This week I have decided to write about my opinions and reflections on Norman Mailer’s *The Armies of the Night*. I will be engaging in this opinionated sharing for I am full to the brim of ideas and responses to this mentally invigorating work. Much of my response will focus on the notion that I found myself, and more often than I would like to admit, relating deeply to Norman’s character. For simplicity’s sake, I will refer to Norman Mailer the author as Mailer and Norman Mailer the character as Norman.

Much of this relationship between myself and Norman rests upon my own identity and how I perform it. I am somewhat of an egoist, but I am sure this only surfaces when I reveal my writing, and empathy is not something that comes easily to me. However, I find it strikingly easy to empathize with some of the conflicts Norman encounters and navigates. The concept of “the Beast” is and how it can “takeover” is something that I have noticed in myself. Frankly, it is so relieving to read an accurate account of the thing that I feel oddly validated. Norman acknowledges his Beast and they share a symbiotic relationship with the Beast capitalizing and emboldening Norman during his inebriation and Norman lives, not to repress his Beast but to embrace it in a self-deprecating way. But is it always self-deprecating and must it be? Surely with some control, there muse be some advantage to Beastliness. But perhaps this is a slippery slope. For control is subjective to the strength of the Beast versus the strength of one’s rational will. And it is not always easy to tell which one is which.

Surely Mailer’s representation of the inner Beast is reflective of the dark consciousness, or pure instinct as the Darwinians would call it. But let us entertain for a moment, the idea that humans are distinct from animals and that the Beast is a true and present aspect of our personalities; the subconscious manifestation of our vices; the side of ourselves that indulges in what feels good though it is not necessarily good. It is largely due to this characterization of the Beast that I find its inclusion in the novel to be a profound window into the human subconscious, or at least my own. I know now that I am at least not the only one who has noticed this about themselves.

Another aspect of Mailer’s novel that I would like to highlight and discuss is the style it was written in. To me the novel nearly boasts that it was written in a very classic, almost Victorian style with its long complex sentences that often contain multiple clauses. Certainly, this is further a demonstration of Mailer’s identity as a novelist. What can be more novelistic? I know; a picaresque tale of a delightfully dislikable but relatable picaroon who runs amok through historical moments of great gravity. *The Armies of the Night* certainly encompasses all of these: Norman, the picaroon. This style is certainly distinct, I would relate it to both *Don Quixote* and *Joseph Andrews*. The concept of comic catharsis could also find a place in Mailer’s novel.

I will finish this response off with a brief discussion of the novel as history. Mailer’s work with *The Armies of the Night* is effective for engaging with history because it tells the story of history. Though it is opinionated, I will venture to say the if one were to read multiple of such accounts, they would understand the historical context in a deeper way than simply reading about the facts of what happened. I am a firm believer that feelings matter too, so recordings of people’s opinions during historical events I find quite valuable. The concept of history as a novel and the novel as history is intriguing to me because it reminds me of the Indigenous practice of storytelling. Storytelling in Indigenous culture is an important means of transmitting valuable knowledge. Instead of merely conveying facts or details of history, storytelling conveys emotions, facts, details, setting, thoughts, and ideas. It carries opinions with it, but that is why it is important to listen to multiple stories and different people. For each different storyteller has a different perspective to bring to the table. I find that Mailer’s narrative style relates to the idea of Indigenous storytelling insofar as it seeks to provide an account of the past through storytelling with an emphasis on the ideas and emotions evoked during the events.