

"The Young Norman Mailer"

by Robert Lucid

Chapter IV, parts 1, 2 + 3

CHAPTER FOUR

Part one

i

Whenever Norman crossed the Pacific he seemed somehow to be beating against the prevailing winds. His first crossing should have been wintry and oppressive: in December, 1944, The Sea Barb took him out from a storybook San Francisco setting into what he and his pessimistic shipmates feared would be as much as four years of mortal danger and destruction. But such had been his interior state that he rose lightly above the oppression and, writing his endless letter to Bea, had seemed almost spring-like in his mood. Now, sixteen months later, his April return crossing on the USS Grant should have been a lark, the scene of a re-birth festival fore and aft; but there is no evidence that he did any celebrating or wrote a word to anyone, and the ship's sergeant of the guard reports that Private Mailer had been a stormy, anger-driven passenger.

Maskovsky's first task, in his unenvied and unadmired assignment, was to sort out the enlisted-man population on his section of the Grant, assigning it to guard duty and other make-work tasks. But the men had swarmed aboard, seizing their bunks on a first-come first-served basis, and then refused to identify

themselves at roll call. So Maskovsky, who clearly was not a battalion sergeant major for nothing, roused them all out of bed and fell them in on deck, discovered their identities one on one, and assigned them bunks and a duty schedule according to the ship's official rosters. None of the men liked it very much, but neither did any react to this display of authority with Norman's furious anger. Unaware as he was of what had happened the last time Norman had been ordered out of bed by a sergeant, Maskovsky could not understand why his old comrade so violently cursed him out,

almost as if trying to provoke some kind of disciplinary retaliation. Far from retaliating, however, the puzzled non-com tried to mollify his antagonist with a cushy assignment. Instead of the guard-duty rotation required of almost everybody else, Norman was put for the whole of the voyage in charge of candy-bar distribution[Manso, pp.94-95].

There is no record of how well he accomplished this, the last military assignment of his career, but we do know that on the ten-day crossing Norman addressed himself to the novel-writing task ahead by rereading Anna Karenina [Lennon, Conversations, p. 190.]. His reading seems to have screened-out most of the rest of his shipboard experience, but there was one thing he remembered finding quite hard to take. The nakedness of his uniform, in a population where all the other men were decorated with every badge and insignia that their military records allowed, became

intolerable to him.¹ This was confirmed when the ship arrived on April 24 in Seattle, where he went immediately to a supply store and bought an overseas-cap trimmed with the yellow piping that identified the wearer as a veteran of the cavalry[nm interview w/me]. Then he wired Bea from the Puget Sound clearing station at Fort Lawton (his first sentence drawing upon their secret erotica vocabulary, wherein they gave jocular code names to their genitalia):

Tell Juno [that the] Dartmouth Ensign landed in Seattle today with Norman in tow. Thursday we start for Fort Dix. Out of the Army May 3 latest. Will phone from Dix. Get room at Palms starting April 30. Or Pierreport. I love you Pooch.--Norman

The next day his jam-packed troop train pulled out of Seattle's King Street station and for six days rolled raucously across the continent, while harried Military Police tried to control the drunken, non-stop celebration. It would be the last

¹Four years later, in a discarded section of an early draft of Barbary Shore, Norman recalls the shipboard experience:

"I had to recognize that if I hated the Army I could not very well wear its ribbons and badges for they were intrinsic with it, part of the game to catch you from behind. And so I took off my ribbons before I sailed for home, and went back as one of the very few privates left in the U.S. Army. And there, on the boat, I had my suffering.

I don't think I have ever felt as insignificant in my life. Without my stripes and my colors I was nothing. That fabulous adjustment I had made to the Army had been glued to them, and I tore off the soldier with them. I felt like a rookie on the boat, and I had the same puckerings of inferiority when I passed a man with a Combat Badge. I had thrown mine away with some insight perhaps of the temptation there would be to assume the decorations again, and it was fortunate for I would not have lasted a day if they had been in my barracks bag. I went out of the army naked as I had gone in, but it was without pride."

journey he shared with Maskovsky, who never forgave the way Norman had treated him. On May 2 Norman was discharged at Fort Dix-- two years, one month and six days after entering the army--where he was given \$117.91 cash mustering-out and travel money, a discharge certificate, and a "ruptured duck" honorable discharge button for his lapel². Four days later, Bea reported to the naval separation unit in New York City to be formally detached from active duty in the Waves, and within a month the couple was in North Truro, just outside Provincetown, in a cottage dedicated, at least for the most part, to the making of fiction.

Before repairing to the Cape, Norman addressed a primary piece of literary business. He had not accepted the William Morris Agency reassignment to another agent, so he went alone to call on someone who, back in August of 1944, he had interviewed in company with Berta. It was Robert N. Linscott, the Random House senior editor who had been the only person in publishing moved by "A Transit to Narcissus" to make Norman an actual offer. At the time, Norman had of course declined the small advance and the contract for right of refusal for his first publishable manuscript, but now he carefully laid out his plan for the new novel, asking if Random

2. In accord with standard army practice, his cash payment included only one-third of the total \$300 mustering-out pay due to Norman. He would get the other \$200 mailed to him at home.

It is noteworthy that Norman seems to have persuaded the clerk who typed out the Honorable Discharge certificate to record him as being discharged from the 112th Cavalry Regiment rather than from the scene of his final humiliation, the 649th Ordnance Ammunition Company.

House might be interested in offering a contract for it. Linscott's ready reply came as an unwelcome, and indeed frightening shock: the current publishing wisdom, the editor explained, was that there was no market for war novels. All surveys of the reading public showed that the war was the last thing audiences wanted to encounter in their reading, and, in the friendliest way, he urged Norman to reconsider his plan [Lennon, Conversations, p. 8]

Norman left Linscott's office thoroughly alarmed, but he did not do the obvious thing: he refrained from turning to any of his other already established contacts in the world of publishing. Story magazine's Whit Burnett had his own imprint at Lippincott, Edwin Seaver was connected with the I. B. Fischer Company through his Cross-Section annuals and was an officer at The-Book-of-the-Month Club, and Ted Amussen had now risen to a senior position at Rinehart. Despite whatever small differences he may have developed with any of them, all of these people would certainly have been willing to advise Norman, who also might have contacted a more modest publishing player: Barbara's one-time roommate at Radcliffe, Adeline Lubell. She had graduated from Radcliffe in the spring of 1945 at the age of 19, and was now a precocious junior editor at Boston's Little, Brown, and Company, in which capacity she had sent to Norman in Japan a cluster of three self-asserting letters concerning the possibility of reviewing "A Transit to Narcissus" for publication. The letters made it clear that

Barbara's circle at Radcliffe bore a strong resemblance to her original Norman Mailer Admiration Society on Crown Street, and while Norman never sent Adeline the "Transit" manuscript, he answered her letters in a way that showed pointed appreciation of her obvious personal interest in him.

But after his Linscott interview Norman did not try to contact any of these people. It was as if the Random House senior editor--who was at that time a far more prominent publishing figure than anybody else known to Norman--had persuaded him that there really was a consensus in the publishing world concerning the undesirability of war novels; one that could be overcome only by the pages of a powerful manuscript. Not that Norman was deciding to write his whole novel on the speculation that, when finished, its manuscript would prove irresistibly publishable. This, after all, was what he had done with "Transit," and the two-year, serial rejection of that novel was painfully fresh in his memory. Though he was sure that his peace of mind required him to have a contract for the new novel, Norman felt that to get one he had to have something to show a potential publisher. So he planned to spend the summer getting as much of his book on paper as he could, and then to negotiate a contract--probably with Little, Brown--based on this sample[nm, Manso, pp. 104-105].

Their mission completely clear, Norman and Bea moved into the Cape Cod cottage in mid-June, where Norman immediately resumed his preparations for composition. His first notebook, headed simply

War Novel, was dated May 19, [19]--46, and opens with an inventory of selections from his army letters file. Going on from that kind of material, the Harvard engineer now devoted himself for almost a month to blueprinting the project. He started 3X5 card files on each of the twenty initially identified characters, adding cards as ideas about them developed. Soon the tightly packed card-file was six inches thick. He listed the twenty names in a column on twenty sheets of paper, and then assigned each character a sheet listing that character's view of the other nineteen. He drew up chart after chart, diagramming lines of relationship between the characters overall, and within various sub-groupings. In the margins of the charts he would list themes both major and minor, stated and unstated, to show how each character connected to them. He even drew a careful 8.5X11 picture of Anopopei, the "ocarina-shaped" island his Americans were invading, with topographical details that located Mt. Anaka as well as the deployed military forces of both sides.

Amid these preparations, Bea settled them into their Crow's Nest cottage in North Truro, which they were renting for forty dollars a week. She formed a strategic alliance with Mr. and Mrs. Barnes, their amiable landlords, who guided her as she scoured the area on her bicycle for basic foodstuffs. Canned goods like tunafish and salmon were especially scarce, there was no butter, and shortening such as Crisco had to be got by special arrangement. Fresh fish and chicken were plentiful, however, and

the larder was enhanced by extravagant packages from both families, who also rented neighboring cottages when they came to visit in mid-July. Setting a pattern that would last for the rest of his life, Norman successfully separated his social time out from his hours devoted to writing, and enjoyed playing host to a steady stream of guests, including some friends from the army (Jerry LeFrancois, among others). Given the priority of her husband's need to obtain a contract, Bea seems largely or perhaps entirely to have put aside her own novel-planning for the summer.

Norman took the plunge sometime in the second week of July, with an opening sentence that would remain the same through almost fifteen months of composition, revision, reexamination and rewrite:

Nobody could sleep.

From there, his little Remington portable typewriter--a mustering-out present from his mother--steadily clattered out better than twenty-five pages a week for the rest of the summer. They recorded the first sections of the first version of how an understrength platoon from a headquarters reconnaissance company--after a sleepless all-night wait--goes ashore as part of an invasion force under the command of a Major General named Cummings to re-capture an obscure, ocarina-shaped little island named Anopopei.

Towards the end of the summer, with almost 200 pages done, Norman and Bea got an invitation to an afternoon tea party at Adeline Lubell's house in Cambridge, and they unhesitatingly took the ferry across Cape Cod Bay to attend. Norman seems to have

spent most of the afternoon talking to his attentive hostess, and when she followed up the meeting with a letter offering to review the manuscript for Little, Brown, he was quick to accept. His working text was rough-typed, heavy with strike-overs, but between them Norman and Bea prepared a fairly clean copy of some fifty thousand words on 186 pages, and had it delivered to Adeline early in the first week of September. At this stage Norman was still a little uncertain about the title--his very first idea had been to call the book "The Dark Cloud"--so at the last minute he removed the cover-sheet identifying his novel-in-progress as "The Naked and the Dead."

At first, the manuscript got quick action. On September 6 Adeline invited Norman to a meeting with her, where she gave him a copy of her "Trade Editorial Report," on his "untitled novel" sample, formally recommending "further consideration" and concluding her single-spaced page of remarks with this:

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.

Norman immediately supplied her with a two-page outline of the whole novel as he then imagined it, and on September 18th she submitted to her editor-in-chief, Angus Cameron, a second report reflecting this author-outline. In this report she added more praise, revealed the novel's title and recommended to the Editorial Board that Norman be offered an advance against

royalties and a contract to publish.

At this point, the reviewing of the manuscript decelerated markedly, and it took about six weeks for negotiations with the conservative Boston house to die gradually down to a dead stop. They were slowed at first by an unenthusiastic outside-reader's report from a profanity-shy Bernard DeVoto, and later by an over-deliberate Editorial Board that, on balance, tended to agree in particular with DeVoto about profanity and in general with Linscott about war novels. The best they were willing to consider was an "option contract" whereby they purchased, with a token advance of perhaps \$250, the right to first refusal of the completed manuscript. Angus Cameron supported Adeline's position and favored a full-scale contract, but he seemed unable to turn the others around.

In early September, just after Adeline's first report, Norman and Bea had left the Crow's Nest for a \$75-a-month, two-room Brooklyn Heights apartment at 49 Remsen Street, one street over from the family apartment on Pierrepont. The two passed the time optimistically at first, setting up their new household and working arrangements, but soon they became impatient. In mid-October, with publication negotiations still hanging fire, Norman chanced to bump into Norman Rosten, a successful writer who was a close friend of Arthur Miller's and, as a Remsen Street neighbor, a cordial acquaintance of the Mailer family. Norman complained to the older writer (who in later years liked to refer to himself as

"the other Norman") about the delays at Little, Brown, and Rosten mentioned Ted Amussen, his own editor at Rinehart and Company. Norman had no doubt been thinking of Amussen already, and this coincidence pushed him over the line. Retrieving the now slightly longer manuscript of "The Naked and the Dead" from his apartment, the two Normans took it without delay down to Amussen's office.

The Rinehart executive editor had always liked both Norman and his work, and he warmly welcomed this opportunity to reconnect with his young friend and to read his manuscript sample. Indeed, before doing so he spent the afternoon discussing the novel's overall plan with Norman, who went home and immediately wrote another outline that somewhat expanded the one he had submitted to Little, Brown. As soon as Amussen read the manuscript he was convinced, and he alternately bullied and begged the project past reluctant editor-in-chief John Selby and through his editorial board[mills, p. 92], even as Norman was, somewhat awkwardly, withdrawing it formally from further consideration at Little, Brown. Then, on November 12, 1946, after a cautionary conference on the dangers of excessive profanity in fiction, Norman, Amussen and Stanley Rinehart signed a contract for the publication of "The Naked and the Dead," the completed manuscript of which was scheduled for delivery by August 1, 1947. The contract provided for a royalty of 10% on the first five thousand copies and of 15% on all copies thereafter, and it offered a generous advance against royalties of \$1,250. This was exactly the kind of fast,

confidence-expressing negotiation Norman had wanted, and it exploded him back into production at a pace and with an ease such as he would never know in writing another of his books.

By this time, Bea had begun her novel as well. Their apartment would have been too cramped to allow them both to write there even if Norman had not used up half of it by installing a photographic darkroom in one of the two rooms that opened out past the entryway-kitchen[Mills,86]. So they located a tiny studio-room for Norman on the third floor of a building-- with a theatrically flamboyant landlady--just down the block at 20 Remsen Street. The young couple managed their household on their income from the federally funded "52/20 Club," under the provisions of which they each received twenty dollars a week for fifty-two weeks as a "Readjustment Allowance for Veterans." They aimed to hold aside their military service savings, so that when their novels were finished they could go to Paris and register under the G.I. Bill at the Sorbonne.

Throughout that year, starting early in the fall and stretching well into the spring, they wintered through the coldest five months on regional record by bundling themselves into the blanket-like life of writing. Besides one other, they bonded more than anyone else with family. They would spend most days of the average week writing, Norman stuck strictly to a Monday-Tuesday, Thursday-Friday schedule. Evenings were often devoted, at least in part, to reading sections of manuscript to each other or, in the

case of Norman's work, to his mother. She had discontinued her managerial work with the Sunlight Oil Company--Barney's OPA salary perhaps helping to make this possible--and was working at a business established by her sister Beck after the war had closed down the Long Branch tourist trade. This was an upper west side Manhattan domestic service, supplying nurses and governesses to households by the day, and was called the Miss Baltimore Agency. Eventually, Fan would take it over altogether. Barney came up to New York frequently, the Office of Price Administration having been reduced to a shadow of its former self, but his appointment as Principal Cost Accountant there did not terminate until spring, 1947.

Barbara, along with Bea's sister Phyllis, was in her final semester at Radcliffe, and still skirmishing with her mother over Jack Maher. Bea stayed in close touch with her own parents, as well as with her two sisters. Dave and Anne Kessler were taking a post-war trip to South Africa, from whence telegrams of congratulation had come on the occasion of the Rinehart contract. Fan's sisters Rose, Jenny and Beck, along with Beck's daughter Osie, remained to one degree or another close presences. And Cy Rembar was practicing law in New York as a way of preparing, though he could not know it, to weld his career to Norman's for the following twenty-five years.

Norman and Bea started out with only a few non-family friends: mostly classmates from college, or vets like Nat Ellis

and Steve Szabo, or people, like Rosten, discovered by Bea during her solitary ten-month residence with Fan on Pierrepont Street, and they would meet some more as the winter descended. But in the absence of the kind of ready-made social structure of Harvard society--the only one, after all, they had ever shared--they were slow to search out new people. Norman's shyness had by no means vanished, and for their leisure they were largely content with each other's company, in which they shared Norman's cooking (Bea was happy to be his permanent K.P.) and his photography hobby, for which Bea often served as model. To be sure, their life together was not without dispute. In fact the marital disputatiousness for which Norman would eventually become famous showed itself, more or less publicly, almost as soon as he got off the train from Fort Dix. Arthur Miller, the Mailer family's Pierrepont Street downstairs neighbor, recalls reacting one afternoon to the sound

of a yelling argument in the hall outside his apartment: Thinking violence was about to break out, I opened the door to find a small young man in army uniform sitting on the stairs with a young and beautiful woman whom I recognized as our upstairs neighbor. They went silent on seeing me, so I figured everything was under control and went back into our apartment. Later the young soldier, by now out of uniform, approached me on the street and introduced himself as a writer. His name, he said, was Mailer.³

At Harvard, though they certainly had their disputes as

³Eight years Norman's senior, Miller had his first great success, "All My Sons," just opening on Broadway in that spring of 1946. He recalled that Norman, upon introducing himself, said that he had just seen the performance and that he too could write a play like that: "It was so obtusely flat an assertion that I began to laugh, but he was completely serious...." Timebends, a Life. Grove Press, New York (1987), p. 139.

lovers, Norman and Bea were not especially famous for them. But now, the emotional bruising he brought out of the army, combined with his ritual of immersion into the writing of his novel, would have made Norman's adjustment to actual married life problematic even if he had not remained suspicious of Bea's previous private life (he was actively suspicious, and had "started to get uptight"[Manso, p. 98] when she first told him about her friendship with the innocent Norman Rosten). Every evidence indicates, however, that, here at the start, the two felt far more in love with each other than they felt torn by any kind of conflict. They were creating a world they had imagined and re-imagined through two years of individual isolation and mutual waiting. They had yearned for one another, free of outside scrutiny or interruption, and now they could explore the fact of their intensely fantasized intimacy. Just as strongly, they had yearned for the chance to realize a body of work--Bea became as caught up in this as Norman--that would give a validating outside form to their inner feelings about the world and their place in it. Now they had the opportunity to try for that work and that exploration, and the opportunity was what they cared about. They were seizing it, and more than anything else they felt happy to be doing so.

Norman later used his third floor Remsen Street studio room as part of the setting for Barbary Shore, so we know what it looked like when he settled down to write The Naked and the Dead there:

A small room, not more than eight feet wide, one had to edge sideways between the desk and the bed to reach the window. The paint was years old and had soiled to the ubiquitous yellow-brown of cheap lodgings....The sash cord was broken, and the window rested in all its weight on two beer cans. ⁴

Here he arranged his blueprints and cards, his typewriter and manuscript copies, and on the desk he lined up four large books. Those long lists of titles dreamed up in Japan had come down to these, and on most working mornings he would get into the mood to start writing by first reading for a little while from one or the other of the four.

His novel's atmosphere, or "overspirit" was intended to be Tolstoyian, so he might read from Anna Karenina. The "slogging style" of The Naked and the Dead came consciously from James T. Farrell, so Norman had the Studs Lonigan trilogy volume at hand. His "occasional overrich descriptions" were inspired by Thomas Wolfe, and what he called the rococo of his novel derived from John Dos Passos, so he also had Of Time and the River and U.S.A. ready on the desk. Norman has always freely acknowledged that,

⁴Barbary Shore, Signet, pp. 8-9. The following summer, deep in the process of re-writing, Norman moved from this room to a somewhat larger, dormer-roofed room a floor above it, subletting it from Norman Rosten. Each of these studios cost him four dollars a week.

literarily at least, *Naked* was obviously and openly derivative.[manso, 101.] Among its other direct sources was his own previous work, and of course the material he had distilled in the army while preparing to write it. This latter, too, in the form of his epistolary "journal" built up over the army years, he kept in his studio.

From its first embryonic conception at Fort Ord in 1944, the central action of Norman's novel had been the story of a small party--a squad, or at most a platoon--of men out in the field on a long patrol. For some time he thought of this narrative as a "novella," and even when he realized that it needed to be of novel-length he persisted in supposing that the novel would be "short." But by the time he was working in his Remsen Street studio--some time in mid-November--Norman had committed himself to postponing the patrol until he had provided the reader with a full and particularized context within which its action could be understood [Marcus, in Lennon, p. 83]. This came to mean that the reader needed to know a lot not just about the patrol members, but about the headquarters company from which the platoon goes out on its mission, about the larger brigade and regimental units that contain the company, about the division to which the regiment belongs, and finally about the whole campaign the division is embarked upon. The novel grew in conception to be Tolstoyian--which is to say epic--in two complimentary ways: because it fixes on a broad sweep of characters rather than on individual heroes

and villains, and also because it presents itself to the reader not as a part but as the whole of a world.

The world of Norman's novel is not, however, all of a piece, and from its author's point of view its most challenging dimension was the representation of officers. Norman's experience in the army did not teach him anything very useable about officers--whether they were platoon lieutenants or division commanders--and his axiom in preparing for this novel, long ago instilled in him by Ted Amussen⁵, was that he must base it on what he had learned at first hand. His intensive, at times almost clinical study of his fellow enlisted men had provided him with the richest kind of material, but that fact only threw into relief his problem regarding officer-characters. He had not studied the few officers with whom he did come into contact--apparently he had not even considered studying them--because army life made him blind to their human qualities. Fighting to maintain his writer's vision

⁵In Chapter Two, part 4, p. 156, Amussen's letter of March 24, 1943 is quoted. Praising "A Calculus at Heaven" as a great step forward in Norman's writing, he nevertheless offers a warning that Norman would take deeply to heart:

"I worry about your writing only because you have that damned facility to write about things you haven't actually experienced. . . .I'm not saying a writer should only write about things he's seen with his own eyes, [and] felt with his own hands and heart. What I do say is that he must always be sure to be goddamned sure of his values...when he translates them into a character and a situation he understands but has never experienced."

Norman came to believe that "A Transit to Narcissus" failed because its material had been too foreign to him. Amussen, who had called for a work "that would be simple, declarative, [and] more plotted" than "Calculus," must have hated "Transit." Four years later, Norman was belatedly heeding the editor's advice with "The Naked and the Dead."

while in the army, he to an impressive degree succeeded; but his success was not complete, and the measure of its limits is revealed in his vision of officers. As a writer, Norman just couldn't see them; instead of people he saw only representatives of a power system, and he had little choice but to render them that way.

Aware as he was of this problem, Norman nevertheless discounted it as a weakness offset by many strengths, and with his sturdy overall sense of certainty about this book he aimed at the timely execution of a strong first draft. From there he figured to revise his way out of any difficulties that might present themselves. Norman had always been a productive writer, and never, as Bea told Hilary Mills, one to wait for the muse to descend[pp.81-81]. Starting in mid-November he would work a full shift--late morning to lunch, after lunch until early evening--four days a week, and on an average working day he produced five to seven pages of typescript. It was the same sizzling pace he had set in the North Truro cottage, and for the following four months he never really broke his stride. Having drawn up his blueprints he proceeded as they directed, amending and revising his prospectus but pushing ahead with it, all the while perfectly confident that this draft would show him the way to revision. He finished it sometime near the end of March, 1947.

Important though Norman's subsequent rounds of revision would prove to be, the initial form of "The Naked and the Dead" was

surprisingly complete. In length, its 844 typewritten pages proved to be only 91 pages short of the very final draft. Like the final, the first draft broke rather unevenly in two, with the longer first part preparing us for the patrol from several different perspectives, while the remaining part takes its dramatic structure from the unfolding stages of the patrol itself. The sequence of events in each part, and the ordering of the novel's principal narrative devices are the same as in later drafts, and though names get changed and personal characteristics are later added or deleted, almost all of the novel's characters make their appearance here at the start. So do most of the themes--the ideas about most of the men, the arguments about army life, most of the systems of thought--that are to be found in the published version of The Naked and the Dead; perhaps the only one understated in the first draft concerns the probable postwar career of General Cummings as an anti-Soviet war hawk. Almost all of the other ideas in the novel's final version foliated in the first-draft like the jungle vines of the island setting that--foot by geological foot--remained indispensable to every version of the novel.

Although the first draft clearly showed the need for various kinds of revision, it showed more clearly still that it was already a success as a novel. The only question was how good it would finally prove to be. Norman knew this. He had written two unsuccessful novels and he knew the difference, even as he heard this judgment echoed by his loyal troop of family auditors, but he

had to have official confirmation. Rinehart's contract had called for delivery by August 1, and he was intentionally a full five months ahead of schedule, allowing himself ample time for rewriting. No rewriting was possible for Norman, however, in the absence of a full consensus between him and his publisher on the present state of the manuscript. Indeed, part of his reason for wanting a full-commitment contract in the first place was that experience had taught him the need for hard-nosed editorial consultation at just such a crossroad moment as this.

Up to this moment there had been little if any call for formal communication with the publishing house; Norman was the author and was writing, Ted Ammusen was the editor and--apart from a few minor conferences--was waiting for something to edit. But in early March, just as the manuscript was nearing completion, Ted shocked Norman by telling him that he had accepted another job and would be leaving Rinehart immediately. The two men had known each other from almost the start of Norman's writing life, and from Norman's point of view Ted's response to the manuscript was critical. So it seemed cold comfort to be told that of course Ted would try to review the first draft and give the question of its need for revision what attention he could. No more reassuring was it for him to say that he would see to it that Norman's new editor at Rinehart was the best man in the firm, and that this man would be sure to see the project through in the most faithful way. Norman only knew that a very important brick had been removed from

the protective wall he had so carefully built around his project, and--re-ordering the pages of his nearly completed first draft and preparing it for delivery--he was both upset and apprehensive.

Ted's successor was William Raney-- at that time a Rinehart associate editor--an unmarried Yale graduate who had joined the firm after getting out of the army, and, Norman knew, had read and admired his originally submitted manuscript sample. Raney took delivery of the full manuscript in the first week of April, promising a fast response, but on the 11th he wrote to Norman:

This is fair warning that it is going to take me longer to read your novel than I had thought. I have it at home and intend to take time off from the office during the day to go through it. I will do my darndest to have a report for you by the first of May.

Norman reacted to this in about the only way he could, resigning himself to the wait, and trying to rest his mind from its marathon effort of the past ten months. It says a lot about the inescapability of his writer-identity that his idea of recreation took the form of searching for the subject of his next novel. He had been becoming more and more political in his thinking over the course of what had been a politically volatile winter in the United States, and he thought he might want to follow The Naked and the Dead with a labor union strike novel⁶.

Outside his studio walls, Norman's winter had indeed been a political one, as the international conflict between the United

⁶Norman wrote Rainey a note asking for examples of American labor union novels published in the 1940s, and drew a somewhat unenthusiastic reply that contained a few titles. [wr, May 14, 47]

States and the Soviet Union over the questions of the rehabilitation of Germany and of civil conflict in such places as Greece sharpened rapidly to a sword's point. Just as Norman was getting his bad news from Ted Amussen and turning his manuscript over to Raney, President Truman was delivering an address to Congress which, in the words of Gore Vidal, proclaimed "what would be known as the Truman Doctrine, in which he targeted our ally of two years earlier as our enemy[vf, 245]." The Truman attack upon Russia had been building all winter, as had opposition to it from a large part of the American left, which welcomed the instant rebuttal of Henry Wallace:

Yesterday, President Truman. . .proposed, in effect, that America police Russia's every border. There is no regime too reactionary for us provided it stands in Russia's expansionist path. There is no country too remote to serve as the scene of a contest which may widen until it becomes a world war.[vidal, VF,246]

Norman emerged from the pages of his war novel into a war-charged historical environment that would influence him radically in his soon-to-be-undertaken revisions of the manuscript. His first draft had not emphasized what in the final version was to be one of the novel's most widely remarked themes: its foreshadowing through General Cummings of postwar, anti-Soviet war-mongering on the part of America's right wing. As Norman waited for Raney to return the manuscript, the daily radio and newspapers were supplying him with what would be the most important material for its revision. The Cold War itself was being born, and while Norman rested momentarily from his literary labors he was able to watch

the President setting in motion the series of acts that would bring it fully into being.

Only days after the Truman Doctrine speech, an executive order installed the Federal Loyalty Oath Program, requiring written conformity from all government employees. Again, the deed was denounced by former Vice-President Wallace. In fact, Wallace was to become the voice of conscience for much of the American left in the months that followed, as Congress --approving the National Security Act-- created both the National Security Council and the Central Intelligence Agency. Norman's own home-front literary world--with its faith in popular-front coalitions and anti-capitalist trade unionism both at home and abroad--listened gloomily over the months that followed, as Wallace confirmed its worst fears about the true intention of the Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. Our country, he told them plainly, was preparing for World War III.[speech citations]

The inner-conflict dividing the postwar American left/liberal world was symbolized by the division between the Progressive Citizens of America--formed in 1946 and committed to the idea of cooperative political action between a coalition of American interest groups and splinter parties that included the Communist--and Americans for Democratic Action, formed in January, 1947. The ADA was the more conservative of the two organizations, listing in its statement of principles a pointed challenge to the PCA: We reject any association with Communists or sympathizers with communism in the United States as completely as we reject any association with Fascists or their sympathizers.[Years, 349]

ADA's goals of extending New Deal programs, protecting civil rights, stabilizing the economy and working for world peace through the United Nations attracted much of liberal America, including mainstream labor leaders and onetime Wallace friend Eleanor Roosevelt.

Norman and Bea, however, and their little circle of literary/political friends--some of them met at discussion-group meetings of the Progressive Citizens of America⁷--scorned such timid failure to fight back against the launching of the cold war. That conflict could only be averted, they felt, through an active exploration of common cause among the great WWII allies--communist, socialist and capitalist-- and, with the PCA, they began to incline toward the idea of a 1948 third-party presidential candidacy for Henry Wallace. Norman Rosten joined the Mailers as active participants in Brooklyn meetings where the formation of a national Progressive Party was being debated, as did Cy Rembar and his legal associate Abe Glasser--later a famously defiant victim of the House Unamerican Activities Committee investigations. Indeed, Norman and Bea associated with few people (except the elders in their own families) whose politics were not at least compatible with this kind of concern.

⁷Norman's sister remembers that though both she and Bea took the PCA meetings quite seriously, Norman was more ambivalent. He was in substantial political sympathy with the group, but he was repelled by the boring, colorless drone of its meetings, and often ridiculed their ineffectiveness.

Sensitive to the threat of a third party, President Truman denounced the idea early on, and in doing so included Henry Wallace in what Truman called the "American Crackpot Association, along with "the actors and artists in immoral Greenwich Village." [vidal, vf, p. 246] The President had a kind of point. The artistic community in postwar America, especially in New York, sheltered an inner-fortress of unqualified political radicalism, and even those in the community who did not consider themselves particularly political took that radicalism for granted. This was true of the couple who were perhaps the Mailers' closest friends: Millicent Brower and her husband Harvey Anhalt, who, though Wallace supporters in 1948, were primarily interested in show business. Following her correspondence with Norman when an undergraduate at Rutgers' Douglass College, Millie--having changed the spelling of her name from "Brauer"-- was trying to establish a career as a professional actress in New York; and after Bea's transfer to the Naval Base there the couple had afforded her frequent sanctuary from the stresses of life with Fan on Pierrepont Street.

Their modest apartment on the west side of midtown Manhattan was often the destination when Norman and Bea would cross the great bridge into the city. Sometimes they were the only guests, and Bea amusedly noted in her commonplace notebook that one night, when she and Norman had brought over for their friends' inspection a set of nude studies of themselves that Norman had taken and

developed in his darkroom, Millie scrutinized the pictures of Norman as if trying to infer what kind of lover he was⁸. Often, however, their hospitable hosts would have other guests as well, and the Mailers met there most of the few new people they got to know that winter. Their only other regular place of call was a charming house in the Village itself, on Leroy Street, where almost every Saturday night a kind of open-house, b.y.o.b. party was given by the popular author Rowland Barber (The Night They Raided Minsky's) and his wife Graeme. They had a Scott and Zelda air about them, and when Millie and Harvey brought the Mailers there for the first time they were happy to enlist as regulars.

Leroy Street in the Village and Millie and Harvey's place on the West Side were the only party scenes from this period that legend has preserved, except for a New Year's Eve party given by Barbara on Pierrepont Street to close out 1946. She gave the party partly to celebrate her own mid-year graduation from Radcliffe, but enough of her classmates and the family's friends were writers that it became something of a literary party as well. Alison Lurie, Barbara's Radcliffe classmate, came with William Gaddis as her date, and she remarked Norman's great good humor amidst the

⁸Actually, Millie may just have been registering surprise. One of the few things Norman had been celebrated for in the army was the size of his sexual member, and reactions in the barracks shower-room of "Holy Jesus, look at that!" were common, he reported to Bea. He was particularly pleased by the folkloric analysis of his 112th RCT mess sergeant, who seriously told him: "You would have been a big man if so much of you hadn't gone into cock." [nb 20oct45]

generally dour literary company. His Rinehart contract made him a success in this crowd already, according to Barbara, and perhaps his guest-of-honor position helped account for his upbeat mood that evening. [manso, 108]

There is no surviving report on how Bea enjoyed the party, but she told Hilary Mills that as this period went along she was becoming increasingly aware of "a lack of confidence in myself.[88]" Though both she and Mills are quick to recall that this was a mood "common to many married women at the time," it seems doubtful if many married women had to undergo quite the change in situation that was Bea's. While she was separated from her husband her centrality to him had been so great and his feelings for her so intense, that their reunion could change their situation only to her comparative disadvantage. Norman's fantasies about her as a photographic model, like his fantasies about her as a sexual partner, would necessarily fall short of realization as he tested them in real life⁹. She continued to encourage him and believe in him, but as more and more people started to do the same, she simply became less of a necessity than she had been before. What she did have that was new, however, and that promised to restore at least a measure of parity to the relationship, was her own novel-in-progress.

⁹Norman would remark in a letter written six months later to Fig Gwaltney [ca. Aug. 20, 1947]: "I've been married too long. The trouble with marriage is people are basically too uninteresting to be forced to live the rest of their lives together."

Bea had started writing sometime after they moved from Cape Cod to the Remsen Street apartment in early September. After Norman would go to his studio in the morning she would clean up the bedroom/parlor, put up her card-table of a desk, and address herself to her narrative about life in the Waves. She had a strict calendar and as a writer she was productive enough, so that her first draft was actually completed and ready for a publisher's review at least a month before Norman's--perhaps even earlier. Of course it was a shorter manuscript by far, measuring 253 pages to Norman's 844, but slender as it was, it was not too short to be regarded as at least a substantial first pass at the completion of a proper novel. She was calling it "Sand Against the Wind," a title that makes no striking sense in terms of the novel's content. But perhaps she chose her title from a feeling about her present personal situation, in which the sand of her own proud presence was in danger of being blown away by the winds of change. What she needed was something to anchor her firmly back into place, and she must have known that this novel could be it.

The novel features five Waves ranging in age from early twenties to early thirties, stationed at the Norfolk Naval Base, where the action starts in the fall of 1944 and extends through to the following spring. The five women are all junior officers, four of them single and living in dormitory-like quarters on the edge of the base golf course, mostly two to a room. They maintain a kind of collegial-friendship relationship with one another as they

do their jobs--which we glimpse only in passing--and devote themselves primarily to the development of various romances with men both present and absent. There is a certain parallel to Norman's novel in that Bea's, too, is trying to present in fiction the experience of a group of people, acknowledging their individuality while asking the reader to take them in as a whole. The problem here, however, is the absence of any kind of action to unify the disparate situations of the people. In the absence of a patrol, or of some other group development to pull them all in and for the reader to fix upon, the novel can at best present a kind of gallery of individual heterosexual situations--often less than compelling in themselves--whose juxtaposition might somehow produce a total effect more engaging than the sum of its parts.

No effective pattern of juxtaposition emerges, however, and the truth is that the novel never even begins to get off the ground. It rests fragmentedly there, concluding with the announcement of the death of Franklin Roosevelt on March 12, 1945--the most Bea-like of the characters says that it is as if her own father has died--without showing even the promise of possible coalescence. The main characters evidently are based in part upon women Bea had served with--importantly so in the case of the married fellow-Wave, with whose marriage Bea had become partly involved--but no composite picture of life in the Waves emerges. Indeed, the fact that they are working for the navy rather than some large corporation is not dramatically noticeable, and we

certainly get no idea--individually or collectively--of why they ever chose to volunteer for military service in the first place. The novel doesn't even serve the purpose of telling us anything much about its author. Norman's continuing suspiciousness regarding Bea's social life during his absence might well have been sufficient to subdue any impulse Bea felt toward the confessional¹⁰.

Perhaps they were hoping for some magic editorial advice when Norman turned the manuscript over to Ted sometime in February of 1947, hazarding the comment that he thought it "wasn't bad"[Mills, 94]. The editor's written reaction to the manuscript is not in the record. Bea told Hilary Mills that although he had suggested various revisions, she had been unwilling to go on with the project. He could not have been too encouraging. For the novel to be salvaged it would have to have been re-planned almost from scratch, and a great part of what had already been written almost surely could not have been used. Bea seems to have expressed no great disappointment, at least not outwardly. Maintaining an all-business air, she replied to Amussen's return of her manuscript by giving him three short stories that she had written--it is not exactly clear when--and asking him to obtain an opinion on their suitability for the "true confession market.[ta ltr]" Muted though

¹⁰In this respect, the novel bends over backwards to avoid giving rise to husbandly suspicion. The most Bea-like of the characters, for example, is presented as a twenty-seven year old virgin, much concerned with retaining this state.

her expressions of disappointment may have been, however, the disappointment itself must have gone deep. Years later, Norman would say:

If it took ten torpedoes to sink the battleship of our marriage, the failure of that novel delivered the first two.[rfl int]

iii

Norman received Bill Raney's report on the first draft of "The Naked and the Dead" in early May, and was at the same time pleased and disappointed. He was pleased because he had been looking for a vote of confidence from his publisher, and he absolutely got that. Raney was clearly "in love with the book,[rfl int]" and regarded it as a sure success almost as it was. The text of his critique has not survived, but as Norman remembers it his idea of revision was limited primarily to modifying Norman's quite modest attempts at seeing how far he could go in the matter of harsh language or unconventional representations of behavior. Norman himself knew, however, that the novel needed much more serious reconsideration than that. Having all along intended to revisit the characterization of officers in the novel, he had--ever since giving Raney the first draft--been thinking about how he should proceed with revisions in this regard. Most importantly,

he had done this thinking while reacting with greater and greater horror to the campaign, as he saw it, being waged by both political parties to condition the American people for the beginning of a third world war against the Soviet Union. He became convinced of the truth of his perception, and he remembers that the power of it ignited "this nerve right in the pit of my stomach." It was a nerve that would drive and guide the whole revision of his present novel, and would, in the long run, have a profound effect upon the shaping of his next.¹¹

As revised, The Naked and the Dead¹² is in large part a

¹¹It is important to note the form taken by Norman's heightened political awareness. His conviction that militarists in the United States were trying to provoke a third world war was not based upon recent study, extensive reading or sophisticated radical analysis. A measure of this would come later, but in these years, Norman's radicalism, however much it agreed with sophisticated radical analysis, harked back to early 1946, when he identified the reversal of government policy in discharging veterans from active service as proof that officers in high places were dangerously irresponsible power-merchants. He distrusted the government at this point in exactly the way that he had distrusted it--and the army along with it--over a year earlier, and for more or less the same reasons.

Norman came out of the army filled with a smoldering G. I. hatred of higher authority, he was re-creating it in the pages of his manuscript, and when public events took their turn in 1947 he came alive to them in this old and comfortable context. The revisions in his novel followed consistently from this, just as, a year later, his work with Henry Wallace was consistent with it. When drafting a 1948 speech for Wallace to deliver to veterans in the radio audience, Norman went straight back to the 1946 discharge-controversy as proof of the promise-and-betrayal treachery of the Truman administration.

¹² Such critical analysis of Naked as does appear here is especially indebted to Donald Pizer's superb treatment of the novel in his Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism. An Interpretation (Southern Illinois University Press, 1982), pp. [90]-114.

novel about the nature of power, and its first major section offers a study of how power is developed and brought to bear by two of the book's major figures. They are Major General Edward Cummings and Sergeant Sam Croft, two authoritarians who never even meet in the course of the narrative, but who divide between them the two power structures that attempt to control the novel's core population. Norman was dissatisfied with his initial representation of both figures, but his deepest reservations concerned Cummings, whose role as divisional commander problematically removed him from the sphere of platoons, patrols, and everyday enlisted-man life. This, after all, was in great part the life of The Naked and the Dead, as it had been that of its author, and Norman's solution to the problem of how to include its commanding general in its representation was: connect him through a bridging figure.

From the start, that figure was conceived as a young second lieutenant who would act as the general's aide, a privileged position in which he could both learn and communicate things about General Cummings that the novel's readers would need to understand. As an officer, the lieutenant could also be used to establish the broader presence of an officer-world in the novel--in opposition to the enlisted-man world--with its thematically important contrasting characteristics and systems of value. And finally, such a figure could move across the two worlds, physically joining that of the enlisted-man as Sergeant

Croft's platoon commander, and in that capacity could lead the long patrol that stood as the heart of the novel's second-half action.

Norman's first-draft attempt at this character had been named Lieutenant Robert Brook, and it had been close to a complete failure. Most of the characters in the novel were based, at least in part, on models from life, but since the lieutenants Norman knew in the army seem not to have been potential characters to him, he had not tried to use them. Having no model for Brook, the author's original inspiration had been to use a version of himself instead. After all, he had thought about going to officer candidate school: why not present a character who was like the officer he would have become if he had gone to OCS? So an officer rather like himself, but without the hidden identity of novelist, served Norman as model for his initial lieutenant-figure. The problem was that this produced a figure who, however interesting from an autobiographical point of view, was wholly unsuitable for the novelistic purposes at hand.

Imagining himself as an officer, Norman could only conceive of a howling failure; a man who had all of the flaws and weaknesses his creator had discovered in himself as an enlisted man, but worsened by the unimaginably humiliating conformities of commission and preparation for command. Desperately insecure, Lieutenant Brook yearns above all to be liked; but feeling somehow driven to live a life of "integrity," he stands off from his

fellows and is widely disliked for his apparent unapproachability. Norman used F. Scott Fitzgerald's title "All the Sad Young Men" to Bea[] in identifying Brook, and this is the stereotype that comes through most strongly in the first draft. Aimless, uncertain, horribly other-directed, the diminutive Brook is drenched in self-pitying sadness, and writes constantly to his absent wife (whom he has married just out college) for comfort. Take away his secret identity as an artist, and add the self-indulgence of hiding behind an officer's commission, and this was apparently how Norman saw himself. In the cool light of revision, fortunately, he also saw that Brook was not even close to being strong enough to fill the character-role in this novel, and so he dropped him altogether.

In his place was created Lieutenant Robert Hearn, Brook's opposite in almost every way. Unmarried, he prides himself on his stoic hardness both of head and heart--his sex life is a long series of carelessly discarded women--and he casts an equally cold eye on the capitalist world's selfishness and stupidity. Born into privilege, he has learned through his father (as well as through his Harvard classmates and his postgraduate money-making in advertising) what the swindle is all about, but he is neither revolutionary nor artist as a result. Rather he is an isolated island of a person: physically tough and aggressive, he is determined to retain personal integrity by rejecting the society of anyone whose personal standards do not measure up to his own.

We can easily understand how the General, himself a social and intellectual snob, might choose Hearn as an aide (a choice that, in the case of the wretched Brook, was totally inexplicable.) Apart from a few superficial points of similarity in background, the hulking Hearn and the diminutive Brook resemble each other only in their rejection of the morality of institutional power.

Since Brook had been such a social gnome of a character, Norman could not use him to establish the existence of an officer-society in the novel. But Hearn, for better and for worse, is a plausible social presence among his officer peers, permitting Norman to insert two important additions to the book's first major section. The broadest is a whole new chapter of sixteen manuscript pages, depicting the officers from the general's headquarters company on a Sunday afternoon recreational outing at the beach[pp. 236-52, N&D]. Under Hearn's stony, ironic gaze they are depicted as being for the most part a sorry, self-serving lot (the General absents himself from their company), and only two of them are taken seriously enough to have ascertainable real-life models. The first of these is Lieutenant Colonel Conn--a racist, red-faced, reactionary social-climber-- who is based upon the commanding officer who took away Norman's stripes in Chosoi the previous spring[]. The other is introduced through another new character, Lieutenant Thomas Wakara, a Nisei-American serving in the General's division as a translator. Wakara has recovered from the corpse of a officer in the Japanese army a journal, the

philosophical contents of which are derived from Norman's postwar conversations in Japan with an ex-kamikaze officer[.]

More pointed in Norman's revision than this officers-as-leisure-class chapter, is his addition of a scene that initially establishes Lieutenant Hearn's relationship with General Cummings. In the case of Brook, Norman had used the device of a war correspondent who first interviews the general and then interviews his aide, an experience that leads the correspondent to conclude: "This boy here is going to get a lot of bloody noses" [ms. 81]. In the revision, Norman drops the war correspondent along with Brook, and instead has Hearn get into a near-physical fight at table during officer's mess. This altercation arises when the hard-nosed second lieutenant is infuriated by the salacious, facistic racism that Lieutenant Colonel Conn regularly dispenses as dinner-table conversation. Reckless of the demands of military courtesy, Hearn proceeds to insult this senior officer in public, and only the intervention of an intrigued General Cummings prevents the situation from exploding. When Cummings calls his aide to his tent for a sympathetic conversation shortly afterward, we are introduced to the two men in the context of their perfectly believable, if somewhat mysterious peer relationship.

The revision works well, since it seems the most natural thing in the world for a self-conscious sophisticate like the General to have picked an aide whose youth, education, intelligence and left-wing politics identify him as a sort of

potential pupil cum debating opponent. In the first draft, Cummings derives most of his power-identity from his here and now authority in the army, but in the second we become more aware of his potential postwar identity. Hearn is at first conscious only of the immediate power of the General in the campaign, and finds the role of being the older man's confidante not unwelcome, since he really does want to understand more about the General's command of strategy and tactics, his "unique ability to extend his thoughts into immediate and effective action." [nd 77]

The second draft develops the General's deeply reactionary historical posture--he tells Hearn "You're a fool if you don't realize this is going to be the reactionary's century, perhaps their thousand-year reign." [85]--in a way that was not possible in the first draft. There the General toys with reactionary speculation concerning postwar America, but now--fueled by Norman's newly-developed alarm that war hawks are indeed taking over postwar American policy--the second draft presents the Cummings character directly as a scheming proto-fascist with a specific postwar agenda. Hearn is so conscious of the here and now of the General's authority as to discount, at first, his long-range thinking about power:

The General might even have been silly if not for the fact that here on this island he controlled everything. It gave a base to whatever he said. As long as Hearn remained with him, he could see the whole process from the inception of the thought to the tangible and immediate results the next day, the next month. That kind of knowledge was the hardest to obtain, the most concealed in everything that Hearn had done in the past, and it intrigued him, it fascinated him. [nd 85]

This first main section of the novel is called "Argil and Mold," Potter's terms, and for both himself and for us Hearn identifies the General as this island world's Master Potter. Only slowly does the second draft use Hearn to draw out the General's sinister postwar ambition.

As the campaign goes forward, at first very successfully, the relationship between the two men develops, and in doing so it illumines the General still further. They have "the easy tacit friendship that many generals had with their aides," [173]; they have "other moments when they were much closer," but they also have a persistent antagonism between themselves, and Hearn couldn't find "the bone on which all this was grafted." The intimacy and the antagonism is partly the result of their mutual admiration being almost systematically interrupted by disagreements concerning the appropriate use of power. The General angers Hearn by explaining that the army's power over men is exercised through the operation of a fear-ladder, "when you're frightened of the man above you and contemptuous of your subordinates"[176]. Hearn does not want to be associated with a tyrant, however effectively he commands his division, and lost in this dilemma he is slow to see what finally becomes obvious: the General's most powerful pull into his relationship with his aide is that of homoerotic attraction.¹³

¹³The first draft had made much of Cummings' homosexuality, representing it as wholly suppressed, but it is less overt than later drafts in linking it to his reactionary political propensities.

What might be called the background of the General's homosexuality is explained in "The Time Machine" flashback into his earlier life--and Norman rewrites a good deal of this in the second draft as well--but basically we learn that it is a truth that he conceals from others and in various ways hides from himself. He virtually confesses it to Hearn, however, revealing in the process an almost shocking self-pity that drives the younger man away even more than does the homosexuality itself. Their relationship begins to go bad at the same point and in concert with the breakdown of the forward progress of the campaign, and when Hearn reacts with defiance against a series of calculated slights from his superior, he precipitates a climactic confrontation. Cummings' power has been a subject often discussed between them, but when the General actually exercises it against Hearn--going so far as to threaten a court martial--he pushes his aide onto the fear-ladder and forces him to renounce his own independence, to "crawfish" as Hearn puts it, in order to escape these consequences. Now utterly repulsed by the General, Hearn leaves his position as aide, demoted down to an assignment that will allow him to function, for the rest of his time in the novel, as the foil for its other most potent manipulator of power.

Sergeant Sam Croft has, during the weeks of the Hearn-

Norman would not become fully conscious of how his own homophobia is revealed in his characterization of General Cummings for some years. He discusses it in 1959, in Advertisements for Myself, where he reprints his 1955 essay "The Homosexual Villain."

Cummings confrontational drama, been engaged in a power-struggle of his own. His adversary has been neither Hearn nor the macrocosmic model of the campaign as a whole-- which, between them, have transfixed the General-- but rather the under-strength Reconnaissance Platoon of the General's Headquarters Company. This group, in various combinations, has occupied the reader far more than has the Cummings-Hearn interplay, and as the end of the first main section of the novel draws to a close, the group has been brought almost entirely under Sergeant Croft's personal control. None of its members required replacing and few of them needed much in the way of revision in the novel's second draft. The platoon has followed Croft through a series of formative experiences, combat and otherwise, and while it contains a stubbornly resistant member in the form of Private Red Valsen, it is nonetheless almost ready to become--as it proceeds upon its long patrol--the central focus of The Naked and the Dead.

Rather like Cummings, as a power-imposing character Croft has need of a bridging or catalyzing figure to make him available to the reader, someone beyond the group presence of the platoon itself. When Norman's second draft created Hearn, and sent him on patrol with the platoon in Brook's stead, a richly productive conflict is set up in the novel that would reach all the way into Croft, bringing forth an identity far more radical than had emerged from Cummings. The General was a power-imposer of an essentially social, and thus artificial sort: his fear-ladders and

tactical manipulations were the product of an institutional
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proves to be heavily secured, however, Croft becomes possessed by the vision of an alternate mission, not ordered by the General and not relevant to the campaign. Croft wants to lead the men on a climb up Mt. Anaka itself, and in this way take up both the challenge with which the mountain fires him and to satisfy an emerging need in himself for expressions of omnipotence.

Driven by his infuriated response to the superhuman power of nature, no longer concerned with any semblance of military mission, Croft burns to take his men up the steep face of Mount Anaka for essentially the same reason that Ahab burned to take his crew into the waters of the great White Whale.

Norman needed a Lieutenant to command the platoon who could impede Croft's design in such a way as to test the Sergeant; to force him to choose between his military obligation to his assignment and his obsession with the mountain. In the first draft Brook is so distracted by the way he appears in the eyes of the

men that he effectively commits suicide, recklessly braving a mountain pass that Croft has warned him is full of Japanese troops, and leaving the astonished Sergeant to do as he pleases with the platoon. But Hearn, less preoccupied with his performance as platoon commander, is not so accommodating, and Croft is able to get to the mountain only by arranging for the Lieutenant's death. He does this by lying to him about the presence of Japanese troops in the pass, so that when Hearn starts to lead the men forward he is trapped and killed. A court martial inquiry--which, in the absence of anyone to call for it, never takes place-- would certainly have charged Croft with murder.

In the wake of Hearn's death, both Croft and Cummings fail to achieve their ends through the exercise of their power. Croft and his exhausted platoon are defeated by the mountain, driven down from its almost-achieved summit by a hive of hornets (exactly like the one that Norman described to Bea in his spring, 1945 letter from Luzon.¹⁴) Cummings' campaign--wholly unaffected by the platoon's patrol--is accidentally brought to a successful conclusion in the General's absence, under the leadership of the bumbling Major Dalleson. These developments are not significantly altered in the changes between the first and the second drafts, though of course Hearn's reflections on his experience with the General are products of that revision. The Lieutenant recognizes

¹⁴See the letter of May 14, 1945, quoted at length in Chapter Three, Part 2, pp. ____.

that the General's perverse manipulations of power must be resisted, but until the war is over his plan is to confine himself to a personal gesture: when he returns the platoon from the patrol, he intends to resign his commission.¹⁵ In the same vein, Private Red Valsen, the closest man in the platoon to being Croft's moral adversary, reflects in the revision that though one man alone cannot repel such power, men joined together might find a way.¹²¹⁶

Norman completed his revision in late June, just about the time Bea was getting her letter from Ted Amussen returning the three stories she had asked him to evaluate for the true confession market. Writing on June 24 from his office at Reynal & Hitchcock, Ted apologized for the long delay and quoted at length "the words of a master" on the subject of this market's requirements:

[The three stories] really don't come close, I'm afraid. They all lack drama, depend entirely upon accident, and make no point about

¹⁵In attributing to Hearn the intention of resigning his commission, Norman is of course recalling his own attempt to turn in his stripes in Chosoi. The difference, though, is that Hearn's self-demotion is conceived of as part of a radical political conversion to an anti-fascist position. While Norman, at the time he created Hearn in 1947, clearly was experiencing a similar conversion, there is no evidence that he identified himself that way in Chosoi in 1946. Then he was simply, if profoundly, in temperamental revolt against the unendurable authoritarianism of the army.

¹⁶ Presumably, Norman was conscious of the resemblance between this perception of Red's and the "One man alone ain't got no bloody fucking chance" conclusion of Harry Morgan in Hemingway's To Have and Have Not.

human behavior.

By this time Bea had, at least for the moment, stopped thinking of herself as any kind of writer; she simply filed the correspondence and continued with a refresher course she was giving herself in French. For his part, Norman had done everything he could think of to improve his manuscript, and had indeed improved it greatly, but he was still dissatisfied with the end result.

At this crucial juncture, with his August 1 deadline little more than a month away, the good fortune that had accompanied him throughout this whole project favored Norman again. Charley Devlin, an impoverished fledgling writer friend of Rosten's, also had a room at 20 Remsen Street. Norman had become friendly with the somewhat older Devlin over the course of the winter, impressed by what Norman saw as his sophisticated command of radical politics,¹⁷ as well as his apparently searching literary insights. So, near the end of June, when his house-mate expressed an interest in reading it, Norman gave him the now-revised manuscript and was pleased to note that Devlin dropped everything to give it his immediate attention. Before the first of July, the two sat down to discuss the novel, and Norman knew immediately that he had found the editorial consultant that Rinehart had been unable to supply.

¹⁷Devlin was not a Communist Party member, but was deeply sympathetic to its aims and methods, and shared with Norman the conviction that the cold-war crisis developing around them was the result of a virtual conspiracy from the right to bring about the third world war.

Devlin liked the manuscript--he wryly acknowledged that it was much better than his own novel-in-progress--but he was sharply critical of Norman's style. He criticized the book's mechanical imagery, its lack of a feel for the figurative, and explained to Norman that his excessive use of the word "very" as an intensifier was not just a problem in itself, but was symptomatic of a serious stylistic insensitivity. Norman was delighted. He now recognized that it was his book's style had been bothering him, and recognized also that Devlin's extraordinarily acute editorial sensitivity was just what the novel needed for its final revision. On the spot, Norman offered him the job of editorial consultant, and Devlin agreed that for fifty dollars a week he would spend the month of July going through the novel with Norman page by page, advising and guiding him as he revised.

It is almost impossible to follow in the surviving manuscripts the footsteps of this revision as it was carried out. Its presumably delicate details are buried in the bulkier changes wrought by Norman's second-draft rewrite; but Norman became persuaded that this revision, in combination with the one that preceded it, pushed the book over the line and into the realm of real distinction.¹⁸ He concluded this finally, no doubt, after the

¹⁸He told Steven Marcus in 1964, in The Paris Review, that if the novel had been published without the rewrites "the book would have been considered an interesting war novel with some good scenes, no more." After them, "If you look at the book you can see that the style shifts, that the parts about Cummings and Hearn are written in a somewhat more developed vein. Less forceful, but more articulated." [Lennon, conversations, pp. 80-81]

book's publication and enthusiastic reception, but--once reached-- the conclusion could not have been more influential upon him as a writer. For the first time, at least in any serious way, he connected artistic success with the formation of political thought. If the embracing of an idea like the one that had converted him just before his revision could have such an effect upon his work, and if the criticism of such an openly Marxist analyst as Devlin could have given the book its final push across the line into real excellence, then it was plain that a more thoughtful contemplation of current political radicalism as literary catalyst was called for. From this time forward, and especially for the next five years, political events, ideas and people would hold a special interest for Norman as he searched out the road his on-going literary career should follow.

Norman's preparation on the manuscript ran well past August 1. He cut, pasted and inserted inter-linear revisions right through August and well into September before the harried Rainey succeeded in getting the manuscript away from him, dog-eared, wildly repaginated and slashed with strikeover as it was. Before it could be copy-edited for a compositor it clearly needed to be re-typed, but they didn't tell Norman this--perhaps because they feared that if he got involved in that process he might start re-writing all over again. What actually tore his attention away was the fact that he had to do something about preparing to leave the

country for a year. He and Bea had a first class steamship cabin-- thanks to the congratulatory Uncle Dave-- on the Cunard Line's Queen Elizabeth, sailing out of New York for Southampton on October 3. They were scheduled to spend a week in London before proceeding by boat-train to Paris, where they both--as GI Bill of Rights students--had been admitted into the Sorbonne's Cours de Civilisation Francaise as candidates for one or another of its Certificat de Langue Francaise.

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end Part One, Chapter IV

CHAPTER FOUR

Part Two

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When citizens of the United States were travelling together as married couples in 1947, the Department of State issued passports to husbands only. Thus, when the Mailer passport was issued on July 7th, 1947, Bea's name and photograph were included, but only Norman had to sign it and only he was afforded a few lines of biographical description¹. Besides this document, though, France required applicants for a student visa to produce proof from a French landlord that French residence had been established, a condition which might have proved difficult for the couple except for the fact that a family representative had unexpectedly preceded them to Paris, and was able to act on their behalf.

Norman's father had not remained unemployed for long

1

Name: Norman Kingsley Mailer
Height: 5 feet, 8 1/2 inches
Hair: Brown
Eyes: Blue
No distinguishing marks on features
Place of birth: Long Branch, N.J.
Date of birth: Jan. 31, 1923
Occupation: Writer

following his three year sojourn with the OPA: two months after his return from Washington, D.C. he was engaged by the formidable firm of Loeb and Troper, an American-based organization of internationally established Certified Public Accountants, which was engaged in auditing and maintaining the books of the American Joint Distribution Committee². He flew to Paris in late July, 1947, from where he corresponded with Bea in early August concerning the location and documentation of a Paris residence for their scheduled October arrival [b>b8/7;8/11/47]. Showing a side he seldom revealed to his family, Barney not only arranged for accommodations at the modest Hotel de l'Avenir, 65 Rue Madame, in Paris's 6th Arrondissement, but instructed Bea on the safest tactics for smuggling in cartons of cigarettes, and went on to provide her with a black market banker who would supply the couple with francs at a better exchange rate than the banks.

The dark side of Barney's identity had remained submerged for a remarkable and unprecedented length of time, and the hopeful consensus of family was that his ways had mended. If so, the mend was only temporary; and in the light of later developments it is more likely that when residing in Washington D.C., freed from the obligations of stealth and thus able to pick and choose his

²The Committee, "an organization involved in the resettlement of people displaced by the war" according to Norman's sister Barbara, apparently arranged for Barney to be hired by Loeb and Troper. Uncle Dave Kessler probably was responsible for the connection. At this time the main European headquarters of the Committee was in Warsaw.

action, Barney had found a level of play sufficiently demanding to satisfy him but also where he could hold his own. At this point it had been a good four years since gambling losses had got him into trouble-- and two more years would pass before he started getting into it again--so this was a genuine green period in the cultivation of his secret garden. Until the first week of September, over a month before Norman and Bea's arrival, he would be agreeably situated in Paris, residing at the Grand Hotel, Place de l'Opera, while training at the local offices of Loeb and Troper for his auditing assignment at the Warsaw headquarters of the American Joint Distribution Committee.

Norman, for his part, remained true to his tradition of crossing the ocean against the emotional current; starting on October 3, he began by having an unhappy time on the Queen Elizabeth. Despite the fact that his dreams of finishing his novel on schedule and embarking on his first European adventure had come true, he flirted with sea-sickness, disliked the largely British first-class passengers, hated the food ("all cabbage and boiled meat called roast beef") and was made uncomfortable by the fact that they were "travelling like officers."³ The truth was that both the Mailers felt out of place on the ship; Norman's social shyness

³About half-way through the composition of The Naked and the Dead, Norman had begun a correspondence with Fig Gwaltney, who had returned to his Arkansas home. Some details about the crossing come from Norman's shipboard letter to his old army friend. Subsequent letters written to Gwaltney throughout the European year are a valuable source of information. [Seuss, acknowledge personally, as well as the dissertation].

brought back his old reclusiveness, so that mealtimes--quite apart from the quality of the food--were an agony of silence. The last two or three of the six-day voyage were lightened considerably, however, thanks to a gregarious group of American Rhodes Scholars who drew the lonely couple into a "pallier" society. [nm>fan6oct47].

In London their hotel was, again thanks to Uncle Dave, Park Lane's toney Grovsnor House; they travelled up to Oxford to visit one of Norman's South African cousins; and they called on friends of friends for a few days before taking a boat-train to Paris on October 15. Norman was sobered by the situation of the people of London:

After a while you get a scared kind of tight feeling. There's no place you can go to get a good meal. And the whole thing extends to many sections of the economy. There's nothing to be had, and the gray days, the gray city...and the lines, the drabness weigh on you. There's no joy at all in London. [n,mm>fan 14Oct1947]

This picture, of course, was only a snapshot taken on the fly, but even in such short compass the British, who on the ship had seemed so off-putting, were now impressive:

Actually the thing that surprises me and elicits my admiration is that the British haven't gone hog-wild. Just the fact that the anti-semitism is within bounds is amazing. And they do seem strong, capable of a lot of attrition. [ibid]

Paris resembled London in many ways, and its beaten-down air of defeat made Norman long for America "and all its ballsy kind of noise and size and excitement. [fig,,11nov47]" But Barney had located them well: The Hotel de l'Avenir at 65 Rue Madam was

close to the Boulevard St. Michelle and to the Luxembourg Gardens, which is to say that it was handy to the Sorbonne itself. Their rent for the one-room "apartment" was about a dollar a day (the black market rate brought them 266 francs to the dollar) and they lived on a total of four dollars a day including shows, movies, cafes and restaurants (at this stage they ate and drank out every night.) As full-time G.I. Bill students they each received a living allowance of ninety dollars a month, and soon they began considering a move to more commodious living quarters. Certainly they felt that they could afford this trip without disturbing much, if any, of their military years' nest-egg.

The Sorbonne's Course De Civilization Francaise was an almost frankly commercial enterprise, launched by the once-proud institution as a way of raising desperately needed American G.I. Bill of Rights dollars, and during the Mailers' November 2, 1947-February 21, 1948 one-term session, well over five hundred ex-G.I.s were enrolled. A class in the French language was required--indeed, the certificate to be awarded was "De Langue Francaise"--along with classes in literature, history and philosophy. But the commercial intention of the program was so blatant and the standards so reduced, that Norman later said that it "had about as much to do with French Civilization as an American high school program in Home Economics had to do with the Civilization of the United States." [nm/rw] Speaking of the thoroughgoing corruption of the whole operation, Norman described--not without a certain

admiration--the textbook scam, in which students paid new-book prices for battered old volumes, but were given receipts--reimbursable from the G.I. Bill administration--for much more expensive purchases.

Bea actually applied herself to the course--having resumed the study of French some months earlier in anticipation, and her notable linguistic facility quickly proved its value. Norman was immensely struck by the elderly, physically handicapped instructor of his French class, Mlle. Denise[?], a woman fanatically passionate on the subject of the integrity of her language. She conveyed to him a sense of how rarely such feelings about the English language were to be found among American speakers, but he made no remarkable progress with French itself. Though he had studied the language at Boy's High and, for a year, at Harvard, and in a pinch could read it with some accuracy, he could not bring himself to attempt speaking it at all. "It was," he said, "as if a hand was gripping my mouth and throat, throttling all sound," and he would pace the freezing streets--this winter threatened to be as bad as the year before--silently conjugating irregular verbs. [nm/rw]

At first, the principal day-to-day problem faced by the young couple was social loneliness. Though they would get to know their fellow-students, and before long would find a society in which they could actually flourish, their early isolation led Norman to advise the newly-married Fig Gwaltney:

If you ever come over you better take every address that people give you, no matter how stupid they may seem, because when you get here you suddenly discover that you know very few people after all, and if Uncle Henry has got a French grandmother you sure enough end up going to see her. [nm>fig11nov47]

But even before Norman passed this wisdom along to his friend, he had begun to break out of such isolation. On November 2, just before classes began, he went to the busy American Veteran's Administration office and, as he wrote to his mother and sister, met a Harvard classmate:
Damn if I didn't meet Mark Linenthal. Much falling on backs, and it turns out he's here for the year also. We went with him to where he's living, and met Alice, his wife, who seemed a hell of a nice dame. [nm>fan/b2nov47].⁴

The newly married Linenthals--he a literary academician, she a talented fiction writer--evidently liked the Mailers, who for their part were almost pathetically grateful to have found them. They spent the whole of that day together, drinking red wine, eating French bread and shooting the breeze. They're living with an impoverished French painter whose only words of English would get mother very annoyed. But as a result of the evening I know how to swear in French now. I have arrived. [ibid]

The two couples made up a regular foursome--rather in the manner

i ⁴ Linenthal, class of 1943, had been Norman's colleague on the *Advocate*, was now a graduate student in English at Harvard, and had come to Paris after the recent close of the first Harvard University Salzburg Seminar, organized by F.O. Matthiessen, where he had acted as Alfred Kazin's teaching assistant. Mark would go on to become a poet and a professor of poetry at San Francisco State. His young bride, just graduated from Radcliffe, would become one of the better known women writers of her generation, publishing under the name of Alice Adams.

of

the Mailers' New York friendship with Millie and Harvey--and ate together in restaurants almost every night. Alice had known Barbara at Radcliffe and, between them, the Linenthals seemed to know half the students at and around the Sorbonne, especially the considerable contingent from Harvard.

Long before his novel began being commercially advertised, much of Norman's Parisian identity derived from the forthcoming publication status of The Naked and the Dead. He was no doubt reassured by this, but his deeper concern was with finding the subject for his next novel. Almost as soon as he arrived he began trying to crack open an avenue of approach to this project, but without a proper place to write, and with his mind distracted by so many new experiences, his early efforts were not encouraging. Norman's consequent anxiety helps account for his edgy impatience with the pace of his manuscript's movement through the Rinehart production machinery. The book's forward motion had been slowed, of course, largely because its author, who had relied upon the typist pool at the Sunlight Oil office, had left Bill Rainey with a disorderly manuscript that had to be retyped. Weeks went by before this had been done and the 935-page product had been proof-read by its editor. In consequence, the production of galley-proof was delayed past the first of the year. Since an early-May publication date has been established, and transatlantic mailing of large packages was confined to surface-mail, Norman

found himself unable to revise his novel at all. He had never before seen a book through publication and consequently had no established practice, but the prospect of being completely unable to reexamine the novel on its way to becoming an irrevocable final text was one that he found hard to accept.

On the other hand he was receiving a steady stream of reassuring mail from his publisher, climaxing in some news of real importance. He had met the firm's president, Stanley Rinehart, in the context of signing the original contract. He had never met him since, however, and there had certainly been no evidence thus far to indicate that Rinehart had ever actually read any of the novel beyond the original 186 page sample shown to him by Ted Amussen. But now, in late November of 1947, Rainey exultantly wrote to Norman about an editorial conference that, he said, "has made me giddy." Rinehart had just read the whole of the final

typescript, and, Bill said, he insists that we do this book B-I-G. He is famous for remaining anonymous, but says he will send a circular to the trade (the people who buy books to sell to people, *schlemiel*) over his signature, sort of reminiscing about his days as a publisher, going back to his George H. Doran days when he worked on "Three Soldiers" by Dos Passos. They did a revolutionary thing, publishing a book in which words like BASTARD and SON-OF-A-BITCH appeared, and he is going to say, "Here it is, boys, a great book, in the great tradition, a realistic novel but more than that."⁵

What Rinehart's enthusiasm really meant, of course, was that he

⁵When The Naked and the Dead was published, Stanley Rinehart in fact did circulate a substantial letter to the trade of the kind Rainey describes. Its text, under a "To the Reader" heading, filled both flaps of the final dust jacket.

intended to promote his new novelist with a full-scale marketing effort. He suggested as much on December 29, in a warmly personal first letter to Norman, written to close out the old year.

A little over a month before the arrival of 1948, the Mailers had moved from their Hotel to a real apartment: it was at 11 Rue Brea, in the same Left Bank district, and it cost them only twenty-four dollars a month. Its layout of tiny rooms--a living room, den, bedroom and kitchen--was large enough for entertaining their gradually growing social circle, and there was adequate space for Norman's writing privacy. It even included a piano for Bea[h95]. For housekeeping, they hired a chambermaid from their hotel,

somewhat to Norman's embarrassment [manso [110], but they decided to go native in the area of personal hygiene, as Hilary Mills reports:

The bathroom only had a toilet and a sink; the bathtub was in the kitchen. Bea remembers that the first time she and Norman tried to take a bath together they almost suffocated. French water heaters were then operated by gas, which had the tendency to rob the air of oxygen. Bathing in Paris was so precarious that people either did not bathe at all or they went to the public baths once a week, as did Mailer and Bea.[hm95]

Sequestered in his den with his typewriter, Norman searched through a variety of possibilities for his second novel. He sent home for what he called The Gilroy Letters: those nine long letters he had written in October, 1944, about his hitch-hiking trip from Fort Ord to Gilroy, California, with Jerry LeFrancois. The letters had consciously been written as fiction-material, and

he asked his sister to send them airmail in the hope that they might be useful to him immediately. Though Norman's writing time was built firmly into his weekly schedule, his efforts would produce little of substance until well after the first of the year. Bea was putting her time productively into the Sorbonne program, but from Norman's point of view the most fruitful dimension of their lives was the social.

Bea began doing some cooking after they moved to the Rue Brea, but they still went out almost every night, either "searching for Sartre" while bar-hopping the famous cafes the philosopher was known to frequent--the Flore, the Deux Magots, the Brasserie Lipp, the Closerie des Lilas and the Dome (they never found him)--or going to parties in the few French and many American digs they came to know through the Linenthals and others at the Sorbonne. Most of the Americans were veterans--among them Norman's old army friend Steve Szabo--enrolled in some G.I. Bill program or other, and most took the view that they were travelling on a lark. As Norman would say years later: "We were all there for the same reason: because we felt that our government owed us a year in Paris." [wilb]

The universally suspicious attitude of the educated veteran toward the military was redirected toward the government, and served as a common bond in a population where the prevailing political sentiment was more or less the Mailers' own. Certainly Norman's credentials as a novelist-about-to-be-published lent

significant authority to his Progressive Citizens of America point of view. And even among those who did not identify with his politics, his literary standing in the community was authenticated by the respect he got from the two Americans who, amidst all these vacationing countrymen, laid serious claim to the title of expatriate.

Harold Kaplan was in Paris as the European editor of the Partisan Review, in whose pages his then-famous story "The Mohammedans" had been published the year before, and he made it known that he had left America for good. So had Stanley Geist, the brilliant Harvard graduate whose Bowdoin Prize essay on Herman Melville had been gratefully acknowledged by F.O. Matthessen in his 1941 American Renaissance. Both Kaplan and Geist tended to cultivate European literary and political cognoscenti, and openly condescended to most of the young Americans around them. But they seemed to concede at least a little something to Norman's accomplishment (they would concede a great deal more before long) offering him a measure of respect that he warmly welcomed.

It would take a little while, however, for the Mailers to settle fully into the social world they had been so happy to discover, partially because they were preoccupied with trying to schedule a get-together with Barney in Warsaw. The long-range family plan for the year was for Fan and Barbara to come to France in the spring, and Norman--urged forward by his mother--wanted to go to Warsaw and arrange with his father a plan for a full family

reunion. When, in November, he filed an application for a visa at the Polish embassy it seemed to be ignored, and Barney had no better luck in being allowed by the Poles to visit the couple in Paris. The three of ~~them~~ therefore formed the alternate plan of meeting in Switzerland over the New Year's holiday--nominally at the Loeb and Troper office in Geneva--where they could all enjoy a change of scenery while planning their springtime reunion.

They succeeded in rendezvousing in Geneva shortly after Christmas. Barney flew as far as Zurich, while the young people survived the crush of third-class rail accommodations all the way, and in some respects the trip worked well. They repaired to a ski-resort outside Geneva, where Barney rested while Norman and Bea enjoyed the skiing. Forgetting that they had originally discovered the sport in New Hampshire four years earlier, Norman now wrote to

Fig:

The best thing was skiing for the first time in our lives. We didn't learn how to turn on the damn things so we'd climb a hill until our legs gave out, and then very cautiously we'd turn around, aim ourselves like a goddam howitzer at a gap between people at the foot of the hill and then take off like a bat out of hell. It's really a thrill--to use an old gag of my cousin's--it's better than football even if it isn't as good as fucking. Also we didn't learn how to stop, but what's a wet ass or two. [fig5Jan48Paris]

They were so keen that they resolved to invest in boots and pursue the sport further. But Norman was not keen on Switzerland itself, whose gross and self-congratulatory prosperity, after London and Paris, deeply offended him. He evidently complained about the tourist-gouging prices so relentlessly that Barney, who by

contrast was enjoying the good-living⁶, criticized what he called Norman's parsimony. [fig5jan;to fan 2jan;to fan5jan.]

Barney's criticism was delivered with enough sharpness, it seems, and was combined with various other, more traditional complaints--Norman's carelessness about his health, his dress, his long hair--as to have been read by his son as a real rebuke. For the first time, Norman was seeing his father as a figure of prosperous authority, not to say sovereign independence, and the unfamiliarity of both the setting and the experience was having its effect. Barney's son, perhaps from this point onward, began consciously to cultivate more respect for his father--notably in letters to Fan--muting the tone of condescension that had been audible beneath the heartiness of his military correspondence. Their working understanding concerning the reunion with Fan and Barbara was that Barney would try to get some kind of furlough from his Warsaw assignment. It might even be possible, the coolly self-confident Senior Accountant⁷ suggested, for him to persuade

⁶There is some evidence to indicate that Barney returned regularly to Geneva that winter, on business for Loeb and Troper.

⁷Barney was not a Certified Public Accountant, but earlier in 1947--perhaps after joining Loeb and Troper--he had applied to the New York Board of Certified Public Examiners for a CPA Certificate, in accord with the terms of a recently passed law allowing accountants over the age of 40 to claim certification on the basis of experience in the field. His employers ordinarily hired only CPAs, and there is little reason to doubt his claim that his position with them was a relatively prestigious one. It would be well over twenty years, however, before his efforts to receive this kind of formal recognition from the State of New York would be successful.

the Committee and/or Loeb and Troper to transfer him back to their Paris offices in time for the arrival of his wife and daughter. In any case, he thought it likely that he could get the firm to bear the cost of their round-trip steamship passage.

On January 2, just before returning their separate ways from Geneva, the three of them wired home a joint birthday-greeting to Fan. Norman and Bea then made their crushed way back to Paris, there to join the Linenthals in an adventure that gave them ideas for one of their own. Mark and Alice had bought a new (1947) Nash automobile for a pilgrimage-sojourn to Spain and Portugal, where they planned to recoup their costs by selling the car "to some wealthy Fascist" [n>barney10jan48], and the four of them drove out

the sixty miles for a visit to Chartres Cathedral:

Despite the fact that it's winter the fields in France are mostly green, and you pass over miles of pleasant country with the green and brown fields, the brown-gray forests stripped of leaves, and the dull blue sky with a weak sunlight. The towns we passed through were charming, small and very old with winding walls, and delicate colors. It felt like Europe, which Paris so far has not felt like, and it gave us a welcome relief from the easy monotony into which days can fall in Paris.[ibid]

The friend-filled social world that had developed for them in Paris over the past month or so had erased one kind of discomfort. The day after the much-enjoyed Chartres drive, a Sunday, Steve Szabo dropped by their apartment for a visit, as did a young woman named Luska Stark, who had been in Czechoslovakia over the holidays and told them all about it. Then Norman and Bea walked back over to their old hotel to chat for awhile with Ginette Thierry, their chambermaid friend (and part-time employee)--Norman

noting that such conversations were "about the only time I speak French now."-- before going on to join Steve in town for a concert. Afterwards, Bea prepared them a simple dinner. It was a weekend that might, with a few modifications, have been spent by Jake Barnes and his friends. Despite the pleasantness of such moments, however, Norman confessed to his father a continuing, indeed a growing cause for deeper discomfort: "I am hoping to settle down and do some decent work," he said. "Tomorrow I'll take a whack at it."

Prior to the first of the year, Norman had tried to get himself writing again by assuring people at Rinehart that he already had.[] When these efforts turned out to be false starts he no doubt felt all the more pressure, so it must have been a special relief to find that within the next week he was writing on an almost heroic scale. As he reported to his mother on January

18:

I now have two first chapters for two different novels. I wonder if I shall finish either of them. As I said to someone or other, I'm going to end up writing a sentence for one manuscript and then a phrase for the other. But I'll give you reports if they come to anything.

One of these projects was a story depicting a rather Hearn-like man in a Hollywood bar, talking with both his wealthy wife and a young woman who--because she had been denounced by the House Unamerican Activities Committee--has just been fired from her studio screenwriter's job. HUAC's late-fall, 1947 report on "Communist infiltration" of the movie industry must have been the

talk of the American community in Paris, as it was of the increasingly beleaguered left/liberal community in the United States. For some not-obvious reason, Norman called this manuscript "The Brute of Darkness." At about the same time as this writing, "The Gilroy Letters" arrived by air mail, but though Norman went over them and took a few notes, they never evolved into a project of their own. The second manuscript mentioned in his letter to his mother turned out to be the major writing project of his year-abroad: a two-draft, sixty-four page, five-chapter typescript called "Mrs. Guinevere," the first version of Barbary Shore.

If Norman's writing was shifting into gear, so was the production schedule of The Naked and the Dead, and as it did his concern increased. Informing Norman that the manuscript was now in galley proof and that a set was being surface-mailed immediately, Bill acknowledged that he and others at Rinehart had subjected the text to some substantive editing:

The "naughty" parts gave us all a headache. You will note obvious deletions but they are very negligible and have in no way hurt your book....The deletions have been in small portions--words and a very few two and three-line obscenities we knew would prevent our sending it through the mails. In other words, we haven't taken large chunks of narrative out; it is just as you wrote it. [br7jan48]

Norman received this unfortunately worded information with suspicious dismay, and evidently replied that he expected to be

given the opportunity to restore any deletions that he disapproved of. For the moment, however, he fixed most of his attention in his Rinehart correspondence on a different question. He had begun what would be the life-long practice of trying to interest his publishers in the fiction manuscripts of his friends: in this case the suppliant authors were Charley Devlin, Fig Gwaltney and, most recently, Alice (Booth) Adams, wife of Mark Linenthal. Now, as letters to him from the Rinehart office make clear, Norman continued solicitous on behalf of manuscripts submitted by all three.[rainey>nm 1/20/48]

Amidst these other matters, the question of the academic program at the Sorbonne began to require some attention. Good standing in the program, after all, was prerequisite to the Mailers being paid a total of \$180 a month in living expenses, so they had some incentive not to flunk out. Bea was in no danger of this, but Norman feared that he was, having attended few classes besides French language, and having prepared even less of the material contained in the course textbooks. There was a second four-month session of the program--scheduled for March-June, 1948--that required successful completion of the first session, but they had already half-decided to forego that, along with the income it would provide, in favor of a season of travel. Yet if Norman flunked now, it mightm they thought, disqualify him for later use of the G.I. Bill (each of them was entitled to a full four years of coverage.) Norman felt that he should do something

to preserve, if possible, his line of credit as a future G.I. Bill recipient.

The only effort either of them could think of in this regard, however, was that of special appeal to the authorities; so, though with little hope of succeeding, Norman went to the program's director:

"Sir," he recalls saying, "I have tried very hard all year to learn French. I always went to the classes...."

"Ca va, ca va," the director replied. "We will give you a special test."

When, in mid-February, the "special test" was offered, Norman found that it was being taken by most of the people in the program--all of whom had made the same special plea--and that it was being offered in a "Oui" or "Non" format. One question he recalls was:

Vous voulez cette parlez du Francais? Recommendez: oui, non?

Norman remembers that everyone passed the language test, and his own Certificat De Langue Francaise scores him as having earned an apparently respectable total score in course work of 23 (vingt trois) out of a possible 40, broken down into written and oral accomplishment: Ecrit 10 (dix), Oral 13 (treize). It turned out to be the last formal academic program he would ever undertake.⁸

⁸Norman's version of these events was recalled in 1996, in his conversation with Richard Wilbur, Paris Review, etc.

In 1982, Bea recalled for Hilary Mills a quite different version of this history, in which Norman and all but eight others dropped out of the program altogether (she being one of the eight.) Perhaps she meant that only eight people finished the requirements for some higher-level, actually respectable academic certificate.

In Norman's first letter to his father after the Switzerland trip, he mentioned somewhat surprisingly that Bea had "been working a little on a novel of her own." [n>b10jan48] Back in the States her actions indicated that she had given up on herself in this regard, and in fact she told Hilary Mills, many years later, that after her first-novel draft had been rejected she decided that "I really didn't want to be a writer. I found out how hard it was." [p.94] Nevertheless, this second effort produced a quite substantial beginning: 23 typescript pages, subdivided into five sections, it is called "My Name is Rachel Greene," which is the answer the heroine gives to the Ellis Island admissions officer when she arrives there with her three children as part of a boatload of Russian Jewish immigrants. Rachel is evidently modelled on Bea's grandmother, who settled in Massachusetts with relatives, and the book was apparently to be a kind of roots novel.

The project came to nothing--Bea had been right in the first place about her potential for becoming a fiction writer--but one wonders what impelled her to give it a second try at just this time. Although we don't know the answer, we do know that this was just about the same time that Norman came home from a visit to the Paris lodgings of a young French couple of their acquaintance and

confessed to Bea that he had spent the afternoon in bed with his host and hostess. He explained that they had been moved to do this by a combination of the extraordinary cold, on the one hand, and the also extraordinary libidinousness--unprecedented in his experience-- of the young man and woman in question.

Bea was very upset.[rflint1/98] Whether or not this was what caused her to turn again to her fiction, it must have made her reflect on the kind of distance that now separated her from her husband compared to the earlier kind, when Norman would fill his overseas letters with the most passionate affirmations not only of desire but of lifelong monogamous faithfulness. She would have been able to measure the gradual, and after all inevitable cooling of this ardor since their reunion; and Norman's continued adherence to the code of candor at any cost must have made her aware of his parallel return to the point of view that had made them quarrel as pre-marital lovers. Then he had argued that for him, and probably for both of them, casual dalliance with others was a future certainty they would have to accept if they were to stay together. It was on these grounds that he had resisted her talk of marriage. When his own thoughts later turned to it, they of course were not caused by any changing of this view. It was just that he saw reasons for marriage that overrode all other considerations.

While Norman was, at this moment in Paris, far from ready to start thinking of terminating his marriage, he clearly was well

past the point of believing that monogamous constancy was a prerequisite for its continuation. How much he had departed from that constancy up to this time is hard to determine (the episode with the French couple may well have been memorable because it was his first threesome, not his first adultery.) But there is no doubt that from this time forward--and especially in the forthcoming post-publication circumstances that would change everything so drastically--the honeymoon for Norman and his Beatrice was altogether over.

That said, they still had much to draw them together and keep them engaged. They remained social fledglings, and they supported each other readily against a largely strange and threatening world. They were in Europe for the first time, were of like minds concerning the political and economic state of that continent--indeed, of all continents-- and having decided to discontinue the Sorbonne program, they looked forward to a spring and summer of adventurous exploration together through travel. (They had already decided to emulate Mark and Alice by getting their own car.) And most of all, the two young people sensed with growing excitement the approaching denouement of a drama they had begun together when they married and entered military service in 1944. The book they had only dreamed of then was actually on its way, and when it emerged on May 6th in New York they would be positioned to monitor the course of its reception from a doubly insulated vantage-point. Not only would they be in Europe, but they would be on a carefully

scheduled family-reunion touring excursion. Thus if the book should come under critical attack they would be both distanced from it and among friends; while if by some wonderful chance it should instead be praised and perhaps even sell well, they could celebrate the victory en famille.

If, therefore, the Paris winter had been made a little colder at 11 Rue Brea by Norman's report to Bea of his afternoon's adventure, there was still much for them as a couple to move on to. As he had during his early days with Bea in Cambridge, Norman took up painting for a short while⁹--and this may have been intended as a gesture in the direction of re-bonding with his wife. In Bea's case gesture of bonding may have taken the form of those weeks spent writing at her manuscript. In any case, Norman soon gave up on the painting and, after working briefly on two manuscripts at the same time, settled exclusively into the composition of what he was calling "Mrs Guinevere." He has since suggested [Advfm] that his problem in finding a viable project for his second Rinehart novel was complicated by the fact that he had no postwar, returning-veteran experience to write about. Instead of getting to know postwar America at first hand, as most of his fellow veterans had done, he buried himself in a writing studio for fifteen months and more, completing his Naked and the Dead

⁹In a mid-February letter to Fig Norman recorded: "We've got exams coming up at the Sorbonne this Saturday and if I pass I'm going to transfer to art school, just to be able to see lots of nekid women as Bea says. But I wish I were a painter. It's not the worst way to spend one's life."

manuscript, and had then departed immediately for Europe. He seemed to imply that he could hardly write a novel about postwar American life as it was lived in the Remsen Street rooming house where he kept his studio. Yet, in the pages of "Mrs Guinevere," it was something rather like this that he actually seemed to be doing.

He got the idea from reading Christopher Isherwood's Berlin Stories, published in the United States in 1945 and evidently read by Norman after his return from Japan.[marcus int] Indeed, he may well have read the book after getting to Paris. What struck him about it was the way Isherwood uses a rooming house in Berlin as the theatre for a fiction portraying the state of Germany at that pre-war time, and in the process foreshadowing a vision of its none-too-distant future. Isherwood cast himself as a story-writer who was the paying guest of a bizarre, faintly allegorical landlady figure--Frau Schroder--whose characterization obviously put Norman in mind of his own even more bizarre landlady at 20 Remsen Street. Her real-life name was June Woolsey, but for fictional purposes Norman re-christened her Mrs. Guinevere. These early manuscript pages make much use of her appearance, as when she comes to the writer-narrator's room to replace the linen: As always, Mrs. Guinevere was dressed somewhat unbelievably. Although it was nine o'clock at night, she had on a night-gown over some sort of slip and brassiere, and had covered the ensemble with a short flowered bathrobe which would have revealed her knees if not for the night-gown, and which did reveal as always large areas of her impressive breast. At the time I assumed she was ready to go to bed, and had reminded herself of the linen at the last moment, but I was to learn that she had merely not bothered to dress herself that day, and that there would be many times when

she would go to bed without ever having put on enough clothing to make it possible for herself to go outside. (p. 23)

Guinevere blowses thus erotically through the house, trailing fantastic stories of religious revelation, for she is a Jehovah's Witness and is consumed by a fiery vision of approaching apocalypse. Her business is to deal with the presence of her several paying-guests, including narrator Mikey Lovett, a writer-figure who at this stage is modelled on Norman himself.

Isherwood's surrealistic rooming-house is populated with various types whose lives offer him windows onto his fictional landscape, and Norman's also surreal rooming-house harbors, in addition to the landlady, two special denizens whose interaction with the narrator is this first draft's main preoccupation. Both make a striking impression upon Mikey, as striking in their ways as that made by the seductive Guinevere, and it is plain from the start that Norman is contemplating for his second novel a bildungsroman-a novel of education in which learner-novice Mikey Lovett is prepared by his teachers for charting the terrors of the postwar American future.

One of Mikey's new teachers is clearly modelled upon Charley Devlin, whose physical characteristics are lifted whole into the book, and whose Communist political savvy is deepened and made strangely kin to the religiousity of Mrs. Guinevere herself. The Devlin character--like him, an Irishman-- is called McLeod, older than Mikey and with a mysterious air of inner knowledge that for his student is screened over and all but completely obscured by

manners, mannerisms and a clinically compulsive way of keeping his room. All that we can tell at the start is that behind the narrative camouflage McLeod seems to possess some secret knowledge that he wants to transmit to his student; wants this almost as much as the student wants to receive it; and that if only the transfer can be completed, an important mission will have been accomplished.

McLeod's opposite number is the other teacher-figure, Hollingsworth. Unlike the landlady and McCloud, Hollingsworth is not modeled on anyone who actually lived at the Remsen Street address, but as a character he is designed to represent a grotesque version of the figure of the American businessman¹⁰. Younger than Mikey, he is mindless in his preoccupation with patriotism, with class-envy, with material success (he works on Wall Street) and especially with the heats of pornographic lust. Hollingsworth seems drawn toward Mikey not in order to teach or give, but to prevent or keep him from something. The draft is very preliminary, but even at this point we sense that Hollingsworth's world disputes the world of McLeod, and that the younger man wants to prevent the older's with Mikey.

Norman was producing the earliest kind of first draft, feeling his way into a subject to see if he really had something of substance to work with. In this process he tried, as he had

¹⁰The Hollingsworth character is modeled on a "vapid young American" at the Sorbonne, whom Norman hardly knew but who for some reason seemed sinister. (Marcus, Lennon, p.90.)

done with other of his long narratives--including The Naked and the Dead--to clarify the inner possibilities of his fictional scenario

by modelling it into an allegorical structure. The notebook containing such a model has survived:

Have McLeod [once] married to Guinevere. Guinevere as America, large, animalistic, psychopathic, vain, warm, uncritical, etc. McLeod as Communism, Lovett as intellect, Hollingsworth as business, as the make-[it] psychology carried to psychosis.

The line of the novel is the play around and about Guinevere. The Communist mating with her in the depression, the subsequent disillusion, the drawing apart, the embitterment and impoverishment of the Communist to the point of fanaticism, the phobia and mania

of the Body of America (the double Eve), the entry of Intellect, so necessary, so mutually satisfying to Communism, and their subsequent rupture to the impoverishment of each; the mating of Business with the Great Whore Body, the displacement of Communism, the hatred and guilt toward it; the prostitution of Intellect with the Great Whore Body. [Jrnl. May 27, 1948]

It is not surprising that the draft did not at this time gather momentum. There were many outside distractions from the narrative, and many conflicts internal to it. Its manuscript concludes with Lovett's twenty-page autobiographical reflection, reviewing in some detail the whole of his Brooklyn past. Then Norman put the file aside. Completing and revising its 64 pages would occupy him whenever he had time to write during the rest of his stay in Europe, and, much later, he would address it again in the context of inventing Barbary Shore, but he anticipated no such thing by the time of his departure from Paris. "My novelistic tank ran out of gas," he said in recalling this time. "I dropped it completely, [and] thought I'd never pick it up

again." [Marcus/Lennon, 81]

It is surprising, really, that he accomplished as much with "Mrs. Guinevere" as he did, for the need to address himself to The Naked and the Dead began to press with ever growing urgency as the New Year continued and the implications of Bill's January 7 letter about having edited-out some "naughty" parts continued to sink in. Misinterpreting Norman's initial letter of response--which apparently contained only an expression of concern and a warning that there might be fireworks forthcoming from him-- on January 20 of that frozen winter Bill ventured the jocular admonition that Norman should stop worrying about such things and "warm up that chilly frame of mind!" He had struck the wrong note, as he soon discovered, and for over a month the hapless editor had all he could do to ride out the blizzard of injured authorial indignation that Norman began sending him in reply.

Back in peaceful October, when Norman was writing his editor comparatively light-hearted letters, Bill had apologetically given him what "is known around here as 'The Pound Treatment.' Ezra Pound used to write such dirty letters, even the men blushed and John Farrar had to slip the Treatment to him." The editor was referring to this paragraph in his own 24 October letter to Norman:

Now an unpleasant part--Norm, you can't write me business letters full of four-letter words. I don't mind any personal correspondence you want to ship this way...but if you write me business letters full of it, it complicates things. The girls here have to read those things, and as all of them...are sheltered females, it's a good idea not to offend. [10/24/47]

At the time, Norman apparently cooperated, but this was the kind of thing that on some level probably bothered him quite a lot¹¹, as appears when he returned to the matter in an obscenity-ridden explosion of January 23-24 (when for the first time Norman began saving carbon-copies of at least some of his letters to his publishers):

I don't think I'm so unreasonable that if I had gotten a letter two months ago which said 'we are having to cut out twenty-two Goddamns, three fucks, twelve Mother-fucks, and a shit or two' --(let's fuck the Pound Treatment for this letter, I'm not so fond of you at the moment that I'm stricken at the thought of you having to retype this)--I think the thing could have been worked out.

The apparent purpose of this paragraph was as much to shock the Rinehart secretaries as to raise a legitimate editorial point, since the text of Norman's novel, at any of its stages of development, never contained any "fucks" or "Mother-fucks." He had anticipated the unpublishability of such language, and from the start euphemized with various forms of "fug." But now he had been informed of editing aimed at specific appearances of profane or obscene detail in his manuscript, and he confessed that as a result he had become preoccupied with what might be revealed when the mysteriously slow-moving galley-proof finally did arrive in Paris ("I just hope I don't have a shit hemorrhage [sic] when I do see [them].") In the absence of the galley-proof, he demanded that

¹¹Norman attached a serious importance to the use of obscenity and profanity in his own private conversation at this time. Later, of course, it would become an important part of his public identity.

he be sent by return air mail an itemized list of all cuts made. He added that he and Bea had just seen the first advertisement for the book in Publisher's (he called it "Printer's") Weekly, and had disliked its illustration of "The Unknown Soldier," which he hoped they did not intend (as in fact they did) to put on the dust-jacket. Then he closed by saying that he wanted--quite apart from the question of editorial censorship--to do some re-writing before the book went finally to press: Give an idea of what revisions cost. Want to rewrite a page of Hearn's soliloquy, want to add a few lines to Rothberg's death, want to cut out about two paragraphs in the next to last chapter on Goldstein, after adding a line or two to the end of chapter which concludes with Goldstein and Ridges empty-handed on the beach. Let me know.

Bill was so surprised, alarmed and offended by Norman's letter that he took the better part of a week to compose himself and his itemized, quite chilly answer "to your questions and accusations." His seven paragraphs were sub-headed into items a) through g), like a legal document. In them, he explained that it was both too late and too expensive to do any rewriting, that the galleys had been delayed briefly but were absolutely on the way, that Norman had been informed every step of the way about the production process, and that the delays in that process had been the result of Norman's own delays in delivering a completed manuscript. ("Had you not asked me for two extra weeks on which to work on the manuscript before you sailed, we could have had it sooner and perhaps worked with you on obscenities.") Bill also defended the line-drawing of the anonymous soldier's face in the

advertisement, not explaining that it happened to be the pride of the Rinehart design department, and was central to its whole advertising campaign. He closed with formality.

Norman was not unmoved by the implicit appeal for fair play and friendship behind Bill's stiff-backed reply. Though he annotated the margin of every one of the letter's items and prepared to defend his right to serious authorial participation in the production process, he also valued his relationship with his editor and wanted to save it if he could. Bill had mentioned, in a brief pause before the storm[to nml/26/48], that toward the end of March he would be sailing for a three-week trip abroad, part of which he wanted to spend in Paris, and he asked for advice and help on the matter of hotels. So Norman's long letter of February 7 offered first a full reply to this, suggesting various places and prices and offering with the warmest cordiality to make all the arrangements, and any last-minute rearrangements that might be required. His thoughtful, best advice was to save money on hotels so that it could be spent on art:
Art-works are fanatically cheap here, and you can buy wonderful reproductions for two dollars, or unnumbered etchings by Picasso or Matisse for as little as five bucks. The duties might be high, about which I know nothing, but the initial outlay is nothing.

Having demonstrated his good will, however, Norman explained that the main point of his letter was "to clear some of the atmosphere between us. We've been good friends, and if we're to continue, as I hope, it's about time we got rid of our hurt feelings." Getting rid of them, after all, would permit them both,

without mere temperament controlling the exchange, to get down to the basic challenge facing the publisher of a serious work of literary art: preserving in the production and promotion process the artistic integrity of the work in question. As the artist, Norman was laying serious claim to interested participation in these processes--indeed, over the years he would revisit this debate in one way or another with almost every one of his books--and he laid out for Bill the argument that had to be given attention.

First recapitulating the history of the book, Norman recalled the struggle with Little, Brown over the obscenity question, an episode that had had the effect of pressing the issue into the foreground for him. He recalled the Rinehart group editorial conference, Bill participating, in which he had promised to cut the profanity as much as he could in all conscience, and how when he sailed from New York there had been no mention from anyone at Rinehart of still further cutting in this regard. But more importantly, he explained that in a serious novel, the point at issue was not the journalistic one of mere "authenticity" in the language:

There is a psychological process to reading where the reader's attention sinks to a second cruising level, and there profanity does not strike him directly provided attention is not called to it by its spacing. He will notice it in time no more than articles and prepositions, and it will affect him the way it should affect him, as an ingredient, an element in war experience.

Norman excoriated commercial writers who wrote their novels to be made into films, falsifying the language as they falsified the

rest of the true military experience, because they wanted to create not an authentic work of art but a commercially viable product.

I want to avoid that worm because I do not feel that I am strong enough nor wise enough to be free of corruption unless I avoid it completely.¹²

All of this stood as a preface in the letter to Norman's appeal that Bill take him seriously; that he see past "my howls and sulks" to the inner appropriateness of his concerns; and that he respect those concerns as his first editorial responsibility. In his previous letter of January 23-24, Norman complained that he felt as if Bill were handling, or humoring him, instead of being candid, and the present letter expands upon this, going over Bill's previous letters of information and explanation "as if they were legal briefs or philosophy," asking for specific answers to questions of when, how and why the cutting, by whom and for whom: "Was it done for the Book of the Month Club who would never take it anyway unless it was cut to a point that I would never accept?"

¹²Norman illustrates the way in which commercial fiction writers corrupt the language of combat experience with euphemism: "Words like browned-off, fouled-up, mother-loving, f---, spit for shit are the most counterfeit of currencies and represent the public's conception of Army life; is indeed a palliative for people who do not have understanding for those areas of experience, and yet must talk about it....I do not think it is an accident that there have been no good novels until now about the war; the men who employed the patty-cakes like mother-loving were corrupted already by an attitude which was alien to abstracting their war-experience and pitching it into the universal. They were a part of the terrifying process which has reduced the lustiness and power of American writing in the twenties and thirties into the slick, superficial, and cloying writing of today."

To Bill's earlier, irritated statement: " All I can do to your accusations is repeat what I told you verbally many times and what I have written you: the book is yours, we cut only where it was a question of taste and where the book would not be harmed [by being refused access to the mails]," Norman doggedly replied: Frankly I do not see how you can cut to taste (a reflection on my own which I rather resent) and at the same time to send something through the mail. The two are rather different operations. What I'm getting at again was whether the cutting was on the order of removing all words of a certain variety, viz: cocksucker, or whether it was taking out a word here and there because you felt it was too dense with profanity on that page. Particularly I would want some idea of the quantity--and that you've been particularly vague about.

Beyond these censorship considerations, Norman addressed two other areas of editorial concern that would always attract his attention during the process of book-production: opportunities for last-minute revisions, and packaging. He had spelled out in his previous letter what revisions he wanted to do, and he simply added here that time would tell whether he could afford to pay the financial penalties that these required. In any case, until seeing the galleys he couldn't be sure that the revisions he had in mind would even fit into the body of the book as written. But the matter of packaging--for the moment he took the view that advertising was a separate activity, and one from which he intended to keep his distance--seemed to him to be his legitimate concern.

It was the dust jacket design that worried him specifically;

a worry that had been aroused by the Publisher's Weekly advertisement featuring the line-drawing of the soldier's face. Somehow realizing that the Rinehart design department wanted to use this illustration on the dust jacket, Norman acknowledged that back in September he had "renounced" any interest in this kind of question. Now, however, he served notice that he wished to reverse himself and to "cut myself in again" on the dust-jacket design. The truth was that Bill had, indeed, been "handling" Norman, at least on this point, and had left unclarified the already-decided question of whether or not the face was to be used on the dust-jacket. If it was, Norman confessed:
I am not at all happy. I don't think he has anything to do with the book, I think he has to do with an Ernie Pyle version of combat fatigue. You accuse me of not giving my specific ideas about a jacket, but I can know what I don't like.

A few lines later he made clear that he also had some ideas about what he did like:
I fail to see why one should have a soldier at all. Frankly, I think the technique with which he was drawn is in opposition to the book. It's slick commercial drawing with a few modern fillips, and reminds me of books like The Stainless Steel Kimono. If it is considered necessary to have an illustration on the jacket why not something which indicates America--some sort of mass ensemble of activity with a few soldiers in the foreground? I think that would indicate more about the nature of the novel than a poor pooped GI--there are the Time Machines, don't forget. As far as advertising goes I am not stepping in; if that soldier is part of the plans for the ads...fine.

Icy stiffness melted, Bill replied with the clear concern of an editor who had to regain the confidence of his author while at the same time telling him things that he did not want to hear. Bill's February 13 letter contained a photostat of the already-

accepted dust jacket for The Naked and the Dead, with the line-drawing of soldier's face irrevocably in place. The editor pleaded with Norman to understand that the booksellers to whom the layout had been presented thought the book "very handsome," and that the design department took great pride in it as dignified and artistic and "quite unlike anything we have done here." At the same time, he begged Norman to accept the fact that the book was going to press in a week and that there was no more time for revision. Revision in page proof would cost at least \$12.50 a page, "would cause untold trouble. And--there is no time."

Hoping that his author would at least forgive him for the jacket, and that the impulse to revise was only a passing one, Bill devoted most of the rest of his reply to the question of his own alleged editorial censorship--"I am honestly sorry that you are in such a swivet, and will try to mollify you as much as I can now"--estimating that perhaps only 25 words were cut, and two or

three images altered:

The scene, which you graphically describe, with Wilson and the prostitute, with his friend looking on. I cut the business about 'little stuff dribbling...' but the scene itself is not damaged; also, 'Give my monkey a drink' has been cut from the scene in Hearn's Time Machine. You mention a stag party there--it is still there....Fug hasn't been changed. It is still fug, fuggin, etc. [2/13/48]

To "prove my point" he was air-expressing on that date a full set of galleys--at the cost of \$12.50 plus insurance, to be charged to Norman's account--and "you should have the package shortly after you get this letter." Bill also explained that though it had

nothing to do with his editorial preparation of its text, the book was indeed under active consideration for selection by The Book-of-the-Month-Club ("which would make you a rich man"). In the unlikely event that they "would be courageous enough to take it," their selection would call for a separate, virtually expurgated edition and that Norman, if he would even consider it, would have to fly over and edit it to his own satisfaction.¹³ Closing at last with warm thanks for Norman's offer to help with hotels, Bill all but openly asked for some compassion for his exhausted state "after getting this off my chest."

The editor had of course been anxious to write a letter that would pick up his author's olive branch and bring their conflict to an end, and he had been successful. Norman forthwith stopped raising difficulties, replying to Bill[nm2/16/br2/20/48]] that on the whole he liked the jacket, knew that his editor had done no harm to the book, and that if the BOMC wanted the novel they would have to want it on terms that he would set--some of which he spelled out. He even allowed Bill to understand that no list of cuts needed to be made up and sent in advance of the arrival of the galleys (whose air-express shipment turned out to be fast and to cost only \$9.00). Norman then wrote a friendly letter to

¹³Though Norman's novel was not selected, Clifton Fadiman, one of the BOMC's more famous judges, wrote to him on February 16:

"Last night I finished reading your book for The Book-of-the-Month-Club. This is purely an expression of my personal feelings: it seems to me an extraordinary job, and I though I would just write and tell you so."

Stanley Rinehart in reply to his of late December, in which he mentioned that he had begun "fooling around with another novel," and settled down to the unproofed galleys when they arrived. Seeing the book in print clearly delighted Norman, and he scrupulously recorded for Bill over fifty typographical errors, all of which had already been caught by Rinehart's proof-readers. Norman knew of the proof-readers, but he enjoyed working with his text so much that he developed the list anyway and sent it along just in case.

It was funny reading the novel. I was depressed in places and excited in others. Right now, at this point in my tastes, the thing I like best is Hearn's Time Machine, and it's the one part that I could see printed out of context without misgiving. I still can't read the novel as a book, nor form a clear idea of its merit. I suppose I'll have to put it on the shelf for ten years before reading it again.

iii

Initiating a practice that would continue over many books and many years, Norman took the galleys and began circulating them among friends whose good opinion he especially hoped for. Mark and Alice got the first set first, but within days a second set of galleys arrived--after six weeks of leisurely surface-mail crossing--and these went first to the formidable Stanley Geist. The Linenthals were, almost as a matter of course, war-whooping supporters, and Mark, who had been reading Stendhal, told Norman that he thought The Naked and the Dead was a better book than The

Red and the Black. But Norman had probably expected these two friends to offer him strong support, and the opinion he really wondered about was Geist's. Harvard's expatriate-in-chief had over the course of the winter moved still further toward establishing himself as a special critical presence in the Parisian-American setting: a man who people kept comparing to Edmund Wilson, and who worked daily on translating Constant's Adolphe into English, he aspired to be an upholder of the most severely high standards, regardless of social friendship. Norman had from the start been intimidated by Geist's air--one that at Harvard Norman had never cultivated himself, but tended to respect in others--and conceded him a measure of real authority so openly that the critic noticed it:

He was very timid at that time. He showed me the proofs of The Naked and the Dead like an insecure young man who wanted some reassurance. He was, after all, a newcomer, and he wasn't at all sure of his ground. [mills99]

Many years later, Norman remembered Geist's conscious critical gravitas when returning the galleys: "You know," he told Norman, as if sharing with him a wonderfully extraordinary discovery, "it's really not bad!" [pr]

This judgement, for all of its patronizing echo, simply delighted Norman, and he proceeded to share the galleys freely with whomever among his compatriots seemed to be interested. By early March the Mailer circle in Paris had widened remarkably, and if Mark and Alice stood with Norman and Bea at its center, it did not take long before it also included Kenneth Lynn, who had taught

with Mark at Salzburg earlier in 1947, and was one of the more or less admiring readers of the galleys. Another was a southerner cousin of Alice's, Nick Arnold, and his wife. More, rather than less impressed by the novel was Salzburg veteran and Harvard ('45) acquaintance Kingsley Ervin, who, along with Lynn's friend Stanley Karnow regarded The Naked and the Dead as a stunning feat for a writer of their own age to have accomplished.

Also a part of this Paris community was Mitchell Goodman (Harvard '43), whose own war novel would be published later with a blurb from Norman, and whose young British bride, Denise Levertov, was already publishing poetry under her maiden-name. Roger Shattuck was a friend too, and in all there must have been a dozen Harvard-affiliated American young men--most of them veterans and most of them newly married--connected with the Sorbonne or some other such program at this time. All were conscious of the tradition which had brought American writers to Paris at the conclusion of the first world war, and--while for the most part not claiming expatriate identity for themselves--most of them were potential or actual writers who were respectfully saluting this earlier tradition. Norman was struck by the literary productivity of this population, and wrote in letters to both Stanley Rinehart and Bill Rainey about what a promising group this would be for a publisher to cultivate.

This largely American community was pieced out with a fair sized number of European nationals, some of them Parisians of

about the same age as the Americans, some older French artists-- Paris was still the great center of painting in Europe-- litterateurs and professionals of various sorts, as well as a small sampling of young Spanish refugees from Franco's fortress to the south. Perhaps the single greatest disappointment to the left/liberal heart in both Europe and America at this time was the survival, and indeed the relative prosperity of Franco's Spain and Salazar's Portugal after the fall of the Axis fascist dictatorships in Europe. The widespread expectation that Franco's government would be brought under pressure by the victorious allied powers, and that democracy might be restored to Spain, had been crushingly disappointed. When, instead, postwar Anglo-American policy successfully called for antagonistic conflict with the Soviet Union--and thus for cooperative coexistence with the staunchly anti-communist remnants of European and Latin American fascism--it drove many of the young Americans in the Paris community just that much more in the direction of Henry Wallace.

Mark and Alice felt the injustice of this situation so keenly that they had drivenn their new Nash on an extended January-February trip to Spain and Portugal, where they had smuggled money and printed materials to underground organizations identified for them by their Spanish refugee friends in Paris, and had smuggled out some poems and some prose manuscripts by a number of Spanish resistance writers.¹⁴ Norman and Bea had changed the Linenthal's

¹⁴In May of 1949 these poems and manuscripts were edited into anthology form, under the title Pueblo Cautivo, by some of

dollars into Spanish peseta in Geneva in preparation for their trip, and were shopping for a car of their own in order to make a similar journey during the first week of April. But before the arrival of spring, and indeed all through the cold winter, they had moved with increasing ease among their American and European friends--fending off the frequent assaults of haughtiness and condescension that they often felt from the latter-- and enjoyed a regular calendar of dinners, parties, lunches and other sorts of gatherings.

Two of the most established domestic venues for these events, especially when they involved the presence of Europeans, were the small but elegant Right Bank apartment of Stanley Geist and his then wife Eileen Finletter, and what Alice called the wonderful Montparnasse apartment of Partisan Review's Harold Kaplan[manso, 110-11] It was at a party at one of these, when the guest list included French Communist party founder Boris Souvarine, that Norman first met Jean Malaquais. Different people recollect the early relationship of the two men differently. Norman himself recalls that their disagreement over the merits of the Wallace campaign made it almost impossible for them to be real friends at this time. But there is no doubt that whenever their friendship began, Malaquais eventually was to exercise a powerful influence Norman's friends in Europe, and a translation was planned, along with an American publication. Norman joined into the plan by writing a Preface of some 1,200 words, recollecting his own observations in Spain in April of 1948.

on Norman's thinking over a period of at least four or five years. Fifteen years the young American's senior, Malaquais' physical appearance strikingly recalled Norman's father--small, sharp-spoken, handsome in the same way--and the writer was probably at the very peak of his cognoscenti European prestige at this time. With three novels and a "war diary" in print, he also had a reputation as a Marxist theoretician whose bitterly anti-Stalinist politics placed him, in Norman's phrase, "somewhat to the left of Leon Trotsky." [pr]

Malaquais often recalled Norman at this first party as an electrifying kind of literary American Adam, holding the floor with passionate expressions of uncorrupted artistic naivete and political ignorance. In Malaquais' recollection, Norman awakened in the Old World imaginations contemplating him, fond memories of their own half-forgotten, Edenic innocence, and it is clear that whenever Norman wanted to acquire a European mentor, this new acquaintance was ready from the start to take on the role[rfl int.]. In Malaquais' later recollections, they met that year in Paris, often as a foursome with their wives, perhaps a dozen times, always talking politics and political theory. A disapproving Mark Linenthal failed to appreciate the romantic intensity of that first party--"I don't remember their first meeting as all that momentous"--and in any case he and Alice couldn't stand the discussions:

[Malaquais] was an intellectual, Norman an activist, and then when

Norman really got into Marxism it was a drag. It made conversation impossible. Alice and I thought, Oh, fuck this, it's dreadful. It was his tumbling to authority, to Malaquais and politics. [Manso, 112].

The truth seems to be that Norman did not really regard Malaquais as a social friend at this time: he regarded him at most as a resource, rather of the kind supplied to him by Devlin the previous summer. Like Devlin (who became a close friend) Malaquais knew something that Norman very much wanted to learn, and he in effect went to him for lessons in the mysterious universe of political economy. However dull it seemed to outsiders, to Norman it had absolute value; he certainly would turn to Malaquais after leaving France, and the significance of their relationship would greatly deepen. For now, though, Norman tended to fight a little shy of French people socially-- however gifted they might be-- put off as he was by their war-wounded pride. Norman met Richard Wilbur at about this time when, fresh from the critical acclaim that had greeted his first book the previous fall, the poet had taken a leave from the Harvard Junior Fellow program to travel in France with his wife, Charlee. Mark introduced the two couples, and they all agreed that they felt unexpectedly defensive and even proud of their own country and its culture amid the frequent Anti-American slights of so many of their French acquaintances. [pr] This did not prevent them, however, from sharing a bitter anger at the cynicism of cold war American foreign policy, and expressing

warm support for the presidential candidacy of Henry Wallace.

Just about this time, Norman received a letter from Stanley Rinehart[3/8/48] telling him that the company had committed to a first printing of twenty-five thousand copies--remarking "God help us if we can't sell them"--and that though The-Book-of-the-Month-Club had finally decided against The Naked and the Dead, all preliminary signs indicated that "everything is going along well." The book was to retail at \$4.00 a copy, and a little arithmetic revealed that Norman's share of this first printing would come to a gross of about \$3,500. This prospect evidently decided him, and, taking advantage of the fact that all automobile dealers in France were in search of buyers with dollars, he paid a thousand of them to buy a new Peugeot. Powered by a sept chevaux engine, with cross-eyed headlights and a pile-upholstered back seat that was cruelly narrowed by the intrusion of real-wheel contours, the car was the first in what proved over the years to be a distinctive series of Mailer automobile purchases. The car's initial mission would be to transport them to Spain.

March was drawing to an end, and Bill Rainey had just sailed from New York for Southampton, whence on April 10 he would travel to Paris. Barney, who had actually arranged a Loeb & Troper transfer to Paris, was also planning to arrive in early April. He would join Norman and Bea in the Peugeot as they met the S.S. America when she docked at Cherbourg on April 21. So if there was a time for Norman and Bea to be without obligation in Paris, and

thus free to retrace some of the southward steps of Mark and Alice, early April was it. Accordingly, they made their preparations, acquiring an April 1, five-day visitor's Visa to Spain, plan their trip with the Linenthals and with Enrique Cruz Salido, who had been at the Salzburg Seminar with Mark.

Enrique's father, a well-known Spanish Socialist, had fled to France after the fall of the Republic, only to be returned by Vichy in 1942 and executed. The son, a graduate student who spoke excellent English, served as a kind of ambassador to the American community in Paris, representing anti-Franco Spaniards both in France and in Spain. As the Linenthals' friend, he had been their advisor for their trip in January, on which they had smuggled in to dissident contacts both money and contraband literature. This time, the more daring goal was to employ the Peugeot as an escape vehicle for one or more dissidents who needed to get out of Spain. Enrique could not himself return to Spain, but his closest connection to anti-government groups there was his fellow-Parisian student Paco Benet Goitia, who was going to accompany the Mailers on their trip. Paco spoke no English, but he was the only simpatico Spaniard in the Paris community who had a Falangist passport, and was thus able to move freely between the two countries. He was also closely connected to the anti-government networks in both Barcelona and Madrid, and on this trip he was not only to coordinate the escape, but also to dispose of the leaflets and other contraband literature that would be packed into the

spare tire and back-seat cushions of the Peugeot.

All this was heady stuff to the young Americans, who up to now had been feeling that their European experience was lacking in authentic adventure. With Paco, Norman and Bea drove south in late March, and by April 1, approaching the border, they were wondering how much scrutiny they would attract. As part of their approach to the crossing, they had Bea take the wheel. The Guardia Civil on the Spanish side were so struck by the unfamiliar sight of a new car being driven by an attractive young American woman that they waived the visitors through, with hardly a pause over their passports. In Barcelona, Paco guided them to a drop-off point--where the back seat and the spare tire were quickly removed, unpacked, and replaced--and then they proceeded to Madrid for the main part of their mission. For two days they dodged about the city, trying to avoid the constant surveillance that Paco sensed to be all around them, before being told that the time was not right for the escape; that the plan would have to be postponed. Pausing only to take in a bullfight, they headed back to Paris with the firm resolve that they would return and complete what they had started¹⁵.

¹⁵Norman wrote to Fig Gwaltney on May 21:
"We were in Spain in April. It's really a horrible place with thugs in uniform all over. We did see a bull fight though, a bad one which was surprisingly bloody and in which there was an anti-Fascist demonstration. Also we got to know some of the guys in the underground in Spain and they're really terrific guys. The thing that keeps surprising me about Spain is how black and white everything there is--after the war I never believed a country could be black and white."

The main effect of the trip on Norman was indeed to whet his appetite for more, but for now the Mailers had to suspend their own travels and prepare to serve as hosts for the various visitors who were travelling in their direction. They arrived back in Paris on Thursday, April 8, only to find that Barney had got there in their absence, was established in the Hotel Montalembert on the left bank, and had already assumed his new working assignment at the Paris office of Loeb and Troper. That weekend, the three Mailers feasted at Rue Brea on a pair of chickens Barney had

A year later, Norman would write of his visit: "There are youths in the Spanish underground who were children when Madrid was under siege. The ones I knew best were students, delivered out of the very body of the bourgeoisie which now sits upon Spain. They carry with them the best hope of mankind, indeed our only hope for the world disaster which every year approaches more closely. For if there is a leavening to our fate, it is raised by the revolutionary, and whatever seeds may rest in man for an equitable, creative society are borne with his tempest." [preface, July, 1949]

brought from Warsaw, and introduced the delighted newcomer to a number of Americans who dropped by their flat for the purpose. Then Norman and Bea turned to greet Bill Rainey, who was arriving in Paris bearing the welcome gift of the first bound copy of The Naked and the Dead ever to see the light of day: in fact it was hand-bound, having been put together specially by the production department a week before regular production was available[]. Norman's mail had started to fill up with little notes from the States, directed to Bill or to him, telling of the first freshets that would build into the novel's flood of welcome--"letters from enthusiastic booksellers, Hollywood agents clamoring for the rights, A.A. Van Dym's enthusiasm, etc. etc." [adelaide4/23/48]--and featuring a signature invitation from David O. Selznick begging that Norman drop everything and come to Hollywood forthwith to write for the Selznick studio.

Laughing-off the absurdity of this more quickly than they recognized its underlying authenticity, Norman and Bea took Bill around to meet their friends, recommending authors and manuscripts left and right, and introduced him especially to Robert, the impoverished French painter who had taught Norman to swear in French and who, despite the apparently hopeless quality of his work, was much beloved by the Mailers (possibly because of his war-record as a member of the Maquis.) They wanted to help Robert financially, so they introduced Bill to him as a famous American art critic who was in Paris to buy the work of unknown painters

for the American market. Bill actually knew nothing about painting, but at Robert's studio he kept a poker face, responding to Norman's prearranged, covert "buy" signals with what he hoped were professional nods of approval at three or four canvases, and at the end of the day Bill solemnly paid the painter a total of perhaps seventy-five of Norman's dollars for the lot.

Such well-intentioned hi-jinks passed the time, Bill apparently reported back to Rinehart that Norman was holding up well under the pressure of pre-publication suspense, and for a brief season the internal reunion arrangements of the Mailer family actually displaced the publishing drama that soon--and for a very long time--would effectively dominate all of their lives. Not only had Barney succeeded in obtaining the new Paris assignment, he had also arranged first-class passage for Fan and Barbara at his employers' expense, but his own free time remained relatively limited. He therefore settled into his job while the vacationing Bill Rainey explored the local haunts with the young Mailers and their friends, driving with them in the Peugeot for short excursions into the countryside. Barney got free from the office, though, for the third week of April, and on Wednesday the 21st he stood with Norman and Bea at the foot of the S. S. America passenger-way as she made berth at her Cherbourg pier. In a setting worthy of a Selznick movie, the Mailer family was reunited on European soil.

Norman had arranged the day that followed like a film script:

after clearing customs and loading up the car, he drove slowly along the Normandy Peninsula coastal-road, stopping along the way to get out and lead explorations of two still freshly-scarred Invasion beaches. Then he cruised inland along the Seine, timing his arrival into Paris so that his family could see her first at sundown of this beautifully clear spring day. Emerging from the damp, wintery months, Norman had been converted that spring into a lover of the city, and his management of their entrance revealed his self-consciousness of the experience. Barbara remembers the

moment to this day:

It was probably the most beautiful sight I'd ever seen at that point in my life. And it was particularly impressive because Norman had written early on not to expect too much of Paris (in the first lonely days after they got there, I guess) and had never bothered to tell us that he no longer felt that way. [1/12/98]

The family put up at the Montalembert, and while Fan immediately began searching out a flat on the Right Bank, Norman, ever on the alert to relieve the financial problems of his friends, got Barbara started on painting lessons from their friend Robert. Though Barney continued busy at the office, they all toured round the city together, but the first ambitious excursion was in the Peugeot in early May: Barbara and the Linenthals joined Norman and Bea for an extended, looping journey first out to Le Mont-Saint- Michel, then down to the south coast of Brittany, and finally an exploration up the Loire on the return leg to Paris. For Mark and Alice, the trip must have seemed the logical extension of their initial tour with Norman and Bea to Chartres

the previous January, but coming upon the prospect of the great

Abbey was to Barbara more like a dream:

As we approached, driving across flat grazing country with sheep, it appeared at first so faintly through a mist that we weren't sure of what it was, and then as it grew clearer, we could barely believe our eyes because it seemed to be floating on a cloud.
[ibid]

There were so few tourists in Europe in the spring of 1948 that the Mailers and their party had almost every place to themselves, and they were besieged by innkeepers to stay the night in Le Mont--which they did. After touring the interior the next morning they headed down toward the off-shore Brittany island of Belle Ile, stopping at the connecting coastal town of Quiberon. They never got out to the island, for some reason, but they frolicked in Quiberon for several nights, falling into a performance-game that underscored the fact that, on May 6, The Naked and the Dead was being released in New York. Alice remembered that they were "playing a game called 'The Naked and the Dead'," and in it "Bea was usually Wilson, and Norman always wanted to be Croft." They played the game repeatedly, on the rocky seafront at Quiberon, acting out scenes from the book as they variously remembered them, before heading back toward Paris by driving along the Loire. They looked at the great chateaux along the river, but did not stop to explore them, and when they got back to Paris they discovered that Mark and Alice, who had sat the whole trip on the much-traveled mohair back seat, had caught crabs.

Much of May was taken up with the first waves of reports from New York, all telling how extremely promising the prospects looked for The Naked and the Dead. Norman got involved in various ways, but he had two concerns that to a certain extent distanced him from the publication hurly-burly: he wanted his family to have a really good vacation in Europe, which to him meant travelling, and he wanted to hang-back from celebrating the success of the book until that success was confirmed. So after getting back from the Brittany trip and catching up on his correspondence with New York, he fought against the temptation to conclude that he had a confirmed hit on his hands. Instead, while tending to his business correspondence as required, he threw himself into planning an ambitious auto tour through Italy. He laid out a sweeping itinerary for a month-long journey, beginning with an entrance to Italy through the Swiss Alps and the San Gottard Pass (the tunnel evidently had not yet been reopened after the war) and proceeding in a dazzling sequence of stops from Milan to Venice, to Florence, to Siena, to Rome; from Rome to Naples, to Pompeii; back North through Pisa and ultimately into the South of France where the goals were to be Nice, Villefrance-sur-Mer and a villa on the Cote d'Azur.

Such a trip was far too ambitious for Barney's schedule, so with his characteristic quickness to separate from the family he insisted that the other proceed without him, and on the last day of May Norman did two things. He went first to the Paris branch of

the Chase Bank and booked an August steamship passage for two, Le Havre to New York; then he rolled the Peugeot east out of Paris, toward Nancy, with Bea beside him in the front and Fan and Barbara happily ensconced on the newly-sanitized back seat. It was a trip that proved to be full of excitement and discovery, starting with the grinding ascent in their sept-chevaux machine

over the Alps, as Barbara remembers:

It was raining that day, and as we began to climb into the mountains, it snowed. The road, which was just an endless series of steep hairpin turns, got more and more narrow as the snows of the winter which had been shoveled to either side got more and more massive....At every turn, Norman had to double clutch to take the car back from second gear to first. We held our breaths and prayed we wouldn't meet another car. Of course we did--just after we passed the top of the pass. At this point the snow was coming down like a blizzard and there was almost no visibility. Backing up a few feet to let the other car go by, we weren't sure if we might not go off the edge.[ibid]

They burst out of the blizzard and into the golden sunshine of Italy quite cinematically, and, indeed, the whole journey proceeded very much as if it were part of a film. Because they did not realize how rare and precious they were as tourists, they marvelled when restaurants staff gladly brought out samples of every dish on the menu to assist them in making their choices. They lingered in Venice, captured by its glow, and chanced across the city's first postwar film festival (which featured "Panic in the Streets.") Barbara remembers Florence because during their few days there, in a hotel on the Arno, she read A Room with a View, and walked across the Ponte Vecchio--which seemed to have been the only one of the bridges to have survived the war.

Part of Norman's plan was to send Fan back to Paris by train after the party had visited Rome, so that in a sense their arrival there had a certain climactic quality. They went first to the American Express office, where they found a packet from Barney enclosing early reviews and some Rinehart letters, all confirming a favorable reception for the novel. While they sat reading in the parked car they were discovered by a Paris friend, Sarai Sherman, and she whisked them off to her pensione at the top of the Spanish Steps, where Norman and Bea took the only vacancy, establishing Barbara and Fan at a hotel across the street. From this base they explored the city, in the process meeting Barbara Probst and her mother, who had crossed with Barbara and Fan on the America, and came to know a group of penurious Hungarian painters, including Simeon Hantai. Five of the painters presented a kind of private show to the four Mailers, who purchased one painting from each, for a total of \$150. Norman then arranged for his mother's departure, saw her off on the Paris train, and pointed the Peugeot toward Naples.

The rest of the journey went according to plan, part of which was to afford the newly published author continuing insulation from the anxieties attending his book's reception. It is probable, though, that the suspense, increased by the fragments of positive information that the American Express mail had provided, was starting to tell on Norman. This at least is one way of explaining why, on the return journey north from Pompeii, he

was so impatient when Bea and Barbara wanted to stop at Pisa and see the Leaning Tower. Barbara recollects:
We drove into the enormous and totally empty piazza where the Leaning Tower stands. The car had no sooner stopped than Norman said, 'Okay, we've seen it. Let's go.' Bea and I insisted on stretching, so we got out of the car and looked at it. Norman didn't even do that. Then we got back in and drove off. We didn't even discuss going inside, which you could still do then.

They passed up into the South of France on June 23, having logged a total of twenty days in Italy, and went directly to Nice, where they had arranged for their next American Express mail pickup. If it had been Norman's conscious intention to use the Italy trip as a kind of buffer between him and the full fact of his novel's introduction to the public, the strategy had been successful. But the buffer collapsed in Nice when what Barbara remembers as the "enormous packet" from Barney was carried out of the American Express office and opened up in the car. The Naked and the Dead had by this time taken off explosively, and the bundles of reviews, advertisements and letters did their work: The atmosphere in the car became somewhat frantic and hysterical. I don't think we finished reading any letter or review because it was always interrupted by word of a comment in what someone else was reading. Finally Norman said, in a rather small voice which I will never forget the sound of because it so totally captured the feeling that none of this was quite real.

[manso, 118]

'Gee, I'm first on the best seller list.'

[End of Chapter 4, Part Two]