

Title: Violence and Vision: The Shadow Side of the American Dream in Norman Mailer's Fiction

العنوان: العنف والرؤية: الجانب المظلم من الحلم الأمريكي في روايات نورمان ميلر

م.م. فرقان محمود شهاب أحمد

Asst. Lect. Furqan Mahmood Shihab

الاختصاص العام: الادب الانكليزي

General specialization: English Literature

الاختصاص الدقيق: الرواية

Specialization: Novel

جامعة تكريت / كلية العلوم الإسلامية

University Of Tikrit / College of Islamic Sciences

furkan.m25@tu.edu.iq

07744047877

الملخص:

تستكشف هذه المقالة البعدين الموضوعيين المزدوجين المتمثلين في العنف و«الرؤية» الوجودية بوصفهما استراتيجيتين فاعلتين يوظفهما نورمان ميلر لتحليل وتشرح تلك المكوّنات من الحلم الأمريكي التي تؤدي إلى هزيمته الذاتية وتآكل بنيّتها الاجتماعية. وسأركّز أساساً على روايات: العراة والموتى (1948)، وحلم أمريكي (1965)، ولماذا نحن في فيتنام؟ (1967). وتشير الدراسة إلى أن تصور ميلر للحلم الأمريكي التقليدي القائم على النجاح والحرية يتمثل في سعي سادي، وغالباً معادٍ للمرأة، نحو ذات أصيلة فائقة الحسن. غير أن العنف سواء أكان نفسياً أم جسدياً بالنسبة لأبطال ميلر الساعين إلى الهدم، ليس عرضاً لمرض مجتمع آيل إلى الانهيار، بل هو سلاح وجودي متعمّد يُستخدم لتحطيم واجهة الرضا الزائف التي تفرضها المؤسسات، واستعادة جانب من القوة البدائية الفوضوية. ويكشف ذلك عن مرضٍ وطني أصبح فيه نزعة الحرية الفردية متشابكة على نحو قاتل مع العدوان والارتياب والفوضى الأخلاقية. ومن خلال منظور وجودي-تحليلي نفسي، تُظهر المقالة كيف أن أخلاق «الهيبيستر»، كما وردت في مقالة ميلر الشهيرة الزنجي الأبيض (1957)، تُنظر للعنف الواعي الذي يمارسه «الهيبيستر-الملاك» بوصفه شكلاً من أشكال

مناهضة الشمولية ذات الطابع النيو-توماوي. وفي النهاية، تصوّر الدراسة ميلر باعتباره راوياً لاذعاً، لكنه ضروري، لانتهيار الروح الأمريكية في مرحلة ما بعد الحرب. الكلمات المفتاحية: نورمان ميلر، الحلم الأمريكي، العنف، الوجودية، الهيبستر، حلم أمريكي، الشمولية، الأدب الأمريكي بعد الحرب، الذكورية، كراهية النساء.

Abstract

The paper examines the two thematic interests of violence and existential vision of the world as working strategies which Norman Mailer utilizes to dissect those aspects of the American Dream which are suicidal and corrosive of our social organism. I will primarily focus on *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), *An American Dream* (1965), and *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967), the analysis indicates that Mailer has conceived of the traditional American dream of success and freedom as a sadistic and frequently-misogynist quest to find an authentic, supersensory self. To the heroes of destruction of Mailer, though, the violence, both psychological and physical, is not the symptom of the malady in the society in decay, but rather, an existential weaponry, directed at smashing the veil of corporate complacency and restoring something like the primal, anarchic strength. This throws some light on a national sickness where the desire to be free at the personal level gets lethally intertwined with aggression, paranoia and amoral havoc. The article presents the conceptualization of the thoughtful violence of the hipster-pugilist, through an existential-psychoanalytic prism, outlining how the ethic of Hipster as described in the landmark essay *The White Negro* (1957) by Mailer as a comprehensive antitotalitarianism of the neo-Thomist variety. Finally, the paper portrays Mailer as a bitter and yet essential chronicler of the spiritual decay of the postwar America.

Keywords: Norman Mailer, American Dream, Violence, Existentialism, Hipster, AnASS/ Totalitarianism, Post-War American Literature Masculinity Misogyny.

Chapter One

1.0 Introduction.

The American Dream is a national mythology of contentment and independence by oneself.

perseverance and democratic potential, has been also a long-standing.

fictional fragmentation of American literature.. Few writers have examined its

brutally existential rigor of Norman corrupting, pathological effects

Mailer brings to bear. Through Mailer's novelistic output, he persisted

reveals an eerie underside below this national myth, a sacred ideal that, in the

forms of hewn mass media(through corporate means): the ideological context [1]post-war interpretation

products, and psychological suppression — do not meet what it should; instead, they leave

us pathologically estranged and spiritually short of breath. Violence thus becomes the

last remaining outlet for a kind of existential authenticity scraping the bottom.

This paper contends that Mailer's fiction proposes a radical formulation: violence and its

correlate, the not infrequent hallucinatory “glimpse,” is the tool by which his

will protagonists desperately/ disastrously try to escape — what he terms the

“totalitarian” values of a consumer society whose lockstep lifestyle is simultaneously repressive and inauthentic. Mailer's concern as a storyteller

shifts from locating drama in the social struggle against institutionalized social

hierarchies (as in *The Naked and the Dead*) to petrifying, in narrative fashion

the person's psychotic break from conventional society. This violent twist is

stated in terms of a search after the transcendent moment, a temporary experience of ecstasy.

self-identification which Mailer considered a hipster attitude. By Mythic Symbolism, Discontinuous Narration in By comparing graphic violence, mythic symbolism and discontinuous narration in this work reveals that Mailer discredits the American Dream.

of being a food of soul, and obligating the subject.

to a horrible vision of their power to cause destruction.

1.1 Aim of the Study.

In this paper, an effort is made to take into account the way in which the fictions of Norman Mailer bring out the.

The violent and pathological subtext of American Dream, contemplates upon the way his.

narrative vision disinvents post-progressive myths of morality, identity.

World War II. Mailer, as indicated in the novels, assumed that to him, success and freedom are.

but a mask is all, a mask concealing a sterile world of unfriendly motives, alienation,

and spiritual decay. Violence as a story will be explained in the analysis.

frame and as a philosophical issue with the boundaries of American idealism.

Based on literature as a topic and a medium, in tracing violence in serial mode of experiencing new cases, the recurrence acts -a redrawing of signifier to humanity that is continuously shifting emotive and literary reverberations..

principal novels.

To discuss the social portrayal of the American Dream as portrayed by Mailer.

psychic phobias of postwar America.

To speak about Mailer and his application of so-called existential vision as one of the tools of the criticism of.

social hypocrisy and capitalist materialism.

To mark the literary technique used by Mailer in regard to his culture and politics.

thoughts of manhood, self and liberation.

In its response to these goals, this paper tends to provide a deeper insight on.

At the same time that Mailer put him in the foreground of his techniques of storytelling and cultural criticism.

wider background of American existential and countercultural thinking.

1.2 Literature Review.

It has been generally agreed by scholars, with but few exceptions, that Mailer was correct in his belief.

fiction is the dramatization of the main paradox of American modernity identity and

only acts of violence can be the foundations of violence, and vision can only pass.

destruction. His work is a long term criticism of the American Dream to his favor.

an ambiguous space of morality, identity crises and spiritual waste lands.

The critics of the text-centered approach have noted Richard Poirier (1972) and Robert Merrill (1978).

Existential concerns that preoccupy Mailer - and even feminist critics such as Kate Millett (1970)

have attacked the misogynist strain in his work with vehemence. More recent researches included one by J. Michael Lennon (2018) and diversity of journal.

articles, and still struggles with his problematic legacy even in its attempts.

read Mailer as a needed, albeit a profoundly flawed, literary activity.

at the moral and psychological price of American exceptionalism.

This criticism observes that, despite being still imperfect, Mailer novels are.

an inevitable soil on which to attack our violent oppositions at the.

American national fiction has its origins.

Chapter Two

Framework

2.1 The Beginning of Existentialism: Violence and Authenticity

The association that Mailer has with violence is paradigmatically existential as he imagines.

it as a frantic remedy to the soullessness of the modern.

This is a section on which he was accustomed to generalize about American totalitarianism in broad strokes that

defines the totalitarian conformity imposed by the mass communications systems,

psychological retrenchment, corporate presence, and retrenchment. In Mailer's view, the

antiseptic, security-obsessed postwar society had largely prohibited authentic

experience and, to quote the writer Sherry Turkle, experiencing a collective experience dead. Amidst this,

violence appears not as pure barbarism but a grisly secular

sacrament — a wager thrown down to either God or the Devil for the salvation of one's true

self.

2.2 The "White Negro" and the Hipster Ambience

It is Mailer's essay — The White Negro — (1957) that constitutes, in the rogue philosopher

behind this dance. Here he constructs the prototype of that American Hipster —

existential outlaw who allows —to be a bad thing,|| and livetime with death as —immediate danger, whoever has divorced himself from society's Super Ego, revels

in those splattered moments of being in —the gigantic present.|| (Mailer, 1957) For

the Hipster, who is left in an "totalitarian" world that rejects real death and feelings,

only respirated across via the milieu of existential "jungle"

fear — a site where violent action is only one of many means to acquire

radical and spiritual freedom. The essay describes a chain of causation: total

Just like the other, conformity generates spiritual suicide which in turn needs – can you guess? – existential violence as the only way to a moment of evanescent, idealistic authenticity. In this way, the

real evil lies not in –the violent act but the repressive society that can even make it seem necessary.

2.3The Naked and the Dead: Violence, Bureaucratic, and the Krazy Dream

Crushed

Mailer’s first novel, *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), shows how the laid the foundation for this kind of critique from its very inception: an image

is provided —in microcosmic form— of an American military that is the lowest common denominator of a society

riddled with totalitarian twinings. The violence here is institutional, anonymous,

and bureaucratic. General Cummings’ Nietzschean adage that — the only future morality of power—“the future morality is a power morality”— presages Mailer’s dystopic

vision of a bitter national psyche obsessed with power long after (Mailer, 1948).

The soldiers, and their pasts and hopes in melancholy "Time Machine.

flashbacks, are psychologically compressed into the impersonal cogs of the army; these are people whose dreams have been subordinated to a larger, more monolithic one.

At the symbolic center of this argument is the climatically doomed ascent of

Mount Anaka. It is the symbolic mountain of just the blank, brutal peak of. American ambition, that dead end without any meaning other than hierarchical.

Maniacal sacrifices to feed the hegemony. The violence is

systemic, structural forces, how the American Dream coupled with concentrated, impersonal authority, is a formula not only of destruction, but also of stultification of personal.

vision. The dream is not pushed aside or delayed, but beaten into submission by the very institutions which are supposed to permit it.

2.4 American Dream: The Metaphysics of Murder and Vision

Odyssey of the Hipster (1967), An American Dream (1965), but he going After JFK.

for assassination instead. A war hero called Stephen Rojack in the novel. ex-congressman, and professor--rapidly acquires the spiritual stupor.

of the American ruling order, brought to a standstill in the emptiness of life lived in the midst of.

the high society that trickles down his emasculating of marriage to the torrid and ruthless Deborah.

Rojack's strangling of Deborah isn't framed as a crime of passion but rather

as a deliberate existential gambit. Then there is barely a heartbeat after the killing

that the murder of all murders to talk to me heavenly, supernatural sense of — I was

in contact with the World, and had a deep if dread-filled sense that Moon was

beauty and Stars not there; The Man-beast louse on the universe, great beast Godl

(Mailer, 1965/1984). This vision, a savage coffee of cosmic awe, demonic force,

and sexual ill-desire that immediately provides the reward for his assault.

The

violence is purgative and metaphysical, ritualized behavior that ruptures the

repressive agreement of his pseudo-existence and gives him a short, hasty passage

to a pan-anthro-ethnic, supernal reality veiled by the scrim of the theatre of "Infinity

Is Going To Be Awesome."

2.5 Table Stakes: Misogyny and the Experience Entitlement

The novel's turbulence of controversy is in this economy of gendered liberation. Sane

feminists denounce the story's belief that manliness can be forged only by stomping out femininity. Although it also embodies Mailer's internal travails, it is

central to the paper's argument: the —dark undersidel of the Dream is unveiled as a

vitriolic self-involved, gendered conception of liberty. What with Rojack's rebirth and all, the reader receives a clear message about those kindred souls such as

Davis's: that the contemporary American male, psychologically eunuched by

corporate —reason,|| can only reconnect with his natural self by shifting naked

power over the domestic and intellectual forces Brooke embodies. The

Therefore, the arriving" vision" is one of and ethical incoherence, and the destructive

irony where the drive for max individual freedom produces the ultimate oppression.

2.6 Why Are We in Vietnam? : A National Pathology of Mass Psychosis

If An American Dream is about urban, personal violence, what are we in Vietnam? (1967) Mailer's violence-vision cycle applied at the level of a nation,

offering a psychedelic diagnosis of the imperial psyche that coursed through the

Vietnam War. The novel tells the story of D.J., an 18-year-old Texan, and the

tale of a hyper-masculine, tech-intoxicated hunting trip to Alaska through an obscene, fragmented consciousness.

The hunt serves as a blunt metaphor for American imperial aggression: an

vehicle of empty, ritualized exhibition of domination that devours resources and is useful to no spiritual or practical purpose. The caricature of the well-off father is D.J.'s dad, Rusty.

successful Dreamer; his —domination ethic mirrors that of the nation itself. It is

something to behold, though the violence (the literal messy disemboweling of

animals)” but also the mental toll of it contained in D.J.'s panic, schizophrenic narrative voice. In one of the climactic points of the hunt, D.J. and his

friend Tex vicariously undergo a sort of shared quasi-mystical experience—what he calls a “vision”

2 through the gift of — connection — from 3 nothingness and power in the midst of grand wilderness absence.

Mailer's point is that when the American Dream becomes a national project empire, it increasingly morphs into a collective psychosis steeped in hypertestosterone

dogmatism, techno-detachment and an insane desire to dominate. The novel's radical style — its meditation of stream-of-consciousness narration, its shifting

perspectives, and linguistic foulness — dramatizes this national schizophrenia. The —vision realized is not a kind of enlightenment but a horrific, amoral

transcendence, a mentality that normalizes and provides excuses for imperial

violence. The national Dream is thus a poisoned cup of empty water, a deadly draft for the colonized that should be refused and spewed.

2.7 Political and Existential Dimensions

Mailer's fiction is unique in the way it elides political judgment with existential

exploration, in which violence emerges as the vanguard of intimacy

rebellion and national pretense. It blurs personal and political. In *The Armies of the Night* (1968), the protest at the Pentagon is raised to an existential plane, a drama of individual conscience against state power. The execution of Gary Gilmore (portrayed in *The Executioner's Song* [1979]) is accordingly examined as that state-sanctioned spectacle of violence that schools society into seeing itself in others' moral inconsistencies.

In philosophy, Mailer derives from Nietzsche's will to power and Freud's opposition of Eros and Thanatos. His heroes are contemporary, flawed *Übermenschen* who will fight a never-ending battle between creative and destructive tendencies. Their violence is an effort, though, futile to loss to rediscover their wills and escape alienation in a God-less world. dead — which sends them on the road to self-immolation. This synthesis ranks Mailer as an effort to find the true self, which in its turn becomes a long journey into the refraction of the search of personal authenticity. and reprimands the very crisis of soul in the country.

2.8 Aesthetic Vision and Narrative Method

What informs Mailer's art is often his collision of aesthetic styles. He avoids passive realism in favour of a participatory, occasionally self-reflexive approach. His work blends:

- Documentary Realism & Novelistic Imagination: In *The Armies of the Night* (—History As a Novel, the Novel as History) and with the grim reportage of *The Executioner's Song*.
- Symbolic Density: War, sex and body returns as imagery standing in for that fight between freedom and restraint.
- Health-Challenged Prose: The disjointed, frenetic prose in books like *Why Are*

We in Vietnam? captures the existential whiplash and moral free fall of contemporary America.

· Disturbing Reflexive Narration: Mitchel goes to great lengths to insinuate and challenge their own authority, what they're telling the story for, and whether or not it is even possible to do so.

That stylistic hybridity — or mongrelism, as Mailer would call it — makes Mailer's from form-content and writing fiction themselves in on itself, so that characters at the very soul or heart of his being is a moral and philosophical enterprise.

2.9 Conclusion :

Norman Miller's novels offer us a terrifying indeed, a terrifyingly irreducible—indictment of the American Dream, of the violence inherent in its logic of individual self-assertion, and of the existential void it leaves in its wake. He does not merely lament the corruption of the dream, but dissects the sick mind that gives birth to it, where violence is the only path to transcendence. Through novels such as *The Naked and the Dead*, *An American Dream*, and *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, Miller charts a course where the pursuit of individual extremism leads to moral confusion, psychological disintegration, and spiritual emptiness.

The collision of violence, political acuity, and existential turmoil in his works a vortex imbued with realism, symbolism, and documentary strategies compels readers to confront the moral challenges of contemporary America head-on. This democracy, stripped of all the aforementioned elements, in order to realize the American dream, seems, in Miller's world, worse than merely a failed social contract; it is a bloody extension of a psychological drama.

And given its raucous and controversial presentation of issues of gender and morality, Miller's works hold profound and controversial significance for anyone who wishes to

understand the American spirit. They call on other thinkers to stop planning for the intertwined costs of freedom, power, and authenticity in our time.

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