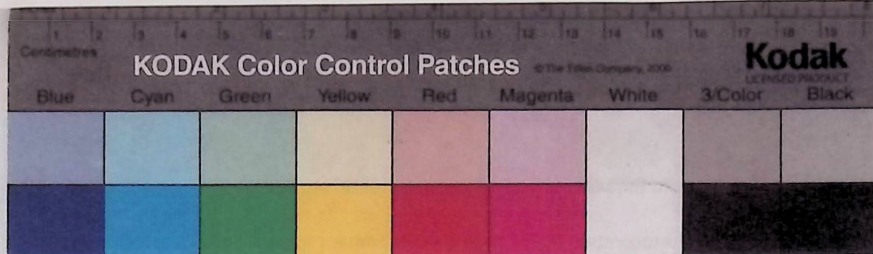
quick short profit. The real knowledge of the good gambler is that one goes

near the Laotian border and every night on the news when any of those places were mentioned I squinted to see if he was one of the soldiers pictured.

I enrolled in summer classes in English, as I had every summer, to get a second teaching major. Then the fall semester started. I was as big as a house and totally miserable, waiting for my baby to arrive, sliding by my due date with no sign of labor. I had a night class in Asian Art History with Mrs. Marshall, and one night I felt strange. This, I announced to the class. 'I feel strange.' 'Go HOME!!' they all yelled at me, in unison, but even though I was two weeks past my due date, I just didn't think it was labor. I didn't have any pains. So I stayed until class was over, everyone watching me out of the corners of their eyes, and soon after I got home my water broke and my mother said I had to go to the hospital. I still wasn't sure I was in labor, and when we walked through the door I apologized to the nurse that I was sorry, I thought I might be in labor, but wasn't sure since I wasn't in pain. I was afraid she would send me back home. She slapped me down on the table, laughed and assured me I would have some pains, and then stuck me with a big needle full of pain killers. That's what they did to ignorant twenty-two year old girls in 1971. They didn't even ask me if I wanted to do a natural birth, why would anybody want to do that? That's why God invented morphine.

The labor went on for eight hours, I was groggy the whole time and don't remember much. I had brought my history book thinking I would study for a test, can you believe it? I do seem to remember floating penises in the pictures of the ruins at Angkor Wat, which frankly I wasn't interested in at that point, and a lot of Buddhas, but not much else.





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Go to bb

all the way with a good thing. \* This movie should have been made like The Long

Voyage Home, it should have had a slow brooding accumulating sense of

loneliness, and hatred and sexual longing and the occasional violence of

combat (no director yet has done a combat scene which is believable -- how

can they when they all copy one another and none of them ever heard a

bullet come toward them in anger, not when they were so dead beat that

stumbling on a pebble was enough to drop a man to his knees). It should

have been done in black and white because gray is the inner life of the

soldier, and the grays of fatigue are the blood of the story, and not the

color of the jungle. It could have spoken of pain and privilege and cruelty

and even of a bit of love here and there -- too late the movies will learn

that one drop of true compassion, honestly arrived at by a journey through

the muck of the real is worth more at the box-office than a thousand

suppositories of the sententious. It could have -- since one must always

consider a movie from its financial possibility or no movie-maker will

engage in an argument about its art -- it could have grossed as much as

any movie ever made, and if it failed it would have lost money for <sup>this</sup> ~~their~~

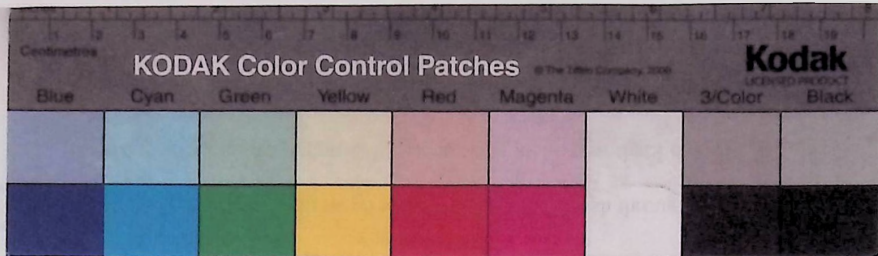
slow, evocative, careful, tender, and very tough-minded movie would have

taken time and talent and courage and taste and all of those cost a

enteen and didn't need makeup.) He was charming and convincing, and I decided Tech might not be such a bad place to go, after all. Before he left that morning, he asked me out to the movies. We started dating, (then after awhile going steady, of course). He was cute and funny and looked a little like Burt Reynolds, with ultramarine blue eyes and dark hair. His family lived up on Crow Mountain and grew watermelons for a cash crop. He was paying his way through school on an R.O.T.C scholarship, so it was a forgone conclusion he would be joining the army when he graduated. This was 1966, and Vietnam was just beginning to be hot, but wasn't the explosive war it became in the next couple of years. When I started dating Larry, I was still seeing Rick off and on, and occasionally a few others as well, like a boy named Audie Ray who had a tiny Triumph sports car and a broken left leg. He had to drive with his cast out the window, so we worked out an elaborate routine where he would use the clutch and brake with his right foot and I would do the gas. I can't believe we didn't wreck the car. One memorable afternoon, Audie Ray was at the house, Larry stopped by, and Rick showed up. We all sat in the living room trying to talk, them waiting each other out. It was most uncomfortable for me. I wanted to sneak out the back door and leave the whole bunch, but I was too much of a southern hostess, so there we sat, drinking Cokes, them talking about football or whatever like they had all come there specifically to hang out with each other. Finally, after what seemed like hours, Audie Ray left, then Rick, and Larry was the winner. That got him a lot of points.

I had promised Rick I would go with him to the homecoming dance months in advance, so he held me to the promise even though I was seeing more of Larry at that





But let ~~and~~ start at the end by ~~co~~ writing  
about the beginning of this movie which  
was filmed after the rest of the feature,  
last, a scene of soldier boys drunk  
in a night-club



### Five

I had known the boy who became my first husband, Larry Norris, all during school, of course, since Atkins was small, but we weren't friends, as he was two classes ahead of me and had gone steady with a girl in his grade named Sharon for most of high school. He was one of the in-crowd, a good football player, track star and all around athlete. Sharon wore his little gold track shoe on a delicate chain around her neck. Then she fell in love with a boy named Bill, and broke up with Larry, as well as breaking his heart. She and Bill got married right out of high school, and Larry went off to Arkansas Tech. The summer before my senior year he was working for Tech going around to all the seniors in the area urging them to go to school there. I had already decided to go to Arkansas State Teachers college, and even had an academic scholarship promised, but he showed up at my door early one summer day, (I was still asleep in bed; I looked out the window when I heard the knock, threw on some clothes, ran a brush through my hair and answered the door in two minutes. It's astounding to me now that I did that, but I was sev-



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fortune in Hollywood. (Especially courage.)

*So, instead, we got a triumph of the stupid.*

*bb* Instead we got a movie dulled by the conflict of cheap minds,

Watching it is like reliving through a cheap movie with all its signals crossed. For example, everybody

*one's first day in the Army - nothing they haven't ever felt*

*for example, I've talked to has asked me questions like "Why did they cast Aldo Ray*

as Sgt. Croft?" (Ray is a big fattish bull of a man with a gravel voice --

when he wants to be tough he yells. Croft was a small, lean man with an

icy personality, a fanatic will, and a soft murderous Texas voice.)

*miscast*  
Why, indeed, cast a hard-working

like Aldo Ray in a part

which needs such *resources of inner madness* *(getccc)*

Well, I believe the answer can be reconstructed. To make a war movie

in which a small man dominates a platoon is not easy to make believable after

~~the score of dull, bullying, ignorant exploitations of combat and the war with~~

~~which we are painfully familiar,~~ the sort of Marine Corps *agit-prop*

where the platoon leader is always a loud, tough, bugger-all, son-of-a-bitch

(precisely a crude imitation of what the average producer had heard

vaguely about the tough sergeant in the Naked and the Dead.) Yes, put a

small man in the part of Croft, and one has to buck a few stereotypes --

talent is called for, a good small actor, a sensitive director, a producer

who can think of what an audience wants next month instead of worshipping



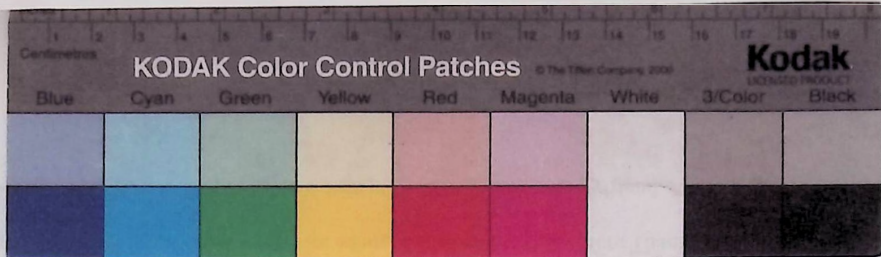
give me a cryptic message. 'Have you heard from Jerry?' he asked, smirking a little. 'Not in awhile,' I said. I never was any good at lying. 'Well, I just wondered. You might want to call him.' That was weird. He seemed so happy about something. I had to find out what.

I got Jerry's father on the phone. In those days, it would never have occurred to me to call a boy, especially long distance, but I was really worried. 'Could I speak to Jerry, please?' I asked. 'He's not here.' 'Where is he?' 'He's gone to get his marriage license.'

I was stunned.

'Oh,' I said, when I could finally speak. 'Well, can you give him a message for me? Tell him Barbara Davis called and said for him to drop dead.'

What an ugly thing to say to his father! But I was so angry I didn't know what else to say. I never spoke to him again, but years later I heard that he became a professional wrestler and then a preacher (or maybe it was the other way around). They had four children and are probably still married, and I thanked my lucky stars it wasn't me who bought that license with him.



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what they admired last year. The big thing, the critical difficulty is

that one must work with mood, one must have a slow-paced picture, done with

style. But The Naked and The Dead is too long already, much too long if

we're going to have it a cheap film. So we can't afford a small actor if

we're going to have a medium-priced director -- <sup>we need a man</sup> ~~they might not sell, the~~

~~the strongest man around for the part. Then~~ picture might lack conviction. ~~Get a big man in the part.~~ If he's bigger

~~than everybody else~~ <sup>than everybody else</sup> ~~around~~

of course the platoon will obey him, ~~the audience~~

~~will believe he is physically stronger than anyone else in the picture. But~~

~~one cannot violate a book mechanically.~~ <sup>CC</sup> ~~The men in my novel had a set of~~

~~complex relations to Croft, he~~ was the hunter, the killer, the horn of the

platoon, an icy <sup>P</sup>will-driven phallus of a man, a mountain-climber -- one

cannot substitute a raw-voiced weightlifter, a muscle-man of a narcissist,

feminine beneath his roar, a faggy whine at the core of the voice -- It

becomes absurd. Such men may beat up queers in a bar, but they're not

killers, hunters, or leaders -- they are bullies. So Croft diminishes from

Ahab-like proportions to a second string tackle at a teacher's college.

~~But~~ <sup>Yet</sup> Croft is the keystone in <sup>the</sup> an arch of relationships <sup>which make</sup> ~~and if he is pulled,~~

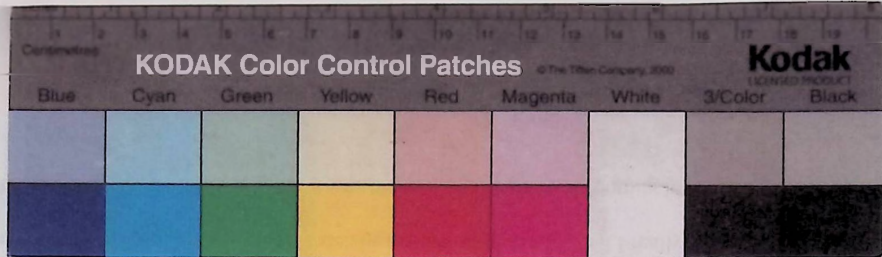
<sup>up</sup> ~~the platoon collapses as a creation -- it is now merely a set of actors~~

~~thin man's part, and the other actors~~

~~who~~ cannot play anything derived from the book because there is no real Croft

neck, which felt more like a dog leash. He wouldn't take no for an answer, and I went along because it was easier than arguing with him, and I did like him. Rick was jealous and big and was a star football player with a reputation as being somewhat of a tough guy. The one time I cheated on him was with a boy named Jerry who was visiting his aunt and uncle for the summer. He was from California and had actually surfed, which was a huge deal at the time, as the Beach Boys were at the height of their fame, and the Mamas and the Papas' monster hit California Dreaming made us all long to go to, or at least *know* somebody from California. We went to the drive-in (with a couple who were friends of Rick's, no less, so it was double cheating) where "A Summer Place" with Sandra Dee and Troy Donahue was playing, and sitting in the back seat with Jerry was such sweet torture. I wouldn't let him kiss me, as I was going steady and I guess I thought if we didn't kiss it wasn't really cheating, but we would almost kiss, our lips getting so close we could feel the heat. Discombobulating, to say the least. Then we stopped at a gas station on the way home, and while the attendant was filling up the tank, good ol' Rick happened by, and saw us. What bad luck. I frankly can't remember if blows were exchanged or not, but there was a fight of sorts, and of course I was caught. After that, there was no reason not to kiss Jerry, so I did and fell hard for him, as one only can at fifteen with an older boy of seventeen. After the summer, he went back to his family, who had by then moved to Kentucky, which was not nearly as glamorous as California, but he promised he was going to come back at Thanksgiving vacation and we were going to run away and get married. I didn't take it too seriously, and I frankly don't know what I would have done if he had pulled up in the yard and said, 'Let's go,' but I did desperately want to see him again, and one day, right before Thanksgiving, the letters we had been exchanging every few days just stopped. My old boyfriend, Rick, dropped by to





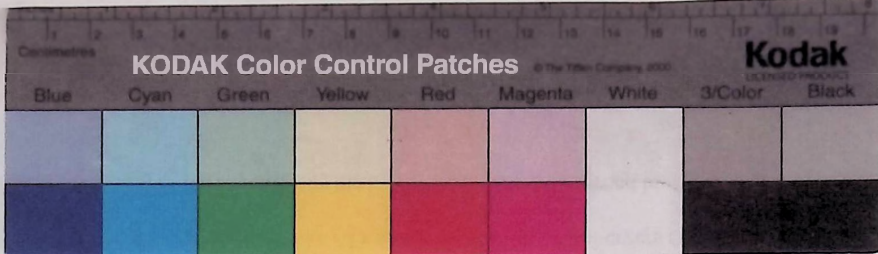
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from whom to take their cue. Yet the script was reasonably faithful, it bore some relation to the book -- pity the poor actor who would try to speak a line to Sergeant Croft when Croft was no longer there -- only a nice cef like Aldo Ray, hoping to make his career and so yelling his head off. Alas, there was nothing left to play -- the platoon scenes had become silly.

But there is the wisdom of having a <sup>director</sup> ~~man~~ like Raoul Walsh. He knows that you got to have pace. So as the relationships disappeared, the dialogue speeded up until it is probably the fastest-talking picture *ever made*. ~~one has ever seen~~ Wilson, the slow, genial, genial Southerner becomes a nervous, jerky, squeaky hillbilly, almost a sad-sack. Roth, the original sad-sack, becomes an ex-Golden Gloves fighter. Gallagher, the ugly Boston Irishman, becomes a young stud, and so it goes. *Aesthetically the platoon was wiped out by an ambush in the casting* ~~stunned cliches, and the actors I felt most sorry for were the ones who~~ *office. Their characters are gone, and the* ~~seemed to have read the book, a corny remark but this picture refreshes~~ *story has become meaningless and dull,* ~~all one's critical cliches.~~ *Only combat can galvanize the audience now.* ~~The platoon is lost as an aesthetic enrichment. But there is~~ *Violent combat and plenty of it. There the* ~~still combat. So the more meaningless the story, the more violent must~~ *picture is conventionally a good war circus,* ~~the combat line. It is pretty good combat -- not good because it is remotely~~

nie, who had bad teeth, and Leon, who had one arm. It was amazing how he could do everything like make milkshakes and flip burgers with that stump. Then we'd pile into each other's cars and drive around and around the streets of town, and wind up the evening by going parking on the lake or on the bluffs of Crow Mountain. That was about the only thing there was to do in Atkins, although there was a skating rink and bowling alley and movie theater twelve miles away in Russellville, and a drive in movie in the summer. After a year or so, Jimmy fell in love with a friend of mine named Ann, and we broke up. She was a year older than him, and unhappily for him, thought of him like a little brother. It was earth shattering, and of course I cried, although now I really can't remember quite why I was so taken with him. Then I started dating a boy named Rick, who was the inspiration for a couple of great scenes in my novel *Windchill Summer*. Now that I'm writing my memoirs, it will be clear to those of you who have read my novels that I'm shattering a lot of my crystals. To digress, my (second) husband, Norman, had a great image he called the Crystal to explain a tool for writing fiction. You take the crystal of your experience and beam the light of your imagination through it, and the story comes out in a different direction, in different colors, but the basis is the same experience. One situation might serve as the crystal for several scenes in your fiction, and I have done that throughout my work. You will probably recognize a lot of things in this book if you have read Windchill Summer and Cheap Diamonds, but that's a hazard of finally writing the truth. I won't divulge here which scenes in the book are real and just how real they are, as even the life-inspired scenes were embellished and changed, but a few were definitely inspired by Rick, who turned out to become a detective in the sheriff's department. We went steady, as well, but this time, all I really wanted to do was to be free and date a lot of guys, but it was too hard. He insisted on putting his ring around my





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like real combat but good as movie-combat, real drive-in theatre combat

where you want to look up long enough from the back seat to get some new

charge. *But artistically the battle is messed - Hollywood's real is still at zero. - no. directly p. 35 22*  
~~So~~ a man dies of snake-bite -- the most exciting moment in the  
 picture; *Instead probably because* it has nothing to do with the book, ~~but~~ *Reed Watson had promised:*

~~"There will be no slavish adherence to the novel"~~ -- and There are other

long ~~mes~~ *Sire* of the swift and the sadistic, -- ~~let~~ fights, and flaming grass,

and officers goosing enlisted men, (yes, look for it) and even one classic

bit of low homosexuality where a dozen Japanese are stripped to loincloths

while Croft gets ready to shoot them. (There was a similar scene in the

book, but it was a detail among a thousand others and came at the end of

the work -- here the scene is gratuitous and presented early to show Croft

slobbering at some naked Japanese buttocks soon to be dead.

Yes, there is really a raw, foul, loutish smell to the platoon now --

I couldn't keep from thinking how popular this picture will be in France

for it will fulfill their idea of the American smell -- yes, the irony is

that the picture was made with War Department tolerance; indeed one can feel

their influence -- part of the logic of having an Aldo Ray for Croft is

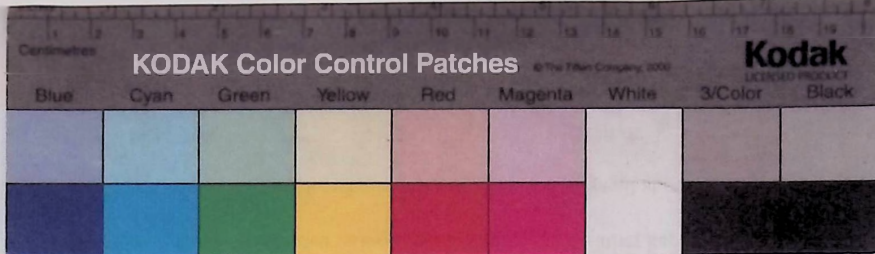
that he helps to make the picture one of those perverse recruiting posters

which are against war and yet whisper to the unconscious ear of the

adolescent -- "Join the Army and learn how to be a Sultan in the Sack."



Just about the time my hair grew out in seventh grade, I fell at the skating rink, my rhinestone glasses fell off, slid across the floor and somebody ran right over them. I had to wait two weeks to get new ones, groping in a fog of nearsightedness and squinting at the blackboard. I went to a basketball game in the gym where they had the concession stand up on a high stage, and when I started back down the stairs I missed them and fell about seven feet to the gym floor, flinging my popcorn and coke out onto the court. They had to stop the game and clean it up. I was in pain from the fall, but more humiliated as everyone clapped and cheered while I slunk out. But strange thing: all of a sudden, guys were taking another look at me, and started asking me out on dates (which meant going out in cars, <sup>7<sup>th</sup> grade?</sup> not just walking to little league games or sitting together at school). My first real date was with a boy named Jimmy, who played cornet in the band. I had come down with hepatitis A that summer I was fourteen, and had to stay in bed for six weeks. That was 1963, and Leslie Gore's It's My Party and I'll Cry if I Want to, and a Japanese song called Sukiyaki played over and over and over on the radio until I thought I would lose my mind. As I was contagious and could have no visitors, Jimmy used to come and stand outside my window and talk to me for hours, which was so sweet. Then one day he slipped his silver band medal through the window, in a crack in the screen, and we were going steady. It seemed that I was forever going steady, but in that little town, after you went with someone a few times, everyone assumed you were a couple and the other boys didn't ask you out. After I recovered from hepatitis, we double dated with a friend of his who was old enough to drive and went to church or the movies or places like Al's snack bar for great hamburgers and curly Q French fries, or the Freezer Fresh, which was the kids' favorite hangout owned by a couple named Win-



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Family and friends, I tell you: I had loved my characters when I wrote about them, and here there wasn't one soldier in the platoon I could recognize nor like nor even tolerate -- a bunch of cowards, thugs, and minor-league hoodlums who reflected nothing but the avaricious haste of the director and the contempt for audiences of the producer. Only one scene <sup>comes</sup> ~~came~~ through from the novel, a marvelously funny scene between Lt. 'Hearn (Cliff Robertson did a good job with what they left him) and a very talented young actor (name unknown to me) who plays Clellan, the General's orderly. It involved the General's desire for flowers, and it was fresh as a scene, it had more to say about the gulf between officers and enlisted men than anything I remember in a war film. It is almost worth suffering the picture for this one scene, and since it stands out complete, virgin, and gracefully-paced, untouched in acting, mood and nuance by the mal-administrations of director and producer, I would suspect that the actors got off by themselves, rehearsed the scene (it is a short one) and got by with it in one take because both director and producer were sluggish at <sup>too</sup> to spoil something good by adding their moment and did not realize how good was this scene, and how sick creative contribution. by contrast would it reveal the rest of their labors to be. ~~It was a scene~~ to leave the author grateful for in fifteen or twenty years the picture

pected to go to parties for the officers whether we wanted to or not, and I had to go to teas and luncheons and things for the wives, which was fine, but I didn't seem to meet anyone who was girlfriend material. At one of the first parties we went to, I totally disgraced myself, and by extension disgraced Larry. We were at the colonel's house, standing outside beside a beautiful swimming pool with shimmery blue water, and a waiter in a white coat was passing around these pretty juice drinks with fruit and little umbrellas in them on a tray. It was a warm night, I was thirsty, so I took one and it tasted pretty good.

Nervous and trying to make conversation with the older officers, I drank it down quickly and the waiter was right there on the spot, like he had been watching, and handed me a second. I was beginning to feel pretty relaxed for some reason and didn't really want it, but took it to be nice and sipped it. About halfway through the second drink, I began to get dizzy and sleepy, and I remember thinking how nice it would be to lie down, just for a minute, and take a little nap on the cool tile beside the pool. The next thing I remember is Larry carrying me into our house over his shoulder. He was so humiliated, and I can't remember what he did or how he explained it, but I hope the one thing he didn't say was, "my wife has never tasted alcohol in her life, and she's an idiot. Sorry." I really, truly, didn't know what it was. Isn't that sad? At the wives teas, there was sometimes tart white wine, and I had a little, pretending to drink it but mostly just holding the glass. One of the ladies once put fresh cut peaches into the glasses, which made it sweeter and more palatable. I had done so many bad things I was past the point of worrying about sin, and never even pretended to look for a church, as my father kept asking me to do. Well, past the point as much as I could be, but I knew it was all shoved into a closet in the





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will be made again, ~~and~~ that scene points the way. <sup>gg (The end)</sup> But what a great movie

was lost this year; years ago I used to say that The Naked and The Dead

could be better as a film than a novel, and I still think it is so.

If the present production deserves that new and ugly word, an abortion,

I have myself to blame as much as anyone. Some decade, some century

from now we all will know what a crime it is to human consciousness when

the mass media wreck an art work which could have brought stimulation and

a sense of the real to all the millions who become each day a little more

unreal, a little more insane because they are fed nothing. <sup>but the</sup>

~~Now I am run-down, I have abused this work to my belly full, and~~ <sup>garbage which comes from the unconscious of</sup>

~~men who would milk their mother in Macy's window~~

~~yet it remains as a vampire in my mind, an evil and odious artifact. So~~

~~to get another idiot laugh.~~ <sup>horror ppp</sup>

~~let me drive one more spike through the heart of its horror -- there is~~

a scene at the beginning, a clumsy inept orgy of soldier sex, a bunch of

goons drunk in a night club, Lile St. Cyr being (patted and payed), it is

Hawaii ~~lent the garbage which comes from the unconscious of men who would~~

~~milk their mother in Macy's window to get another idiot laugh.~~ <sup>(the creators are</sup>

~~trying to copy From Here to Eternity and are merely mirroring~~ <sup>themselves;</sup>

~~Georgy~~ Aldo Ray spits a mugful of beer into a whore's mouth; enter the

military police, the girls scream, the breasts heave, the hips cook, the

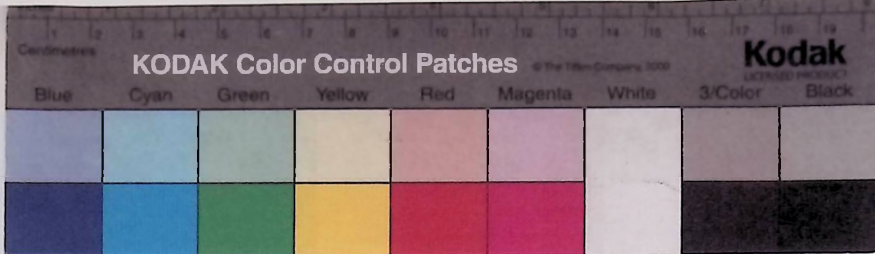
Fort Campbell was right on the border between Kentucky and Tennessee, and our house was spot on the line, our living room in Tennessee and our bedroom in Kentucky. It was small, a two bedroom bungalow with gray linoleum tile floors and all the walls freshly painted chalk white. I can't bear flat white walls or the color gray, but we weren't allowed to paint them, so I had to settle for hanging up tons of pictures and putting down rugs to make it seem less like an institution. The kitchen had old appliances from the fifties and nestled in the white metal cabinets was a roll of roach killing paper full of a zillion roaches. So much for accuracy in advertising. Across the street was a golf course, handy for Larry who was good at most sports and liked golfing. The house was a two family bungalow, the other side a mirror of ours, but it was empty. I was so happy to see Larry, so guilty for my little escapade with Edmond, that we had a great reunion.

*Photo: Larry on the army base*

Larry was an armored cavalry officer, the 3rd Platoon leader for F Troop 17th Cavalry, 23rd Infantry Division (of Lt. William Calley fame who was at the center of the infamous My Lai massacre). Larry didn't mind spending his days inside a hot tank, although I had such claustrophobia that I popped in and back out of it in one minute when he took me on a tour.

Life on an army base is insular, and the chain of command extends to the wives, too. I was an officer's wife, albeit the lowest ranking officer, and I learned I was supposed to act like it. Officers got better everything, housing, food, all kinds of things, than the enlisted men, which I quickly learned. I knew no one, of course, but we were ex-





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soldiers fight, it is thick and stupid and meaningless and yet the picture begins with it, a set of sequences obviously filmed after shooting was done in Panama and a roughcut had been made. Sex they needed, more sex decided the wise producers, and sex the audience would have -- sex at a stag dinner with a snatch in your face. What could be more like boffo at the box-office?

*sex is great, sex is money, but still*  
Well, dear Paul and dear Raoul, let me tell you -- I for one

*I* happen to like burlesque, but a good many people don't, burlesque is not

the most prosperous show business in America, sex comes slow to a good many people, and they don't want their noses rubbed in it, because even if it gives them a charge it gives them a headache as well. And besides half the people in the audience are likely to have read the book, and when this

scene starts in Hawaii it confuses them -- where in the book does this scene

*in Hawaii* take place, they wonder, *will* it makes them nervous, *can* could they possibly have

forgotten something, is their memory even worse than they thought? And

so the worries begin, their nervous system is assaulted with confusion,

then attention is never prepared, and they are off -- they are thinking

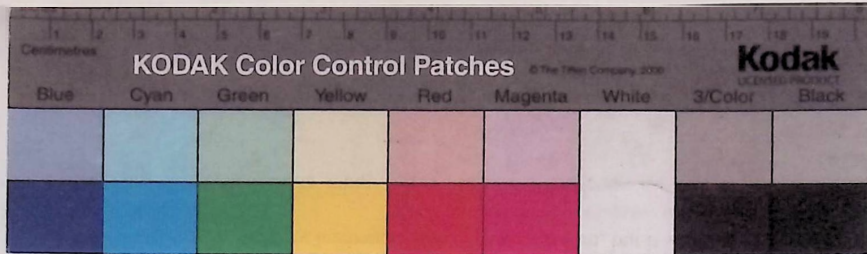
about themselves instead of the picture.

*And then there's Alde Ray. Everybody I've talked  
but how can Hollywood still be that stupid*  
Yes, how can anyone be that stupid? How can Hollywood be that



pulled me into the bedroom. It took about two minutes to get undressed, and another three from start to finish. It was reminiscent of my first time, in the back seat, but the shocker was that Edmond was much smaller than Larry in the . . . um. . . equipment department. So small, in fact, that I wondered if he was normal. I had only actually seen one, and I guess I thought they were all pretty much alike. Although he was a great kisser, the rest was like those pastries in the bakery case that look so delicious and taste like white paste. I got dressed and left in a flood of guilt and anxiety, and the next day squeezed into my green Volkswagen, packed to the gills, to drive to Fort Campbell and move into army housing. I'm sure my parents breathed a sigh of relief when I left town. I was a ticking bomb waiting to go off at any minute. I'm sure they had no idea it had gone off, and it was a dud.

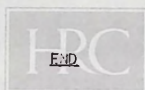
## Seven



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When ~~the~~ it knows it is dying.  
 stupid? (Even if they are dying.) Well, stupidity is the cupidity

of the dull, and we are dull when we are drenched with anxiety, when choked  
 with too much ambition and hysterical from too little courage we leap  
 upon a difficult and dangerous work (an expensive property) which calls  
 for bravery in the guts, grace in the touch, proportion to the mind, and  
 some minimum of aesthetic dedication in the heart.



the stupid believe they can cheat on life  
 and get away with it, and I was stupid  
 the night I met Gregory because I  
 tried to tell myself that a man I  
~~did not trust~~ whom I had no  
 confidence was worthy of confidence  
 because he was bringing me money,  
 So if I've been a little hard on Walsh  
 and Gregory, I can tell you - friends,  
 and Soes, dear family, there is no one  
 I feel harder on at the moment  
 than the real villain, that stupid  
 idiot - Norway Miller.

At one point they gave me an enema, and just as I sat down on the pot beside the bed, the entire Ladies Auxiliary of the Church trooped in with their flowered dresses and big smiles to give me their support. I screamed at them, 'GET OUT OF HERE!' and threw toilet paper rolls at them, poor things. They scurried away and I felt bad, but really--this Christian business of pushing visiting the sick is just too much. The sick just want to be left alone to fart at will, or get up in a backless johnnie with their butts exposed and go to the bathroom without having to entertain somebody underfoot praying over them.

I had a spinal for the last big pain, and they whisked my baby boy away before I had a glimpse of him because he had mucus in his lungs and had to be suctioned, (he was probably zonked out on the painkillers, too, poor baby) and then I passed out, so I don't remember seeing him until later when I went to the incubator and there he was, the spitting image of Larry. At least people could stop counting on their fingers the months Larry had been away. He was so beautiful, lots of dark hair, an adorable little monkey face and he was huge!--nine pounds, rosy cheeks hanging like ripe peaches. My friends Matthew and Larry from creative writing class bounced in to congratulate me, totally stoned, and were, Like, 'Cool! Awesome, man! Look at his little toesies!' when they saw him. The nurses' eyes were as big as hub caps. Obviously I hadn't had a husband there with me, so I'm sure they were whispering, "I wonder which one the daddy is? I wonder if she knows?" I named him Matthew Davis, not because of my friend, I had already picked out the name with my husband before I even met him, but it was a nice coincidence, the Matthew and Larry thing.



# TRADE EDITORIAL REPORT, Little, Brown & Company

This report is not complete unless the proper printed lines are checked

MS. NO. 1012  
DATE September 18, 1946  
READER A. Luba  
TITLE THE NAKED AND THE DEAD  
AUTHOR Norman Mailer

## ACCEPT

No revision  
Suggested revision below  
☒ Subject to conditions stated below

## REJECT

Routine Letter  
Special Letter  
Encourage Author

## RECOMMEND FURTHER CONSIDERATION

State reason below

I wrote my first report for reference without even entering the manuscript, since I did not consider it a formal submission. Mr. Mailer had agreed last spring to show me at the end of the summer as much as he should have accomplished, so that we might discuss the direction of the book and work over my criticisms. Since then Mr. Cameron has become interested and is treating the manuscript ~~like~~ as an official submission, so I will stick to my report and revise the recommendation.

First of all, let me repeat that this is, I think, the finest American novel to come out of the war, a lasting book whose treatment and technique override the war angle and make it a permanent contribution to American literature.

Secondly, it is going to be too long, considering the author's technique. This is a collective novel, a cross-section of characters, with admirably revealed personalities, excellent interrelationships, but not much growth. The characters are well-conceived but they do not grow. In a first book of this power, this does not matter so much since the author is one who will grow and develop in skill and understanding; nevertheless, I think the manuscript will have to be considerably tightened and cut from its proposed 800 manuscript pages.

There are a good many roughnesses in this hard-written, densely packed first draft of 184 pages. The concept of the general changes in the middle of the talk with the correspondent. The two personalities of Rothenberg and Goldstein interchange as they converse. Crofts is never totally real. Each of the characters needs a slight sharpening of definition. (These are criticisms I make, let me remind, subsuming that the writing and the author's understanding are terrific, but that he needs time to rework this first draft.)

I have discussed with the author the plan of the book which is roughly something like this. He is studying about nine men in one platoon of combat infantry in the Pacific and the General and his aide. The interactions of these men under duress are realistically conveyed through the author's marvelous sense of spoken language rhythms and the colloquial idiom. There will be a climax at the end when the General sends the platoon around the back of the island to come up behind the Jap lines, the only possible way to take the island (Mr. Mailer has long been a student of military strategy). The plan fails because it is ill-conceived, but the Jap lines break anyway. This is very sketchy as I tell it, but I think it works out well in the author's unofficial outline. At any rate the book promises to hold together well.

I recommend then that we accept it, paying the author an advance ~~on~~ toward the finished novel. If we don't take it, we are passing up the first really important novel to come out of this war and a potentially tremendous author.

If any of the items below are checked "yes," recommended procedure must be discussed in this report.

TITLE: Needs new title? Yes ☐ No ☐ COPYRIGHT: Are permissions required? Yes ☐ No ☐  
LIBEL: Has MS. libel possibilities? Yes ☐ No ☐ ILLUSTRATIONS: Do you recommend? Yes ☐ No ☐



Copy

Trade Editorial Report, Little, Brown & Company

This is the first quarter of what is going to be a too long, but damned good book. If the rest of the ms. keeps up to par, I am going to recommend that we accept pending revision, or at least take an option on it.

It is not, strictly speaking, a novel, any more than most of the fictional pieces in the New Yorker are short stories. That is, it relies less upon plot and character development, than upon imaginative, real depiction. It's that compromise between reporting and novelizing which we had such difficulty defining with Aldridge's OF MANY MEN.

In other words, this is life as actually seen and experienced. The characters are real and typical, though fictional. This is realistic writing in its best strain, rich, detailed, imaginative, impacting in its sincerity and validity.

The action concerns a platoon of men in combat, but where Harry Brown's A WALK IN THE SUN was a dramatic fake, a romanticized and synthetic piece of fiction, over-heightened and slight in importance, this is a slow, thick textured reportage of actual experience, with more variety and perspective than I would have expected from anyone so young. When Mr. Cameron and Mr. Blanchard and I discussed T.E. Doremus's book, it was remarked that there was a brilliance of insight, and amazing maturity of skill and intelligence, and a sameness of character. Here Mr. Mailer has worked introspection in with the interaction of characters. He knows men, their individual personalities, their motivations, their varying speech patterns, and their effect on one another in combat life. He has brought everything in with no strain, and a tremendously real cumulative effect. The evaluations are never intrusive.

The book is going to be too long, a Wolfian mountain of material, all good, but all of equal weight. There are occasional changes of pace in small intruded sections which enrich the book as the interlarded fragments do in Dos Passos' USA, without loosening the texture and confusion the pattern of development as certain parts of that trilogy do.

There is a feeling for description here, which I find striking, placed as it is against the language of the men. I like the color of the author's language and don't find him over-adjectival, though some readers may.

I am asking to see the finished book, and looking forward to it. If it is as good as I expect, we'll just have to forget our prejudice against war books, and realize that life went on during the war as it did before, though with greater intensity and accelerated conflict. This is life, not a war story. I think it's one of the best books of men in war I have read, the best from this war, and certainly as good as Hemingway's and Dos Passos's books out of the last war, though less slim and ordered as yet.

Written by  
Adeline Naiman

Look what I found  
APRIL 25 '98

## HOW I DISCOVERED NORMAN MAILER AND SUCCUMBED TO THE HIGHER CRITICISM

by Adeline (Lubell) Naiman  
September 16, 1981

In the summer of 1945, nineteen, fresh out of Radcliffe, and full of the nerve of ignorance, I convinced Little, Brown and Company to hire me as an editor. This was a bargain for them since they had been paying me \$10 per manuscript reading as a freelance, and my salary was \$28 a week--publishing was then a gentleman's trade. The only woman editor had announced her intention to leave and resume family life with her naval officer husband due back from the wars, and a slot was being held for a returning G.I. I, therefore, did the work of several people, learned a great deal from my boss, Angus Cameron, and had a marvelous time. Besides reading all manuscripts, writing reports, recommending editorial revisions, and working with authors, I wrote jacket copy, made sales pitches to the marketing people, researched the competition, and hunted out new authors. I was allowed to scout in New York, deal with agents, and develop new writers and book ideas. After three months I got a small raise and at Christmas an unexpected bonus. I had the job every lit'ry young woman dreamed of.

On January 24, 1946, I wrote a letter to a young author who was working on his first full-length novel, full of conviction and misgivings. The brother of a close friend from college, he had married the older sister of my roommate the day after she and I moved in together and just before he went off to the war in the Pacific. Somehow we began writing letters to each other--not surprising since I supported the morale of a regiment of penpals--but didn't meet until after the war, in Cambridge when we were inhibited by having our mothers in tow. To tell the truth, I was disappointed--all that flash and verbal voracity so thin and subdued, and both of us shy. Then he disappeared into the unheated autumnal Outer Cape to Write. I heard from his sister that the book was progressing and offered to read it. No response. I repeated my generous offer through my former roommate. Again no response. Finally, I wrote directly, and eventually was given to read 184 thumbled pages of the rough first draft of The Naked and the Dead.

Someone not long ago gave me photocopies of Little, Brown's correspondence file on the book; the more scurrilous and personal letters are missing. What I don't have, alas, is the brief report I wrote in white heat the day I read the manuscript. I remember that it was a paragraph long and that I threw off my flossy language for something pungent and efficient like, "This is going to be the greatest novel to come out of World War II and we must publish it." I also did what I had been moved to do only a couple of times in my brief tenure as an editor: I filled out a Blue Card with publishing recommendations, estimated sales, price, advertising budget, and the like. I think I said we might sell 7,300 copies, but it may well have been 3,700; nonetheless, we must publish.

(I remember the look of my reader's report, incidentally, because I sent a carbon off to Norman Mailer sub rosa, and his father carried it around in his wallet for the rest of his life, pulling it out at parties where I was and telling a story that grew larger, more heroic, and more sentimental at each telling. I became something like Little Miss Muffet, small, delicate, and courageous, doing battle with the great spiders of the publishing empire. That is not how I saw myself at twenty.)



A turmoil ensued at Little, Brown. Angus had reservations about the author but agreed about the novel and backed me in my fiery commitment to it. He did worry about the dirty words--this was thirty-five years ago, if anyone remembers--and our executive vice president, who was less than wild about the book, agreed to go along with our enthusiasm provided the language got cleaned up. Snotty letters flew between Miss Little, Brown and the lowly but intransigent Mailer about the boon LB was bestowing on him by potentially offering an option contract. Angus wrote to Norman and got a good argument back. Then LB's president came into the picture and refused to publish the book unless the language got cleaned up.

Stalemate. Finally, Angus agreed to an outside reading or two. He asked me if I would agree to let the decision stand on the basis of a reading by someone I approved of. Bernard DeVoto was then the literary guru of Greater Cambridge and alleged to be a foul-mouthed conversationalist; I agreed. The threadbare manuscript was sent off posthaste (how did we live without photocopying?), and a week later we got back a six-page double-spaced critique, beginning--

All other considerations which this book presents are subsidiary to the problem posed by the profanity and obscenity of its dialogue. In my opinion it is barely publishable....

It was a brilliant exegesis and dead right, but of course, it was all wrong. I was felled by the voice of the god and wrote to Norman urging him to purge his manuscript of excessive profanity and consider an option contract with Little, Brown and a munificent \$300 advance.

Norman, meanwhile, took my one-paragraph report elsewhere, with proof in hand that Naked was publishable. The last item in my bowdlerized file is a note from me to Angus Cameron, dated November 14, 1946. Two weeks earlier I had turned twenty-one, earned my first hangover, and realized I was disenchanted with the glamor of publishing. Now I typed--

I received a letter today from Norman Mailer, informing me that he has a contract with Rinehart for The Naked and the Dead with a \$1250 advance. He stresses the point that they took only a week and that it was read by only two people.

The rest is somebody else's story.

*Arthur Miller*