

From Sex Prisoners to Female Revolters: Feminist Narrative in Norman Mailer's Novels

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Abstract—Norman Mailer, a Pulitzer Prize winner and a chronicler of his time, devoted his literary career to the representation of the western culture and the reality of America by putting his trust in sex and illustrating the gender relationship. In his writings, male are often created as robust, violent and powerful while female are often being bullied, humiliated, and defeated. Thus, Mailer has become one of the prime targets of feminist literary critics, being accused as a “prototypical male chauvinist”, a “warrior for male supremacy”, and a “militarist”. However, what these feminists fail to trace are Mailer's development of feminist thoughts in his writings: *The Naked and The Dead* models women as prisoners of sex, having no chance to air their voice; *The Deer Park* exhibits female as passive angry fighters, trying to be heard but failed; finally, *Tough Guys Don't Dance* constructs the dynamic female revolters, claiming the initial feminism success. Thereby, Mailer exhibits his positive exploration of feminism thoughts, his view that reality is not sex but personality and individuality, and his desire for a balance between man and woman. This paper is grounded theoretically on psychoanalysis and feminism with textual analysis of the female characters in Mailer's three novels, progressing from *The Naked and The Dead*, through *The Deer Park*, to finally *Tough Guys Don't Dance*.

Keywords—Norman Mailer, feminist, psychoanalysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Norman Kingsley Mailer (1923–2007), an American novelist, journalist, essayist, playwright, film maker, actor, political candidate, is a winner of the National Book Award and two-time Pulitzer Prize author. He is regarded as “one of the most visible of contemporary novelists”, “a historian of the moral consciousness of his era” and “the representative writer of his generation” [1].

Binary system has laid the foundation for western culture, so is the division of women according to western literature. Women are either good or evil, demonic or benign, spiritual or material, virginal ideal or sex object. In larger part of the western tradition, women are considered as men's ontological idea of desire or object of dominance.

It is noticeable that Norman Mailer often depicts in his novels the women characters as sexual object of men. They are constructed according to the patriarchal norms. Mailer presents those female images and zoom the problem of women's oppression to the public eye. He resorts to the strategies of both psychoanalysis and feminism to present these female images. One of the conjunction of interest of both psychoanalysis and feminism is the “body and mind”, as they both explore the relationship between one's body and conscious, body and desire. Inspired by psychoanalysis, feminists have thought about not just about the body, but the female body and its desire and challenged the patriarchal

presentation of women.

Mailer deploys psychoanalysis in his novels, presenting and contextualizing the oppression of women, men's desire and domination in western culture. And then interweaving the feminist awareness into his female characters to create paradoxical female characters and challenge the patriarchal dualism. With a positive outlook for women's future, Norman Mailer endows his female figures the final success of rebellion. Integrating psychoanalysis with feminism, Mailer brings the gender question to the surface and put the stereotyped female images to question.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

As a dominant and prolific American writer, Norman Mailer has drawn immense academic attention. In order to show the development of Mailer's genres and themes in his works, and how the critical focus shifted through different periods, this paper chooses to study the critical discussions of Mailer corresponding to the three periods of his literary creation: the early works in the 1940s, master works from the 1950s to the 1970s, and works from the 1980s to 2000s.

Among the early criticism on Norman Mailer, Gore Vidal and Richard Foster are the two who deserve much attention. They review Mailer's early work not only in terms of the general themes of war, power, existentialism, and reality, but also discussed the sex relationship, the reality, the individuality which are reflected in Mailer's first novel *The Naked and The Dead*. Vidal in *The Angels Are White* (1960) comments that Mailer “approach a point he shifts into a swelling, throbbing rhetoric which is not easy to read but usually has something to do with love and sex”, “the connection must be made between time and sex” and “Sex will be a dead end for him, because sex is the one purely existential act” [2]. Richard Foster in *The Early Novels* analogizes Mailer as an overmatched boxer “who floored in the second round, springs back and sustains the fight far beyond expectations through variety and inventiveness of footwork and temporizing punches” and holds that Mailer has pursued a course of “individualistic development” [3].

Therefore, critics in his period point out the truth that Mailer attaches much importance of sex to his writings, and revealed ambiguously that Mailer pursues a development of individualistic, which includes the development of women's individuality in his novels.

Tony Tanner, leading of the criticism of Mailer's works on the second period, makes a defense of the artistic art of Norman's *The Deer Park* and *An American Dream* in his *On the Parapet* published on *Critical Quarterly* in 1970. In which, Tony makes an analysis of the male characters and the relation between sex and reality, pointed out that Mailer “put

his trust in sex”, “sex is time” and “time is the connection of new circus” for Mailer. Robert Langbaum also makes a stylistic defense for *An American Dream* and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Joyce Carol Oates, in his *Male Chauvinist?* argues for Mailer that the reality in his novels is not sex, but personality and individuality. Joyce believes that Mailer held the opinion that women should not be regarded as biological machine, nor should men as economical machines, but as human. This period also produce some biographies for Mailer, among which, Philip H. Buftith and Jennifer Bailey are worth mentioning. In his *Norman Mailer* (1978), Philip points out that Norman Mailer has rendered the conflict between the requirements of the self and the demands of society with “more energy of style, more ideational power, and more vivid drama than any other American writer to emerge since World War II” and Mailer tried to “to realize in his life the beliefs, hopes, and imagines that he expresses in his work...to validate the ideas advanced in his books by eventually acting them out in the world” [4]. Likewise, Jennifer Bailey identifies Mailer as a quick-change artist in his *Norman Mailer: Quick-change Artist* by interpreting Mailer as “the peculiar megalomania of a young writer” to “the existential hero”, “a frustrated actor” to “angels of sex” [5].

However, opposite to the above positive review of Mailer’s works in the second period, Mailer and his works also become the prime targets of the feminist literary critics. Mary Ellmann, for example, who approaches fiction from the vantage point of the treatment of female characters received at the hands of masculine protagonists or authors accuses Mailer of being the prototypical male chauvinist. In 1970, *Sexual Politics* was published based on Kate Millett’s PhD dissertation. In which, Millett makes a critique of patriarchy in Western society and literature, addresses the sexism and heterosexism of the modern novelists D. H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer and contrasts their perspectives with the dissenting viewpoint of the homosexual author Jean Genet. Millett questions the origins of patriarchy, argues that sex-based oppression is both political and cultural, and posits that undoing the traditional family is the key to true sexual revolution. Millett criticizes Mailer as “warrior for male supremacy, a “militarist”, an “advocate of genocide” and a “latent homosexual” who indulges in “heterosexual posturing” [6]. Another feminist, Germaine Greer, also batters Mailer with her publication of *The Female Eunuch*. In sections titled “Body”, “Soul”, “Love” and “Hate” Greer examines historical definitions of women’s perception of self and uses a premise of imposed limitations to critique modern consumer societies, female “normality”, and masculine shaping of stereotypes. Greer scrutinized Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream* and blamed Mailer for his depiction of female characters in traditional perception. In 1971, after the debate with Mailer in New York Town Hall, Greer writes an article on the debate with Mailer, titled *My Mailer Problem*, in which she accuses Mailer as “a typical patriarch, friend of the fetus, and oppressor of the child” [7].

Therefore, criticism on Mailer’s second period creation divulge to two extremes, with some critics praise him as the “the angles of sex” who reflects the reality of women’s pathetic fate, while the extreme feminists regard him as “prototypical male chauvinist”.

Critics on Mailer’s last period of creation continue to focus

on the power, the sex and reality, together with new exploration on his religion and mysticism. Harold Bloom, in *Norman in Egypt: “Ancient Evening”*, comments “Mailer has gone back to the ancient evenings of the Egyptians in order to find the religious meaning of death, sex and reincarnation” [8].

There are other essays center upon Mailer as theosophical or occult speculator, a mythmaker of a very Romantic kind. One article worth special attention is Jessica Gerson’s *Sex, Creativity and God*, trying to adjudicate the disputes between Mailer and the feminists, turns to Kabbalah as a possible source for the archaic attitudes of Mailer’s sexuality. Jessica argues that Mailer’s sexuality had much to do with the mystical Judaism and that not all women’s liberation see Mailer as enemy and in a sense Mailer have reached conciliation with feminists.

Therefore, critics in this period has come to argue for Norman’s sex view with the evidence of his religious belief and come to the conclusion that Mailer does not conflict with feminists but only reflect the reality with his depiction of sex.

The studies done by the Chinese scholars on Mailer’s works can be roughly divided into three groups: the first group is the thematic study; the second group is about the narrative strategy, the last group is studies on the cultural, social and political imprint in Mailer’s works. Of the thematic studies, many scholars have concentrated on the themes of “existentialism” “power” and “conflicts”. Articles on the existentialistic ideas include “Existentialism and Human—*The Naked and The Dead*” by Zhao Yanhua in 2003, “Existentialism in *The Naked and The Dead*” by Kou Qinglan in 2007, “Absurdity and Alienation: An Existentialistic Interpretation of *The Naked and The Dead*” by Tang Bing in 2008 etc. All these articles focused on how the existentialism had its influence on Mailer’s novel, *The Naked and The Dead*. Regarding the theme of power, there were illustrations in “*The Naked and the Dead: Wavering in the Power and the War*” by Wen Hua in 2001), “*The Naked an The Dead: Pursuit and Release of Power*” by Ou Hua’en in 2006 etc. They probed into the essence of totalitarian, and pointed out it wiped out the individuality and personality. As to the topic of conflicts, Wang Min in her “*The Naked and The Dead: Conflict between Humanity and Barbarity*”, Li Yingna in “*The Interpretation of Conflicts in The Naked and The Dead*” etc., figured out the conflicts and disharmony between the ideal and reality, humanity and barbarity, subordinate and their leader, America and the world. The next focus of the domestic scholars is the narration in Norman Mailer’s works. “*The Absence of the Author in The Executioner’s Song*” by Shi Yafang in 2005), “*The Artistic Tension of a Dual Text: An Analysis of the Narrative Ethics of Norman Mailer’s Armies of the Night*” by Wang Hui in 2007 discussed the narrative strategies and features of Mailer’s works. Shi Yafang also made some cultural historical study on Mailer’s creation: “*Culture Text in The Naked and The Dead*” in 2004, “*The Castle in The Forest: A New Historical Text*” in 2008, proving that Norman’s writings concerned much about the reality of America and the world.

The research of sex and sexuality also attract the attention of a few Chinese scholars. Some essays worth noting are: “*Nicole: The Pathetic Second Sex in Male Writings—An*

Analysis of The Executioner's Song" by Kou Qinglan, "Mailer's View of Gender" by Ren Hujun and "Women Struggling in Plights: A Study of Norman Mailer's Early Fiction" by Xu Meihua. Kou makes a character analysis of Nicole, the female antagonist in *The Executioner's Song*. Discussing in detail how she is molded as the traditional female and how she is defeated in the fight for independence and freedom, pointing out that Mailer is still in the framework of traditional western culture. He depicts Nicole with traditional female features through his male perspective, narration and voice, which reflects the female stereotype on male literature. But on the other hand, he endows her with feminism awareness, trying to gain her freedom, which mirrors Mailer's passive feminist views. Ren defends Mailer against the accuse from the feminists through an analysis of the gender relationship in *The Naked and The Dead*, *The Deer Park*, *An American Dream*, and *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. Ren argues that "on one hand, Mailer concerned much about how women were enslaved by the standard of male dominance and moral judgment, and on the other hand, he cared about how female rebelled against the male dominance and fought for their freedom and happiness. He advocated the equality between men and women and made it clear that the absence of it gave the best explanation for the unhappiness and inharmony between the two genders" [9]. Ren claims that Mailer is actually in the same side of the feminists when he points out: "Mailer's representation of the gender relationship is not the result of mere artistic imagination, but his reflection upon the gender problem in American society. Mailer couldn't ignore the sex problem as he lived in the society where gender equality has not been achieved. His representation of the gender relationship is to call on people to pay more attention to it" [9]. Doctor Xu Meihua in her doctoral dissertation, "Women Struggling in Plights: A Study of Norman Mailer's Early Fiction", draws the conclusions that women are confronted with the hard living plight in different social stages and the early Mailer holds an ambivalent attitude towards women with the analysis of Mailer's *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park*, and *An American Dreams* [10].

The critical analyses both at home and abroad have illuminated my researches on Norman Mailer's representation of gender relationship in his fictions. However, they fail to trace the progress of Mailer's feminist exploration within his texts through different periods of his literary creation, because most critical analyses focus on only one single work of his and there is an obvious lack of research on the connections between works. Since few reviewers have studied how Mailer's feminist thoughts develop from one work to another, there reveals the lack of a clear view of Mailer's final feminist aim and how his view is formed. Therefore, this paper intends to explore how Mailer's feminist ideas develop through an analysis of subjectivity of female characters in his three works corresponding to his literary creation periods: *The Naked and The Dead*, *The Deer Park*, and *Tough Guys Don't Dance*.

III. THEORETICAL BASIS

Different from the traditional binary system which put the male as the subject and female as the other, the dualistic relationship between self and other, subject and object, man

and woman, mind and body, this paper will make a study of the subjectivity of the female characters in Mailer's fictions by placing the woman as the subject and man as the other. And the arguments will base theoretically upon Lacan's psychoanalysis of the mirror stage and the Other, and Simone de Beauvoir's view that woman is not born but become a woman under the historical, cultural and political influences.

Jacques Lacan, a French psychoanalyst and psychiatrist, divided the psychic development of human beings into three stages: the mirror, the imaginary, and the symbolic. In the mirror stage, Lacan analyzed: "from the age of six months... fixing his attitude in a slightly leaning-forward position, in order to hold it in his gaze, brings back an instantaneous aspect of the image" [11]. The act refers to the child (subject) recognizing his own image (object) in the mirror. Lacan holds that the Other and the self are of mutual consequence according to his psychoanalysis through three registers (the Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real). He claimed that "unconscious is the language of the Other. "He made an explanation of the relationship between the Subject, the self, the Other, and the other: the Subject is the human identity, the self is the imaginary of the Subject or the ideal Subject; the Other is the symbolic father or authority; the other is the imaginary Other; the Subject can only find his or her own identity through the Other.

Much influenced by Lacan, feminists have tried to show how women's identity is being constructed by western tradition and the culture and politics and the history. Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, points out that western philosophers established the female sex as "the other" to rationalize and promote the development and growth of fledgling patriarchy. Man is the One while woman is the Other, Man the Subject while woman the Object. Simone de Beauvoir makes the famous claim that woman is not born but become a woman under the historical, cultural and political influences.

Therefore, the subjectivity and particularity of the women in Mailer's fiction can be revealed not only through what they themselves are but also through the construction of the male characters. The male are the Other which reflects the subjectivity and the particularity of women. As to why the women in Mailer's fictions are constructed as so, they are the result of the reality, namely, the historical, cultural and political influences.

Grounded theoretically on Lacan's psychoanalysis of the self and the Other and feminist's view that woman is constructed under the historical, cultural and political influences, this thesis intends to make a textual analysis of the female characters in three novels of Mailer's in terms of subjectivity, progressing from *The Naked and The Dead*, through *The Deer Park*, to finally *Tough Guys Don't Dance*.

IV. SHADOWED SEX PRISONERS

The Naked and The Dead is a war novel about the male's desire for power and domination. Compared with the powerful, rough, strong male characters in the novel, the women are deliberately pushed at the background as men's ontological desire. While there is an absence of women in the novel, women are conspicuously present everywhere throughout the text. They are the pregnant wife waiting for husband back, the hardworking Jewish wife, the grudging

wife who revenged with adultery. Norman Mailer present those stereotyped female images to mirror the oppression of women in the patriarchal history.

Just as Jessica Gerson mentions in his *Sex, Creativity and God* the reason why Norman Mailer become one of the prime targets of feminists literary critics is his “well-publicized sexual attitude” which are “idiosyncratic blend of hipsterism, apocalyptic sexuality and old-guard sexual morality” [6], Mailer has the effort of representing the dehumanized aspects of womanhood: an ignorant female preen in the mirror, the object of men’s sexual desire, a devil without fidelity, a machine of offspring, a man’s puppet for power.

Anthony Burgess comments *The Naked and The Dead* as “brutally compelling, savagely convincing” and it is “the shattering story of a group of young American soldiers battling their way across a Japanese-held Pacific island” [12]. Therefore, there is not much description of female characters directly, but through the psycho activities, namely, the recollection of the male characters. As the traditional female stereotypes, women in *The Naked and The Dead* are also created catering to men’s fancy. Gallagher’s reminiscence of the swell night when he and his wife Mary expressed their feeling towards each other goes:

Looking off across the beach, searching the lights of Boston Harbor, which flicker like star formation in an uncertain clouded sky. She picks up a handful of sand, and pours it on her shoe, the glare from the bonfire making her hair seem golden. Her slim long face, freckled and sad, seems pleasant, almost lovely.

The description of his wife is in line with the traditional images of women as loving, tender and fragile. More evidence is found when he was brooding upon their life together, he drew a woman in the sand, the woman he drew had great breasts and a narrow wrist and a very full hip. He remembered that Mary was very ashamed of her tiny breasts. She had once said, “I wish they were big.” “Why?” “I know you like them better that way.” He had lied, “Naw, they’re just right the way they are” [12]. Women were molded according to the tastes of men, and become their objects of desire. Even the best man or the most moral man in *The Naked and The Dead*, Goldstein, an honest, industrious, and in a whole, a good man, detests his wife when there was a scar left on her belly after childbearing as described: “Her scar troubles him; despite himself he looks at it with distaste and she notices that” [12].

In men’s eyes, women are ignorant and what they are capable of doing is only preen herself before the mirror and please men. When Hearn remembered his girlfriend, he recalled that “he had a girl friend, a great catch, the young beauty at this summer colony. Miss Sally Tendecker of Lake Shore Drive, and the inescapable connotations to come of Christmas holidays, and fur coats, perfume and college dances in the hue-titled rooms of the big hotels” [12]. Women’s life seems to be a void, there is nothing to do as Wilson remembered: “The main street has assumed its tawdry prosperity with discomfort; it is hot and packed with people and stores are small and dirty. Languid and feverish, the girls walk by on thin legs, with painted faces, staring at the movie house with their pale insolent eyes as the sun glares on the dirty asphalt and models the dust-filled pores of the

trampled papers underfoot” [12].

Women in the tradition are not only ignorant but are the ontological objects of men’s desire. At the outset of the platoon’s marching, the soldiers began to make jokes about women. After Wilson daydreamed about liquor, he reflected for a moment and then chuckled and made an analogy of drinking and having sex: “When a man’s got it jus’ as nice and steady as he wants it, well, then he never can remember what it’s like without it. Ans when he ain’t got it, they ain’t nothing harder than for him to keep in mind what a pussy feels like.” and made fun of women’s body: “they was a gal Ah had once on the end of the town, wife of a friend of mine, and she had one of the meanest rolls a man could want. With all the gals Ah’ve had, Ah’ll never forget that little old piece” [12]. When Wilson won a lot money out of the poker game, what he thought of was also women. As Julio Martinez was recalling his childhood, he remembered his brother Ysidro bragged that “I screw good stuff. Big girls. Girls with plat’ num blonde. Alice Stewart, Peggy Reilly, Mary Hennessey. Protestant girls” [12] and referred women as objects of amusement just like a guitar. To men, women are useful only to please them. As Roth, a Jewish, dreamed about his wife, he thought of “taking pornographic pictures of a model whom he had dressed as cowgirl. She was wearing a ten-gallon hat, and a leather fringe about an inch wide across her breasts, and a leather holster and cartridge belt was slung at an angle across her hips. He imagined now that he was telling her which way to pose and she was obeying with a tantalizing insouciance” [12], as he thought of this, his groin began to ache. Therefore, women are the sexual object of men and nothing else.

Besides being molded as submissive object of sex, women are often depicted as demonic and evil. Men often demeaned women as lower and dirtier than men. And one of the false characteristic the male figures disapproved of women is infidelity. When Sergeant Brown talked with Stanley about fidelity, Brown said “you can’t trust any of them. There isn’t a woman you can trust” [12] and he did not even believe his own wife and decided that his wife was out having herself a good time and warned that if he had found his wife lied to him, he would lick her out. More men joined Brown and Stanley on the same argument of women’s loyalty in another occasion. Stanley and Minetta argued with Brown and Polack about the fidelity of women. Stanley trusts his wife and Minetta trusts his girlfriend. However, Brown doesn’t believe women and told Minetta that what his girlfriend was doing now at six in the morning was waking up in bed with a guy who can give her as much as he can, and she was giving him the same goddam line she handed Minetta. There ain’t one of them men can trust and they all will cheat men. As the story goes, Brown thought about his family and remembered that his sister Patty had a divorce, everybody was talking about it, “in the bar-rooms, in the smoking cars, in the locker rooms at the golf club they are talking about Patty Brown” [12]. Brown warned his wife Bev if he ever caught her in anything like that, he would kill her. In the patriarchal society, woman is meant to be loyal to her husband and infidelity is an unforgivable sin.

The tradition and history also constructed woman as a machine of offspring and a man’s puppet for power and success. Hearn recalled his father accused his mother that “I

got my business and you got your social engagements, and each of us ought to be happy. Only it seems to me you could give a little time to Robert, that kid's a big kid, and he's healthy, only he's like a cold fish, there's just no life in him." and "The truth is we should have had another kid, or a bunch of them" [12]. Just as Simone de Beauvoir writes in *The Second Sex*, "in truth woman has not been socially emancipated through man's need—sexual desire and the desire for offspring—which makes the male dependent for satisfaction upon the female" [13]. Women become the machine of children for men. Another female character Margaret, General Cummings's wife, is constructed as men's puppet for power and success. To help Cummings get his promotion, Margaret invited the General to the party in their house, tried to find out which food Cummings' senior officer, the then General likes and talks to housewife at a post dance, discovers an acquaintance of her father's whom the General knows. It was a success. But Margaret started to wonder what the point to invite the General when the old fart will be dead by the time it's a question of recommending Cummings for general's rank. And Margaret complained that it would be more fun without the General. Therefore, Cummings flew into a rage and shouts to her "Fun, There are more important things than fun" [12]. Women have sacrificed to help men, but what they get is only accusation and blame from men.

Though there is an absence of detail description of women, Mailer has the effort of representing the dehumanized aspects of womanhood through the presence of men, and the presentation of the stereotyped women were everywhere throughout the text: an ignorant female preen in the mirror, the object of men's sexual desire, a devil without fidelity, a machine of offspring, a man's puppet for power, thus, Mailer has exposed to the readers the reality that female were treated as prisoners of sex. And that is why Mailer was accused by Millet as "warrior for male supremacy," a "militarist", an "advocate of genocide" [6].

But what they did not see is that Mailer is reflecting history and reality through sex. As a writer of integrity, he tried to use pornography and phenomena to arouse the audience's attention on the problems of our society. Living in a society where there is no moral, no political, no religious center, Mailer has taken up the responsibility to fulfill the void of life with his sex. And the exposure of the oppression of women and disclosure of the stereotyped females are only his first step to mirror the reality. In *The Deer Park*, Mailer will, with superb artistic, surprise readers with new images of female characters in his storytelling.

V. PASSIVE ANGRY WOMEN

One of the reasons why Mailer was often subjected to criticism is that he was constantly changing, he forayed into politics, poetry, biography, literary criticism, the theatre and film-making, acted in the civil disobedience, ran for mayor of New York, remarked on TV shows, behaved wildly at parties. He posted as a quick change artist and an ambitious versatile man. But, at the depth of his work, there is the focus of life, of reality.

Compared with the static presenting of female images as prisoners of sex in *The Naked and The Dead*, *The Deer Park* constructs the gender relationship in a more dynamic or even

radical way, and it reflects the political atmosphere of America which was in great cultural and social upheavals in 1950s. In 1950s, America saw a phenomenal economic growth. It was the world's richest country. Television had a powerful impact on social and economic pattern. Americans of all ages became exposed to increasingly sophisticated advertisements for products said to be necessary for the good life. "Beat Generation" rebelled against conventional values. Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* and Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* are a critique of modern, mechanized civilization. A milestone in the civil rights movement occurred in 1955 in Alabama when Rosa Parks refused to give her seat. It was also the time when feminism began to pervade in the U.S.A. Impressed by the movements of those "angry women", Mailer molded in *The Deer Park* of female images with feminist consciousness, trying to fight for the full independence and equality in the brutal patriarchal world, such are rich and powerful widow Dorothea O'Faye, active and clever Hollywood star Lulu Meyer, Elena who is kind and full of dignity.

Dorothea O'Faye is the first angry female Mailer presents to us. She is active, rich, strong, powerful, and generous. Mailer described her "handsome with a full body and exciting black hair". She is full of experience that "she had been notorious as a show girl years ago, and famous again in her night-club days as a singer and her boast was that she had been everywhere and had done everything. She had been a call girl, a gossip columnist, a celebrity, a failure, she had been born in Chicago and discovered in New York, her father had been a drunk and died that way, her mother had disappeared with another man. She had done her father's work when she was twelve, he was a sort of a janitor, and she collected rent from tenants and put the garbage out. At sixteen she was kept by the heir of a steel fortune, and a couple of years later she had an affair with a European prince and gave birth to his illegitimate son, she had made money and lost money, she had been married three times"[14]. More important is that she is economically independent and full of wit. She was known for her rough wit and force of her style. She offered to men a quick mind and a tough tongue which was respected greatly. Men took her out like a business partner, and in all the sweat of a night club, they found Dorothea easy and they could talk to her. She also had her points. Her loyalty was strong: "to be her friend was to be her friend, and it was her code never to leave a friend in needless trouble" [14]. She is of awareness to keep her subjectivity when Martin Pelly wanted to have her, she said "nobody owns me". Here men and women shifted the role, male tried to please female. Martin Pelly tried to please Dorothea and when the Ghost was played he was the first to go out. "I'm bonehead for this sort of stuff," he would say easily. "I'm not quick like Dorothea" [14].

From the above analysis, Dorothea O'Faye embodied the very quality of feminist awareness but her struggle and effort was in futile at last. Dorothea could not escape the fate of being the object of offspring and sexual desire for man. She was seventeen when she met her first husband O'Faye, he was a vaudeville hooper on the crest of a vogue. Dorothea lived with him, she was crazy about him as she swore, worked out song-and — dance routines to support the act they did together, and suffered his cheating, for he lamed a

different girl every night. She thought how to save money and he thought how to spend it. When she found herself pregnant, he gave her two hundred dollars in cash, left the address of a doctor friend, and moved his belongings out. Dorothea again became an object of men. She then sang in the club and had an affair with a European prince and became pregnant again. "She was the janitor's daughter and now she carried royal blood" [14], she thought and she could not bring herself to extinguish such a creation and again became the object of her son. She had a troublesome son, but she had always been pleased to spoil her son, to forget him, to love him and match his tantrums with her own. She had to fix many things he had done. He was always causing trouble, he smoked, drunk, did whatever was not allowed and on his eighteen birthday, he asked her for three hundred dollars to give a girl an operation. Despite what she did for him, her son failed her and became a pimp. Moreover, even though Dorothea tried to keep her subjectivity, she finally resorted to man's hug and became again the prey of men, she finally conceded to marry Pelly. She again fell back into the stereotyped female: "Pelly acted like a new father passing out cigars. He not only bought champagne for everybody, but he nursed Dorothea through the meal as if she had just left the hospital" [14].

Lulu Meyers, a Hollywood star, also shared the same feminism consciousness as Dorothea, she was active, full of scheme, rebellious against the marriage arranged by Teppis, the head of Supreme Pictures. At her debut in the story, she naughtily covered Eitel's eyes with her hands and when Eitel asked whether she was marrying Teddy Pope, another movie star, but a gay, she flipped her cigarette to the floor and grinded it out with a quick impatient motion and turned to Munchin to tell Teppis to lay off the drum. At Teppis' party, when she was asked to dance with Teddy, she rebelled by running away with Sergius. On another occasion, Teppis again tried to press Lulu into marrying Teddy. He lured Lulu with the benefits she would have if she married Teddy by coaxing that "You and Teddy can hit it off. He's been hurt, he's got a delicate heart...Lulu, you're the woman who could straighten him out and then he'd worship the ground you walk on...think of the respect people would have if you could make a man out of Teddy Pope" [14]. When the coax did not work on Lulu, Teppis even tried to intimidate Lulu, saying that "You'll go down and down. You'll get older, you won't look so good, you won't get work so easy, you won't have a studio behind you...you'll end up, a dance-hall cutiey, that's the sort of girl. I could cut my throat I'm so aggravated" [14]. Despite of all the threats and coax from Teppis, Lulu married Tony secretly that morning.

However, Lulu Meyer was with her weakness, she was selfish, restless, narcissistic and weak-willed, and that determined that she would fail in this battle against men and fight for her happiness. Despite her awareness to rebel against the fate arranged by men, she was still an object of desire and tried to please men. As a movie star, she would do whatever the photographer asked her to do. She paid also much attention on her appearance, the reason the reason why Lulu didn't like Teddy was that "each of them photographed best from left side of the face, and when they played a scene together Teddy was as quick as Lulu not to expose his bad side to the camera" [14] and she was not satisfied with her breasts and thought of having a breast raise. She was also

narcissistic and selfish that the heart of her pleasure was to show herself. She was a gossip girl and that to eat with her was a torture: "It did not matter with what friends she found herself nor with enemies, her attention would go, her eyes would flee. She had the worry that she was missing a word of gossip, a tip, a role in a picture...it did not matter; something was happening somewhere else, something of importance, something she could not afford to miss" [14]. She was restless and careless in money, she could gamble for days. The rebellion of marrying Tony which she set against Teppis was also made out of her impulse and without much consideration. And she paid for her impulse that Tony was only using her fame to reach his own ambition in Hollywood, and after she was without value, he played loose with other women and brought her a lot of troubles. Besides the failure of her marriage, she also failed the fight for independence in yielding to Eitel again and depending on Eitel to help her, becoming his mistress. Women had again become the object of men.

Elena Esposito is the most tragic female character in *The Deer Park* because she was the one who fought the most fiercely and lost the most. She was a night-club Latin dancer, not brilliant, poor background, but very human, not a schemer. She was a near-beauty, her hair was a rich-brown and her skin was warm. There was a something delicate about her and very proud. Her face was not exactly soft. But it was heart-shaped, and above a tender mouth and chin, the nares of her long narrow nose suggested ample aptitude. She was a girl who's composed of hurts and emotion and dirt and shining love. When she was served by a negro waiter, and thought he was being a little too intimate with her, and when Munshin told her how wrong it was to have prejudice against a Negro, She was ashamed of her prejudice. Elena is a person whom hates everything that was small in herself. She was consumed by the passion to become a bigger person than she was. She was most importantly, with awareness not to depend on men. She has been with Munshin for seven years. He has promised her a divorce from his wife but he never fulfilled it considering the power of his father-in-law Herman Teppis, who was the head of the Supreme Pictures. When Munshin wanted to five her a thousand dollars, she wouldn't take it. She then left Muchin without any requests and started to live with Eitel, the Hollywood director, who was at the bottom of his carrier and found inspiration with Elena. They have had happy time together, each found love and compassion with each other. However, Eitel was later defeated by the reality, yielded to the authority, gave up his pursuit of being an artist not a commercial director, and he became tired of her, couldn't stand with Elena's presence, and wanted to break up with her. Elena knew this, and she again kept her dignity and moved out Eitel's house.

Elena in her way tried to gain her independence, however she was too weak, too desperate to know what she want and let others lead her way. At Teppis' party, she was desperate. She had nothing to say at the party and said the ice-cream was expensive and even tried to prove it. In the first weeks of living with Eitel, "Elena's eyes never left Eitel's face; her mood was the clue to his temper; if she was gay it meant he was happy; if Eitek was moody, it left her morose. No one else existed for her" [14]. She confined herself again in the prison of men: "She became Eitel's responsibility, without

family and without friends. Collie had taken care to wean her from everybody she knew, and for that matter Elena made friends poorly. If she could chat easily with Eitel, often going from one subject to the next, she was in stiff company the few times they went out” [14].

She tried not to be the object of men’s desire but always ended up with depending on men and having sex with men. After she left Eitel, she went to Marion and listened to and did what he asked of her. She even slept with Beda who once suggested Eitel to sleep with his wife, and he with Elena. She was now on the edge of breaking down. Eitel deserted her, Marion despite her, she could do nothing. On a drive with Marion, they had an accident and she was hospitalized. Eitel, out of compassion and guilty, went to her and proposed to her. Different from last time when she was leaving, Eitel proposed to marry her and she declined to keep her dignity, this time she accepted. At last, she became Eitel’s wife and even had a boy. Life seemed to Elena good and even successful in the eyes’ of other women. But her survival of the accident and his happy ending with a family is actually her failure of her fight against the patriarchal world because she depended herself on men and became again the object of men’s desire in the end.

Norman Mailer’s portrayal of the above mentioned female images as passive angry women who were dissatisfied with their life and tried to fight for their independence but resulted in failure is the reflection of the reality for many women in the 1950s who fought and shouted to change their social status, but encountering obstacles in reality, thus, could only get partially success or just failure. But these were only destinies for women in the 1950s, women in the 1960s and after, have continued to fight even more fiercely and finally achieved what they were aspired to get in reality. As a “historian of the moral consciousness of his era”, Mailer will in his *Tough Guys Don’t Dance* show the readers the initial success of feminism.

VI. DYNAMIC FEMALE REVOLTERS

America witnessed tremendous social, cultural, and political upheavals in the 1960s to 1980s. Young people plunged into radical political activity; many more embraced new standard of dress and sexual behavior. People were apt to wear long hair and beards, blue jeans and tee shirts. There were illegal drugs, rock and roll, the Beatles and the Rolling Stones and other British groups took the country by storm, which formed a counter-culture in America. The women’s movements were more radical than ever before. In 1963, author Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique*. A new magazine, *Ms.*, began its publication in 1972. Between 1971 and 1976, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, a handbook by a woman’s health collective, sold 850,000 copies. Feminism was pervading in the every corner of America. In political, there were confrontation over Cuba, the war in Vietnam and the space program. In every aspects of American life, things were changing, people were revolting. As “a chronicler of his time”, Mailer’s novels are tied to the outstanding events of the time—World War II, the Korean War, the McCarthy investigations, Vietnam, and the sex, the women.

As the last of the trilogy, *Tough Guys Don’t Dance* reinforces the depiction of the stereotyped images to make a more powerful blow upon them. The first female character

Mailer presents to the readers is Jessica Laurel, or later known as Laurel Oakwode. She is an estate agent representing Wardley to come to province town to purchase a house for Patty Lareine, another major female protagonist. The description of Jessica also falls into the traditional depiction of women as male’s sexual object. “She had large, well-turned promiscuous breasts—one nipple tilted to the east, one stared out to the west—a deep navel, a woman’s round belly, a sweet buoyant spread of buttocks, and dark pubic hair” and she was undeniably appealing and had “a charming upturned nose and a full pout on the mouth, as spoiled and imperious as the breath of sex. Her nostrils flared, her fingernails—the Liberation could go screw itself” [15]. Her voice gave men an impression of sensuous arousal that as if “she could measure to the drop just how much sex she might be sitting upon” [15]. Her loose behavior with men led her to lick Tim’s cock in front of her partner Lonnie, a gay. Lonnie shot himself to death because of the shame of his inability and out of his bad debts he could not pay in front of Jessica. Jessica then became panic and ran into Patty Lareine and Regency. Patty was at the time knowing Jessica wanted to buy the house herself, so Patty shot Jessica and then Regency helped to sever her into pieces and dumped her into the Marijuana burrow.

The same pathetic fate was also shared by Patty Lareine, who married three times and was planning to marry once more. Patty Lareine was a blonde who preened on herself just like Jessica, or more over Jessica. She paid much attention on her body and was proud of her body. “She loved nude beach parties on the back shore and enjoyed standing (with her brown snatch limned in honey-gold by the sun) a foot away from the eyes of some potential lover on the sand who was eating a hot dog, one eye on the red meat covered with mustard coming up to his lips, the other on the copse between her thighs” and “she could cavort bare-ass in the sea, her arms around two other naked women, her mean, pinching, Southern fingers tweaking their nipples—nipple-pinching, tit-grabbing, ass-slapping” and “she also liked to walk about out house in her high heels and nothing else” [15]. Patty is depicted as a demon with unsatiating appetite for sex and money. When Patty was Patty Erleen, she joined the wife-swapping game with Tim, Madeline and her first husband, Tim “kept pushing her to put her mouth into places she swore she had never put it before...in each other’s pits” [15]. Some years later, Patty became Wardley’s wife. And Wardley was a former classmate of Tim’s, thus, they met again, Tim became her chauffeur, Patty had sex with Tim on Wardley’s back. Patty was also with some wit and scheme to cheat money out of her second divorce and became wealthy. Then, Patty married Tim. What she did in her third marriage was giving parties, all kinds of parties, just as bewitching as Gatsby. “When the parties went on long enough, she would, if the moon was late and full, get out her old cheerleader’s bugle and there in the night blow a Retreat to the moon” [15]. When she was still in marriage with Tim, she gave herself to another man, Regency, a policeman who helped to kill Jessica. After the murder of Jessica out of a rage, Patty went to Wardley, her second husband, for two millions and told Wardley she was not going to remarry him since she was in love with another man. Wardley was so furious that he shot

Patty to death and Patty's head was later severed by Stoodie and Spider who first helped Wardley to bury Patty but wanted to blackmail Wardley with Patty's head.

Based on the depiction of the above mentioned two female characters, Mailer makes a step or a big leap towards the construction of womanhood. This leap is made by dynamic female revolvers, namely, Beth, wife of Spider, and most importantly through Madeline, ex-girlfriend of Tim and wife of Regency. Though being portrayed as "a quiet, pale, soft-spoken, furtive, dun-colored young woman with eye-glasses" and "deliberately refused every small charm that could have attached to her" [15], Beth was a woman independent economically and full of power. She supported Nissen Spider's house, and with her money, Nissen bought his Honda 1200CC, his Trinitron TV, his Sony video camera, his Betamax recorder and his Apple computer. Beth was also a knowledgeable woman. She wrote poetry and they were good. "On reading what little she would show... she was as cruel as a ghetto rapist in the brutality of her concepts, quick as an acrobat in he metaphors, and ready to slay your heart with an occasional vein of feeling as tender as the stem of honeysuckle on a child's mouth" [15]. Beth combined much of a female image as a hippie who embraced sex revolution. She had sex with Nissen and even allowed Nissen to video it and showed it to his friends. She was also benign in reminding Tim to be careful with her husband Spider and Stoodie when she knew they were to set Tim up for the murder. She was courageous and independent enough to go away when she learned the news Spider had been killed. Mailer constructed Beth as a cool, independent, knowledgeable female who determined her own fate.

Mailer's positive feminist thoughts reached its full expression in Madeline, a medley of stereotyped female images and new dynamic female revolvers. Madeline in appearance was also a prey to men's sexual desire. At first, she owned a beautiful body and womb conforming with the traditions. There Tim quoted a piece of John Updike's description of women's womb to analogize Madeline's: "Each hair is precious and individual, serving a distinct role in the array: blonde to invisibility where the thigh and abdomen join, dark to opacity where the tender labia ask protection, hearty and ruddy as a forester's beard beneath the swell of belly, dark and sparse as the whiskers of a Machiavel where the perineum sneaks backward to the anus. My pussy alters by the time of day and according to the mesh of underpants. It has its satellites: the whimsical line of hairs that ascend to my navel and into my tan, the kisses of fur on the inside of my thighs, the lambent fuzz that ornaments the cleavage of my fundament. Amber, ebony, auburn, bay, chestnut, cinnamon, hazel, fawn, snuff, henna, bronze, platinum, peach, ash, flame, and field mouse: these are but a few of the colors my pussy is" and "her belly and her womb became all of her" [15]. And when Tim suggested to go wife-swapping, Madeline as stereotyped female listened to Tim and went to it. However, the result of it was the sapping confidence in Tim and sagging trust between each other. And after that, they quarreled and fought. And finally, Tim lost the car and slammed into a tree during a fight. Madeline came out of the hospital with a frightful scar on her belly and lost her womb, the very symbol of women. And that began her fight against the patriarchal world. She left Tim and then met and

married Regency. While Regency found out her womb was damaged, he went to Patty. When Regency blamed the hurt womb on Tim and wanted to trap him, Madeline was bold enough to warn Regency that she might shoot him. As the story went and Regency confessed his jealousy of Tim whom Patty loved, his guilty of helping Patty kill and sever Jessica, his fright of discovering Patty's death. Madeline fell sympathy for him and even nursed him. However, Regency was wrong to make jokes on and laughed at her womb when he said the reason why he made Madeline come sixteen times in a night was due to her lack of womb, Madeline shot him and claimed the final success of women. A woman without a womb is not the woman in stereotypical sense, she is just her own, whether men like her or not.

The woman images in these three novels embodied the characteristics of the malleable, various, and creative subject capable of an limitless extent of self-creation. Mailer's focus in *The Naked and The Dead* is to present the existence of women with the absence of them and to bring the victimized female images to the front stage to scrutinize and to charge. Therefore, the female characters in *The Naked and The Dead* fall in the historical stereotypes as male's objects of desire, static and passive prisoners of sex, incapable of self liberation. Lulu Meyers, an energetic Hollywood star and Elena Esposito, a gender delicate dancer, Dorothea O'Faye, a powerful strong woman and many other female characters are presented in *The Deer Park* as passive angry women to exhibit how the traditional women are endowed with feminist awareness and tried to fight for their independence but finally failed. At last, in *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, the female protagonists, sampling by Madeline who self-created as a female subject by the lost of her womb, become the dynamic revolvers, claiming the initial success of feminism.

VII. CONCLUSION

Through study of Mailer's development of feminist thoughts in his three writings: *The Naked and The Dead* models women as prisoners of sex, having no chance to air their voice; *The Deer Park* exhibits female as passive angry fighters, trying to be heard but failed; finally, *Tough Guys Don't Dance* constructs the dynamic female revolvers, claiming the initial feminism success, this paper draws the conclusion that Norman Mailer is not a typical patriarch, friend of the fetus, or oppressor of the child as accused by the extreme feminists, yet neither does he explicitly express his favor over feminism, but exhibits his progressing view towards women by his developing and changing depiction of the female figures in his fictions together with the changing world and reality. As a quick-change artist, Mailer has offered readers the full view of the ever-changing society and reality of his time by putting his trust in sex, by the transformation and construction of the subjectivity and particularity both of men and women in his novels. By talking about the sex, Mailer is actually talking about the morality and reality of his age. While integrating the sex, the morality, the life, the history and reality into his writings, Mailer is reaching people and by reaching people, he is influencing the history of his time and the later age. He not only makes record in his writings of the pain, the hardships of women's quest of equality and independence, but also renders them the initial success against the patriarch society and let them

endure and prevail in the new thriving world. In this way, he is showing the readers and the critics that he is not a macho or chauvinist but a writer with integrity to record the voice of the human beings and be a prop and a pillar to help human beings endure and prevail.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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