

## Psychological And Sociopolitical Perspectives In Norman Mailer's *The Naked And The Dead*

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### ABSTRACT

A prominent figure in post-war American writing, Norman Mailer addresses psychological and societal concerns in *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) that left readers and critics perplexed. He brought them together in a complementary manner that clarified the evolution of their cause and effect. This study explains the different reasons why people gain power, how it hurts both those who abuse it and those who are abused, and how it affects people's minds and society when it comes to megalomania. It also seeks to expose the inner thoughts of the modern person, who is afflicted by spiritual decay as a form of resistance against the political life that permeates practically every sphere of American society. Mailer's strong and prominent characters, such as General Cummings and Lieutenant Croft, who embody the victimizers' megalomaniacal mindsets, serve to illustrate these issues. Lieutenant Hearn and Troop Red Valsen, two additional helpless persons who would suffer at the hands of the victimizers, have always been the focus. In this book, Mailer urges the reader to either give in to immoral influences or make an effort to achieve some degree of spiritual autonomy and self-respect.

**Keywords:** Norman Mailer, *The Naked and the Dead*, power, megalomania, victimization, and suffering.

### Introduction

According to French philosopher, social theorist, historian of ideas, and literary critic Michel Foucault (1926–1984), power is an issue, exploitation, and absolute mystery. Power, according to Foucault, is "visible and invisible, present and hidden [as well as] ubiquitous." He also adds: "Everywhere that power exists, it is being exercised" (*Power/Knowledge*, 213). One aspect of Mailer's personality is his megalomania. By employing many literary genres to subtly alter reality while utilizing fiction as a guide, he continues to push the boundaries. Mailer is ambitious, open-minded, and prepared to use fiction to highlight a novel idea of reality because of his emotions and self-assurance. In order to demonstrate how megalomania results in violence that some characters find personally rewarding, Mailer makes references to it and its effects on the man throughout *The Naked and the Dead*. Specifically, a guy tries to use his immense ability to influence others, learn the truth about dying, and endure the pain of seeing violent acts. Generally speaking, Mailer's main focus is on the interaction between a person's will and a society that seeks to suppress it. This spiritual conflict is closely related to the topic of power, especially political power, and the necessity for individuals to fight against the forces of totalitarianism. Because of the immense power of politics and society, modern man is in danger of losing his freedom, dignity, and sense of self, which is what, motivates Mailer to write about megalomania in relation to power.

### Power of the Novel

*The Naked and the Dead* is a well-known war novel that is often regarded as the best book of World War II. The connection between soldiers and the army has unquestionably evolved throughout time, and the soldier in a war novel was the victim of a power that he was unable to comprehend or control. Diana Trilling in "The Radical Moralism of Norman Mailer" says that "the army has become identified with the irrational and destructive authority of society itself" (152). Trilling also describes this authority as a "death-dealing power" (152). A variety of genres are covered in *The Naked and the Dead*, including historical, political, and documentary. As an ideological fiction, *The Naked and the Dead* addresses war-related topics in general and the effects of politics and society on militants and civilians in particular. In terms of psychology, the book depicts how each person views what is right and bad in society and criticizes their lack of faith.

Because he yearns to critique both the individual and society, Mailer handles all of his characters in *The Naked and the Dead* symbolically and figuratively rather than physically. He introduces his characters as being more important than the military action. Similarly, Ihab Hassan in *Radical Innocence: Studies in the Contemporary American Novel* refers to the modern self and its suffering from the contemporary life by saying: "spirit is exhausted, civilization is overextended, and the individual must move on surfaces or be crushed inward" (12). In all its positive and negative aspects, such a powerful statement serves as a warning and a cause-and-effect formula for the worn-out spirit that resulted from the overextended civilization. This serves as a caution to modern man: in order to avoid being devalued by the forces of society, one must grow, be on guard, and deal with teething issues.

According to Hassan, the individual's limited influence over society is a symbol of their incapacity to change things and project confidence. Additionally, the modern man suffers from impotence and inactivity, two major characteristics linked to alienation. Hassan says:

The individual's sense of his potency, his power to effect change and mold events, seems in a steady decline. It is no great wonder that men choose to withdraw from the public realm of action, though their withdrawal from the world compels them into a fragile or futile relation to themselves. (15)

In the context of politics, power in this instance causes alienation, anxiety, and frustration. In addition to damaging social pressures, the contemporary man is also associated with abusive political forces. Power manipulation always ends and subjugates justice and reason, and it becomes impossible to make the primary goals clear.

*The Naked and the Dead's* title conveys some important connotations. The title's literal meaning alludes to the destiny of undeclared and dead soldiers in all conflicts. Two distinct and complementary terms, "the naked" and "the dead," as well as the linking word "and," which in the title suggests an opposition rather than identity between two important concepts, make up the title's lexical structure.

Since there is no arbitrary power to defeat oneself, there will be sufficient resolve to accomplish objectives. In order to convey the idea of being exposed, empty, and vulnerable, Mailer used the term "naked" multiple times. The title and the novel itself have deeper significance than one might think. Only when he is in the process of developing a new way of life and self-confidence can the non-hypocritical person beat a corrupted society. Correspondingly McConnell in *Four Post War American Novelists: Bellow, Mailer, Barth, and Pynchon* says:

In Mailer's world, a man is not only tested and refined by his moments of nakedness, he is also judged by them [...] if the man's past has been one of the tiny evasions, small hypocrisies, then the moment will not endure [...] as it should, in the creation or fabrication of a new style for living, a more embracing and heroic style of being in the world. (68)

*The Naked and the Dead* tells the story of the American invasion of the Japanese island of Anopopei during World War II, headed by General Cummings. The Japanese land-based forces control the island, which the American troops try to control. Once there, a reconnaissance team under the command of Lieutenant Croft and fourteen infantrymen moves in to learn more about the enemy's location and strength. Since the island is a hub for having the authority to rule, it is a dream come true. The novel is organized into four sections. Mailer portrays Lieutenant Croft as a strong guy in part one, "Wave," and demonstrates his violent behavior toward his platoon. General Cummings and Lieutenant Hearn, two additional characters, are introduced in part two, "Argil and Mold," along with their conflicting political and intellectual stances. "Plant and Phantom" is the third part, where Mailer depicts another physical altercation between Sergeant Croft and Lieutenant Hearn. Hearn's death is also foreseen in this section. Part four, "Wake," concludes the book and explains the Japanese army's alleged victory brought on by a shortage of food and munitions. Ultimately, the novel's four-part structure is crucial in emphasizing the power dynamics and offers substantial backing to one side of the power struggle.

### **Croft's Exaggerated Conduct**

While Croft was playing cards with some troopers late at night, the first indications of power-hungry megalomania appeared. Croft makes sure he controls the entire affair, primarily because a disgruntled soldier from the back bunk interrupted them. Croft spoke to that trooper, displaying his tyranny and belligerence in front of the others, saying: "If you're really looking for something, you can mess with me" (N.D. 1). The soldier who had protested did not respond at all because he was afraid; Croft sat down and grinned satisfactorily. Such responses reveal Croft's arrogance and tyranny and set the victimizer apart from the victim. Furthermore, whether seen favorably or unfavorably, Croft's smile is a symbol of strength and triumph. Put differently, Croft wants to impose himself through coercion so that he won't be insulted. The troops view Croft as an unquestionably brave individual who has been characterized as "the best platoon sergeant in the Army and the meanest" (N.D. 11) and as the one who "loves combat." "A worse man you could be under or a better one, depending on how you look at it" (N.D. 11) is what the narrator continues to repeat. As a battle enthusiast, superior, and pessimistic, Croft displays his dominance, authority, pride, and self-assurance. "A responsibility he craved; he felt powerful and certain at such moments" (N.D. 18) is how Croft describes his confidence in leading men.

The platoon soldiers, including Hennessey, are terrified for a variety of reasons. Croft thinks that "Hennessey was frightened and it amused him" after observing his "white silent face" (N.D. 18). In addition, the term "amused" describes Croft's initial signs of megalomania in his actions. Croft continues "laughing to release the ferment in him" (N.D. 11) since he clearly believes Hennessey will be slain. The way Croft responded to Hennessey's death is definitely concrete proof of his megalomaniacal behavior, which is completely at odds with a trooper's scared and helpless mindset. Because of his thoughtfulness, the narrator compares Croft's response to Hennessey's passing to a man who learns of his wife's treachery. The connection between unfaithfulness and death and power is actually what this resemblance alludes to. The Sergeant also has "odd dreams and portents of power," according to Mailer (N.D. 26). Mailer used a very creative approach, Time Machine, to emphasis on Croft's autocratic power-filled nature. Intentionally, he uses this strategy to introduce his readers to his characters, their motivations, and their social and psychological backgrounds. Furthermore, Leigh claims that the book's "inflexible structure formalizes determinism and establishes restrictive terms for the fictional world Mailer is able to create." In a nutshell, Croft is the unbeliever and unadjusted person in a corrupt social structure. Croft who is "a mean boy," "just didn't like to have a man interfere with him." Additionally, he could not "stand to have anyone beat him in anything" (N.D. 102).

In response to these unsuccessful attempts, Croft states: "I HATE EVERYTHING WHICH IS NOT IN MYSELF" (N.D. 107). The psychological meaning of this inner voice helps him understand his obstinate and domineering nature and encourages him to take on new tasks. Croft is so bold and ambitious, despite his lack of literacy, that he embraces the war—the ideal field of action—to fulfill his desire for slaughter and conquest and to exercise his ferocity without worrying about consequences.

It is necessary to compare Croft's personality to Cummings' in order to comprehend his. Conversely, Croft is "the perfect victim [...] for the General's grim plans" because the former obeyed the orders indirectly. Croft is a victimized and victimizing destroyer of a life he cannot have, whereas Cummings is a self-conscious denial of life, according to sociology. Life perfectly captured Cummings's aloofness toward his wife, but it also perfectly captured Croft's cuckold behavior. Croft's relationship with his wife is symbolic of treachery, whereas Cummings' is symbolic of sterility, according to Mailer. They both serve as metaphors for failure, whether it is in their current or future circumstances. When taken as a whole, Cummings and Croft offer a hazy picture of the political and social dynamics that make men part of the title's dreamy "dead": Croft has missed his shot at life, while Cummings has been denied it.

### The Authoritative Personality of Cummings

General Cummings, another powerful figure, uses great power in a manner similar to Croft's. His soldiers resemble "a nest of ants wrestling and tugging at a handful of breadcrumbs in a field of grass" (N.D.21). Drawing Cummings' soldiers as "ants" foreshadows their sluggishness and moral decline in a realistic way. For the first time, Cummings showed an unpredictable personality—at least to Lieutenant Robert Hearn. After telling Hearn that he had "powerful enemies," Cummings' self-pitying "voice had been disgustingly apparent" (N.D.50) to Hearn, who firmly believes it is "quite in contrast to the clear cold sense with which he usually estimated men and events" (N.D.50). Astonished by Cummings' inconsistent attitude, Hearn discerned "quite early that he [Cummings] was a tyrant [...] and a frightful snob" (N.D.50). According to Hearn, who was Cummings' self-assured assistant or intellectual equal, "in his manner are combined effectively the force, the tenacity, the staying power of that doughty animal [bulldog] with all the intellect and charm and poise of a college professor or a statesman" (N.D. 52) in a newspaper article. Furthermore, this report demonstrates Hearn's unwavering desire to know the General's true nature or to resolve the previously displayed discrepancy. By portraying Cummings as a power-hungry fascist leader and an intelligent politician, Mailer demonstrates how Cummings forces himself on his troops during the island's occupation. It is "to determine the validity of a new strategic theory [which] is prompted by raw opportunism" (Miller 68) that Cummings has meticulously planned the dispatch of a patrol to the rear of the Japanese position. On the other hand, this reckless tactic with little connection power results in the deaths of some soldiers.

In contrast with most politicians, Cummings makes extensive use of the political tenet that "the end justifies the means." Cummings uses this political philosophy to demonstrate his interest-seeking and power-hungry nature. Additionally, Cummings takes use of the chance to discuss with Hearn the following defense theories:

If you're holding a gun and you shoot a defenseless man, then you're a poor creature, a dastardly person [...] The fact that you're holding the gun and the other man is not is no accident. It's a product of everything you've achieved; it assumes that if [...] you're aware enough, you have the gun when you need it (N.D. 54).

General Cummings was compelled by the military organization to fully forgo human ties. He was also compelled to maintain his dominance by degrading his assistant and utilizing political ideologies to control him through force or possibly magnetism. The magnetic might of Cummings controls Hearn, who is forced to remain in his tent; "he couldn't escape the peculiar magnetism of the General, a magnetism derived from all the connotations of the General's power" (N.D.54-55). The General is shown as having absolute, capricious, and commanding power via his character, expertise, ambition, and persuasive skills.

During a political debate between Cummings and Hearn, the former expressed a desire to share his views on liberalism and winning the current conflict, claiming that the "root of all the liberals' ineffectiveness comes right sprang out of the desperate suspension in which they have to hold their minds [...] The type of thing that preoccupied me was what makes a nation fight well" (N.D. 114). As a desperate liberal, Cummings also purposefully provides an illustration of how his superior authoritarian thinking differs from Hearn's. Hearn's convictions are misunderstood by Cummings, who is eager to point out that his ideas are flawed and incorrect, at least in Cummings' opinion. And then he starts to hypothesize: "If you're fighting in defense of your soil, then perhaps you're a little more effective[....] After a couple of years of war, there are only two considerations that make a good army: a superior material force and a poor standard of living" (N.D. 114). The General's viewpoint in this quote is completely at odds with liberal thinking.

As an American with a strong sense of authority, Cummings thinks he has a lot of potential that will enable him to dominate other people and take over their nations. The statement "We have the highest standard of living in the world and [...] the worst individual fighting soldiers of any big power" (N.D. 115) is Cummings' attempt to persuade Hearn. Cummings repeatedly uses the same phrase to support his arguments: "Break them down." An enlisted guy becomes more upset every time he witnesses an officer receiving an additional privilege (N.D. 115). Hearn believes that having "big power" entails dismantling other people, which will ultimately make them more hateful of him. Cummings understands what it's like to be despised. But he wants people to be afraid of him and stay away from him. Cummings, who is a member of the army, an institution that exercises total authority and control by coercion, terror, terror, injustice, incarceration, and

superiority, is commanded more by position than by any other factor. Joining the army implies that Cummings gives up his humanity and becomes a machine, or even a robot, with no emotions or perceptions.

The episode with the cigarette end between Cummings and Hearn serves as an example of the various forms of Cummings' power and terror. Hearn tosses a cigarette end into Cummings' tent floor as they converse. Hearn's action, in Cummings' opinion, is an assault and a clear rejection of his authority; the incident "was a symbol of the independence of his troops, their resistance to him. The fear, the respect his soldiers held for him now was a rational one, an admission of his power to punish them, and that was not enough" (N.D.212). According to Cummings, only strong men can exist, accomplish their objectives, and exert authority over others in America since it is a politically, economically, and militarily dominant nation.

Cummings advances his ideas about power and how to obtain it in a morally sound manner. Hearn, who is so keen to become a strong man, is impressed by Cummings, who asserts that "the only morality of the future is a power morality, and a man who cannot find his adjustment to it is doomed." "There's one thing about power," Cummings said. Only from the top down can it flow. It simply calls for greater power to be directed downward, to burn it out, when there are small surges of resistance in the middle levels (N.D.215). Furthermore, when you become a powerful man, you also target a helpless person for persecution and humiliation.

The culmination of the lengthy discussion between Cummings and Hearn, two opposing forces—totalitarianism and liberalism—occurs when Cummings makes fun of Hearn for throwing a cigarette end at the former's tent floor earlier. Forced to pick it up, Hearn unwillingly says: "I resent this. It's an unfair proposition" [...] "A series of emotions, subtle and conflicting, flowed behind the surface of his face[....] Cummings forced himself to face the hatred in Hearn's eyes. He was feeling an immense relief (N.D. 216). Hearn requests a transfer to another division from the General after feeling humiliated.

Finally, the cigarette is a potent symbol that conveys masculinity, greatness, affluence, and most importantly, power throughout the exchanges between Cummings and Hearn. Hearn and Cummings both utilize cigarettes as a form of humiliation and control. For Cummings, the cigarette ultimately "threatens the army as a preview of the future, the bureaucratic pattern of the totalitarian dream." For the same reason, the narrator writes: "Hearn was an embodiment of the one mistake, the one indulgence he had ever permitted himself, and it had been intolerable to be with him since then" (N.D.273).

### **The Ineffectual Power of Hearn**

Lieutenant Hearn plays a crucial role in the story both philosophically and theatrically, despite never having met Cummings and Croft. After Hearn is humiliated by Cummings, he is sent to Croft's unit, where Croft plans his murder out of a desire for power, dominance, and envy. Croft's retaliation is demonstrated by Hearn's death at the hands of the Japanese in front of his eyes. Ironically, Hearn wants to "make the world in his own image and impose his will upon it" (Hassan 147).

Hearn strikes a nice balance throughout the book, but he also succumbs to his craving for both authority and significant strength. According to McConnell (p. 75), Hearn "is an ideal figure to become the unifying consciousness, the central moral voice of *The Naked and the Dead*." Hearn plays the part of a passive tragic hero who never stops observing the world around him. Accordingly, Mailer's heroes—among whom Hearn is one—do their best to "understand a complex situation, all the while keying themselves to the point of urgency, the critical point of understanding where the action is unremittingly forced upon them" (McConnell 75). In fact, Hearn is always the observer or spectator who does his best to understand Croft's experiences and Cummings' views. As an urban hero, Hearn identifies with the downtown and ambiguous culture, attempting to understand its complicated mix but failing. Regarding this:

To the Mailer hero, the Mailer sensibility, society in its everyday appearance is a sham, a trap hiding beneath it deep and dark conspiracies, games of power and death which are subtle perils to the soul. The Mailer hero, then, characteristically enters upon a process of examination, investigation, and discovery whose final illumination, ideally, will force him into just such a shattering confrontation with the existential void (McConnell 75-76).

That is to say, appearances are never true. In various viewpoints, society supports people in positions of authority and disregards individuals who are morally upright but unproductive. As a result, the protagonist who is discovering plays a dual role in the narrative both technically and philosophically. The modern hero, who is distinct from all past heroes, is also personified by Hearn. With so many barriers in his path, our contemporary hero finds it tough to conquer them. In order to highlight his point about the modern man in modern society, Mailer deftly employs a hero—or rather, an anti-hero.

In *The Naked and the Dead*, man is once again portrayed as tainted, reluctant, and so confused that he is powerless. Hearn, a liberal thinker who finds himself at the center of powerful opposing forces, is well suited for these attributes. This implies that Hearn is the one who loses in both power struggles and that he is essential in connecting them. In addition to serving as a mediator between the commanders and soldiers, Hearn also serves as a link between the two primary protagonists, Croft and Cummings. In addition to being a somewhat enigmatic and hollow figure, Hearn represents the liberal voice and the moral side of his culture.

Hearn has several characteristics with the two perpetrators, Croft and Cummings. Hearn had the same desires for control, power, and appearances that incited Cummings and Croft. Hearn is drawn to Cummings because he has the capacity "to



extend his thoughts into immediate and effective action" (N.D.89), which appeals to him. Furthermore, "Always there was the power that leaped at you, invited you" (N.D.235) is what Cummings said to Hearn. Hearn wants to be like Cummings, but he hates his position in relation to him: "he had acquiesced in the dog-role, had even had the dog's dream, carefully submerged, of someday equaling the master" (N.D.208). Considering that "he was basically like Cummings," Hearn even feared "when he searched himself," that "he was just another Croft" (N.D. 262; 385).

The fight in *The Naked and the Dead* centers on the three major protagonists, Cummings, Croft, and Hearn, who fought a real war against the Japanese and an ideological war against one other. Thus, the main fight in the book is between "the mechanistic forces of 'the system'," which are exemplified by General Cummings and Sergeant Croft, and "the 'confused humanism' of Lieutenant Hearn which ranges against these." Indirectly, this struggle depicts the machine as the winner and the human as being vanquished and killed by the two oppressors.

The Japanese prisoner incident is among the most startling instances of Croft's haughty, heartless conduct. One of the Japanese was captured by Croft and his recon, and Croft's response to the captured person was extremely chilly and provocative. Despite his desire to kill the prisoner, Croft tried to provide consolation and safety signals. Croft killed the Japanese soldier after giving him hope for the future because he saw war as "a nice measure of satisfaction of an unquenchable lust for conquest and blood" (Trilling 152). The entire scene clearly alludes to Croft's domineering, hysterical, and "blank" attitude: "The smile on the dead man's face amused him, and a trivial rill of laughter emitted from his lips" (N.D. 129). Croft is gratified when someone is killed and thinks he is better than them since he was spared. He declares that Croft's platoon dies as a result of their weakness. Croft defines power as having the experience, survival, and control that make him more attractive than his battalion.

In addition to feeling ambitious and immortal, Croft has faith in his ability to accomplish his objectives despite having to ascend Mount Anaka, the island's highest peak.

Ironically, Mailer demonstrated power in Croft's life and in the novel's pivotal moment of murdering a bird—rather than the strong Sergeant. One of the platoon members, Roth, discovered a small bird with a wounded wing and meticulously played with it while Croft was occupied with tending to a stretcher. Not just the other platoon members were drawn to this bird. In a symbolic sense, they saw it as a form of comfort, enjoyment, and restitution to their distant relatives. To Croft, however, it was a challenge to his authority:

Roth was completely absorbed in the bird[....] Roth had fallen in love with the bird immediately. It was lovely[....] He felt exactly the same joy he knew when his child had plucked at the hairs on his chest[....] He could not have picked a worse time to antagonize Croft. And deep within him, his rage was alive again, flaring. Everything was wrong, and Roth played with a bird, while nearly half the platoon stood about watching (N.D.351).

Croft demanded angrily that Roth give him the small bird. He felt "the bird's heart beating like a pulse against his palm" after he had captured the bird. Croft's rage worked into his fingertips as its small eyes darted wildly. Crushing it in his hand would be the easiest thing to do (N.D. 351). Mailer uses two images to convey the whole scene: a thin card on edge, threatening to fall, and strong water rushing through rock crevices. These two pictures symbolically highlight the conflict between the strong and the weak and its issues. While the others were watching, "[s]trange impulses pressed through his nerves, along his muscles, like water forcing itself through fissures in a rock mass[....]and the impulse, confused and powerful, shimmered in his brain like a card on edge about to fall" (N.D..351). The troops' first response to Croft killing the bird was startling: for the first time, the entire platoon rebelled against Croft, and many of them were incensed at his heinous and terrible deed. Therefore, this mishap and its aftermath confirm Croft's inefficiency and humiliation due to his arrogant power: a small bird defeats a tyrannical military sergeant!

Croft's relationship with Red Valsen and Hearn is one of the numerous effects of the aforementioned accident. For example, in the Valsen case, Croft increases the hostility by his action through which Valsen "knew without ever admitting it that he was afraid of Croft." However, he questioned Croft angrily: "What's the matter, Croft, you throwing orders around to save [yourself]?" Being shocked, Croft retorted: "I've had enough, Red." "You bit off a little too much this time" (N.D.352). Knowing of the incident, Hearn forced Croft to apologize to Red. Croft unwillingly said:

If Croft had been holding a rifle in his hand, he might have shot Hearn at this instant. That would have been automatic[....] He knew he had to comply. If he didn't, the platoon would fall apart. For two years he had molded it, for two years his discipline had not relaxed, and one breach like this might destroy everything he had done[....] He felt as if his flesh were crawling with vermin" (N.D.353).

From several angles, the final picture of vermin—a type of worm or rodent that spreads diseases and destroys crops or the human body—is evidence of Croft's loss of authority or control. It also indicates that he failed his second objective, which was to climb Mount Anaka.

Croft's will to climb "over the mountain," Anaka, is the primary example of his desire and power (N.D. 293). Croft saw "evil as a vital force" that gave him "energy and a decisive manner that the weaker, idealistic characters lack" (Miller 70), therefore he took advantage of both people and nature to achieve his goals. Croft's tenacious desire to ascend the mountain further demonstrated his extreme exhaustion and his disregard for both himself and the others in order to continue. Croft demonstrates his recklessness despite his decisiveness and steadfastness; to him, it was imperative to avoid retreating:

Croft [...] wanted to quit too, and each time a break ended he fought a quick battle with himself, exposed himself to all the temptations of rest, and then continued. He moved on because somewhere at the base of his mind was the directive

that climbing this mountain was necessary [...] He could have turned back no more easily than he could have killed himself. (N.D.438)

Geographical locations and the force of nature are essential in defeating the violent and haughty Croft, whose might is overthrown by the mountain, a representation of beauty. According to an environmental theorist, The mountains, deserts, and seas are examples of elements of nature that are beyond human control.

Croft and Red, two adversaries who represented distinct types of power—the power of tyrants and the strength of the rebels—had met in person. Croft's overpowering authority led him to expectantly threaten Red with a gunshot. Nevertheless, Red thinks that the others will stand by him after defying Croft's intimidation; sadly, nobody does, or perhaps, they are afraid. Croft then turned to face the others, requesting and threatening them: : "Who wants to get lined up with Red?" "Awright, Red, go get your pack" "Ah'm gonna shoot ya in about three-four seconds" (N.D. 463). Described as standing feet away and aiming his gun towards his soldier, Croft has the intention to shoot Red who "found himself watching the expression on Croft's face" (N.D.463). Consequently, after watching Croft's finger on the trigger, Red surrendered suddenly. Croft beats Red who grumbled half-heartedly.

Croft stared at the mountain, the most confusing obstacle he had ever encountered, as he retreated from climbing. Croft claimed he was climbing it alone, feeling anxious, helpless, and insecure. The narrator skillfully conveyed Croft's emotions as he lost his authority, control, and life:

A stream of wordless impulses beat in his throat and he had again the familiar and inexplicable tension the mountain always furnished him. To climb that, he had failed, and it hurt him vitally. His frustration was loose again. He would never have another opportunity to climb it. And yet he was wondering if he could have succeeded. Once more he was feeling the anxiety and terror the mountain had roused on the rock stairway [...] The empty hills would have eroded any man's courage. (N.D. 472)

Croft had lost everything in his life, including the mount and himself. Climbing the mount is symbolic of ascending a ladder with many barriers on its steps, and halfway up, one encounters numerous skirmishes that prevent him from reaching the peak. The all-inclusive scenario is a clear indication of battling life's obstacles.

Particularly at the novel's conclusion, it appears like Croft and Cummings are losing some sort of influence. A closer look at Cummings as he lies in his tent, thinking about his predicament, shows how distraught he is over losing the fight. The narrator provides an overview of the entire scene by stating:

The power, the intensity of the urges within himself, inexpressible, balked, seemed to course through his limbs, beating in senseless fury against the confines of his body. There was everything he wanted to control, everything, and he could not direct even six thousand men. Even a single man had been able to balk him. (N.D.200)

For a variety of reasons, including fear, failure, and despair, Cummings felt that he was losing authority. Actually, "he was afraid; failure now would be fatal." "It was acutely difficult now to conceal his annoyance with the most insignificant details, and it was affecting everything about him[...he felt powerless to alter it [the division]" (N.D.200). Because of his indolent soldiers, Cummings, who believes that Anapoei is an ocarina on which he plays his music, suddenly gets desperate. Mailer deftly and purposefully employs this island's chart to make "the first of many gestures towards the great reality [...]" ; in fact, it is an essential component of the novel's layout, serving as both a governing metaphor for the work and a guide to the process of reading it" ("Leigh, Spirit of Place, " 427).

The psychological, sociological, and, more specifically, political forces that he saw all around him were diverse, intricate, interwoven, and ever-changing. Mailer examined these forces. These factors put human compassion, dignity, and individual sovereignty in jeopardy. The whole thing has a negative impact on Mailer, who starts worrying about how society and politics affect people. The immediate effects of social and political power on the fate of the main characters have been made evident throughout the book.

## Conclusion

The main issue of Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead* is power, which is examined from a variety of angles, particularly the sociopolitical and psychological ones. In summary, the primary struggle in *The Naked and the Dead* is between the need for personal integrity and the mechanical forces. On the one hand, there is Commanding General Cummings, the brilliant and heartless fascist whose authority and control are unrivaled throughout the book, with the exception of the final moments, and the ruthless and ruthless Sergeant Croft, who shares many traits with Cummings. They both represent the mindless machine that obliterates everything. From the beginning until the end of the book, the defiant and courageous Private Red Valsen and the bewildered and deceived Lieutenant Hearn make an effort to preserve their identity and dignity in contrast to them. As anticipated, the machine triumphs when the human fails; nonetheless, by the end of the book, Valsen is vanquished and humiliated, and Hearn is either dead or has been sent to be dead by the machine. Likewise, Croft is defeated and humiliated by nature, and Cummings' aspirations are dashed when he fails to defeat his adversary on his own. Paradoxically, Cummings, who considers himself superhuman, is dissatisfied when his objectives are met by accident. Major Dalleson and his troops' enraged inaction and refusal to any reform were the main causes of Cummings' failure.

For people who are deemed helpless, impotent, and useless, power—related to one's origin and status—is the aim, especially if it is abused. Like a machine devoid of feelings or senses, power crushes everyone in its path, including the individual who aspires to power because of their position, organization, or even their own thoughts. Power, as one of life's

inclinations, aspirations, and motivations, must be used to combat oppression, victimization, and injustice, not the other way around. In one way or another, the weak prevail in the majority of the events and actions that take place throughout the book. In other words, powerless forces defeat the compelling characters. The failure of Cummings' and Croft's aims, which eventually point to the machine's failure and its detrimental effects on both man and nature, is therefore clearly demonstrated by this problem. The lesson conveyed also serves as a defense of modern man's resistance to the forces of mechanical society's dehumanization. However, Hearn's demise and Valsen's disgrace signify that the machine has defeated humanity.

Nearly all of the characters suffer from a variety of issues, such as war, impotence, bullying, lost opportunities, alienation, and megalomania. They are either physically alive and spiritually dead, or existentially naked and imaginatively dead. Mailer's final point is that people must either submit to repressive powers or make an effort to preserve their spiritual autonomy and self-respect.

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