

INDIVIDUALISM OR EGALITARIANISM?

A CULTURAL CRITIQUE OF POWER AND
MORALITY IN NORMAN MAILER'S FICTION

个人主义还是平等主义？

——诺曼·梅勒小说中权力与道德的文化批评

任虎军 著

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序

Preface

任虎军博士的论著《个人主义还是平等主义?——诺曼·梅勒小说中权力与道德的文化批评》着重关注当代美国作家诺曼·梅勒小说中所表现的权力与道德。之前,任虎军博士对当代美国小说进行了较长时期、较为深入的研究。

作为一位犹太裔美国人,诺曼·梅勒以其独特的视角审视当代美国社会。他在小说中深刻揭示了当代美国社会所提倡的个人主义本质上是自我、征服和统治。而这种个人主义与性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义霸权之间有着十分密切的联系,因为这里强调的是美国男性的重要性,强调的是美国白人的优越性,强调的是美国对全世界的霸权欲望。

任虎军博士的论著以美国个人主义文化为参照,以性别、种族和国家差别为切入点,揭示了梅勒对美国个人主义所执的批判态度。尽管许多评论家认为梅勒是个人主义的倡导者,但他在其作品中常常对当代美国社会所奉行的个人主义表示怀疑和不满。这种矛盾与梅勒本人的双重身份有关:他不时表现出美国白人的优越感,然而,作为一位犹太裔美国人,他又属于少数裔族,在白人世界中处于劣势地位。在其小说中,梅勒严厉批判了当代美国社会中存在的种族主义、性别歧视和霸权主义,为我们了解当代美国社会与文化提供了一种难得的视角。

任虎军博士于 2002 年至 2005 年在南开大学攻读英美文学方向博士学位,离家万里。三年苦读,潜心学问,终于 2005 年夏获文学博士学位。一年多来仔细修改,补充其博士论文,始成此书。

衷心希望任虎军博士继续努力,为美国文学研究做出更大贡献。

严 启 刚

四川外语学院教授

2006 年 12 月 13 日

重庆歌乐山下

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Abstract

Norman Mailer(1923-) is generally considered as an advocate of individualism, but his works, especially his novels, indicate that he prefers egalitarianism to individualism. This study explores his concern with power from the perspective of his identity as a Jewish American. It positions Mailer's concern with power in the context of the American individualist culture and examines power and morality in his novels along the lines of gender, race, and nation. By looking into power relations between men and women, between the white majority and the racial and ethnic minorities, and between America and the rest of the world as reflected in *The Naked and the Dead*, *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park*, *An American Dream*, *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, *The Executioner's Song*, *Tough Guys Don't Dance*, and *Harlot's Ghost*, which are all set in contemporary America, it reveals the intimate link among American individualism, sexism, racism, and imperialism in contemporary American culture and society and the complex relationship between Mailer and American individualism.

This study uses the ideological criticism as its method of investigation and draws upon such critical approaches as the Marxist, the feminist, the post-colonialist, and the new historicist in analysing and interpreting power and morality in Mailer's novels. It also draws a theoretical framework from Michel Foucault's theory of power and Bertrand Russell's theory of the ethics of power for the analysing and

interpreting of power in Mailer's novels.

Mailer is a Jewish American. He is both within and without white America and is both an insider and an outsider. His identity as a Jewish American provides him with a double perspective from which he can view contemporary America from both within and without. He has a deep concern with the morality of power and he sees power in terms of the effect of its exercise. He believes that power is both repressive and productive and that power that enslaves others is productive only to one that exercises that power and forever repressive to others over whom that power is exercised whereas power that sets others free is productive both to one and others and therefore always moral. He does not approve of power that enslaves others but values power that sets others free. He stresses the morally productive aspect of power and harshly criticizes power-morality because it functions only to reinforce and sustain power that enslaves others rather than power that sets others free. He wishes to see freedom and happiness enjoyed equally by all human beings, whatever their gender, race, and nation, and does not want to see some people enslaved and dominated by others just because of their gender, race, and nation.

Mailer suggests in his novels that not everyone can exercise his/her own individuality in contemporary America because individuals in contemporary America are not equal in terms of gender, race, and nation. He also indicates that in contemporary America one's exercise of individuality more often than not implies one's exercise of control over and repression of others and therefore the very individual who is repressed by and under the control of another can not exercise his/her own individuality. He believes that only when individuals in contemporary America are equal with one another can they be really free to ex-

ercise their own individuality. To assume that all individuals in contemporary America are repressed without distinguishing them along the lines of gender, race, and nation is an act of obscuring the existence of sexism, racism, and imperialism in contemporary American culture and society and the intimate link among American individualism, sexism, racism, and imperialism.

Mailer shows that American individualism does not imply self-reliance, self-determination, and independence as fostered by the American frontier experience and advocated by Benjamin Franklin, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and others but self-interest, subjugation, and domination as practiced in contemporary American social, political, cultural, and religious life. Mailer demonstrates that American individualism is closely linked with sexism, racism, and imperialism because it often stresses the primacy of the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant Americans and male Americans as individuals and emphasizes the supremacy of America over other nations. Mailer's concern with the effects of the exercise of power is a reflection of his obsession with the effect of American individualism on the moral consciousness of the American people. He believes that the existence of sexism, racism, and imperialism in contemporary American culture and society has exacerbated the moral consciousness of the American people and he has been critical about sexism, racism, and imperialism, suggesting that everything that America has done in the name of serving God is directed toward its domination of the world and that everything that the Americans who call themselves Christians have done in the name of doing service and honor to God is directed toward the domination of the poor and the weak by the rich and the strong.

Mailer's attitude toward American individualism, though predomi-

Abstract

nantly critical, sometimes seems somewhat ambiguous. As a Jewish American, he belongs to the community of the ethnic minorities and is always in an inferior position in white America. His inferior status as an outsider makes him tend to see the relationship between men and women, between the white majority and the racial and ethnic minorities, and between America and the rest of the world from the perspective of the "oppressed" and the "ruled." He severely criticizes sexism, racism, and imperialism in contemporary American culture and society and advocates freedom and equality among human beings. As a Jewish descendant, he values the morally right action and behavior and harshly criticizes the American individualist action and behavior of men enslaving women, of the white majority oppressing and dominating the racial and ethnic minorities, and of America trying to dominate the world. But then, as a Jewish American, Mailer partly, if not wholly, belongs to the white community and therefore has at times been somewhat ambiguous about the white domination. He seems to be more sympathetic with Jews and Mexicans than blacks. And as an American, he has sometimes shared the prevalent view in his time of America as superior to other nations in the world and therefore partly participated in the sustaining of the dominant ideology of imperialism in contemporary America.

Key Words: Power Morality American Individualism
Norman Mailer

中文摘要

诺曼·梅勒(1923—)被许多评论家认为是个人主义的倡导者,但他的作品,特别是他的小说却表明他更主张平等主义。本书从诺曼·梅勒犹太裔美国人这一文化身份的角度研究了他对权力的关注,以美国个人主义文化为参照,以性别、种族及国家差别为切入点,研究了诺曼·梅勒小说中的权力与道德。通过探讨在《裸者与死者》、《巴里海滨》、《鹿苑》、《一场美国梦》、《我们为什么在越南?》、《杀人者之歌》、《硬汉子不跳舞》和《哈洛特的幽灵》中所反映出来的存在于男性与女性之间、美国白人与少数裔族美国人之间以及美国与世界其他国家之间的权力关系,揭示了美国个人主义与性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义之间的密切关系以及梅勒与美国个人主义之间的复杂关系。

本书采用了意识形态批评方法,在分析和阐释诺曼·梅勒小说中的权力与道德时使用了马克思主义、女性主义、后殖民主义和新历史主义等文学批评方法,在分析和阐释诺曼·梅勒小说中的权力时还借用了福科的权力理论和罗素的权力伦理学理论。

诺曼·梅勒是一位犹太裔美国人。他既属于美国白人社会又不属于美国白人社会,既是美国白人社会之中的一页又是美国白人社会之外的一页。他的犹太裔美国人这一文化身份为他提供了观察当代美国的双重视角,使他既能从知情者又能从局外人的角度审视当代美国。他深切关注权力的道德性,常常从权力实施效果的角度看待权力的性质。他认为权力既是压抑性的又是生产性的。奴役束缚别人的权力只对权力实施者是生产性的,而对权力实施的对象永远是压抑

性的；而能够使别人得到自由的权力对权力实施者和权力实施的对象都是生产性的，因而总是道德的。梅勒批判奴役束缚别人的权力，但却倡导能使别人得到自由的权力。他强调在道德上具有生产性的权力的一面，而严厉批判权力道德，因为其作用就是强化并维护奴役束缚别人的权力，而不是解放别人使其得到自由的权力。他希望所有的人都能平等地享受自由和幸福，而不愿看到一部分人因为其性别、种族及国家而受他人的奴役和统治。

梅勒在其小说中表明，在当代美国，人们作为个体在性别、种族以及国家方面是不平等的，因而不是每个人都可以自由地表现自己的个性。他也表明，在当代美国，一个人的个性表现常常意味着对他人的控制和压制，因此，受控制、受压制的人常常不能表现自己的个性。他认为只有当人们彼此平等时，他们才能真正自由地表现自己的个性。因此，不加区分地认为在当代美国所有的人作为个体都受到压抑的观点掩盖了在当代美国文化和社会中存在的性别歧视、种族主义与帝国主义，掩盖了美国个人主义与性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义之间的密切关系。

梅勒表明，美国个人主义不是美国边疆经历所鼓励、富兰克林和爱默生等人所倡导的那种个人主义，而是当代美国社会、政治、文化和宗教生活中所奉行的那种个人主义。它并不意味着自立、自主和独立，而意味着自私自利、征服和统治。梅勒表明，美国个人主义与性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义之间存在着密切的关系，因为美国个人主义常常强调美国白人和美国男性的首要性，强调美国对世界的霸权。梅勒对权力实施效果的深切关注表明他对美国个人主义对美国人道德意识的影响极为重视。他认为，当代美国文化和社会中存在的性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义使美国人的道德意识日趋恶化。他对性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义向来持批评态度，认为美国以服务上帝的名义所进行的一切活动都是为美国称霸世界服务的，而声称自己是基督教徒的美国人所从事的活动常常是为富人统治穷人、强者压制

弱者服务的。

梅勒对美国个人主义的态度总体上是批判性的,但有时却表现出一定的含混。作为一位犹太裔美国人,他属于少数裔族社会,在美国白人社会处于劣势地位。他在美国白人社会中的劣势地位使他能够从“受压迫者”、“受统治者”的角度看待男性与女性之间、美国白人与少数裔族美国人之间以及美国与世界其他国家之间的关系。他严厉批判当代美国文化和社会中存在的性别歧视、种族主义和帝国主义。作为犹太后裔,他重视道德上正确的行为,严厉批判男性奴役束缚女性、美国白人压迫统治少数裔族美国人以及美国企图称霸世界的美国个人主义行为。但另一方面,作为犹太裔美国人,梅勒是地地道道的白人,因而他对白人在美国的统治的态度有时是含混的。他似乎对少数裔族美国白人比对美国黑人更具同情心。作为美国人,美国优越论在他身上时有反映,因此他在一定程度上又参与维护了当代美国文化和社会中存在的帝国主义意识形态。

关键词: 权力 道德 美国个人主义 诺曼·梅勒

Abbreviations

I will use in the text the following abbreviations of Norman Mailer's works, whose editions will appear in the Bibliography:

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|
| <i>ND</i> | <i>The Naked and the Dead</i> |
| <i>BS</i> | <i>Barbary Shore</i> |
| <i>DP</i> | <i>The Deer Park</i> |
| <i>AM</i> | <i>Advertisements for Myself</i> |
| <i>PP</i> | <i>The Presidential Papers</i> |
| <i>AD</i> | <i>An American Dream</i> |
| <i>WV</i> | <i>Why Are We in Vietnam?</i> |
| <i>TD</i> | <i>Tough Guys Don't Dance</i> |
| <i>ES</i> | <i>The Executioner's Song</i> |
| <i>HG</i> | <i>Harlot's Ghost</i> |

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Introduction

Power has been Norman Mailer's major concern in his fiction, and for more than five decades critics and scholars have been engaged in the discussing and interpreting of Mailer's obsession with power, which has resulted in a controversy over Mailer and his work, focusing mainly on his conception of power and his attitude toward violence, and yet no consensus has been reached. The controversy has inspired the present study which is intended to examine power and morality in Mailer's fiction, with an aim to explore the relationship between Mailer and the dominant ideology in contemporary American society.

The idea of conducting the present study grows out of an imbalance between the Mailer scholarship in China and that in America. Norman Mailer is a great contemporary American writer who has been writing for more than five decades and produced and published more than forty books of more than one genre,¹ but there has been a rather small scholarship on him in China. Chinese scholars and critics, due to some historical reasons, did not pay much attention to Mailer until the early 1980s when two critical essays on his *Ancient Evenings* appeared in the journal of *Reading*.² Since then, in more than two decades, only less than thirty essays have been published on Mailer or his work in Chinese academic journals or newspapers, but few have covered Mail-

er's fiction as a whole.³ Although recent years have witnessed the publication of several books on the history of American literature in which Mailer's novels are referred to, none of them intends to make an intensive and in-depth investigation; instead, they have only made a brief introduction to his fiction, with more emphasis on some of his novels than on the others. Some of the authors of these books have observed Mailer's concern with power and violence in his work, but none of them has developed their observation into a comprehensive exploration of Mailer's conception of power and his attitude toward violence.⁴ So far, on the Chinese literary critical scene, there has been no monograph on Mailer's conception of power and his attitude toward violence. The absence of such a monograph has stimulated me into pursuing an effort to probe into Mailer's conception of power and his attitude toward violence and write a monograph on his concern with power in his fiction.

There has been, however, a growing scholarship on Mailer in America which has been developing along with a controversy about Mailer's conception of power and his attitudes toward violence and women. The controversy began as early as in the 1950s when two important critical essays on *The Naked and the Dead* were published.⁵ And now, more than half a century later, the controversy seems far from ceasing, and scholars and critics seem to be more and more interested in Mailer's conception of power.⁶ And yet, there has been no accepted overview of Mailer, nor of his work in general and his fiction in particular, nor of his conception of power and his attitudes toward violence and women, to say nothing of a critical consensus. In addition, American critics and scholars have seldom examined Mailer's attitudes toward racism and the American imperial culture. The lack of such a consensus or examination has convinced me of the necessity of con-