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Mis (representation) of Women in Mailer's *An American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance*

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By

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Letter of Recommendation

The thesis entitled "**Mis (representation) of Women in Mailer's *An American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance",*** has been prepared under my supervision by Saroj Subedi, the research is original and dig out useful information. He carried out the research from August 2010 to May 2011. I recommend it for evaluation to the research committee.

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Letter of Approval

This thesis entitled **"Mis (representation) of Women in Mailer's *An American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance",*** Saroj Subedi, submitted to the Central Department of English, Tribhuvan University, has been approved by the under signed members of the Research Committee.

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Abstract

This research on Mailer's *An American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance* explores his attitude of complex relationship between male and female. By portraying male and female characters in both positive as well as negative characteristics, Mailer establishes his idea that both have strengths as well as weaknesses because we cannot transcend human limitations. From the perspective of feminist criticism, the research analyzes the characters and images used by the novelist in the novels.

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I. Norman Mailer's Attitude to Female Sex

Norman Mailer has never been portrayed as a favorite of female readers; moreover, he has been persistently misunderstood in terms of the female role in his works throughout his fifty-six year writing career. These misinterpretations may be attributed to some of his central paradoxical theories. These include the role of the mind in contracting cancer or preventing conception, his suggestion that antibiotics cause AIDS, or perhaps most significant, the transfer of psychic power between combatants or lovers. All of these must be quoted at length in order to be fully comprehended. Suffice it to say, these theories are mostly seen in *The Prisoner of Sex*, a work integral to this thesis because it functions as Mailer's personal reaction to women who have not understood his work (and in some cases attacked it) in the early and middle stages of his writing career. Through a textual analysis of *The American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance* this research will trace chronologically the evolving and increasingly complex role of primary female characters. Transitions between these novels will highlight how specific female characters are used to embody the development of Mailer's philosophies. His major female characters are Deborah, Ruta, and Cherry in *An American Dream* (1964), Marilyn Monroe in the biography *Marilyn* (1972) and *Of Women and Their Elegance* (1980) (written from the first-person point of view of Marilyn), Madeleine and Patty in *Tough Guys Don't Dance* (1984), and Kittredge and Sally in *Harlot's Ghost* (1991). The remaining two works, *The Prisoner of Sex* (1971) and *Genius and Lust* (1976) can also serve as direct support in explaining Mailer's personal philosophies. These and the above analyses are, essential in exposing female Mailer readers to a better understanding of his theories, in hopes of sparking further interest in not just the presented material but all of his works.

A more specific view of which novel exemplifies which philosophical theme can be dealt with in the chronological order in which the novels appeared, showing how specific female characters exemplify each theme's meaning. For example, *An American Dream* is a novel in which Mailer uses both supernatural and grotesque dialogue entailing the two themes of cancer and contraceptive use. Mailer parallels Rojack's stirring emotional sickness to the imminent danger of cancer unless he can overpower his wife Deborah by killing her, thus absorbing her power and destroying his malignancy. Rojack's battle for existential self-definition in a naturalistic world continues later in the novel, when he has sex with the singer, Cherry. Her diaphragm is compared to a shield, her womb unreachable. Once the contraceptive is removed, Rojack and Cherry are now equals, sparking his inner battle of whether he can accept love, which he ultimately does.

The themes of inner sickness and repudiation of contraceptives continue in *Marilyn* and *Of Women and Their Elegance*. The critic Ingrid Bengis writes that Mailer is after the degree of intimacy that reveals obscure aspects of one's personality (72). In *Marilyn*, Mailer writes in his chapter on Marilyn in Hollywood, "we never know which curses, evils, frights, and plagues are passed into another under the mistaken impulse we are offering some exchange of passion, greed, and sexual charge" (87). By avoiding contraception, two people exchange not merely fluids but actual power and spiritual good or evil.

Tough Guys Don't Dance and *Harlot's Ghost* appear further along in Mailer's career, yet still establish the protagonists' solution to their inner existential battles through the acceptance of love from their women. In *Tough Guys*, the theme of curing cancer is prevalent in the relationship between Madden and Madeleine. Barry H. Leeds supports this in his book, *The Enduring Vision of Norman Mailer*, by writing,

"again, cancer figures prominently, supernatural omens abound, and potential salvation is offered through a regenerative heterosexual love" (74). It is with this Mailer concept that I present the evolving female character as a saving force for each of his male characters. Related but subordinate issues in this research are the responses of several representative women (not necessarily feminist) critics and biographers to Mailer's female characters. Such key critics include Laura Adams, Barbara Lounsberry, Diana Trilling, Judith Fetterly, Stacey Olster, and Joyce Carol Oates. Their ideas will be presented as contributing evidence illuminating the chronological evolution of Mailer's female characters. Part of this subordinate issue of research deals with the spectrum of positive vs. negative female viewpoints, as is most obviously seen between the integrity and accuracy of Lounsberry, and the disingenuous malice of Millett. One such example of pure insult without substantial evidence is in Millett's book, *Sexual Politics,* where she writes that *An American Dream* is simply "an exercise in how to kill your wife and be happy ever after." Germaine Greer, also a feminist author, disagreed with Millett, stating that she had "misidentified the enemy," and also told *The New York Times*, "It's absolutely philistine not to recognize what a great book *An American Dream* is." As far as accuracy and integrity are concerned, Lounsberry has shown such support of Mailer's works by stating, "his greatest gift as a writer is for metaphor, which he employs as a probe of his subject and as a tool for enhancing intimacy with his readers and stimulating mental and social activity" (55). All responses chosen will lend themselves to understanding the misinterpretations of Mailer's feelings about women, and the crucial role of his female characters in each novel. In addition to these primarily female sources, Barry H. Leeds and J. Michael Lennon will contribute their expertise from both a current point of view and a historical/chronological one.

Rather than merely synthesizing the interpretations of the critics, this thesis will consist primarily of my own views regarding Mailer's female characters, with the works cited used to substantiate my personal analysis. My research consists of positive feedback concerning Mailer's woman characters. I am one female Mailer reader who believes that such characters as Deborah, Cherry, Kittredge, and Madeleine bring Mailer's philosophies to life. These women bring Mailer's main male characters out from their naturalistic nightmares and further toward the protagonists' existential journey's. I disagree emphatically that the above female characters were created in any offensive or degrading way, but rather am convinced that Norman Mailer does not hate women, and is, on the contrary, so intrigued by them that he finds the rawest possible edge of the female being in his writings. Ideally, this work should serve as a research tool for future Norman Mailer readers, welcoming new interpretations of his work amidst the ever-changing society of the twenty-first century.

Mailer's *The Prisoner of Sex* is one of his powerful texts that reflects his belief about woman. It is such a crucial segues into the mind of Mailer, which depicts his views of women and how they are presented in his works. This autobiographical testimony not only further explains some of Mailer's most controversial and misunderstood theories, but also presents its readers with specific functions female characters play for the purpose of developing his plots. Religious allusions abound here due to Mailer's strong faith in Judaism. Also, critics see Judaic mystical history in *The Prisoner of Sex*, showing a conditional treatment of Mailer's female characters in accord with his attitudes toward sex and women. *The Prisoner of Sex* is a main source of autobiographical information in terms of his novels and will be further utilized throughout this research. The purpose of this chapter, however, is strictly a

lesson in the Mailer female character formula. Mailer's use of D.H. Lawrence's style in this work is also a strong support of the two authors' shared beliefs, shown through their writings. It is relevant to examine the belief of the author in two out of four sections of his book: "The Acolyte" and "The Advocate." "The Prisoner" and "The Prizewinner" are not necessary here because their contents are not relevant to the focus of this thesis.

Mailer's attitudes toward sex and women have their philosophical foundation in mystical Judaism. Jessica Gerson helps readers to understand that Mailer's view of God is an obsession as to whether He is "essential or existential" (2). More specifically, Mailer is unsure of whether God is perfect or capable of being fallible. Whichever is the case, there remains a balance between men and women that is either in great tension or perfect balance. Perfect balance signifies equality, which in turn creates beauty. It is this philosophy Mailer uses as proof that technology has no place in the womb or on the penis. Gerson further explains, "[m]an is the creator, but woman is the passive, nurturing recipient of this active creative force, without which the created form would never be realized" (4). With respect to "The Advocate" portion of *The Prisoner of Sex*, there are two different types of women in Mailer's novels. One type is demoniac (Deborah and Ruta of AD), while the other is good and redemptive (Cherry of AD). According to Judaism, women are powerful both creatively and Satanically. Mailer believes that for this reason, women are closer than men to eternity, and men's fear forces them to "destroy every quality in a woman which will give her the powers of a male, for she is in their eyes already armed in the power that she brought them forth" (116). Gerson supports this by writing, "Mailer reminds us of the Hassidic sage, the Koretzer, who sees woman as the God-given Evil Impulse which must be mastered, "before she overwhelms man" (5).

With respect to modern civilization as we know it, Mailer is not against a Woman's right to choose. He is actually in favor of abortion but against birth control. In defense of this apparent contradiction, Mailer believes that women should not be shielded from any information regarding birth control. Actually, Mailer has always believed women should have any and all legal access to contraceptive information and devices. He may have a preference to the diaphragm over birth control pills because a diaphragm is easy to remove immediately, without fear of side effects or hormonal imbalances. As far as abortion is concerned, Gerson relates one of the two orthodox Jewish views on women to Mailer's belief, explaining, "the woman is not included in the injunction against waste [t]herefore, although she may not use any device—intercourse must be natural—anything she wishes to do *after* intercourse to destroy the seed is permissible" (11).

"The Advocate" portion of *The Prisoner of Sex* largely deals with Mailer's depiction of women through his novels. He highlights passages from Henry Miller and D.H. Lawrence, not only in admiration of their work but also to prove that male authors can, in fact, write about the female just as well as any woman could. Mailer's views of Miller's work will be seen later on in this thesis, but it is important first to emphasize what Mailer loves most about Miller's writing. Jennifer Bailey writes, "[h]e unerringly discerns in Miller's bombastic and raucous sexuality the best of his own fictional metaphors, while Lawrence's sensitive romanticism takes on the hue of Mailer's grand but certain failure in *An American Dream*" (133). The failure she speaks of is Rojack's constant search for his self-definition even after the story is over.

Mailer is also famous for his novels like *Marilyn* and *Of Women and Their Elegance.* In the former, Marilyn Monroe is a female character represented as a sexual

icon, was the object of extreme interest, perhaps obsession to Mailer over the course of many years. He has compiled three works on Monroe: *Marilyn* (Mailer's own personal view of Monroe which includes photographs arranged by long-time friend and collaborator Lawrence Schiller), *Of Women and Their Elegance* (a pseudo-autobiography in which Mailer assumes the role of Monroe), and "Strawhead" (a one-act play casting Mailer's daughter Kate as Monroe). His writings on Monroe have been controversial to many critics, mostly because he uses what he calls "factoids," or what have been called "half-truths" in these works. In defense of this accusation, Mailer says that in order to get what most people would call facts, people should look to the main biographers of Monroe, including those he quoted in *Marilyn*. What Mailer wanted to accomplish was how he saw Monroe, what he thought of her as a female existentialist, who always tried to retain her identity, or rather continual search for one. He saw Monroe as his ideal female character; his perfect heroine, one example being his reference to her in *An American Dream*. He thought of her as almost a mirror image of himself. Mailer even made a playful cryptogram using "Norma" and "Marilyn" to make "Norman Mailer" (plus and minus a few letters). There was a time when Mailer thought he could have been the one to save her and be the ideal husband for her because he thought he knew her so well. That belief was short-lived because Mailer realized his marriages were no more successful than her own.

Monroe was not meant to be saved or even tamed. As Mailer is ahead of his time in literature, so was Monroe in sexuality and beauty of a woman without restraints. The extensive research Mailer has compiled covers everything from Monroe's childhood and estranged family, to her approximately twenty-year modeling and acting career, to her untimely, mysterious, and controversial death. The

bottom line behind this long-time obsession with Monroe was her sexuality. He thought of it as her religion, food, music, and mental drug.

Mailer's short story "The Time of Her Time" is a segment from his collection, *Advertisements for Myself*. Featured in his massive 1998 anthology, "The Time of Our Time", the story tells a tale of sexual competition between the protagonist, Sergius O'Shaugnessy, and his (sexual) antagonist, Denise Gondelman. This competition entails a combination of intellectual wit with a challenge to make this particular woman have her first orgasm with a man. There is a slight resemblance between O'Shaugnessy's and Hubbard's Catholic upbringing (only in a sexual sense), in which religious imagery abounds. There are also examples of animal imagery, one of which is a comparison of O'Shaugnessy's lust with that of a bull.

When *Advertisements for Myself* was first published in the late 1950s, fear of controversy arose due to a scene in which O'Shaugnessy forces Gondelman into having anal intercourse with him. Mailer's note prior to the story reads:

> "The Time of Her Time" was a salacious object in its time. Secretly, I didn't believe it could be printed. Then my publisher, Walter Minton of G.P. Putnam"s, agreed it could not be included in Advertisements for Myself. Not as it stood. […] Before it was over, he agreed to take the chance without asking me to remove a word. Then a year or two later he published Lolita. "You know," he confided once, "I think it was publishing "The Time of Her Time" and seeing how little trouble came to us which made me realize you could do Lolita." Reader, the story you are about to peruse is the godfather of Lolita. (318)

Sergius O'Shaugnessy is a twenty-seven year old amateur bullfighter who received his training in Mexico, and is now setting up a bullfighter school, and home, on

Monroe Street in Manhattan. He refers to his new neighborhood as a “tenement jungle, [where] barbarians ate their young, and any type who reached the age of six without being altogether mangled by father, mother, family, or friends was a pint of iron man, so tough, so ferocious, so sharp in the teeth that the wildest alley cat would have surrendered a freshly caught rat rather than contest the meal” (320).

O’Shaugnessy quickly realizes that this environment is severely different from his previous home in the Village, so his purpose is to appear menacing. He attracts attention easily because of his height and blonde hair, “ [and] barbarians would notice [him], they noticed everything, and so it was wiser to come on strong than to try to sidle in” (321).

II. Mailer's Treatment of Women Characters in *An American Dream* and *Tough Guys Don't Dance*

An American Dream is a fitting place to begin the research on Mailer's works, not just because it is his second truly significant novel, but because it is an extremely complex and stunning view of how he uses three female characters to embody the development of two controversial theories. Deborah, Ruta, and Cherry are powerful and each of them play a distinct role in *An American Dream*, representing examples of the role of the mind in contracting cancer or enabling conception, and the transfer of psychic power between combatants or lovers. A secondary component in this work is Mailer's use of the grotesque, entailing animal imagery, and also the supernatural, such as God and Satan (Manichaean), and the battle for self-definition over natural obstacles. The terms existentialism and naturalism can be seen as only Mailer's personal representations of self-definition through natural obstacles. The protagonist, Stephen Rojack, must also be a focus of analysis in order to understand how the three women carry out Mailer's themes. Critics are another secondary approach, important in showing evidence of both misunderstanding and enlightenment in the examination of the women in this novel.

Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly is Rojack's wife of eight years. She is heiress to a two hundred million dollar fortune and has unlimited ties to society's elite. The eighth year of their marriage has been spent in separation, although Rojack admits to needing to contact her periodically. Rojack explains his relationship with Deborah by saying,

> We had been married most intimately and often most unhappily for eight years […] she was a great bitch, Deborah, a lioness of the species: unconditional surrender was her only raw meat […] She

> somehow *fails* […] if the lover escapes without being maimed to the nines or nailed to the mast. (9)

This is one of many examples entailing Mailer's animal imagery for Deborah. Her persona develops further as a woman who has been slowly torturing Rojack during their marriage, especially with infidelity. Rojack again explains:

> She had indeed announced each of [her infidelities] to me, but beyond this were anywhere from two hundred to precisely no infidelities, for Deborah was an artist in that great dialectic of uncertainty where lies lead to truth, and truth begets the shimmering of lies—"Are you *mad*?" she would ask when I would disclose my suspicions of a particular gentleman or lad, "Why, he's a boy," or "Don't you know he's repulsive to me," which she always said in her best London voice […]. (10)

Although seemingly at first these are just a series of petty tiffs between man and wife, they are actually an introduction into the real inner workings of Deborah. Andrew Gordon believes that Deborah's treatment of Rojack throughout their marriage is essential in providing readers with empathy for him by explaining: "If Rojack is arrogant, ambitious and a seducer, still his minor transgressions do not seem to merit Deborah's prissy, schoolgirl judgment that he is "evil, awful and evil" (14). Mailer must get us to side with Rojack at this early stage; if we can forgive the hero now for this venial sin, we will be more likely to side with him as his crimes increase in seriousness. An understanding must be made that Rojack is a victim and readers are intended to empathize with him early in the novel. Rojack's actions determine his self-defining journey, even if it means committing murder and other evil acts.

Rojack compares her attacks to punctures all over his insides, which never hit the same spot twice. He calls Deborah an "artist with the needle" and despite his need to be free of her, doesn't know if he has the strength to leave her (17). Rojack claims to be in a torturous marriage because his love for her is not pure. He says:

> I had loved her with the fury of my ego, that way I loved her still, but I loved her the way a drum majorette loved the power of the band for the swell it gave to each little strut […] I had the idea of running some day for Senator, an operation that would not be possible without the vast connections of Deborah's clan. (17)

Rojack feels empty without Deborah because of Mailer's first theory, which is the transference of power. Deborah gives Rojack strength and power, but with limits and a price. That price is more like a devil's contract. Judith Fetterly better explains their marriage and what Deborah gives Rojack by stating: "[Deborah] is also connected intimately to Rojack's capacity to realize personal power. She is the "armature" of his ego, and he fears that he does not have the 'strength to stand alone' without her" (56). In contrast to her rich identity as Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly, her efforts to get an identity out of his name result in nothing really. It is this view of himself as nothing that Deborah continually aggravates by saying he is nothing but a bully or nothing but a coward, by reminding him that he is not her father or her first husband or her real lover. The potential for murder in Rojack's relation to Deborah is thus double: she both represents his way of becoming something and confirms his sense of being nothing. The compulsion to see Deborah irregularly throughout their separation starts to make Rojack nervous because he cannot stop seeing her and senses that she will soon be glad to be rid of him and never turn back. He knows this about her and it leads to one last phone call that becomes the catalyst for Deborah's character to reach

her climactic role in Mailer's novel. Throughout their conversation, Rojack notices that Deborah is cordial and calls it a "very bad sign" (19). Her voice is "slithery with innuendo, [leaping] like a deer, [and slipping] like a snake" (20). She entices him to her "lair" where the battle between good and evil commences.

The battle Rojack faces against Deborah is disease-ridden, animalistic, sexual, and also religious. Deborah is a nemesis so powerful that her defeat is necessary before any healing on Rojack's part is possible. While Deborah and Rojack exchange insults, Rojack feels something stirring within him while watching Deborah break out in red patches on her neck and chest as signs of her rage. That stirring is Mailer's second theme in the novel, which is cancer stemming from rot, anger, and hatred emanating from his cells. Rojack describes what is going on inside him by using cancer imagery:

> [The patches] radiated a detestation so palpable that my body began to race as if a foreign element, a poison altogether suffocating, were beginning to seep through me. Did you ever feel the malignity which rises from a swamp? It is real, I could swear it, and some whisper of ominous calm, that heavy air one breathes in the hours before a hurricane, now came to rest between us. (25)

Rojack fears Deborah and knows she is quite capable of murder. He says he would welcome death from any other killer, "but Deborah promised bad burial" (26). If he does not succeed in this fight with Deborah, the cancer will overtake him.

When scared or highly aggressive, animals don't just appear menacing, they give off a scent that warns the opponent of danger. Deborah gives off an odor that Rojack refers to as carnivorous. Also, before they even begin arguing, Rojack could tell she had been drinking rum because it was seeping through her pores, giving off a

scent that was repulsive to him. Germaine Greer explains the "Great Bitch" in further detail by saying:

> The Great Bitch is the deadly female, a worthy opponent for the omnipotent hero to exercise his powers upon and through. She is desirous, greedy, clever, dishonest, and two jumps ahead all the time. The hero may either have her on his side and like a lion-tamer sool her on to his enemies, or he may have to battle for his life at her hands. (187)

Greer calls this an exploit because communication between the two is impossible, which in turn is due to the relationship being sexual and political in nature, not endearing and mutual. The reason Mailer presents Deborah and Rojack's relationship as such is because Rojack's real love is to be found later in Cherry. During the murder of Deborah, a phenomenon takes place that is the clearest example in this novel entailing the transfer of power. As Rojack strangles Deborah (both began equally strong), her strength passes over to Rojack. He gains Deborah's strength and is now able to benefit from her powers. Sexual imagery is also prevalent, when Rojack mentally sees a door opening for him while killing his wife. The phenomenon is explained with a murderous passage, couched in sexual imagery, describing the release of Deborah's hold on him:

> I thrust against the door once more […] I was driving now with force against that door […] spasms began to open in me […] pulse packed behind pulse […] black biled lust […] hatred passing from me in wave after wave […] illness as well, rot and pestilence, nausea, a bleak string of salts. (31)

The threat of cancer that was Rojack's warning is purged through his sexual release.

Rojack is the victor over Deborah. Greer reaffirms this imagery by explaining, "[T]he proper fate of the Great Bitch is death, either the metaphoric death of orgasmic frenzy and obliteration, or actual death, which Mailer's hero metes to his savage wife by strangling. She asked, she got" (189).

Now that Rojack has obtained Deborah's powers, like an animal his senses are heightened. He absorbs every sound, along with sensitivity to touch so strong that he has to take his shirt off because he can still feel Deborah's hand on his shoulder. His new animal traits are compared to those of fish, mice, and cardinals. His hearing is also finely tuned as he comments on being able to hear refrigerators click and fans turning on. Rojack needs these newly acquired gifts to develop his growing self-definition and face more battles the cosmos has in store for him.

The very next battle is introduced to Rojack through subconscious force, "Once again I could have been in a magnetic field where some force without sensation other than its own presence was coaxing me firmly to step away from Deborah, cross the room, and out the door" (41). This force leads Rojack into Ruta the maid's room, where a Manichaean battle ensues. Ruta is later seen in the novel as having ties to Deborah's father, Barney Kelly. Rojack's intercourse with Ruta is Manichaean because he struggles with invitations from God and the Devil, while penetrating her both vaginally and anally. The decision to accept the Devil is spontaneous, for Rojack chooses to finish anally with Ruta at the last minute. Choosing the Devil bestows more magical powers as a reward to Rojack.

In anticipation of receiving his gifts, Rojack wants the lights turned off in Ruta's room. In the dark, Rojack notices, "the darkness came over like air on a wound when the dressing is removed" (48) He continues with his observations by saying,

"My senses were much too alert. Everything which had passed from her body to mine was now alive inside, as if a horde of tourists, pokey and inquisitive, were wandering through my body" (48). Like a new superhero noticing everything new about what his body is capable of, Rojack observes with wonder all the gifts that will help him retrieve the existentialist inside. Rojack will need these gifts in preparation for the cover-up of Deborah's murder, and also for the quick cunning he will need to answer questions about his wife's murder from Detective Roberts. After Rojack leaves Ruta's room, he returns to where he had left Deborah and throws her body over the balcony, making her death appear suicidal.

The catalyst has been set and Rojack has proved to be a worthy adversary to the naturalistic forces around him. His struggle is far from over though, because he must now learn to use his existential power in bettering his life and in shaping his destiny. He could not have started this journey, much less won it, had it not been for his marriage to Deborah and the murder of her at his hands.

Detective Roberts is an impending threat because he can pull Rojack back into weakness before he can even have a chance to continue finding himself. Rojack feels uneasy about Roberts, just as he has with Deborah, but there is nothing supernatural about this adversary so Rojack has been dealt the better hand. With his newly acquired powers, Rojack concocts an explanation entailing religion and cancer to create a philosophy for Deborah's suicide. This is actually a reflection of what has been used on him by Deborah and Ruta, so now Rojack uses it to deter Roberts and go on with his transition.

The explanation of suicide in *An American Dream* posits a philosophy Mailer has about cancer, which stems from the throttling of anger deep inside. Rojack tells Roberts that Deborah was in a "pre-cancerous stage," and that she knew suicide was

her only option. Rojack explains that Deborah, “felt that as your soul died, cancer began. She would always say it was a death which was not like other deaths” (68). He then explains that Deborah felt the cancer develop within her, and that it was her cells that jumped off the balcony, not her body. Rojack then explains that as Deborah and he were in bed together as husband and wife, the cancer from which Rojack‟s mother died came upon Deborah.

Rojack does not complete his explanation there. He throws Roberts off with the added images that Deborah felt there were demons possessing her, she felt she was turning evil, and as a fervent Catholic it was her duty to commit suicide before losing her soul entirely. Even though Catholic doctrine deems suicide punishable by damnation, Deborah did not want to lose her soul to the demons ensuing within her, so she chose what she thought would be the lesser of the two consequences, demonic possession or eternal damnation. Roberts is stumped by this religious explanation, and needs time to sort everything out. This buys Rojack time for his next step in which Cherry helps him develop his existentialism (self-definition) in a way that helps him to love truly for the first time. Still, his battle is not yet over.

While en route to the police station, Rojack feels the tugging force of naturalism (obstacles) in the form of pressure. Steve’s heart is a bird (canary) and he has the memory of the forest outside. More animal imagery appears when Rojack feels like a fox in a bog, smelling fear but hoping to live while the hounds are waiting outside. Paranoia is the tugging force this time, and Rojack must stay calm and trust his instincts in order to get away from the police. His senses are still finely tuned, feeling the heat of the detectives’ anger like the burn of a ultraviolet light.

Cherry’s appearance at the police station could not have come at a better time, for she is the support he needs to keep himself from confessing all. The elderly but

powerful Mafioso Cherry is with, Eddie Ganucci, is “swimming in cancer” and was afraid to be cursed by Deborah. This is why he never got out of his car after the accident and thus was captured. Cherry’s presence keeps Rojack strong, though he feels his insanity developing, along with intense paranoia:

> Because there was a vast cowardice in me which was ready to make any peace at all, ready to pillage in public the memory of that wife I had had for near to nine years, ready to mock the future of my brain by preparing to cry out that I too was insane and my best ideas were poor, warped, distorted, and injurious to others. No, I wanted out, I wanted to get away from this trap I had created for myself, I would have given up if my cowardice had the simple strength to throw my voice across the room. (87)

Rojack’s existentialism prevails again, along with the added help of religious imagery, because he asks God for a sign, sees Cherry’s long blonde hair, and hears the voice inside him say, “Go to the girl” (89). The autopsy report on Deborah helps Rojack also, for it seems that she did indeed have cancer. This brings together science and magic. It also signifies the validity of her death, creating Rojack’s thought that, “if Deborah’s dying had given me a new life, I must be all of eight hours old by now” (93).

With his newborn life, Rojack sets out to see Cherry. Laura Adams explains Cherry’s role by writing: As her name indicates, there is something virginal and as American as cherry pie about Cherry, despite the sordidness of her past. Her Southern family background includes incest, suicide, and madness as in the Faulknerian version of the failed American dream, and her former lovers include members of the Mafia and a black musician. Cherry too is a murderer, having arranged for the removal of

the boyfriend whom she believed to have been the cause of her sister's suicide. Cherry's wide experiences make her something of a representative American and therefore a candidate for spiritual renewal. Something happens as he watches her sing in the nightclub. For one, no Manichaean battle will happen with her because he cannot, and no one has ever been able to, "possess that ass" (100).

Rojack begins to behave like a perverse Cupid, shooting arrows first into her big toe, then working his way up to her womb. He notices the effects he is having on her, the twinges in her sound, the most significant being with her sudden and apparent nausea. The arrow in Cherry's womb pierces her shield, causing her sickness and poison to escape from her and into him. A transition both magical and existential happens here, as Rojack rushes to the bathroom and vomits:

> […] and I held to the bowl and shook with sickness, and thought that if the murderer were now loose in me, well, so too was a saint of sorts, a minor saint no doubt, but free at last *to absorb the ills of others and regurgitate them forth*. [My Italics] ah yes, this was communion and shuddering rings of nausea […] up from the belly, up, up, and the presence of Roberts up and *splat*! Pea beans and shredding of puke came up from the basement of my belly, the police were saying goodbye to my body. (101)

Rojack is reborn a second time, first from the defeat of the devil (Deborah), and now from the saving of an angel (Cherry). When he cleans his face, he washes carefully, "as if I were washing a new face" (101). But the paranoia remains as Rojack notices the still crisp collar of his used-up shirt, comparing it to a superior ego that will not relinquish its power no matter how many times he removes and dons his shirt. He still

feels haunted by Deborah and wonders if he will be dead or incarcerated within three days.

The sexual union between Cherry and Rojack is one that strengthens him because he accepts love for the first time. Animal imagery comes into play here, along with another of Mailer's philosophies on the detrimental effects of contraceptives. What happens between Cherry and Rojack is the first battle of existentialism without the tugging force of naturalism. This time, the battle is within himself, a battle against his own fear and paranoia. This is probably the most important struggle, because without overcoming his inner fear, Rojack will never have a chance to continue his journey toward self-definition.

The beginning of their lovemaking is nothing spectacular, the two "finding middle ground, more like animals in a quiet mood" (126). There is no love yet and Mailer knows why. Cherry still has a shield about her, and that shield is a diaphragm. Rojack cannot finish inside of her unless the diaphragm is removed, reflecting the disdain Mailer has for contraceptives. Once back inside her, Rojack feels their lovemaking changing entirely and his inner battle begins. He cannot continue with his growth until they are together as equals. When they are "steel to steel," Cherry opening up her heart and womb to him, part of his American dream is attainable. Bird imagery is prevalent here, as love "flies into Rojack like some great winged bird" (128). Rojack is asked to accept love and he agrees. For the first time, he "came up from his body, rather than down from his mind" (128). Cherry is also a winged creature, because as his savior she is an angel. Love is Rojack's strongest weapon because, "love is not a gift but a vow…only the brave could live with it for a little while" (165). The bravery is at first tested with the mutual confession of each other's

transgressions, but that is soon followed by another challenge when Shago Martin, a lover of Cherry's, enters.

Receipt of this vow of love is tested by Rojack's fight with Shago Martin. This is the last test that will train Rojack in his existentialism, so that he can then go on to confront Barney Kelly, Deborah's father. The fight is not meant to leave Rojack fulfilled. Quite the contrary, it actually reminds him of his fears once again. This is important because Rojack cannot accept his own essence before releasing all of his fears. The acceptance of love from Cherry was only a reward for having the courage to come thus far. Fetterly supports this phenomenon taking place between Cherry and him by explaining:

> [Rojack] seeks in her, as he did in Deborah, some image of the self that will give him power and control. It is his desire to look good in Cherry's eyes and to live up to what he thinks she sees in him that enables him to resist the temptation to give in to the police and thus confirm that sense of self he fears. Cherry is directly responsible for his salvation, as Deborah is for his damnation. But the point is still the same; Rojack needs from Cherry exactly what he needed from Deborah and killed her for not providing. His identity and his power are inextricably connected to women. Women are the arbiters of his fate. (140)

An American Dream does not end with any sense of closure, for self-definition is a life-long journey that contains constant obstacles. Even though it was made known that Rojack is a professor of Existential Psychology in the first few pages of Mailer's novel, self-definition was never attainable without the help of Deborah, Ruta, and Cherry. As Judith Fetterly states, "[t] he image of men as superstuds lined up in

attendance on the demands of women, who represent and possess ultimate power, is central to the mythology of *An American Dream*" (138).

Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance* is a typical murder/mystery novel. Those familiar with Mailer's style, however, see recurring themes of religion, animal imagery, Manichaean battles, and cancer, as well as the influence of Henry Miller. There is also a striking resemblance between this novel and *An American Dream*, specifically with its female characters and journeys of self-definition. Here it is dealt in depth with the actions of the protagonist for the purpose of explaining the functions of the female characters. The plot will be summarized in order to focus on the discussion of those aspects of it, which highlight how the women in the narrator's life bring him further toward his existential journey. Tim Madden, the protagonist, journeys towards American existentialism or self-definition much like Rojack. Patty Lareine (Tim's wife) and Madeleine Falco (Tim's ex-lover) resemble Deborah and Cherry in relevance with their functions within the novel. Barry Leeds makes this comparison, stating:

> [*Tough Guys Don't Dance*] is similar to [*An American Dream*] not only in the circumstances of its composition but also in many of its themes, symbol patterns, and plot situations. Again, an estranged wife is murdered, possibly by her husband, the first-person narrator. Again, the existential will of the protagonist is tested by the danger of falling from heights, by a hostile police investigator, and by various adversaries from the demimonde. Again, cancer figures prominently, supernatural omens abound, and potential salvation is offered through a regenerative heterosexual love. (76)

Although similarities between the two novels abound, one uniqueness is the shifting of hetero and homosexual love between male characters.

The novel begins with Madden waking on the twenty-fourth morning of Patty's leaving him. He describes his marriage as less than perfect, rather disastrous in fact. Madden calls Patty an addiction, much like marijuana, liquor, and cigarettes. All these things are unhealthy and yet one cannot seem to stop consuming them until they are no longer available. Madden explains:

> If I had loved her once while knowing her frightful faults-even as we smoke like happy fiends and shrug away the thought of a lung cancer still decades away, so did I always perceive that Patty Lareine could be my doom around the bend of some treacherous evening—yet, so be it, I adored her. Who knew? Love might inspire us to transcend our dire fevers. That was years ago. Now, for the last year and more, we had been trying to kick the habit of each other. Intimate detestations had own each season until they rooted out all the old pockets of good humor. I had come to dislike her as much as my morning cigarette. Which, indeed, I had at last given up. After twelve years, I felt finally free of the largest addiction of my life. That is, until the night she left. That was the night I discovered that losing my wife was a heavier trip. (4)

Ironically, he tries to heal his loss by going back to cigarettes, alas finding no comfort in his futile attempt to substitute one addiction for another, "[f] or with the return of this bummer habit came back every bit of the old longing for Patty Lareine […] each cigarette smelled in my mouth like an ashtray, but it was not tar I sniffed, rather my

own charring flesh […] [s] uch is the odor of funk and loss" (5). Cigarettes and Patty appear to be linked: both make Madden miserable yet appease his addiction.

Patty Lareine is a character much like Deborah in *An American Dream*. Both have supernatural abilities, Deborah's in the form of heightened earthly senses, Patty's in the form of conjuring psychic phenomena. Madden and Patty once held a séance in their Provincetown home. During this event, she and another character, Spider Nisson, screamed at a supernatural vision they alone witnessed. Patty, like Deborah, is also a socialite, hosting parties constantly. She even welcomes Alvin Luther Regency, Chief of Police, on one occasion by turning the music down to appease angry neighbors while at the same time placing joints in Regency's pocket. Madden and Rojack's fear of their Wives infidelities are similar, both men knowing fully that there is always a conquest or potential lover on the horizon. Patty's brazen attitude is what Madden sees most in her. She enjoys gathering attention as Madden explains:

> [Patty's] body was her proud possession. 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. (106)

She and Deborah are both consuming characters, standing in the way of the rotagonists quest for self-definition. Once Patty is gone, Madden begins his existential journey through an unexpected event.

On the twenty-fourth evening of Patty's departure, Madden visits a bar, The Widow's Walk, to write and sip bourbon. He notices a blonde accompanied by a

gentleman, and Madden thinks she is remarkably similar to Patty. After comparing this mysterious blonde to Patty and a porn star named Jennifer Welles, he thinks, "[t] his blonde reminded me so directly of Patty Lareine that I felt obliged to strike" (19).

Madden feels compelled to hit on this captivating blonde. He knows that she is vying for his attention and admits, "[n]o mean surrogate was this lady for my own Patty Lareine" (18). Madden compares the blonde's voice to Patty's, explaining:

> Patty Lareine had such a voice. She could be diabolical with her lip around a Very Dry Martini (which, of course, count on it, she would insist on calling a Marty Seco). "It was gin," she'd say in all the husky enthusiasm of her hot-to-trot larynx, "it was gin as done the old lady in. Yes, asshole," oh, and she would include you most tenderly in this jeer, as if, by God, even you, asshole, could feel all right if you were being kept around her. (20)

This being the first interaction Madden has had with people since Patty left, he is intrigued as he eavesdrops on the couple's conversation, realizing that this blonde does not have Patty's wit, but makes up for it by having a wealthy manner about her. Madden imagines her meeting one at her hotel-room door, "attired in no more than white elbow length gloves […] and high heels" (21). Madden strikes up a conversation and joins the ambiguous couple. They (Jessica Pond and Lonnie Pangborn) inquire about a chateau in Provincetown, and Madden lies to maintain conversation with Jessica, saying the place belongs to Meeks Wardley Hilby the Third. Wardley is Patty's ex-husband and an old schoolmate of Madden's at Exeter. The two were also kicked out of the school together and, years later, met again coincidently as jail-mates (Madden having been incarcerated for drug dealing and Wardley for killing his first wife with a candlestick).

In a foreshadowing of events to come, Madden continues to drink and contemplates the simple possibility and ease of killing the two and hiding their bodies when Jessica and Lonnie part ways with him. He remembers nothing for the rest of the evening, yet wakes up the next morning with a tattoo of the name "Laurel" on his arm. The imagined scenario of Madden killing Jessica and Lonnie is part of the plot of the novel, but his interaction with the two is also the beginning of the intertwining of characters. Lonnie Pangborn is already familiar with Wardley and was, in fact, sent by him to Provincetown. Also, Jessica Pond's son is a lover of Lonnie's, showing Lonnie's switch from homosexual love to heterosexual coupling with Jessica.

The facts are still a blur at this point, while Madden tries to figure out how the evening went and why he has a tattoo. The name Laurel presents a mystery in itself, bringing memories of Patty yet again. He imagines her shrieking, "Laurel […] [a]re you daring to inflict Laurel on me again?" (38). Madden continues to ponder random thoughts:

> Still! Why had I chosen to inflict the name Laurel on my wife? I knew she was the one lady Patty would never forgive. I was with Laurel, after all, when I met Patty, except that her name was Madeleine Falco. It was Patty who had insisted on calling her Laurel the day they met. I learned later that "Laurel" was short for Lorelei—Patty did not like Madeleine Falco. Had I chosen the tattoo to punish Patty? Had she truly been in the house? Or was I living with some fragment of last night's dream? (41)

As Madden thinks about various scenarios for the previous night, he again focuses on his marriage to Patty. Madden's relationship with Patty is Manichaean and

supernatural in the way he describes it. He is not exactly sure why she was with him because he is disappointing to her more than not. He goes on to explain:

> Of course, I never pretended to understand Patty. She may even have been in love with me. It is hard to find a clearer explanation. […] Since I was no more than her chauffeur in the year before we got married, and since I had "crapped out" (those were her words) for deciding I did not care to murder her husband; since I was also an ex-con who could certainly assist her up no marble stairways in no mansions in Palm Beach, it was never comprehensible to me why she should desire my medium-attractive presence in marriage unless she did feel a salubrious melting in her heart. We had something in bed for a while, but that can be taken for granted. Why else would a woman marry down?
>
> Later, when it all got bad, I began to wonder if her true passion was to reveal the abyss beneath my vanity. Devils work. (55-6)

The Manichaean Hell-Town became a household name in Patty and Madden's marriage. Hell-Town is a term people used to describe a village inhabited by pillagers hundreds of years ago who, with bonfires would lure ships away from the lighthouse to destruction. Once the ships arrived, villagers robbed the victimized sailors of their valuables (63-4).

Hell-Town and its history came up in conversation every time the two of them smoked a type of marijuana called Hurricane Head. This addiction, mixed with Patty's supernatural interests, did not bother Madden, because he entertained her notions. Patty called herself a witch. She was a white witch because she was a blonde. When Madden argued that she was no blonde because her "pussy hair [said she was] brunette," Patty replied, "[t] hat's carnal taint" and "[m] y pussy hair was bright gold

until I went out and scorched it with the football team" (62). She would want to blow her bugle to wake the dead in Hell-Town because she thought if "those mutherfuckers" sleep, they would grow too powerful and that it would be better to keep them down (62). Patty felt she had the witch-like power to subdue evil spirits.

It was not only the reefer, but also the home which they shared that sparked Hell- Town. Madden called their home a phenomenon. He explains: Half of our holding of sills, studs, joists, walls, and roof had been ferried over from Hell-Town more than a century ago, and thereby made us a most material part of that vanished place. Something of a perished Klondike of whores and smugglers, and whalers with wages hot in their pockets, lived in our walls. […] What a Biblical scene Hell- Town must have offered of catamites and sodomites and whores passing the infections of the ages on to each pirate with blood in his beard. […] Some of that rut was added to our marriage during the first year we lived in our house. A bawdy force came down to us from one-night stands of whores and seamen more than one hundred years dead. I would, as I say, not enter into disputes about the real or unreal possibility that they lived in our walls—I only say our carnal life did not suffer. In truth, it thrived on the lusts of our unseen audience. It is nice when a marriage may feel like an orgy each night without having to pay the toll—that is, having to look on the face of the neighbor who is screwing your wife.

Embellished by Patty's sixth sense, supernatural notions abound in Madden's Provincetown home. Their sex life was more exciting due to their (mostly Patty's) supposition of ghostly company. Madden decides to move his Hurricane Head stash out of the back woods of Truro due to Regency's prying eyes and Madden's fear of getting busted yet again for a drug charge. While removing his stash, he discovers the severed head of a blonde woman and in his panic doesn't take the time to look at the

face to see whether it is Jessica's or Patty's. When he gets home, Madden contemplates whether he had something to do with the murders, or he is being framed by someone clever enough to know where he keeps his reefer stash. Manichaean battles abound here, as Leeds explains: God and the Devil are again embattled in a Manichaean struggle over the best and worst in the human soul. Just as Rojack's journey through the New York night and later through the artifice of Las Vegas are seen as infernal, Tim Madden's drive to his marijuana stash where the *heads* are secreted (Mailer may be punning here) smacks of a trip into hell, and provokes an equivalent fear in him. Madden's salvation ultimately must lie in overcoming his visceral fear. (81)

Aside from the murder/mystery aspect of the discovery, Madden's relationships with Patty and Madeleine are intertwined as intricately as those among Lonnie, Jessica, and Wardley. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Madden was with Madeleine before Patty. As he seeks answers for what is happening to him, he visits a psychic named Harpo. It turns out he is the one that gave Madden the tattoo the night in question.

Madden doesn't remember why he requested it from Harpo, but it had to do with Madeleine and asking for forgiveness. At Harpo's, Madden figures out that Madeleine is living on the Cape, and that she is emotionally damaged. He knows it has to do with their history together, and sets out to find her.

The relationship between Madden and Madeleine is similar to that of Rojack's and Cherry's in terms of both couples feeling free and happy when together. Madden describes Madeleine as a strong Italian woman from Queens with mafia connections. He describes: She had gravity, and to counterbalance it, I would go through great pains to make her laugh, even trying to walk on my hands around our furnished room.

A moment of merriment from her gave a bouquet to my mood that could last for hours. That was why I had fallen in love. She had a tender marrow within her depths that I found with no other woman. (156)

Madden then goes on to say that they started to get too close because Madeleine as too emotionally dependent on him. After being together for two years, they discussed dating other people, which Madden, unbeknownst to her, secretly agreed to, cheating on her occasionally. Madden wouldn't be surprised if she did the same, because he worked twelve-hour evening shifts at a bar, and "much love can be made in twelve hours" (156-57).

Madden remembers what helped to break Madeleine and him up. He allowed her to see a manuscript of his that had a passage from John Updike which Madden favored. It had to do with the best description of a pussy he ever came across. The piece Madeleine saw that hurt her read:

> Right now, for instance, my mind is pondering the difference between Updike's description of a pussy and a real cunt, that is, the one I am thinking of at this instant. It belongs to Madeleine Falco, and since she is sitting next to me, I need only reach over with my right hand to feel the objective correlative on my fingertips. […] You don't know whether to eat her, devour her, revere her or root about. I used to whisper, "Don't move, don't move, I'll kill you, I'm about to come." How her cooze would pullulate in reply. Whenever I was inside of Madeleine, the other girl she usually was, the dear brunette on my arm that I walked with down the street, ceased to exist. Her belly and her womb became all of her—all that fatty, saponaceous, sebaceous,

> unctional, unguinous quiver of lubricious worldly delights. […] Her cunt was more real to me than her face. (154-55)

It is in this passage that the influence of Henry Miller is seen. Lust is born out of awe for women. Miller writes that a cunt is one of the prime symbols for the connection between all things, and Mailer highlights in *The Prisoner of Sex* that women's cunts are always closer than their faces. What was meant to be a profession of love became an insult to Madeleine, causing her to weep. Madden's last sentence offended Madeleine severely. The final blow, however, came when she and Madden answered an ad in *Screw* magazine seeking a white married couple for some fun.

Madden remembers, "I talked Madeleine into attending [the orgy] with me, and the use of the word' attend "must come from my Exeter French, since we had to drive all the way from New York to North Carolina to get there, and didn't know the people" (155). The photograph of Patty and her husband, Big Stoop, prompted Madden to answer the ad. Patty intrigued him and Madeleine thought that Big Stoop must have an enormous dick because there was no other explanation for his appeal, given how unattractive he looked. It was here that Madden met Patty for the first time, years before her marriage to her second husband, Meeks Wardley Hilby the Third. Her name was originally Patty Erleen, before she changed it to Lareine. This could perhaps represent Miller's influence, because narcissism prompts one to change one's identity. During the wife-swapping event, Madden and Madeleine never told Big Stoop and Patty they were not married. He remembers hearing Madeleine in the other bedroom while he was with Patty. He recalls:

> So I had gone through some quick rises and free falls of the ego, passing through two days and a night of Mateswitching […] and never a cigarette for the moments I felt *impaled*—that is the word for

> listening to my woman give voice to pleasure (and how Madeleine could moan) while another man was in her. No male ego is the same after hearing the same ongoing female cry of pleasure given to a strange new (very long) dick. “It is better to be a masochist than a faggot,” I said to myself more than once during those two days, but then I spent hours that had their won glory for me, since the chiropractor’s wife, formerly his nurse, this Patty Erleen, had a body as pneumatic as a nineteenyear-old model in *Playboy* standing unbelievably before you in life, and we had one hot high school push-on romance, that is, I kept pushing her to put her mouth into places she swore she had never put it before, which kept us in each other’s pits, we had such hooks for each other, so mean and intimate and nasty and super-pleasureful (as Californians say) for being nasty. God, Patty Erleen was nice, you could fuck her till you died. Even now, twelve years later, I was close to that first night again, and did not want to be, as if to think well of Patty would betray Madeleine once more. (158-59)

When the weekend ended Madden and Madeleine fought on the way back to New York, culminating in a car accident. The result of the accident left Madeleine unable to have children, creating a deeper rift in their relationship. Cocaine became their stabilizer, until they finally broke up and Madden was sent to jail for drugs (when he met Wardley again, as prison-mates). Towards the end of the novel, when everything begins to unfold, the intertwining of relationships is brought about in sharp detail. Also, such relationships explain what actually happened on the night in question, and why they occurred. Regency is now married to Madeleine, which makes Madden fear

his reconciliation with her will be an impossibility. Leeds summarizes these relationships by explaining:

No one and nothing is as it appears to be in *Tough Guys Don't Dance*. Regency, the top police officer, is actually a criminal. The apparent murderer [Madden] is the only entirely innocent character. The "murdered" wife [Patty] is actually a murderess until she is herself murdered. Both homosexuals, Wardley and Pangborn, become temporarily heterosexual. The menacing Bolo Green (Mr. Black), Patty's Chauffeur and lover, becomes affable to Madden (who had been Patty's chauffeur and lover when she was married to Wardley). A series of minor doppelgangers populates the book, echoing the Madden/Regency connection. Patty and Jessica are so interchangeable as blonde sex objects that Tim is confused as to whose head he first finds in his marijuana stash. Wardley and Pangborn have parallel anomalous sexual relationships with Patty and Jessica respectively (in which they are replaced by Madden) and ultimately shoot themselves with matching pistols. Madden begins to figure out that he is innocent of murder and realizes that he is being framed. The name (Laurel) tattooed on his arm is synonymous with the late Jessica Pond whom Madden fucked on the night in question. Her real name is Laurel Oakwode. Madden's father helps him in rectifying the situation by digging up the bodies and retrieving the heads, bringing them to Madden's home. His father, Dougy Madden, has cancer and Madden feels the illness when thinking about how he could have managed murder. He thinks about killing Patty and recalls, "[…] each time I resisted the impulse, had not a sense of oncoming illness settled more firmly into me" (259). This is comparable to Rojack killing Deborah, feeling the malignancy sliding off him, bringing freedom. The cancer imagery is symbolic of Mailer's philosophy that cancer is created by human action, not biological creation. Madeleine is Madden's salvation

just as Cherry is Rojack's. When Madden finally reconnects with Madeleine, they realize they still love each other and want to be rid of Regency because he, Patty, Wardley (now dead), and Spider (also dead) conspired against him. When they are together in Madden's home during Regency's visit, Madden sees that he wants to be with Madeleine. He says:

> Now I might be going back to Madeleine, and my heart lifted like a wave. A wave at night, be it said. Patty Lareine at her best used to give me emotions that were close to sunlight, but I was approaching forty, and the moon and the mist were nearer to my sentiments. I relinquished her hands and kissed Madeleine lightly on the lips. It brought back how nice was her mouth and how much like a rose. A faint sound, husky and sensual as the earth itself, stirred in her throat. It was marvelous, or would be so soon as I was not full of thinking of what awaited me below. (341)

What awaited Madden below was Regency. The confrontation between the two is short, Regency falling into a fit of epilepsy or stroke. He is confined to Madden's bed, and Madeleine refuses to leave him while he's sick and takes care of him. Regency is hostile, throwing threats back and forth about how he's going to destroy her and Madden. A final insult, however, results in Madeleine shooting Regency dead. Her reasoning is as follows:

> It was nothing remarkable to go out on, but she had come to her own conclusion that he must be executed. Crazy people in serious places had to be executed. That much you learned with your Mafia milk. A year later, when she would talk about it, she told me, "I just waited for

> him to say the word that would get my blood to rise." Do not call an Italian queen small potatoes. (366)

Leeds also finds this issue of male female relation in the works of Mailer quite complex. For her it is the write himself who holds such negative attitude about the roles to be presented by such established novelist. She writes about the ending of *Tough Guys Don't Dance*:

> The novel on the other hand, ends on a lengthy series of elaborate, often forced explanations of how various culprits and an additional supporting cast did away with the seven victims. There are solutions in abundance, but no true *resolution*, and Madden's new beginning with his old love, Madeleine, is a pallid echo of Rojack's discovery of love with Cherry. (85)

Madden and Madeleine are together again, yet as in *An American Dream*, there is no guarantee of life happily ever after. Although Madden does not lose Madeleine as Rojack loses Cherry, the journey toward self-definition always continues.

III. Mis(representation) of Women in Mailer's Novels

This research explores Norman Mailer's attitude of complex relationship between male and female. His *An American Dream* presents an extremely complex and stunning view of how he uses three female characters namely, Deborah, Ruta, and Cherry. They are powerful and each of them play a distinct role in the novel, representing examples of the role of the mind in contracting cancer or enabling conception, and the transfer of psychic power between combatants or lovers. His use of the grotesque, entailing animal imagery, and also the supernatural, such as God and Satan (Manichaean), and the battle for self-definition over natural obstacles, make an impression that the novelist is against women. Deborah is an heiress to a two hundred million dollar fortune and has unlimited ties to society's elite. The eighth year of their marriage has been spent in separation, although Rojack admits to needing to contact her periodically. Her persona develops further as a woman who has been slowly torturing Rojack during their marriage, especially with infidelity.

Although seemingly at first these are just a series of petty tiffs between man and wife, they are actually an introduction into the real inner workings of Deborah. The issue here is that if we can forgive the hero now for this venial sin, we will be more likely to side with him as his crimes increase in seriousness. An understanding must be made that Rojack is a victim and readers are intended to empathize with him early in the novel. Rojack's actions determine his self-defining journey, even if it means committing murder and other evil acts.

But Deborah also gives Rojack strength and power, but with limits and a price. That price is more like a devil's contract. In contrast to her rich identity as Deborah Caughlin Mangaravidi Kelly, her efforts to get an identity out of his name result in nothing really. It is this view of himself as nothing that Deborah continually

aggravates by saying he is nothing but a bully or nothing but a coward, by reminding him that he is not her father or her first husband or her real lover. The potential for murder in Rojack's relation to Deborah is thus double: she both represents his way of becoming something and confirms his sense of being nothing. The compulsion to see Deborah irregularly throughout their separation starts to make Rojack nervous because he cannot stop seeing her and senses that she will soon be glad to be rid of him and never turn back. He knows this about her and it leads to one last phone call that becomes the catalyst for Deborah's character to reach her climactic role in Mailer's novel.

Likewise in the novel Mailer's *Tough Guys Don't Dance* also contains recurring themes of religion, animal imagery, Manichaean battles, and cancer, as well as the influence of Henry Miller. Tim Madden, the protagonist, journeys towards American existentialism or self-definition much like Rojack. Patty Lareine (Tim's wife) and Madeleine Falco (Tim's ex-lover) resemble Deborah and Cherry in relevance with their functions within the novel. Although similarities between the two novels abound, one uniqueness is the shifting of hetero and homosexual love between male characters. The novel begins with Madden marriage is less than perfect, rather disastrous in fact. Madden calls Patty an addiction, much like marijuana, liquor, and cigarettes.

Patty Lareine is a character much like Deborah in *An American Dream*. Both have supernatural abilities, Deborah's in the form of heightened earthly senses, Patty's in the form of conjuring psychic phenomena. Madden and Patty once held a séance in their Provincetown home. During this event, she and another character, Spider Nisson, screamed at a supernatural vision they alone witnessed. Patty, like Deborah, is also a socialite, hosting parties constantly. She even welcomes Alvin

Luther Regency, Chief of Police, on one occasion by turning the music down to appease angry neighbors while at the same time placing joints in Regency's pocket. Madden and Rojack's fear of their Wives infidelities are similar, both men knowing fully that there is always a conquest or potential lover on the horizon. Patty's brazen attitude is what Madden sees most in her.

Hell-Town and its history came up in conversation every time the two of them smoked a type of marijuana called Hurricane Head. This addiction, mixed with Patty's supernatural interests, did not bother Madden, because he entertained her notions. Patty called herself a witch. She was a white witch because she was a blonde. Such supernatural powers associated with women makes an impression that the novelist is against women. But it functions to balance the power between them.

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