

## 摘 要

弗兰克·诺里斯(1870-1902)被誉为美国19世纪自然主义文学运动的先驱和跨世纪美国艺术与思想转型的试金石。作为一名坚持创作源于现实生活的作家,诺里斯关注女性社会角色、女性觉醒等世纪之交的热点问题,并将之作为其作品的重大主题,贯穿于其创作生涯。

本论文以诺里斯的三部长篇小说为文本,参考诺里斯评论文章、传记、书信集和评论集,从女性主义批评的视角对诺里斯小说塑造的女性予以重新审视,从而指出诺里斯作品中的女性形象复杂多样,但总体上可分为三种类型:家中天使、新女性和拥有双性气质的女性。这三种类型突显出诺里斯女性观的形成和发展。诺里斯厌恶那些在行为上依赖、屈从,在思想上无知、封闭和性格软弱的家中天使女性形象,愤其不争。与此同时,诺里斯又指出这些家中天使的人生充满着悲剧色彩,而男权社会的多重压迫则是造成女性悲剧人生的主要因素。对于被视为欲望客体的女性,诺里斯给予了极大的同情。与家中天使女性形象完全不同,诺里斯笔下的新女性形象是具有女性自我意识和个人行为能力的女性主体。她们在一定程度上表现出坚定信念、勇气、力量、理性、独立性、竞争性和智慧等特质。然而,诺里斯也指出:他所处的社会中,一方面,整个社会的女性观并未随着社会变革而发生改变,男性仍坚持传统性别观念。另一方面,新女性丢弃传统女性气质,走向男性化,这意味着她们不再是男性的伴侣,因此,诺里斯对新女性的性意识觉醒以及欲望膨胀持反对意见,认为“新女性”的涌现在一定程度上使得两性矛盾日益突现。根据诺里斯的观点,这种新女性的塑造并不是其解决两性矛盾的终极形式。为缓解当时日益激烈的两性矛盾,诺里斯塑造了“双性气质女性”,即同时拥有男性气质和女性气质的女性主体,提出了两性平等互补的主张。其笔下的“双性气质女性”体现了男女两性共同人性的元层面,从而模糊了传统的性别界限,女性成为了与男性平等的个体,由此颠覆了父权社会对女性作为客体、“他者”和“第二性”的规范,突破了男权中心文学塑造女性的逆来顺受的“家庭天使”形象以及一些女性主义者倡导的独立自主的“新女性”形象。通过塑造双性气质女性形象和提出两性平等的互补观,诺里斯试图在观念上缓解美国19世纪晚期两性关系紧张和社会性别混乱的状况。故而,其双性气质女性的塑造具有了超越时代的意义。

作为关注人类命运特别是女性命运的作家,诺里斯一方面站在女性立场关注女性社会地位,描写和批判父权制下女性倍受压迫的生存状态,同情女性的不幸遭遇,希望女性能通过抗争赢得与男性相同的权利;另一方面,他却无法摆脱父权制对其道德观的影响和束缚,提倡压抑女性的性意识扩张,反对任何形式的女性欲望膨胀。除此之外,诺里斯在展现女性人物的内心世界、心理活动以及刻画父权社会中女性所受到的精神迫害和思维禁锢等方面远不如其同时代的女性作家。因此,诺里斯并不是女权主义者,其女性观也不是现代意义上的女权思想,仍然存在一定的时代上和认知上的局限性。

**关键词:** 弗兰克·诺里斯; 女性形象; 家中天使; 新女性; 双性气质女性

## Abstract

Frank Norris is regarded as the forerunner of American naturalism and has long stood as a touchstone figure that provides immediate access to what transpires in American thought and literary expression at the close of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. His vital accomplishments still as a readable literary artist and an insightful observer of American life account for his present status in American literary and cultural history. Being a writer who insists on the writer's inspiration right from the reality, Norris shows his great concern on the hotspots of the turn of the century—women's social role and their awakening. Taking woman as an important theme, Norris portrays different types of women throughout his lifelong creation.

Interpreting from a feminist perspective, this thesis takes Frank Norris's three novels as the analyzing texts to reexamine his female characters and excavate his vision of women. After a close reading of his novels, this thesis indicates that Norris's female characters, who are complex and diversiform, can be classified into three types: "angel in the house", "new woman" and "bisexual woman". Then, by exploring detailedly these three types one by one, this thesis reveals Norris's ambivalent attitudes towards "angel in the house" and "new woman". For one thing, Norris shows great sympathy for the angel-like woman who is restricted and repressed by the conventions of the patriarchal society. For another, he disgusts the dependent woman who is not made for the harshness of the world. As for new woman, Norris, on the one hand, expresses his appreciation of her characteristics of being active, intelligent, independent and strong-minded. And, on the other hand, he presents his anxiety over her quest for sexual freedom. In his novels, he indicates that sexual liberation is a kind of degradation caused by a repressed side effect and it virtually aggravates woman's slavery. Therefore, Norris implies that a new woman is not the kind of woman to solve the intensive conflict between sexes of that period. Moreover, Norris states that the loss or betrayal of feminine traits predicates bachelorhood to new woman, for this type is not made for man with conventional sexual attitude. By creating the bisexual woman who possesses both masculinity and femininity, Norris demonstrates the complementary relationship between the two sexes on the basis of mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual love and mutual tolerance. There is no denying that Norris's characterization of the bisexual woman, his ideal woman, is ahead of his time.

Although Norris attempts to protest against the inequality of women's position in patriarchy and particularly for his attempt to portray new woman and create his ideal woman,

it must be acknowledged at the same time that Norris cannot break away from the patriarchal ideology that constitutes his greatest limitation in his vision of women. As he feels suspicious of some radical statements and actions in feminist movement, especially women' quest for sexual freedom, Norris can not be considered as a feminist. Moreover, Norris is not keen enough to explore female characters' inner thought compared with his contemporary women writers. He approaches most of his heroines externally rather than internally, which results from his unconscious reinforcement of patriarchal modes of perception.

**Key Words: Frank Norris; Images of Women; Angel in the House; New Woman; Bisexual Woman**

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## Introduction

Benjamin Franklin Norris(1870-1902) is an outstanding American writer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. His contribution to American literature is profound, extensive, and permanent. Although he lived only to thirty-two years old, he was a prolific writer, composing 1 poem, 3 collections of short stories, 8 novels and 55 critical essays. He put forward his theory on novel writing in his essays. And his practice of the theory is considered as “high emprise” by W. D. Howells, the most influential American literary critic during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Howells 769). Moreover, his reputation is established through his “introduction of French naturalism into American fiction”<sup>1</sup> (Frohock 5) and his influence on the “legislation designed to cure the railroad monopolies” along with the publication of The Octopus (ibid.).

The criticism on Frank Norris started shortly after the publication of his first novel, Moran of the Lady Letty (1899). The early critics observed Norris’s works mainly from his life experiences, including the experiences in his childhood when he was just a mama’s boy, his college years in Paris, his love affairs and marriage and his interview in battlefield. From 1930s to 1950s, some critics focused on the features of the Zolaesque in F. Norris’s works. Donald Pizer, an expert of American nineteenth century literature, summarized those critics’ viewpoints and held that “critics of Norris’ works correctly emphasized his heavy debt to Zola for specific plots, scenes, and characters, as well as for larger qualities of scope and method” (552). Other critics paid great attention to Norris’s unfinished trilogy—The Octopus and The Pit. George Wilbur Meyer revealed that these critics “observing[observed] this epic from the Marxist viewpoint”, criticized the brutal struggle between the wheat farmers and the railroad owners, the fall of the speculators in the grain market in Chicago and accused the crimes that the capitalism and the bourgeoisie had done on those virtuous proletariats (351). However, in the following years, the criticism on Norris laid fallow. It was not until the publication of Warren French’s lively, provocative study—Frank Norris (1962) that changed the situation. In Warren French’s view, Norris’s scholarship became a particularly vital area of both literary research and cultural study, with Frank Norris as the touchstone for turn-of-the-century changes in art and thought. In his work, Warren French not only placed Norris in the popular culture of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but also argued that Norris was a scion of the American Transcendentalists (129). Consequently, Norris’s stock immediately increased in value. More and more critics started to do researches on Frank Norris. For instance, Donald Pizer published a monograph, The Novels of Frank Norris, in 1966; William B. Dillingham’s Frank

Norris: Instinct and Art appeared in 1969. From 1960 to 1979, an increasing number of monographs and essays appeared, such as William B. Dillingham's Frank Norris: Instinct and Art (1969), The Merrill Studies in The Octopus (1969) edited by Richard Allan Davison, Jesse S. Crisler and Joseph R. McElrath, Jr's Frank Norris: A Reference Guide (1974) and Don Graham's monograph, The Fiction of Frank Norris: The Aesthetic Context (1978). It seemed that the study on Frank Norris is enjoying a renaissance. In the 1980s, the establishment of "Frank Norris Society" in 1986 and the origination of Frank Norris Studies in 1989 pushed the study to an upper stage. Until now, there are about 200 essays, 50 books (biography, letters, criticism) titled or related to his works. The recent researches on Norris and his works can be classified as feminism, cultural study, comparative study and interdisciplinary study. The representative books are Deconstructing Frank Norris's Fiction: The Male-Female Dialectic (1998)<sup>2</sup>, Reading the Symptom, Frank Norris, Theodore Dreiser, and the Dynamics of Capitalism (1999)<sup>3</sup>, and the representative essay is "Frank Norris, Market Panic, and the Mesmeric Sublime" (2003)<sup>4</sup>. In this aspect, the research on Frank Norris and his works has just begun and has been far from inclusive, even farther from comprehensive.

In China, there is no authoritative monograph on Norris's life or his writing career but an overall introduction to his major novels. Only 4 novels of his have been translated into Chinese. Even though some famous Chinese critics, like Wang Changrong, Zhu Gang, have affirmed Norris's contribution to American Naturalism or even the whole history of American literature, they viewed and studied Frank Norris and his works only from a macroscopic angle. Wang Jinghai wrote an essay on the naturalistic feature in Frank Norris's novels in 1999. In 2004, Wang Liya published her essay "Frank Norris on Novel Theory and the Idea of American Novel", in which the studies of the American novel theory raised up by Frank Norris and the practice of his novel-writing theory has been analyzed and interpreted. In other words, the domestic research on Norris is nascent and immature.

With the rise of feminist criticism in 1960s, Norris and his female characters became a burning topic debated among these critics. Jennifer L. Fleissner, an American critic, straightforwardly pointed out that "Women characters are central to naturalism" (x). W. M. Frohock, one of Norris's biographers, concluded that: "What the critics commonly report about Norris's women is undeniable" (41). As Norris portrayed many vivid and lively female characters in his novels and short stories, critics tended to explore Norris's vision of women by analyzing those female characters.

Generally speaking, critical receptions of Norris's female characters fall into two categories. Some critics, especially traditional feminist critics, take negative attitudes towards

his female characters as well as Norris's view of womanhood. They think that F. Norris has created the images of "Angel in the House" one after another and accuse Norris's constant portrayal as restatement of the standard of "The Ideal Woman". Donald Pizer even concludes that "Those female figures are (the) self-sacrificing helpmates to men" (178). Joseph R. McElrath, Jr., another expert on F. Norris, summarizes their criticism and points out that those female characters are "Victorian ladies" or the "men's women" (Revised 41, 81). Moreover, some feminists assert that F. Norris has never really intended to create the strong-willed women that appear and flourish in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (West 59).

Other critics discover that the female characters depicted by Norris are puzzled, confused and lead tragic and miserable lives. Warren French points out that Norris "is sympathetic with the female" in his novels (87). In addition, some of them analyze the characteristics of Norris's female figures and summarize them as strong-minded, capable and fortitudinous. Another American critic concludes that "Frank Norris even celebrates masculine women over more feminine types" (Lehan 199).

After a close reading of biographies and works of Frank Norris, the author of this thesis has a different viewpoint and holds that those remarks are lopsided views on Norris. All the attacks from feminist critics and others are channeled through particular focalizations primarily based on the superficial appearances of Norris's myth. The simplistic interpretation of Norris's women is an unfair judgment of Norris, as well as an unbalanced version of Norris's works as a whole. As a matter of fact, Norris's attitudes towards women are complex or rather ambivalent.

Based on the previous critical receptions, this thesis attempts to make a detailed analysis of Norris's vision of women, from a feminist perspective. Defined in a broad view, feminist literary theory focuses on analyzing and examining the oppressed status of women and the modes of representing women. This kind of criticism at first mainly focuses on gender prejudice against women from male writers; during the second stage, the feminists find out a literature belonging to women and thus turn their attention to women's literature; in the third stage, all the theoretical study, from literature, criticism, psychology, sociology to culture fall into the object of their study. Feminist criticism can be understood from different angles. For instance, at the deconstructionist level, the aim is to dismantle and subvert the logocentric assumptions of male discourse—its valorization of being, meaning, truth, reason, and logic, its metaphysics of presence. Logocentrism is phallo-centric (hence the neologism "phallogocentrism"); it systematically privileges paternal over maternal power, the intelligible over the sensible. At the ideological level, the reader doesn't accept the hegemonic

perspective of the male and refuses to be coopted by a gender-biased criticism. Gender is largely a cultural construction, as are the stereotypes that go along with it: that the male is active, dominating, and rational, whereas the female is passive, submissive, and emotional. At the thematic level, the feminist reader should identify with female characters and their concerns. The object is to provide a critique of phallo-centric assumptions and an analysis of patriarchal visions or ideologies inscribed in a literature that is male-centered and male-dominated. Feminism lays stress on the study of women writers but it is not restricted to this respect only. It is also employed to study the male or female characters in the works of male authors with the purpose of revealing the relationships between an author's gendered subject positions and his depiction of characters.

Therefore, this thesis attempts to follow the thematic direction, that is, to examine Norris's vision of women through a feminist interpretation, focusing on the root that caused his ambivalent attitude towards women, revealing F. Norris's attempt to ease the strained male-female relationship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to build a harmonious society.

Therefore, this thesis intends to analyze three types of female images chosen separately from Frank Norris's last three novels, concentrating for a moment within the sphere of private, the home. Tracing their lives, their pursuit, agonies, merits, weaknesses and their relationships with the other creatures both within and outside the texts, the thesis points out that Norris tries to articulate what they might have originally wished to articulate but failed to be recognized. And the thesis continues to propose that these three types of women represent a process that the male author himself underwent in life and in writing career: his attempt to ease the tense male-female relationship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and his hope for a promising future of the harmonious relationship between sexes.

This thesis is divided into three chapters. The first chapter is to examine the angel-like images in Norris's works. Analyzing Annie Derrick and Angéle in The Octopus, this thesis reveals Frank Norris's attitude towards the "Angel in the House". Examining Norris's attitude from feminist point of view, the thesis indicates that Norris, on the one hand, expresses his disgust with their dependence and looks down upon them; On the other, he shows sympathy for those women who are restricted and repressed by the convention of the patriarchy.

The emphasis of chapter two is placed on the analysis of Laura, the heroine of The Pit. In this chapter, Norris's ambivalent attitude towards "new woman" is studied and revealed. For one thing, Norris portrays Laura as a woman who is not satisfied with the arbitrary, socially constructed gender roles, which confines her creation. Norris appreciates this new woman's endeavor to free herself from the patriarchal forces and control and her quest for equality and



her self-identity both in the society and at home. For another, he considers woman's awakening sexual needs as immoral and expresses his anxiety of new woman's pursuit for sexual emancipation.

The third chapter mainly focuses on Norris's ideal woman and his intention to create this type of woman. Accordingly, this chapter points out that the ideal woman portrayed by Norris is a mixture of masculinity and femininity. Travis in Blix is the representative of his ideal woman. By portraying Travis as bisexual woman who is not only a strong, mannish and principled "fighter" but also the hero's good companion and soul-mate that seeks comfort from her, shares her insights during their growth, Norris attempts to ease the intensive male-female relationship in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to build a harmonious society in the days to come.

There is no denying that Norris's fictions provide us with a text to understand the scio-political construction of female identity in his times and this construction's influence upon him both as a writer and a man. It is hoped that the rereading of Norris's vision of women in historical and biographical contexts would reveal his sympathy for women's sufferings in the traditional patriarchal culture in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century U.S., his contradictory attitude towards the new woman and his exploration of the reciprocal, non-confront love would be a proof to the construction of a modern American woman. Although we cannot say Norris is a feminist, his search for the complementary relationship between sexes has already transcended his time. Norris's greatness and profoundness lie in this.

## Chapter 1: “Angel in the House” in The Octopus

From the 17<sup>th</sup> century to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, female characters in the works of American writers, either male or female, are mainly molded as either a good wife or a loving mother, as a faithful spouse, a mistress, or a witty “angel”. These women are described as men’s “pure angels”, “frail vessels” or subordinates. In 1854, a British poet, Coventry Patmore published his poem, “Angel in the House”, in which he emphasized woman’s “precious” characteristics as: being pure both mentally and physically, submissive to their fathers or brothers before marriage and their submission turned to their husbands after being married, to be sympathetic, gentle and self-sacrificing. The concept of “Angel in the House” becomes increasingly popular through the rest of the nineteenth century and continues to be influential into the twentieth century. With different points of view, writers, journalists and critics express their attitudes towards this female type in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Frank Norris is not an exception. In one of his best novels, The Octopus, Frank Norris portrays two angels and expresses his attitude towards them.

### 1.1 A Fragile and Dependent Angel

In The Octopus, Annie Derrick is depicted as an “Angel in the House”. When she was very young, her parents had died. Her parents had left nothing to her. So she had to fight for living in her youth. She completed her schooling by teaching the lower grade students in her school. After graduation, she becomes a formal teacher in her Alma Mater. Even though she is well-received by her students, Annie does not love her career which is the very means that supports her from starvation and degeneration. Instead she indulges in attending numerous parties, salons and cotillions. It is in one of these parties that she meets Mr. Derrick who later becomes her husband.

Frank Norris reveals the factor that causes Annie’s betrayal of her profession. Traditionally, girls in the 19<sup>th</sup> century are taught at home by their mothers, resident tutors or visiting teachers. Angel-like women are defined chiefly in terms of their marital status. Patriarchal society does not give unmarried women the same status as married women, because it is believed that marriage is the most important accomplishment a woman could achieve. Society does not respect these unmarried women and often makes them outcast. Grown up with the firm belief that the competing world is only suitable for man and woman is the weaker sex, Annie believes that it is marriage that defines a woman’s status and dignity

and a sense of belonging and it is only marriage that can be the basic and continuing framework for her life. In another word, only by getting married, can she get firm support and steadfast protection and the most reverent attitude by others. Even though teaching is the very means that supports her from starvation and degeneration, she finds her career boring and vapid. Therefore, she dreams of someone who can take her out of the “droning routine” of the classroom (Norris, Novels<sup>5</sup>; Octopus 624). And she does not care whoever the person is and for whom she really loves or not. Described as a complete and substantial female animal—no more, no less, she does choose the way. Thinking that marriage is the most important accomplishment a woman can achieve. So she zealously takes part in all the parties, salons and cotillions, tries to meet as many excellent men as she can and tends to choose the most excellent man on whom she can rely. Through analyzing Annie’s interior monologue and her activity, Norris indicates that the role a woman plays is not determined uniquely by her physiology, but primarily by social and cultural conditions. The Octopus reveals that gender identity is culturally constructed rather than biologically ordained, just as Simone Beauvoir says in The Second Sex that “One is not born, but rather becomes a woman. No biological, psychological, or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents in society. It is civilization as a whole that produces this creature”(273). One’s gender consciousness and sexual differentiated behaviors are not inborn, but shaped in the restriction of such conditions; biological state is not the dictate of a woman’s fate; the gender roles of man and woman will change along with the transformation of society and culture.

After marriage, Annie depends entirely on her husband or sons, who support and protect her, and also arrange her life. She has no right to make her own decision. Without any individual thoughts, Annie has to obey her husband and “follows him unquestioningly” (Norris, Novels; Octopus 623). On the occasion of having different opinions, what she will do is only allowing her pretty, puzzled eyes to meet her husband’s firm ones. As she does not insist on anything, she “easily obliterates herself” (ibid. 623), averts her eyes from her husband’s and draws back her attention to her everyday reading again. As an “Angel in the House”, she has no self, no individuality. Nobody considers her as an individual at all, neither does she herself. Over and over Annie is described as weak and always being afraid of life’s challenges (West 117).

Her married life proves pure and enjoyable indoors. Every day, she leads an easygoing life. “Some days [she] begins with sitting before a table on the porch, stirring her coffee with one hand, holding open with the other the pages of Walter Pater’s ‘Marius’”(Norris, Novels; Octopus 623). At her feet, her over-fed white Angora cat is licking her white fur leisurely.

Sometimes she “carefully spreads her light brown hair over the back of her chair” (ibid. 718) and lets the sunshine fall down on her hair. Or with an open volume of poems turns down upon her lap, she sits in a long wicker chair, letting her glance “losing itself in the immensity of Los Muertos” (ibid. 720). She likes this kind of life style. However, her calm life is frequently disturbed when she looks into distance after reading, she is always “troubled” (ibid. 624), and even at times “stunned” (ibid. 624) by the vitality of the wheat. She finds the “nakedness” of the ranch’s earth “indecent,” which shows her inability to appreciate the beauty of the reproductive nature (ibid. 623-624). The growth of wheat fills her with an undefinable terror.

It is queer that Annie feels anxious and panicky when she is alone, it is strange that her rest is always disturbed by the nightmare shaped the reality while lying half asleep at night; and it is eccentric that she at all times worries about the inscrutable future that is haunted by phantoms of war, revolution, famine, poverty. According to the view of one of the leading Norris critics, Richard Chase, Norris “dislikes the character (Annie in The Octopus) as she is afraid of the vastness of the wheat-bearing valley” (193). Norris sees Annie as a passive, inferior and dependent “angel in the house”. In this sense there is truth in the saying that indoor life makes her the “eternal child” (Norris, Critical 563). In “A Question of Ideals”, Norris indicates that the angel-like woman, like Annie, is the weaker sex compared with man. This kind of woman is always treated as a child who needs protection (ibid. 357). According to the dominant patriarchy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, women mainly depend upon men. This kind of woman has no grasp, even in thought, on the reality around her. Beauvoir analyzes the characteristics of this kind of woman and indicates that:

Lock the doors and close the shutters, however, angel-like woman fails to find complete security in her home.[. . .] And precisely because she is incapable of grasping it through technical skill, sound logic, and definite knowledge, she feels, like the child and the savage, that she is surrounded by dangerous mysteries. She projects her magical conception of reality into that male world; the course of events seems to her to be inevitable, and yet anything can happen; she does not clearly distinguish between the possible and the impossible and is ready to believe anything, no matter what. (570)

In the novel, reading is described as one of the mighty few favorites that Annie loves to do every day. She always sits on the floor surrounded by books. Her thought is described as pure, romantic or unrealistic. What she reads are poems, essays and “little toy magazines” full

of the flaccid banalities of the “Minor Poets” (Norris, Novels; Octopus 625). When a poet, Presley, visits her ranch and lives in her house, she is delighted and expects to associate with someone who loves peaceful, aesthetic, dulcet, marvellous and interesting romance or romantic poems like her. Nevertheless, she is disappointed to notice Presley who shows intense interest in the reality. Presley’s indifference to “elegant” English is considered by her as a positive affront (ibid.). Presley’s savage abuse and open ridicule of the neatly pharsed rondeaux and sestinas and chansonettes of the little magazines is to her mind “a wanton and uncalled-for cruelty” (ibid.). She even finds Homer’s epic as awful, violent and coarse works with headstrong passion, slaughters and hecatombs and barbaric feastings. When she asks the poet to read his newly-written poem, what she hears of is “Song of the West” which depicts the swift, tumultuous and heroic life and poems about the reality such as the fierce, bloody battle between railroad owners and the ranchers (ibid.). So she is extraordinarily disappointed and regards the lines of the poet as profane words to literature.

By portraying Annie as a woman who cannot appreciate not only the beauty of the vitality of the earth but also the beauty of the reality, Frank Norris states that there is no one who will expect women to be intellectual, no institute will give academic education and little opportunity for them to use such knowledge in the patriarchy (Norris, Novels 257). Moreover, Norris exposes that what “formal” education Annie receives at school is some basic language skills such as reading and writing so that she can read or write letters, reads the Bible and the principles and manners which tell her that almost she shall obey both in society and at home. In other words, the “knowledge” Annie learns is still mainly about the ladylike graces and some accomplishments such as basic skills of reading, writing, drawing, sewing, singing, doing math and manuals of etiquette and conduct which instruct young girls in manners or society and the home. Even more to the point, Norris reveals the purpose of such accomplishments is only to increase women’s attractiveness in the husbands-hunting and to make their more qualified to be proper women or wives. Beauvoir even concludes that those knowledge taught by the school as an art of hunting that prepares a young woman for marriage (483-4). Beauvoir also points out that the restrictions that education and custom impose on women now limit their grasp on the universe (670). As she is cut outside the center of politics and economy and is constrained at home, Annie Derrick distinctly realizes her status in the society. She finds out that there are few ways for her to strike out on her own or be independent. Being economically dependent, what she can do is to stay at home—the shelter for her, and to seek for support and protection from man.

In a party held at the big hall decorated with flowers, paintings, crystals and china in

Annie Derrick’s house, her inanity is shown completely. As the speaker of Norris, the narrator of The Octopus, Presley can find no enjoyment in the occasion but sips his wine “mechanically”(Norris, Novels, Octopus; 1059). He regards the marvelous rooms where those madams live as “beautiful and golden cages” (ibid.). From the picture of feasting, the scene of luxury, the atmosphere of decorous, well-bred refinement, he discovers the reason why these madams are fatuous—the blocked indoor life. When he talks with madams headed by Annie Derrick about the severe situation of the poor people, he discovers how mincing these madams are. One of the madams touched by Presley’s poem describing the poor people states that she tends to sell all that she has and gives to the poor. A few minutes later, she changes her mind, promises to send a whole shipload of wheat to the starving people in India and speaks while laughing: “[n]ow, you horrid réactionnaire, are you satisfied?” Poor Annie somehow questions: “By the time our ship reaches India the famine may be all over, doesn’t it?” In answering, Presley indicates that the starving people are always in a fixed quantity and Annie needs not be afraid of being too late in the matter of helping the destitute. He further points out that “the poor ye have always with you” which implies there are poor people who live around them and they need not to transport the food for a long distance to do such “beneficent activity” which shows their “kindness” (ibid.). As the topic transfers to some awful things, he answers Annie Derrick and other “empty-headed” and “faineant” madam’s questions and sayings in “meaningless word” (ibid.).

Norris stresses on the characteristic of Annie— she is “not made for the harshness of the world” (Norris, Novels; Octopus 623). When there are some issues that would be hazard, what Annie Derrick thought is that “[i]t is better to submit, to resign oneself to the inevitable” (ibid. 719). She shrinks from the harshness of the world and hides herself in her shelter. And this is best shown in the scene that Annie’s husband, son and other farmer ask for fair price of wheat and fight with the authority. In order to give prominence to Annie’s weak feature, Norris depicts another rancher’s wife, Hilma, as a decisive and determined figure. When the rancher’s wife suggests to go to the farm where fighting is going on, what Annie only thinks of is getting away from the troubled place. She cannot help wailing: “There, where they are fighting? Oh, I couldn’t. I—I can’t.” “Oh, it’s terrible. I’m afraid. Oh, I’m afraid. Let’s go home” (ibid. 994). To her, home is a safe shelter that protects her from the dangerous things outside. Annie is portrayed repeatedly as a wife and mother who is frail and weak.

After fierce fighting, the farmers have a ditch ambush and suffer great losses. Some farmers are killed, and still others are seriously wounded. In the sight of her husband, what Annie does is “threw[throwing] herself into his arms” (ibid. 997). When she finds that her son,

Harran, is mortally wounded, she cries impotently, “Harrie, Harrie, oh, my son, my little boy”. As she is “dazed, numb with fear”, she “faints” and has to be “half-carried” to the bedroom (ibid. 997-998). On the contrary, Hilma, another rancher’s wife, is portrayed as a woman who remains strong at the scene of dead bodies, takes her husband’s head in her lap and “cries without sound”(Norris, Novels; Octopus 997).

In the novel, Norris considers Annie’s inability or paralysis of the vitality of the earth and the world as the result influenced by a matrix of social repression rather than as her biological destiny. Norris’s capability of realizing the influence that social convention has done on portraying woman as the conventional female stereotype, “Angel in the House”, manifests in his concern of the position of women and their gender roles in a complicated and changing time.

## 1.2 An Angel as the Object of Male’s Sexual Desire

Angéle, a maid working in the farms of the valley of the San Joaquin, is another angel-like woman in The Octopus. In this novel, Angéle is portrayed as a woman with white forehead, wonderful eyes, full Egyptian lips, a lender neck and golden hair hanging in tow straight plaits on either side of her face. Her beauty is almost beyond expression. Even though she is diligent and curious in learning, the impression she makes is a stunner that arouse men’s sexual desire. It is understandable that there are many suitors of Angéle. One of the ranchers of the valley is highly attracted by Angéle. What Angéle allures him most is the “full and round curves of her hips and shoulders”, “thick neck”, “white and sericeous skin”, “large and full lips and the sweet feminine amplitude of her breast” (ibid. 709, 623-624). While Angéle is cleaning up his room, the rancher gazes her from her full lips, plumpy breast to round hip.

In this novel, Frank Norris reveals the fact that a woman is an image to be uttered. For the rancher, Angéle has the slightest importance. What counts is what Angéle provokes, or rather what she represents. She is the one, or rather the passion or enthusiasm she arouses in the rancher, or else the concern he feels for her, who makes him act the way he does. Traditionally, woman is regarded as a use-value for men, an exchange value among men; in other words, a commodity. Her price will be established in terms of the standard of her work or according to male’s need or desire, by “subjects” (qtd. in Warhol and Hendl, 368). In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its fantasy onto the female figure, which is styled accordingly. In the traditional exhibitionist role, women are simultaneously

viewed at and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote to-be-looked-at-ness. In a dominant scopic economy, women are prescribed by this masculine specula(riza)tion and corresponds. Women are regarded as the object of contemplation and the consignment of beauty. While their bodies find themselves thus eroticized, and called to a double movement of exhibition and of chaste retreat in order to stimulate the drives of the “subject”. Within this logic, in the predominance of the visual, women display as “the leitmotif of erotic spectacle” who hold the look, and play to and signify male desire. In the picture of the phallo-centric hierarchy, women are considered as “the object of sex” (qtd. in Warhol and Hendl 364). Frank Norris points out the inferior position of women and realizes that the decisive factor that the patriarchal society has made on the making of women.

In portraying Angéle, Frank Norris presents us a woman who is suppressed under the phallo-centric hierarchy. In the presentation of the incompatibility of the sexes, Norris’s blame is laid on male-centricity which takes a woman and her body as mere appendage to his own desire and considers female needs and female nurturing impulse trivial and unworthy of consideration. In the patriarchal society, a woman is just the sexual symbol for man. Woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man and not man with reference to woman. A woman is the incidental, the inessential as opposed to the essential. Man is “the subject” and “the absolute”, while woman is “the other” (Beauvoir 16).

Even more to the point, Norris expresses his disgust of “sexual-symbolized” Angéle and his love of a grave, dignified and composed woman with “little feminine” in portraying Presley’s attraction of Hilma’s statuesque calm evenness of contour yet remained, her seriousness after she experiences the harshness of the world and gains the knowledge of the world (Norris, Novels, Octopus; 1079).

The rancher magnetizes by the beauty of Angéle’s body and even suggests that she should cohabit with him without marriage. As a girl who preserves her moral integrity, Angéle refuses him resolutely. However, he does not give up. The rancher continues to pursue Angéle and tries to possess Angéle. Noticing that Angéle’s date with her boyfriend under the pear trees which are marks that separate the two farms, the rancher follows her every time and tries to find a chance to have an affair with her. One moonless night, Angéle arrives at the dating place a little earlier than usual. And the tragedy occurs. Having been raped, Angéle is found lying in the shadow of the trees, inert and unconscious. A month later, Angéle finds her pregnant. Loss of virginity and being pregnancy shake her world. She is “delirious and raving” (ibid. 709).



Being raped means a disaster to Angéle. Her world collapses. Angéle’s breakdown is not the sign of some gender-determined constitutional weakness of mind or will, but the result of the fact that certain social forces press harder on women in sexual and marital relationships. As an “Angel in the House”, she must follow certain rules, which conform to the social codes. These rules define and create a perfect image of a proper lady, and those who act in different ways from the prescribed proper conduct will be expelled from the society. Beauvoir argues that:

Woman was loved only for her body to the neglect of her splendid intelligence. Instructions on the conduct for a lady were spread by means of periodicals such as *Ladies’ Mercury* (the first English periodical for women) and ladies, conduct books. These works were intended to educate young girls into properly-behaved and respectable ladies—obeying the will of their parents and husbands. However, if we go through the conduct rules, it is found that they were all designed to beautify women’s appearance or to “naturalize their lack of sexual desire. (655)

According to the 19<sup>th</sup> century conventions, as an Angel-like woman, she lives under severe moral standards. She has no right to her own body. She is not conceived as an individual, but as possession of her family or a man. Since she is only considered part of the family instead of herself, it is important for her to be a virgin before marriage in order to show her chastity and loyalty to her future husband. Virginity therefore is worshiped as a symbol of honor for an unmarried woman. In addition, this ideology satisfies men’s possessive attitude towards their wives. She is brought up and brainwashed to believe that sex is something that happens only between a husband and a wife. If a woman is not married then the intercourse is considered wrong. She is taught that the mere act of thinking about sex is sinful and their primary concern is to remain pure until marriage. According to the dominant sexual ideology, “sexual relations within Victorian marriage are unilaterally based on men and male needs” (ibid. 670). Women will not express their sexual desire, or even feel it. From a man’s point of view, a modest woman, or a proper lady, should seem to have no desire for men at all. What she should do is to provide everything that her husband needed from her and to take complete charge of maternity. Neither a woman’s desire, nor her consent is at issue, for women are believed to be asexual. The ideal Angel-like woman is pious, pure, and above all submissive. To women, having sex is not to fulfill their love feelings or physical desire, but to satisfy their husbands’ needs and to realize their natural and bounden duty that is to bear children. That is to say, a woman has to act lady-like and suppresses her sexual desire. She will not allow

herself to be sexually active unless the right man (her husband) directs her. For a woman, serving man’s desire appears more important to serving her own. In these social conventions an unmarried woman, virginal, innocent and ignorant of sexual matters, is defined as pure and well-situated for marriage. Those who fail this “glorified” role of wifehood, however, are considered as unmoral “fallen” women. Angéle recognizes that there are two ways lying ahead of her: one way is to be a prostitute who wanders among males; the other is killing herself. Realizing that a bitch is always a bitch according to the patriarchy, Angéle commits suicide. This story of Angéle reflects Norris’s full awareness of the unreasonableness of the traditional gender hierarchy, which favors men over women and relegates women to the negative poles of the binary opposition between two sexes.

In characterization of Annie and Angéle, Frank Norris feels disgusted of their dependence and looks down upon them on the one hand. On the other hand, he has excavated the factors that caused the dependence of the Angel in the House. His commiseration is presented specially on the women who have been regarded as “the other” or “sexual symbol”. He even shows sympathy on them who are restricted and repressed by the convention of the patriarchy.

Although he points out the social responsibility with men to become social beings to the gender role of women and realizes the reason why women are constrained at home instead of searching their own individualism as men in portraying “Angel in the House”, Norris does not advocate specific struggle for equality in education, vote and employment as the early proponent of feminism, Mary Wollstonecraft does in her A Vindication of the Rights of Woman (the first great feminist treatise). Although he is aware of the incompatibility of the sexes, Norris doesn’t realize the women’s low positions in the society as John Stuart Mill states in his The Subjection of Women which indicates women’s status in 19<sup>th</sup> century and the fact that women are treated as slaves and do not have equal rights as men in many aspects: “Women had always hitherto been kept, as far as regards spontaneous development, in so unnatural a state, that their nature cannot but have been greatly distorted and disguised...The society not only tolerates but even insists upon such invidious distinctions between the sexes that turn women into virtual slaves” (Mill 55). Norris can not feel as Betty Friedan does about the emotional and intellectual oppression that she and other middle-class educated women experience because of their limited life options. Comparatively, Norris’s attitudes towards “Angel in the House” are not so strong and revolutionary.

## **Chapter 2: New Woman in The Pit**

The phrase “new woman” was publicly acknowledged with the out-coming of essay “The New Aspect of the Woman Question”, which was written by the famous feminist novelist Sarah Grand (1854-1943) in 1894. The New Woman is a feminist ideal that emerged in the final decades of the 19th century in Europe and North America. It is a reaction to the gender role, as characterized by the “Cult of Domesticity”<sup>6</sup>, ascribes to women in the Victorian era. Advocacy of the New Woman image is found among novelists, playwrights, journalists, pamphleteers, political thinkers and suffragettes at the turn of the century. The aim of the new woman’s supporters is to encourage women to liberate themselves from male domination, to manage their lives and leave behind anything that might restrict their pursuit of happiness and self-realization.

Certain characteristics are seen as pertinent to the new ideal of feminists. In a general way, a “New Woman” is supposed “to have received an adequate education (primary, secondary and preferably also tertiary) and to be able to use her knowledge wisely; to earn money and thus be financially independent; to participate in political discussion and decision-making; to decide herself if, when and whom she wants to marry and how many children she wants to have; to show outward signs of being different by wearing more comfortable clothes, to see rational dress; and, generally, to defy convention and social norms in order to create a better world for women” (Warhol and Hendl xiii).

The phenomenon of the “New Woman” is a product of social and economic change that affects both the private and the public world in America. After the first women’s rights convention was held in 1848, American women fought for the right to vote. Those suffragists make great effort to change thousands of local, state, and federal laws that have limited women’s legal status and social roles. In the following years, new women with masculine traits flourish the whole country. Swimming, horseback riding, golf and tennis strengthen their bodies and self-confidence. The popularity of the bicycle liberates them from their corset, shortens their skirts and makes them free to roam through the countryside. With more formal education than their mothers, new women have an enhanced sense of self, gender, and mission. Vigorous and energetic, they are likely to be involved in institutions beyond the families—in colleges, clubs, settlements, or professions. By the end of the nineteenth century, American newspapers, magazines, and lecterns abounds with speculations concerning the demise of familial and marital structures within a rapidly changing society. Most novelists,

critics, columnists, social commentators and psychologists, both male and female, portray the new women and depict the changes that occur in women in that period.

Living in a period of women's liberation movement, Frank Norris seems to exemplify the more modern, adventurous, questioning spirit which comes into literature at the turn of the century. As a successful and foreseeing thinker, he inevitably fixes his eyes on women and their gender role. Resisting many of the assumptions of Victorian society and hoping to make change, Norris escapes from the oversimplified images of women and creates new women who do not conform to the Victorian stereotypes. Showing great concern on "this modern, typical 'New Woman' of America", Norris exposes and discusses this female image in almost all his short stories and novels of his middle writing career (Norris, Collected 173). Even in his unfinished trilogy—*Epic of the Wheat*, he treats thoroughly the woman role as an important theme in all his creation. Despite of short stories and novels, he writes several critical essays on this topic, such as "A Question of Ideals", "Novelists of the Future" and "Why women should write the best novels: and why they don't". Moreover, he breaks down sexual taboos in literature by introducing the sexual feeling, which has been overlooked in English fiction for nearly a century. According to Otto Weininger, author of Sex and Character, the degree of a woman's emancipation and her qualification for it are expressed "in direct proportion to the amount of maleness in her." He continues to state that: "All women who are truly famous and are of conspicuous mental ability [. . .] reveal some of the characters of the male, some external bodily resemblance to a man." This point is made even clearer when he comments conclusively that "those so-called women who have been held up to admiration[be admired] at , by the advocates [advocacy] of women's rights, as examples of what women can do, have almost invariably been what I have described as sexually intermediate forms"(qtd. in Kaminer 42). The presentation of Laura Dearborn, the heroine of The Pit, matches Otto Weininger's description of prevailing images of strong women with masculinity.

## 2.1 A Woman with Strong Will and Independence

In Victorian Conventions, John Reed states that "To the Victorian mind, a masculine/new woman challenges moral and social assumptions which Victorians consider essential to a stable society (36). Laura Dearborn, the heroine of The Pit, is a woman who has the characteristics of "New woman". In portraying Laura as a strong-willed and independent woman, Norris shows an acute sensitivity towards how she has to struggle for equality. Laura, the heroine, is endowed by the writer with individuality. Although as a village girl who lives in Barrington, Massachusetts, Laura Dearborn works and supports herself, has her own way

of thinking, makes her own decisions and pursues her true love, though finally she is hurt and harmed deeply because of some reasons. One of Norris's critics, Lawrence E. Hussman, also underscores that, "Laura becomes another agent in Norris's program for the development of the 'new woman'" (qtd. in Piep 45). The education Laura receives is counted "unusual" compared with girls in her era[late nineteenth century] (Norris, Pit 21). After leaving high school, her father hires a private tutor for her and allows her to continue her study for four more years. Her instructor's task is rather to guide than to enforce her application. She is considered as a "devoted" student (ibid. 21). Being fond of reading French classical plays, she has an ability to read, soon possesses knowledge of French and knows her Racine in the original almost as well as her Shakespeare. Education and book-reading make her self-confident. With broad knowledge of the world, she has an enhanced sense of self, gender, and mission. Vigorous and energetic, she is likely to chip away at the old restraints little by little.

She has her own opinions on issues. She knows exactly what she wants. She is a new woman whose experiences and activities reflect the majority of the middle-class women in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century in U.S.A. Although the existing world that composes of distinctly male and female spheres guides her to become a wife without ambition, Laura struggles to articulate a woman's right to freedom and equality with men and frees herself from the bondage of the traditional morality. The very experience of watching the performance in the theatre enables her to have "her ambitions—to be an actress, a tragedienne, playing the roles of Shakespeare's heroines" (ibid. 22). Moreover, she has her ambitions—to be an actress. She feels life meaningful when she performs well. And her performing talent is unveiled in the rehearsal for the beneficent party. After emulating the heroines of the plays in her spare time, she feels the disapprobation of the entire village. She is considered as the heretic and is restricted at her house. Realizing the fact that she cannot live up to her ideals in Barrington where she is born and lives, she resolutely moves to Chicago, a big city with more opportunities and new notion towards women.

Being secluded at home and doing hard domestic work, Harriet Beecher Stowe, a feminist, once complains: "I am sick of the smell of sour milk and sour meat, and sour everything, and then the clothes will not dry, and no wet thing does, and everything smells moldy; and altogether I feel as if I never want to eat again" (qtd. in Fields 110). Alice James (1848-1892), the youngest child and only daughter of the New Englander Henry James, who spends most of her lifetime at home, describes her life as "a process of killing herself". Alice is, in many ways, a victim of a society that severely circumscribes the lives of women and

deprives privileged and talent women like Alice of their intellectual, spiritual, and emotional freedom. According to the convention, to renounce a woman's femininity is to renounce a part of her humanity. Misogynists have often reproached intellectual women for "neglecting themselves" (Beauvoir 642). Beauvoir considers the statement above as nonsensical. She holds that the concept of femininity is artificially shaped by custom and fashion and has been imposed upon each woman (ibid.). Charlotte Perkins Gilman is also unsatisfied with her domestic life. In this novel, Frank Norris questions the ideal of domesticity and indicates that it is the indoor life that stands on the way of women to realize her dream as many feminists do. Norris even states that the talent of many women is killed by the silent and blocked domesticity. Not only in this novel, Frank Norris further points out that it is the indoor life that stands on the way of women to be excellent writers in an essay, "Why Women Should Write the Best Novels: and Why They Don't"(1901). In addition, Norris reminds readers that the new woman novelist, unlike other women novelists, is among the ranks of the "arrived". He states that New Woman writers are competitors in literary market because they have a wide range of experience beyond the domestic sphere. Through this essay, Norris indicates the horrible life of women and advocates them to walk out. Socialist feminist, Nikolai Lenin, a disciple of Karl Marx, says that the success of a revolution depends upon the degree of participation by women and a woman can be emancipated only when she can take part on a large social scale in production and is engaged in domestic work only to an insignificant degree (qtd. in Beauvoir 61). In The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State, Engels also advocates women's emancipation, emphasizes the importance of participating in social life and says convincing: "Within the family he is the bourgeois and the wife represents the proletariat. [ . . . ] The first condition for the liberation of the wife is to bring the whole female sex back into public industry" (ibid.). In the socialist feminists' and Norris's eyes, family life seems less interesting than grappling with outside objects that demand their zeal and learning. They believe that women's role needs not be confined to the domestic domain. They even encourage their sisters and daughters to work rather than to jump into unwise marriages. Between 1880 and 1900, the highly percentage of employment of women hired in most parts of the society becomes an established fact. And this is surely the most significant event in the modern history of women. In 1880 there are 2.5 million female wage earners. By 1900 there are 5 million, about 20 percent of all women in the United States over the age of fifteen. By 1910 about 25 percent of women older than fifteen are working outside home. Many women become teachers, others worked in offices and factories (Ver Steeg 546).

Breaking away from the bondage of New England morality in her village, Laura is

independent and adapts to her new life quickly in Chicago. Firstly, she makes her life organized and prepares herself for being an excellent actress length by length. Indoors, she begins a course of reading in order to be a learned person. The books she chooses are “solemn works full of allusions to ‘Man’ and ‘Destiny’ instead of love stories and novels (Norris, Pit 59). While reading, she “underlines” the key points, “annotates” her own understanding on the books and discusses it with her friends (ibid. 59). Twice a week on Mondays and Thursdays, she takes a French lesson. Outdoors, she goes constantly to the concerts or lecture halls (esp. numerous piano and cello recitals) where she receives artistic training. She finds that she is “amused with her emancipation from the narrow horizon of her New England.”(ibid. 60) She spends her rest time completely in practicing her acting skill. In order to practice her skill, she joins in as many performances as she can. Even though the directors are very “severe” and “relentless” and always criticize actors and actresses, they are satisfied of the performance of Laura (ibid. 60). With her “dignified”, “gracious”, “gracefully condescending” poise and manner, she dramatizes not only her role, but the whole of her surroundings (ibid. 72). The stage seems to “define itself with almost visible distinctness the moment she set foot upon the scene” (ibid. 72). As her performing talent is unveiled, the editor tiptoes from group to group and says: “Very fine, our duchess. She [does] well professionally” (ibid. 72).

Laura is a woman who has her own view on the world. She shows her dissatisfaction towards the “New England” morality that restricts young women’s thoughts and activities. In the rehearsal for a performance, one actress has the nose bleed while playing. The director is so angry that he hustles, scolds and browbeats that actress. Under such circumstance, Laura feels a certain resentment of the director and she interferes and calls the director by his first name: “We will say nothing more about it (this topic) and go on performing” (ibid. 64). On another occasion, her individuality is shown entirely. At the door gate of the theatre, Laura, together with her sister Page and Aunt Wess’, is waiting for their friends, the Cresslers. Even though Page recognizes Mr. Jadwin whom she once met at the dinner party held last week by the Cresslers. Even though she knows clearly the fact that the gentleman will watch the play with them and is waiting for the Cresslers, too. She’d be better to ask Mr. Jadwin for the reason why does the Cresslers have not come to the theatre on time. However, she regards the quare from a lady to a gentleman as in an impolite way, declares flatly “I wouldn’t (do it) for world.”, “I just couldn’t.” and refuses to take any action (ibid. 4). On the contrary, Laura takes over the role of negotiator, goes right up to Mr. Jadwin, speaks to him and manages to convey to him the impression that if he does not know her sister Page, he shall be bold.

Norris's biographer Warren French is right in seeing the "Laura plot as more important than the 'pit' scenes" which other readers wish to emphasize (109). Other critics of Frank Norris, like Walker and Lon West also note that "Norris certainly sees Laura as the center of the novel" (Walker 291; West 119). Norris himself explains in a letter written to his friend Isaac Marcossion: "She(Laura) occupies the center of stage all the time, and I shall try to interest the reader more in her character than in any other human element in the book" (Norris, Collected 173). Because he can not ignore the new woman, Norris seems to anticipate readers' impression that women theme takes the plot away from "the main theme"<sup>7</sup> in The Pit. The heroine Laura is depicted as a complex and rebellious woman who has read far more extensively than her husband and is familiar with art and music.

Here, as elsewhere, Norris appears to celebrate the New Woman figure for her robustness, her healthy pleasures and her hearty delight. In the novel, Norris appreciates emancipation of Laura. For example, the young wife's yearning for a heroic action in The Pit, Laura Dearborne's alertness to the social and cultural hindrance to female development and quest for creation and subjectivity in social, economic and artistic life. Moreover, Norris shows admiration for female talents and their will to struggle the conventional regulation of the patriarchy.

In his essay "A Question of Ideals" (1896), Norris praises the most popular version of the New Woman figure:

Unlike Mr. Wenzel's girl she is very tall and a little slim, and her dignity and imposing carriage are her great characteristics. She is rather grave, doesn't smile often, and then mostly with the eyes. Nor is she so entirely given over to society as the girl of the broad chin and high-piled hair. You see her in states of mind rather than in places, in conditions rather than in circumstances. As I say, she is tall enough to look down on most men. On the whole, I prefer her to the one of the broad chin. She is more serious, perhaps, and you must keep keyed pretty high to enjoy her society. ( Norris, Literary 166 )

In addition, Norris points out that the muse of American literature must be no longer the "chaste, delicate, super-refined 'Angel in the House' of Victorian fiction but a more modern, more vibrant New Woman figure" in the essay, "Novelists of the Future" (ibid. 1155).

## 2.2 A Pursuer of Sexual Freedom

As a new woman, Laura not only rebels against New England Morality as "Cult of



Domesticity” and “Woman without talent is virtuous” but also search for either a soul mate or a sexual partner and pursuit of sexual freedom. She knows exactly what she wants and is reluctant to marry. Once she talks with her aunt, she says that she likes Landry Court immensely; she finds the afternoons in Mr. Corthell’s studio delightful and she loves the rides in the park behind Jadwin’s horses. Additionally she has no desire that any one of these affairs shall exclude the other two. She wishes nothing to be consummated (Norris, Pit 60). Moreover, she declares: “I love nobody.” Her thought shocks her aunt, a traditional Victorian madam. That is to say, what she wants is making those suitors love her and pay her all those innumerable attentions. So she does not refuse Mr. Corthell’s proposal entirely and gives him false impression that she likes him very much. That is why she never asks herself whether or not she is in love with any of the three men who strive for her favor. At this stage, the flirtatious Laura unmistakably fits the mold of the liberated “new woman”, who has achieved great personal freedom (not only physically but also psychologically).

Laura’s reluctance to marry reveals her unwillingness to submit her identity to man. This can be the main reason why she does not want to marry any of the men and sacrifice her self or submit to and obey him. It is the unwillingness of a woman to lose her own identity which has been labeled as the feminine mystique, and which constitutes the primary attribute of the submissive wife stereotype (Ferguson 31). Since Laura will not give up her identity, she can not be considered a submissive wife. When she is beset by a variety of suitors (Corthell, Landry Court, Jadwin and so on), she has a clear thought in mind---she does not want to marry at the moment. So it is understandable that she firmly persists in her reluctance to marry.

She is annoyed of being considered as “the object of sex” of men and is unwilling to be controlled by men. Although Mr. Corthell, an artist, is considered the one who shares interest with her and the one who escorts her to numerous piano, cello recitals, lectures and concerts which she loves, she refuses his proposal resolvedly. Norris depicts her inner thought and analyses her choice among her suitors: she realizes that she is “just a woman, with all a woman’s limitations” accompanies by Mr. Corthell and is disgusted with his erotic gaze (Norris, Pit 17). And for Landry, she originally thinks that she can “manage with the lifting of a finger” (ibid. 59). However, her attitude towards Landry changes after she is kissed by Landry one night at the gate of her house. She realizes that she is only a mattress, maybe prostitute in Landry’s mind. So she regards his behavior as his “disrespect” attitude towards her (West 118). She is so furious that she breaks off with Landry immediately. With Mr. Jadwin, she can be always calm and tranquilly self-possessed. Moreover, it is Mr. Jadwin who

makes her feel that she has a head as well as a heart when he talks to her. Thinking that her relation with Mr. Jadwin is more a give-and-take affair, more equality, more companionship, she chooses Mr. Jadwin as her companion/husband.

Most novelists depict marriage as the happy ending of a new woman, whereas Norris goes on revealing Laura's new woman characteristics after she marries Mr. Jadwin. As a new woman, what Laura aspires to is comradeship between husband and wife. However, what her husband, Mr. Jadwin, expects is the traditional marital life and an Angel-like wife. After marriage, he restricts Laura's living sphere at home and deprives her right of working or taking part in any social activities. Every day, she spends most of her time in her living room, even having her dinner there. Every month, there is only her sister who can come to see her one or two times. Although she has a luxurious house, she feels lonely. She finds her marriage life boring. Once she has indulged in buying old books, clothes and paintings. But soon she is sick of those possessions and finds her life meaningless. Otherwise, she will dress in full costume of "Théodora" or "Macbeth" or "Carmen" or "Bizet's cigarette girl" or "Athalie" at her residence and plays as though for a public performance (Norris, Pit 162). Her husband can not understand her and murmurs: "Well, it's a strange wife I've got here. ... Well, do too much of that. It's sort of over-wrought- a little, and unnatural. I like you best when you are your old self, quiet, and calm, and dignified. It's when you are quiet that you are at your best. I didn't know you had this streak in you. You are that excitable tonight" (ibid. 174). She disregards her husband and exclaims defiantly that "It's myself, for the moment whatever it is. I have my own ambition" (ibid. 175). And then she continues her performing. She dances with great passion, as though she will be never tired. Every time she devotes to dancing, she makes her yellow skirt flying upward as a flash of flame spurting from the floor, moves her whole body with wild, untamed spirit. The castanets snap like the crackling of spark. Her black mantilla is a hovering cloud of smoke. She is incarnate flame, capricious and riotous, elusive and dazzling.

However, she is not contented with constant purchase and performances. She seeks a soul mate who can accompany her, share interest with her and arouse her passion of life. It is Mr. Corthell who "arouses her impulses so often". To her, Mr. Corthell seems able to reach all that is impetuous in her nature. She finds another self which is "headstrong" and "impetuous" when she is with him (ibid. 74). Straightway he "makes her feel her sex" (ibid. 74). In the name of giving lessons, Corthell visits and accompanies Laura every day. Sometimes Corthell teaches her to appreciate great paintings and literature while cultivating her lingering passions with romantic music and conversations about subjects that allude to erotic love. Given the

turn-of-the-century anxieties about female sexuality, it is hardly surprising that the encounters between Corthell and Laura are overlaid with sexual connotations. Already during his first call, Corthell asks permission to play Liszt's Mephisto Waltz for Laura on Jadwin's "grand, noble organ" that has hitherto stood unused (ibid. 219). Reclining "in a long chair in the dim, beautiful picture gallery," Laura's response to the "prolonged chord's Liszt's, heavy and clogged and cloyed with passion" can only be described as orgasmic: "the vibration of it shakes her entire being, and leaves her quivering and breathless, the tears in her eyes, her hands clasps till the knuckles whitens"(ibid. 221-222). In the chord of Liszt, she is so "transfixed" and "transported" that she is "quivering" and "breathless" with tears in eyes and hands clasps and regains her passion of love (ibid. 139). Little by little the companionship grows and trends toward intimacy. When they once again gather, neither of them mention her husband. After playing the piano, she leads him upstairs to her sitting room which is the peculiar and particular place of her privacy. In the room, they have intimate conversation. And Laura begins to complain about her marriage life: "I spend most of my time, even have my dinner in the sitting room. Oh, the ennui and stupidity of all this wretches life!" (ibid. 199). She knows well what effects her words and her pose will have upon a man who sympathizes with her, who loves her. Nevertheless, she keeps on complaining: "If I have only known then that those days are to be, the happiest of my life. [ . . . ] This great house, all the beauty of it, and all this wealth, what does it amount to? I hate this house, I hate this life. It is killing me" (ibid. 207). My little body is a weary of this great world." Influenced by her saying, Corthell feels wearing of her life as Laura and tries to comfort his lover by producing a "heart-shaped" matchbox. And what followed had been read as an allusion to sexual intercourse. When her lover puts forward bravely: "To take you far away with me. I will come for you tomorrow evening. You will be ready then to go with me?" (ibid. 230), her answer is presented as "Yes, yes, to go with you anywhere" (ibid. 231).

Norris's concern for and understanding of new women is closely related to his peculiar personal history. When he was a delicate boy, he developed an emotional dependency on his mother, who was a popular actress and had talent on performing. She was a strong-willed and self-confident woman. Her excellent performance made her popular, which created the opportunity to meet many young men. Frank Norris's father was one of them. At first, she hasn't planed to abandon her career after marriage. However, childbearing broke her plan and ruined her life ever since. As a compensation, she reared her children's to develop a tendency towards artistic things. Frank Norris and his brother Charles became artistic writers instead of merchants as his father wished them to be. His wife, Jeannette, is another important person in

his life. She is an active, fortitude and mighty woman who acts as the soul-mate to Frank Norris. Lon West has made comments on Jeanette's influence on Norris: "Jeannette does make the adult Frank Norris—a nearly mature writer, frees from the conventional social set and rules." (109) These two intimate women influence Frank Norris's life and his thought. That is to say, Norris's upbringing environment, his own experience as well as his relationships with his mother and wife, contributes to his idea towards new women. That is the reason why "Norris feels sympathy for Laura when he depicts her boring days in her own boudoir". Norris easily understands Laura "why she feels boring and lonely, with her business man husband and her oversized house, and he knows why her lover can touch a space within her spirit that Jadwin (her husband) cannot find" (West 118).

There is no denying that Norris advocates women's emancipation and supports their claim for equality with man both politically and economically, and admires the intelligent, progressive, self-reliant women. However, he feels suspicious of some radical statements and actions in feminist movement, particularly when he realizes that women totally neglect the feminine virtues and tends to be morally irresponsible and sexually aggressive. In Norris's mind, it consequently brings harm to women themselves and also to men, because it makes the intense conflicts between the sexes more severe. Norris, in his novels, expresses his anxiety over the women with sexual desire and indicated that sexual liberation is a kind of degradation caused by a repressed side effect and it is virtually aggravating women's slavery.

Compared with his contemporary women writers, Norris's anxiety towards sexual liberation shows his limitation as a male writer. Norris's worry about the loss of female virtues and female identity in her quest for personal freedom and equality with men, specifically in sexual life, is very well presented in his characterization of Page, Laura's sister. Page finds the sexual intercourse between her sister and Mr. Corthell "illegal". And she lets her blazing eyes rivet upon her sister's and rebukes her sister: "Why did you tell us this morning at breakfast that you and he (Corthell) were in the art gallery the whole evening?" (Norris, Pit 167). "You managed very awkwardly this time, it seems to me" (ibid. 168). She reaffirms the woman's role in marriage and asks her sister Laura never to be bold, conspicuous and aberrated, but just remains "to be well-bred, gentle, womanly and to love one's home and to take care of it, and to love and believe in one's husband" (ibid. 168). When Page detects her sister's eloping plan with Corthell, she angrily accuses Laura of not acting as the assistant who will give help when her husband needs: "If your husband had business to deal with outside, do you think that it is normal that you were moping and pining because he left you at home? No, you could not. You should help him buckle his sword on, and when he

came back to you, you shouldn't tell him how lonesome you were, but you'd take care of him, cry over his wounds and tell him to be brave"(ibid. 198). That is why the novel ends with Laura remaining ultimately at the side of her husband. However, Laura's stay with her husband seems more an escape from than a solution can be employed, and the novel never really answers the question of how the modern women are to use their sexual freedom.

In reality, the years between 1870s and the 1920s are a turning point in American middle-class women's sexual life. Middle-class women are becoming more aggressive in sexual matters. They think it right to enjoy sex, to decide when to have and when not to have sex, and when to have and when not to have babies. Many psychologists declare war on Victorian ideology, labeling it superstitious, unscientific, and unhealthful. They pronounce sexuality as positive, energy-producing, and pervasive force in human life. Women are no longer passive in their sexual behaviors. They smoke, drink, ride bicycles, and play golf and tennis like men. They even change their dress style. Lois W. Banner describes the changed dress style of these new women.

She could be easily identified by her new style of dress. Instead of yards of trailing petticoats and beribboned gowns, which women had laboriously embroidered by hand, the "New Woman" wore a tailored suit or a dark skirt and a simple blouse, or "shirtwaist" modeled after men's attire. Her skirts might not have risen above her ankles, but if she were particularly daring, she might loosen her corset---that torture of instrument of Victorian dress that gave women 18-inch waistlines but also caused fainting spells and sometimes even permanently damaged internal organs.(22)

Many feminists and women writers feel chained and inhibited when they encounter about sex, about the body and the passions. There is a phantom that constantly reminds them that it is unfitting for them as women to tell others their feelings. Men, their reason tells them, will be shocked, if they do tell the truth. They feel an urgent to ask for freedom of body writing. Norris's contemporary women writers, like Kate Chopin(1851-1904), Edith Wharton (1862-1937), concern on the women who have sexual desire and ask for sexual freedom. In Chopin's The Awakening(1899), Edna Pontellier, the heroine, feels oppressed by her husband and the loss of her own identity. Chopin discusses the consequences of women being (represented by Edna) economically dependent on men: Men produced wealth, which is then bestowed on women, establishing an all-determining social convention. As a result, women become totally dependent on men and have to use their sexual attributes to win husband and secure a family. Her suicidal swim can be seen as a means of satisfying a desire to be reunited

with this force. And another famous woman writer at the turn of the century, Edith Wharton portrays her heroines' search of sexual freedom and condemns the sexual repression of the patriarchy. In her work, The House of Mirth (1905), she depicts an ambitious young woman who crosses class lines intent on becoming a success in her own right. The heroine tries to realize her ideal at any price: flirting with men, ruining of a friend, marrying someone who is wealthy and with noble blood, and even having sexual relationship with a duck for higher status. Her work, The Age of Innocence (1920), is a study of the patriarchal society that encourages sexual repression. It depicts a man who is totally alienated from his instincts and feelings. In these two stories, Wharton indicates that female sexuality can not find an outlet while male sexuality is still subject to conventions.

Figured by Norris as a new woman, Laura kicks and bolts against the bonds of patriarchy. More or less, through this female character, Norris expresses his concern with women's status and reveals his appreciation towards them. However, "Laura is not the best example of Norris's respect for emancipated women", an American critic, Lon West states (West 105). The ideal woman that Norris creates in his fictions is Travis, the heroine in Blix. Both modern and principled, she is presented as man's soul mate and mentor.

### **Chapter 3: Bisexual Woman in Blix**

Norris's treatment of the "New Woman" sheds new light on our understanding of this "He-Man of American literature". However, he does not appreciate the image of new woman in every aspect. Norris argues that when a new woman tries to have the same rights and freedom as man, she denies her feminine nature as well as the gender differences. Usually she becomes an extreme super-female, who threatens male's identity and makes a stable and reciprocal relationship between the two sexes impossible (Norris, Literary 151). He points out that sexual liberation is a kind of degradation caused by a repressed side effect and it virtually aggravates women's slavery. Moreover, Norris states that the loss or betrayal of feminine traits predicates bachelorhood to new woman, for this woman type is not made for man with conventional sexual attitude. Therefore, Norris implies that new woman is not the kind of woman to solve the intensive conflict between sexes of that period. The ideal woman portrayed by Norris to deal with the sex chaos at the turn of the century is the heroine Travis in Blix, a bisexual woman that possesses both masculinity and femininity, or in McElrath and Crisler's words, "a mixture of masculinity and femininity" (332).

The concepts of "bisexuality" and "bisexual" are sometimes confused with the concepts of "androgyny" and "androgynous". Although "androgyny" is not originally presented by feminists, it has been endowed with totally new connotations by the famous feminist Virginia Woolf and has been widely used by other feminists. Usually, this concept is purposefully used to point out that the elites, especially brilliant writers, are androgynous persons. Woolf emphasizes both masculine traits and feminine traits—"the great mind" when creating literary works. However, according to Helene Cixous, "bisexuality" refers to each one's location in self of the presence—variously manifest and insistent according to each person, male or female—of both sexes, non-exclusion either of the difference or of one sex (qtd. in Warhol and Hendl 354). That is to say, "bisexuality", as a sociological and psychological concept, only lays stress on the two kinds of characteristics (masculinity and femininity) in human being. This concept, which is introduced into classical psychoanalytic theory in the 1890s and early 1900s, is used as a way of understanding evolutionary theory, developmental aspects of human sexuality, the balance of masculinity and femininity in the individual and adult homosexuality (qtd. in Fox 3). The reason for this thesis to use the concept of "bisexuality" when defining Norris's ideal woman as a bisexual woman is to emphasize that Frank Norris is not a feminist notwithstanding his progressive notion of women, though his

idea of bisexual woman seems, to some extent, identical with the concept of “androgyny”.

### 3.1 A Masculine Rebel of New England Morality

Like other middle-class girls, the living sphere of Travis Bessemer (the heroine of Blix) is mainly restricted at home. The traditional morality (the ideology of domesticity) confines Travis to home and urges her to consider her role as a mother-woman who “idolizes” her children, “worships” her husband, and “esteems” it a holy privilege to efface themselves as individuals and grow wings as ministering angels. Marriage, husband, family and children are taught to be the most important things towards her. At the age of sixteen, she makes a formal debut into society. And she takes part in parties in which she dances with numerous young fellowmen. It is in those parties that she met her “chum” Condry Rivers, a young newspaperman with literary ambitions. Then they affiliate with each other in the conventional way: During the season they go to the theatres Monday nights. Condry calls regularly Wednesdays and Sundays. Then they manage to be invited to the same houses for teas and dinners, and the same party for dance.

As she grows older, she is gradually aware of the inequality of the social convention and begins to question the system of domesticity. As a matter of fact, at the very time that domesticity and true womanhood are expounded as an American ideal, Travis wishes to follow J. S. Mill’s tradition of individual liberty and wished to free herself from the female oppression. Her sense of freedom comes from a growing realization of the impending threat to her freedom as she matures. In her eyes, family life seems less interesting than grappling with outside objects that demand her zeal and learning. She thinks that a woman’s role needs not to be confined to the domestic domain. Travis tells Condry that they have lost charm for each other. And there is no more freshness in him for her. She is tired of the convention of the society, as she finds restriction established for women only. She revolts principally against the endless round of conventional “functions” that she is expected to attend and the rules of decorum she is supposed to follow while attending them (French 80). So while charting with Condry Rivers, she exclaims straightforward that she intends to break with smart but decadent San Francisco society, and will not take part in those parties any more. She claims that “I’ll find my amusement somewhere else.[. . .] I am going to do the things that I like to do” (Norris, Blix 38). She enjoys riding a wheel, taking long walks and studying something. In addition she regards her relationship with Condry Rivers as “part of the game” that is played between young fellows (ibid. 39). She insists that Condry stop flirting with her as he does not really love her. Norris’s idea of how people shall behave is projected through his picture of the



activities Travis substitutes for the detested conventional "functions." She enjoys discovering San Francisco and resolves that she will often go round to queer little, interesting little places. She even discovers that fishing is better than teas, and dancing, and functions. Constantly they explore the city together as friends. Sometimes they go to the dock, see the vessel and interview a captain whose story becomes a perfect material for Condyl's novel writing. Sometimes they have lunch at a Chinese restaurant where they chat about literature and novel-writing for a whole afternoon. Among other mild adventures, they have arranged a marriage between a middle-aged lighthouse keeper and a genteel serving girl.

The first sight of the heroine Travis, who is a tall, solidly built with broad shoulders, deep chest and round neck, gives the reader a strong impression of her masculine appearance. The convention against which Travis revolts is stultifying enough—a round of dinners, teas, and dances at which the same people continually meet and gossip for fear of being called—as Travis is—declass  if they fail to attend. Norris exaggerates his gratification by drowning the character of Travis in adjectives of praise—"She is just good, sweet, natural, healthy-minded, healthy-bodied girl, honest, strong, self-reliant and good-tempered"(ibid. 108). So far Norris is likely to appeal to all women that are independently-minded. Norris discovers and points out that the patriarchal regulation restricts not only women's body but also their mind. So she frees her body from the patriarchal society.

S. N. Verma, an expert on Frank Norris, views in his essay Frank Norris: a Literary Legend that Travis inspires Condyl, by her masculine force of character and purpose and by her maternity and patience in his improvement, to become strong enough both to fight against Condyl's desire to gamble and to pursue his career with energy and perseverance (Verma 74). Although she has never gone to college to learn how to write novels, Travis is a marvellous reader. She can easily notice the novels' key points which are extremely subtle and can easily be ignored by the most experienced fiction readers. It is she who suggests a "better ending" for his story (Graham 20). When Condyl is indulged in gambling, Travis accompanies him finding out ways to get rid of the bad habit and making him overcome finally. This time she has repossessed confidence and power. She(Travis) feels more surely that she is not only stronger than Condyl, but in a manner older, more mature. She is conscious of depths in her nature by far greater than in him. She is capable of attaining heights of heroism, devotion, and sacrifice which he, for all his unilateral masculine force, not only could never reach, but could not even conceive of. She works day and night and finally nurses him back to life (ibid. 21).

Blix has usually been read as autobiographical, and even Norris admits parallels between his hero's life and his own. There is an assumption that Norris's behaviors on the basis of the

novel are partly unsound, since there are important discrepancies even in easily observed matters (Norris' father was not, like Condyl's, dead, nor was Norris the only child in his family). Otherwise, Warren French points out that while one shall not assume that the novel retells the story of its author's life, and it can be safely read as his spiritual autobiography. It describes not the life he lives, but the life he dreams to live (French 80). This biographer observes that "Blix is central to understanding Norris" (ibid. 79), because it offers readers his first illusion of his ideal woman, a mixture of masculinity and femininity. Other biographers also state that Travis, nicknamed "Blix" by Condyl, (like Jeannette, whom Norris nicknamed "Buck") attractively transcends all such generational and cultural distinctions as she makes her first appearance in the novel as a demigoddess (McElrath and Crisler 327). Treating Travis like a comrade, Condyl, the stereotype of Norris, discovers the unconventional qualities Travis (a character models Jeanette) has. Norris's appreciation on Travis can be found through Condyl's support of Travis's decisive break-up with the convention and his admiration for Travis's talent on writing.

Independence and freedom are the targets Travis sought throughout her life. Even though Travis and Condyl realize that they feel in love with each other, they two, especially Travis, have no thought of marriage. She thinks that marriage is not indispensable, instead, companionship with love is enough. Moreover, Travis disapproves and even acts against the traditional marriage institution. She is outrageous that a married woman shall be regarded as a man's property. She articulately speaks out the unequal status of women and men. In her mind, marriage merely means responsibilities, duties, gravity troublous seriousness, inevitable disappointments and distasteful things to her. So, instead of getting married with Condyl, she lives with him out of wedlock. She experiments free union without submitting to the legal, social and sexual injustices suffered by women in conventional marriage. Free union, in her opinion, is a more natural way to unite both sexes than conventional marriage, in which she can pursue her individual rights without the limitation of the sexually biased moral codes. Free union provides the possible solution to deal with the inequality that a woman suffers as an alternative to conventional marriage. That's to say, when she refuses sexual relationship and marriage with men, she goes through different experiments as she challenges the social status quo as pioneer.

Her self-reliance and self-determination are emphasized by her questions of the knowledge which girls learn such as: "Why should girls not be taught the principles of machinery? Such knowledge would be useful to them in energizing as in enervating occupations." Joseph R. McElrath, Jr observes that Travis is the woman who believes that she

shall have “some occupation,” and she hopes to study medicine (ibid.). Travis asks Condyl: “Why shouldn’t I have a profession just like a man—just like you, Condyl? Isn’t studying medicine, Condyl, better than piano-playing, or French courses, or literary classes and Browning circles? Oh, I’ve no patience with that kind of girl” (Norris, Blix 207). As she makes it clear, she declares her will to go to New York to study medicine.” (ibid. 208). When Condyl makes the myopic remark that she might find someone to marry in New York, she protests, “No; I’m going there to study medicine” (ibid. 208). Additionally, both of them are about to begin their careers (Travis begins her college in New York and Condyl Rivers starts to write novels.)

Don Graham reveals that “Blix takes one of the much-discussed questions of that period—the attitude to be taken by women towards the career—as the central theme” (21). Revealing her desire to live an independent life, Travis’s choice of a profession is significant. She is no longer to view herself as a frail being requiring the protection of strong males. She realizes a profession as a way for her to be truly independent from the family and other bondages of the society and feels satisfactory only if they have gained education and profession. Lon West points out that “She(Travis) finds the nursing ‘agency’ where she works; and this professional success, plus her firmly independent stand toward Condyl, marks her as the most liberated of Norris’s women” (106). Travis insistence on studying medicine and having a profession of her own manifests Norris’s awareness of the importance of the profession to a woman. He does explicitly advocate women to go out and look for fulfillment beyond the role of homemaker. In other words, he realizes what a harassment of the concept “Angel in the House” represses women as Virginia Woolf expresses in an essay titled “Professions for Women”:

She (the image of angel) slipped behind me and whispered: “My dear, you are a young woman. You are writing about a book that has been written by a man. Be sympathetic; be tender; flatter; deceive; use all the arts and wiles of our sex. Never let anybody guess that you have a mind of your own. Above all, be pure.”(Collected 294)

Being a professional woman writer, Virginia Woolf discusses the ways in which gender-consciousness affected, or threatened to affect her. Virginia Woolf writes that the concept of being “an angel in the house” bothers her, wastes her time and torments her that at last she cannot bear this image and she kills it (ibid. 285). She additionally outlined the impediment that stood on the way of women’s emancipation.

### 3.2 A Possessor of Feminine Traits

In Blix, Travis is depicted as not only a “healthy-bodied, strong-willed, self-reliant” masculine girl but also a “good, sweet, honest and good-tempered” hostess of her family and soul mate of her friend Condry River (Norris, Blix 8). In the novel, Frank Norris describes Travis’s father Mr. Bessemer as an abstracted, self-centred old man who only cares two things—homoeopathy and the mechanism of clocks. Mr. Bessemer has a strange way of talking to himself in low voice, keeping up a running, half-whispered comment upon his own doings and actions. Other people consider his way of talking as monologue. It is hard for him to be understood by others. Travis is the one who acts as a bridge for her father to communicate with others, besides her sisters and brother. Moreover, Travis’s mother has died when Travis is young. So the duties of taking care of her younger sisters, brother and father, organizing the daily affairs of the family are left to Travis. Travis becomes the “mother” of her younger sister and brother and the hostess who does housework perfectly. Travis supervises everything at home, giving directions to maids as to the hour for serving dinners.

“And tell Maggie(the cook),” pursued Travis, “to fricassee her chicken, and not to have it too well done.”

And leave the heart out for Papum. He likes the heart.(ibid. 11)

During her dinner time, she always reminds her father not to tip over the coffee or soup bowl and pushes the cup or bowl further on the table. In addition, she prompts: “Is it strong enough for you, Papum.” or “Hot rolls are bad for your digestion” (ibid. 10). While having meals, her attention must be divided between her father’s plate and her brother Howard—who is atrociously bad. Her brother is squirting watermelon-seeds at her younger sisters or doing other tricks on her. Mr. Bessemer can not stop his son or just disregards it. As the mother-like sister, Travis exclaims his name, gives him five minutes to finish eating, goes upstairs with him and gets ready for Sunday school. Howard knows that his older sister’s decisions are the laws of the family, finds every means to finish his breakfast within the specified time without protest.

To her friend, Condry Rivers, Travis is the soul mate who breaks his bad habit of gambling. In the patriarchal society, the card business is one part of the club life of men together with drinking and flirting with women. If a man doesn’t lead this kind of life, he will be segregated by the majority of men. Condry doesn’t want to play cards, swears not taking part in the game anymore. Even though he plans to bring no money for him to bet, his

rationality fades away when he is asked to go to the card-room. Having borrowed enough money, he plays time after time. Since then, he is infatuated with gambling. In order to help Condyl, Travis learns to play cards and breaks his bad habit of gambling by a stratagem. Moreover, Travis encourages Condyl to enter the competition of novel-writing and provides him with enough money to take a month off to write a story based on one of the lighthouse keeper's tales. When Condyl reads his manuscript, Travis approves his writing. Her ability of "[catching] on to every one of his excellent point" bestirs him (ibid. 256). Her love towards her beloved and friends is deep and tender. Whenever her beloved asks for help or her friends are in hot water, she cheers them up and tries every means to help them out. Her hortative words and tender affection assist them from desperation. With her care and help, her beloved and friends begin their new exploration at the end of the novel.

Norris's advocacy of the appropriate gender relations between the sexes is forcefully expressed in his depiction of Travis, a woman with either masculinity or femininity. She displays the longing for union with men by giving and loving, meanwhile she possesses her female subjectivity and female aggressiveness and dominance that make her self-confident and independent. Through the creation of the modern women Travis, Norris shows, by concrete examples, how Norris's ideal woman exerts her female subjectivity in love and in life and how she plays as a complementary role in her equal interaction with man. Norris's ideal woman (and Blix represents that ideal more than does Moran) thus embodies both halves of a correct ethical balance—positive feminine traits like spiritual purity, moral awareness or maternity and positive masculine traits like strength, independence and self-reliance—which enable her to fight against the bondage and ask for her rights (Graham 48).

The generalization of Norris's ideal women as unrealistic and abstract is similar to Samuel Taylor Coleridge's remark that in Shakespeare "It is the perfection of women to be characterless. Everyone wishes a Desdemona or Ophelia for a wife creature who, though they may not understand you, do always feel for you and feel with you" (Coleridge 349). Just as Coleridge is obliged to, in his inordinate generalization, ignore the better than half of Shakespeare's "perfect" women who are anything but characterless, the critical commentary on Norris's ideal heroine also primarily lacks depth and all-roundness. It would be too much a simplification to classify her into mistress-type or characterize as being docile and submissive. On the contrary, she does more than serve man. She responds to her soul and most important of all, free them from the guilt of male sexuality.

As man's soul mate, she rescues, pities, comforts, accompanies, sustains, influences and teaches man and in turn is rescued and comforted by her lover. The special power of Norris's

ideal woman lies in their frank and honest enjoyment of sexuality. As an active partner in love, they, together with their mates break the sexual taboos of traditional society to achieve their full humanity and to create a new morality based on nature and instinct, the equality of man and woman, the freedom of choice. The ideal woman's most noteworthy aspect manifests in the gender role-playing, in which she shows a kind of bisexual disposition. She possesses not only the definitive female traits such as gentleness, sentimentality, devotion and affection, but also some specific qualities, which are consistently stereotyped as male attributes like independence, bravery, self-confidence, smartness and rationality.

The traditional binary opposition between men and women has continuously been a problem that can never be settled satisfactorily. As we have discussed, Norris can fully understand the injustice of male dominance and female subordination and the inappropriateness of the traditional gender construction. However, he does not approve the total degendering of society, which is complicatedly expressed in his ambivalent attitude towards the forceful and aggressive women. In spite of the intelligent, progressive, self-reliant qualities, the New Woman, the ideal of radical feminist, neglects the feminine virtues, such as nurturing impulse, tenderness and emotional sincerity and tends to be ambitious, morally irresponsible, sexually aggressive and permissive and behaviorally manipulative and domineering. It will make the intense conflicts between the sexes more severe.

In order to solve the sexual tensions, Norris conveys his ideal of the reciprocity between men and women based on mutual tolerance, mutual trust, and mutual love and understanding. This notion of reciprocity between the sexes is a challenge not only to the traditional dividing lines between subject and object, and self and other, but also to the modern eradication and subversion of gender stereotypes. The development of bisexual disposition or the formation of bisexual personality or the configuration of unified double gender roles is regarded as the inevitable result of social progress and feminist development. Originally, in the studies of gender-role stereotypes in this culture, masculinity and femininity are thought of as separate ends or poles of a single long line. Thus, perfect masculinity is at one end of the line and perfect femininity is at the other end. By this definition, if a person is perfectly masculine, the person should have no feminine traits, and if a person is perfectly feminine, the person should have no masculine traits. However, some researchers argue that masculinity and femininity are not polar opposites but instead are independent measures; attributes considered masculine are found in feminine girls, and less masculine boys have more of some masculine attributes than do to boys who look more masculine. These researchers believe that there are really two lines, one representing masculinity and the other representing femininity, and that a person

can be low on one and high on the other, low on both, or high on both. Like those researchers, Norris himself celebrates the equal interaction between two sexes with a readiness to improve gender construction.

Norris, as a serious and insightful writer of his time, has already reflected and anticipated the favorable tendency of the reconstruction of gender and sexual identity. Don Graham, in Critical Essays on Frank Norris, observes that “The author(Frank Norris) seems to be resolved that we shall not admire the traditional femininity that appear to be self-sacrifice and generosity in his heroine” (24). Another important critic of the 19<sup>th</sup> century American literature, Donald Pizer remarks in his The Literary Criticism of Frank Norris: “Many of Norris’ heroines have the Gibsonesque combination of statuesque beauty, maternity and firmness of mind. Norris believes that San Francisco women in particular are Gibson types—tall, handsome and sturdy” (167).

Norris’s description of bisexual woman is, to a great degree, identical with the contemporary feminist concept of androgyny. Androgyny is an ancient word taken from the Greek andro(male) and gyn(female) and defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes and the human impulses expressed by men and women are not rigidly assigned. (Richmond-Abbott 10) Heibrun raised his understanding almost three decades ago: “Androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests, further, a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women of being aggressive, as men tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom” (qtd. in Richmond-Abbott 11). Judith Laws gave her definition to “androgyny” that “it is a state in which feminine and masculine elements are present, accepted and accessible within the individual” (ibid.12).

The Famous feminist, Virginia Woolf treats androgyny as the thinking mechanism of literary creation and the criterion of literary criticism from feminist standpoint:

In each of us two powers preside, one male, one female; and in the man’s brain, the man, predominates over the woman, and in the woman’s brain, the woman predominates over the man. The normal and comfortable state of being is that when the two live in harmony together, spiritual co-operation. If one is a man, still the woman part of the brain must have effect, and a woman also must have intercourse with the man in her. Coleridge perhaps meant this when he said that a great mind is androgynous. It is when this fusion takes place that the mind is fully fertilized and uses all its faculties. Perhaps a mind that is purely masculine can’t create, any more than a mind that is purely feminine. I thought.(Room 102)

Woolf does not mean that the two genders in androgyny should be exactly equal. In her opinion, an androgynous thing is not an ideal, but it has become a reality in some great writers, such as Shakespeare and Jane Austen. In this famous essay, A Room of One Own, Virginia Woolf expresses her profound understanding and offers a specific definition of “an androgynous mind.” She supposes that, “There are two sexes in the mind corresponding to the two sexes in the body” which also “require to be united in order to get complete satisfaction and happiness” (ibid. 102).

The combination of the best qualities of both sexes in a favorable duality in which Norris’s bisexual woman has chosen corresponds to contemporary feminists’ modern woman and their thought of gender identity: “It is fatal to be a man or a woman pure and simple. One must be woman-manly or man-womanly” (ibid. 108). Postmodernist feminists cherish the harmonious co-existence of the male and female without losing the irrespective features, which just corresponds strikingly to Norris’s ideal of reciprocity between two sexes. Norris has already insightfully tackled it through the presentation of the modern woman.

The idea of bisexual woman has great significance. By portraying this woman image, Norris erases a series of binary oppositions, including men/women, fact/illusion, head/heart, voice/silence, culture/nature, demand/gift, reason/intuition, and society/family. And then the opposite and unbalanced gender relationships will come to a close, substituted by a partner relationship in supplement. On the one hand, the creation of this image embodies the multicultural spirit at the turn of the century. On the other hand, the depiction of it can be considered as a way and a key to solve the problems of feminism, of the relationship between the two genders.

Of course, compared with the image of new woman portrayed by Norris, there is no denying that Norris’s ideal woman Travis has the same independent character and similar rebellious spirit against the bondage of the society as the new woman. However, Norris stresses at the same time the notion that the traditional feminine traits are essential to and bounds to his ideal woman, bisexual woman. What’s more important is that Norris ignores the sexual need of bisexual woman. This is different from the image of new woman. In such a case, the bisexual woman cannot be considered simply as a kind of new woman. They become the type of woman portrayed by Norris to establish a complementary relationship between the two sexes on the basis of mutual understanding, mutual trust, mutual love and mutual tolerance.

All in all, Norris’s creation of the bisexual woman stresses the need for a sex-specific vision of women subjectivity. Frank Norris appreciates the bisexual woman who searches for



self and realizes her ideal by fighting or hard-working. However, in the characterization of his ideal women, the bisexual woman, he emphasizes the values of female attributes, such as selfless love, sensitivity and tenderness, which exert great influence on the improvement of their own characters and the formation of their integrity. In this way, His bisexual idea deconstructs the binary opposition between male and female. Norris not only allows for a new mode of understanding female subjectivity, but also finds an adequate form of representation for the new figurations of the female subject. Norris's bisexual woman, as we have seen, by the strain of the intercourse with difference, works at a distance either from radical feminism that rejects the male symbolic order in the name of difference or from male chauvinism that discards female qualities.

## Conclusion

Women's social role is the most concerned topic for the fin-de-siecle Americans after the first women's rights movement. As a writer who obtains his writing materials from the reality, Frank Norris is sensitive to the debated things of his time. His fiction provides people today the overwhelming evidence of his concern on women. From the titles of his novels, readers could realize that Norris particularly focuses on the female characters in most of his novels. In those novels, he has brought to life an abundant and various women characters, who have depth, intensity, and roundness and a supporting cast.

These women characters are dynamic and not easy to comprehend. One important way of understanding Norris's depiction of women is to be aware of his underlining assertion of the proper role and status of women both in society and family. Rereading Norris's works from the feminist point of view provides us an opportunity to reflect the problematic female role in the society.

This thesis has shown Norris's vision on women by analyzing the different female characters in his novels. Norris's cynicism and sympathy for Angel in the House are shown side by side in his work The Octopus. In the presentation of the incompatibility of the sexes, Norris considers female needs and female nurturing impulse trivial and unworthy of consideration. Moreover, Norris lays his blame on the male ego-centricity and self-sufficiency which take women and their bodies as mere appendage to his own desire. He shows sympathy for those women who are taken as sexual symbols or the other.

His appreciation to the powerful and self-reliant new women is presented by his novel The Pit and some of his essays. In this novel, he applauds the new women who awaken to seek for their rights and wave flags and bang the drum for women to rebel against male-centered society. He can be viewed as a standard-bearer of the new women. He advocates women's emancipation and supports their claim for equality with men both politically and economically, and admires the intelligent, progressive, self-reliant women.

However, Norris's attitudes towards new woman are considered as complex and ambiguous. As a male writer, he is suspicious of some radical statements and actions in feminist movement, particularly when he realizes that women totally neglect the feminine virtues, such as, nurturing impulse, tenderness and emotional sincerity and tends to be ambitious, hedonistic, morally irresponsible, sexually aggressive, behaviorally manipulative and domineering, which originally belongs to man. This emancipation is inclined to lead to

homologation, namely, to the assimilation of women into masculine modes of thought, practice and sets of values, and consequently to the masculinization of female or to the denial of female special ability and values. In Norris's mind, the purpose of this egalitarian ethic might not change the situation of inequality between two sexes, on the contrary, it might intensify it. In other words, it will consequently bring harm to women themselves and also to men, because it will make the intense conflicts between the sexes more severe.

Therefore, the characterization of his ideal women, women with bisexuality, is a way which Norris found to ease intense relationship between sexes at the turn of the century. The uniqueness of Norris's representation of bisexual women is viewed as worthy of men's profound love, as man's equal, man's soul mate and even man's superior or mentor. Norris transforms the female from object into subject by activating her, giving her voice and empowering her without depriving her of the admiring qualities of traditional femininity. More exactly, Norris's ideal woman is remarkable for her totality of being bisexual that is both traditional and modern, combining life-giving, life-sustaining, and nourishing presence bestowed upon their lovers or husbands or families with independent, courageous and intelligent self. Norris emphasizes the reciprocity and harmony rather than the antagonism between two sexes. The female is no longer considered "the second sex" or male's enemy and rival. The male and female maintain their respective features but coexist and cooperate with each other. The "family" is no longer a traditional social unit of male mastery and female obedience but a home of destiny, full of love, friendship, care and comfort, managed and operated by man and woman together. The female's position both in family and society will never be neglected or denied and her value will be fully expressed. She will never play a subordinate role or act merely as a domestic loyal servant but as a woman with her own subjectivity. The male denigration and constriction of the female will be replaced by the male respect and admiration for the female. And contradiction, conflict and hostility will be substituted with dialogue, complementarity and mutual understanding between men and women.

Frank Norris's pursuit for harmony between sexes matches the postmodernist feminist pursuit for a harmonious happy coexistence of men and women which emphasizes mutual trust and mutual respect between the two sexes. The resulted rereading has given new visibility to Norris's female characters, their strength and their different types, and has revealed his own sensitivity to the women issues. Norris, as an unprejudiced writer, not only depicts the women's social role of his age, but also perceptively foreshadows the future conceptualization of a female role in the society.

Therefore, Norris shows his sympathy for the Victorian ladies, which no one can deny, and launches possibly the thoroughly revealment of the inequality of the patriarchy. Yet, in many of his novels, he admires the ability of piloting and performing possessed by the new women and the masculine trait such as extroversion, ration, independence and dominance they possess in their fight for equality. Moreover, Norris, as a great and complicated writer, has already predicted the future tendency of gender reformulation and male-female relationship. Under these circumstances, the significance of the thesis is apparent in the reconsideration of Norris's depiction of women characters, and more importantly, it is of great assistance to realize that Norris has made great contributions to feminist criticism.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> The publication of his McTeague and Vandover and the Brute has made him a primary architect of American naturalistic novel.

<sup>2</sup> This book, the doctoral dissertation written by Lon West, is a study that expands on the view of Norris as more romantic than naturalist by discussing the natural man and refined woman types in his works. In the book, West also connects Norris and his novels to Carl Jung's archetypes of the Great and Terrible Mother and the punishing Superego-like Father.

<sup>3</sup> Reading the Symptom was written by Mohamed Zayani. In this book, distancing himself from views that conceive of capitalism as a purely economic category, the critic argued that capitalism provides the socio-symbolic or the structuring whole within which naturalism is produced and from which it cannot be dissociated.

<sup>4</sup> An article published on 75<sup>th</sup> vol. of American Literature in 2003 which studied Frank Norris's The Pit from economical and psychological aspects. The critic, David A. Zimmerman, laid his attention on the invisible fingers that control the stock market and the hysteric symptom of the stockjobber.

<sup>5</sup> Novels, which is the short form of Frank Norris: Novels and Essays, is a collection of Frank Norris's three novels and several essays. Three novels in it are McTeague, Vandover and the Brute and The Octopus.

<sup>6</sup> The "Cult of Domesticity" or "Cult of True Womanhood" (named such by its detractors) is a prevailing view among middle and upper class white women during the nineteenth century, in Great Britain and the United States. According to the ideals of the cult of domesticity, women were supposed to embody perfect virtue in all senses. The women who abided by and promoted these standards were generally literate and lived in the northeast, particularly New York and Massachusetts. Women were put in the center of the domestic sphere and were expected to fulfill the roles of a calm and nurturing mother, a loving and faithful wife, and a passive, delicate, and virtuous creature. These women were also expected to be pious and religious, teaching those around them by their Christian beliefs, and expected to unfailingly inspire and support their husbands.

<sup>7</sup> The main theme of the novel is the deal of wheat (Jadwin's corner of May wheat).

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## Informative Chinese Abstract

作为 19 世纪美国自然主义文学运动的先驱和 20 世纪初“揭丑”文学运动的鼓吹手，弗兰克·诺里斯（1870-1902）历来被认为是将本土工业发展中的残酷、蜕变、暴力和堕落等非人性行为作为主体心理格式的批判者，或被看作为给“微笑的”主流美国文坛增添悲剧色彩的悲观论者。对诺里斯的早期研究多从其所受影响的角度来发掘法国自然主义作家左拉、美国心理学家约瑟夫·孔德以及生物进化论者达尔文的文学意义，并从中发现这一意义与诺里斯创作之间的关联，或是从马克思文艺理论批评视角指控美国铁路当局的经济霸权统治以及铁路托拉斯对美国普通民众的剥削和压迫。由于研究视角的单一或狭隘，诺里斯研究一度走入低谷。

直到美国文艺批评家华伦·法兰西的《弗兰克·诺里斯》传记（1962）问世，欧美学界对诺里斯研究才又重新繁盛起来。1986 年“弗兰克·诺里斯研究学会”的成立和 1989 年《弗兰克·诺里斯研究》的创刊使得诺里斯研究形成新的高潮。至今为止，国外已有 200 多篇期刊论文和 50 多部专题著作（内容包括传记、书信集和评论集）面世，这些著文从女性主义、文化研究、比较文学、跨学科等不同视角对诺里斯的作品进行了重新解读。

诺里斯生活在美国女性逐渐觉醒的时代。随着社会生产力和新大陆文明程度的提高，女性开始反思自身及其社会角色，她们发觉自己始终处于社会边缘，她们所生存的社会中仍以男性为中心，男女不平等的现象比比皆是。因而她们愤然振作，积极反映，逐步走出家庭空间，投身社会活动，并通过提升自身能力以提高其在家庭和社会中的地位以达到在社会各个领域中扮演更为重要的角色的目的。19 世纪末，社会对女性话语、女性地位和社会角色的重新思考和激烈争论成为那一时代的主要特征。作为一名坚持创作源于现实生活并关注世纪之交社会问题的作家，诺里斯选择女性及其社会角色作为其创作的主题之一。

从 17 世纪中叶至 19 世纪末的美国文学中可见，女性人物要么是贤妻良母、持节贞女以及富有牺牲精神的“天使”，要么是令人生畏的“妖妇”或“巫婆”。19 世纪末期，在女性意识逐渐觉醒，新女性大量涌现，社会性别问题突显，两性矛盾日益激烈的社会背景下，众多男性作家怀着憎恨和畏惧的心理，将有着自我意识的新女性扭曲成或狡诈或残忍或谋夫的“魔鬼”和“悍妇”，并在其作品中重申“家中天使”和“第二性”等男女差异和男强女弱的观念，提倡女性应该安于厅室，号召自食其力的职业女性回归家庭。

大多数评论家认为诺里斯的女性观与这类男性作家无异,指出诺里斯笔下的女性形象都是依附于男性且具有自我奉献和自我牺牲精神的传统女性。麦克艾尔斯(Joseph R. McElrath, Jr.)在其著作《重释弗兰克·诺里斯》(1992)中将诺里斯笔下的女性形象概括为“维多利亚女性”,指出这些女性在作品中都表现出生活迷茫、精神混乱或缺乏精神寄托。诺里斯传记作者华伦·法兰西则认为诺里斯洞悉了被父权制压迫下的女性的一生即悲凉凄惨的人生这一事实,并在其作品中表达了对传统女性的同情。评论家列安(Lehan)则指出诺里斯笔下的女性形象不乏具有坚定信念、勇气和力量等男性特质的新女性形象。

本论文基于以上评价,着手从国内外收集到的资料(诺里斯的小说、有关对诺里斯的评论、传记和书信集),考察诺里斯的女性观及其发展。通过阅读其作品以及对其的评价,笔者发现诺里斯的女性观颇为复杂,不能简单地将其创作意图归结为“女性回归传统”的号召(美国自然主义评论家皮泽)。研究中,本文作者以诺里斯三部长篇小说为文本,并参考诺里斯评论文章、传记、书信集和评论集,运用女性主义理论重新审视诺里斯小说中的女性。通过梳理及分析该作家作品中的三类女性形象:家中天使、新女性和双性气质女性,从而解读出其女性观及其发展轨迹。

在本文的第一章中,笔者侧重分析诺里斯笔下的“家中天使”形象。这类女性大多表现出无法独立生活而只能依靠男性生存的特性。她们所受的教育是如何使自身具备相当的魅力以吸引男性,她们所学的知识局限在“家政”范围,她们所要求具备的能力是读懂各种道德训诫的文章并按其中要旨规范自己的言行,她们唯一的社交活动是参加各种宴会,凭借自己的年轻美貌博得男人的青睐,最终能嫁给一位有钱的男性,婚后则淹没在繁杂的家务中。本文作者在本章中揭示:诺里斯对这些女性的态度是复杂的,他或是同情这些遭受着双重压迫(父权、夫权)的女性,认为她们的人生因而充满着悲剧色彩;或是对这些女性的依赖性和不抗争性表示愤慨。诺里斯从而指出父权社会的维多利亚女性是被物化的客体,丧失了决定自我命运的权力,只能沦为男性欲望和审美的对象。由于这类女性对男性的依赖,对处被动地位的不争,接受处于主体地位的男性将他们的要求强加于自己,因而自我只能是沉默的、失语的,只能丧失自己的声音。此外,诺里斯通过其小说对父权社会的两性性别角色规范进行了批判,对父权社会刻意强调两性差异,即所规范的所谓“男性气质”(包括坚定的信念、勇气、力量、理性、独立性、竞争性和智慧等)和“女性气质”(包括软弱、温顺、依赖和被动等)给社会带来的恶果进行了揭露。诺里斯进而指出:处于父权意识下的女性若要被社会容纳和认可,就必须

按照男性的意识规范，压抑、扭曲和重塑自我，自觉或不自觉地去融入男性权力话语系统而符合父权意识。此正如西蒙·波伏娃所指出：“个人之为女人与其说是‘天生’的，不如说是‘形成’的。总之，在父权社会中，女性是‘第二性’，是男性的‘他者’，是可以被任意命名的”。通过维多利亚女性的塑造，诺里斯集中反映了在男权中心的社会和政治背景下，女性在家庭和社会中受压抑、受迫害的种种情形，并在作品中表达了他对女性的同情和在一定程度上反映了他的男女平等思想。

在第二章中，笔者着重分析诺里斯所塑造的“新女性”形象。诺里斯笔下的新女性不愿再做传统规范所要求的“客体”，她们不再沉默无语，不再矜持失音，不愿再为“他者”，而是具有女性自我意识和自我决策的女性主体。在多部作品中，诺里斯描写了一群目标明确、行事果敢、有崇高理想并具广博知识的新女性。在莫兰、屈丽娜和劳拉三位女性的塑造中，诺里斯强调女性应该过一种经济和精神上都能独立的生活。其中《深渊》中的劳拉是这群新女性中的代表人物。在“小麦史诗”三部曲之一的《深渊》中，诺里斯最关注的主题仍没有离开女性问题。在该小说中，诺里斯塑造了一位具备情爱意识、婚姻自主意识、夫妻平等意识、命运抗争意识和经济独立意识的女性主体——劳拉。读者可以从这类女性身上看到她们具有的坚定信念、勇气、力量、理性、独立性、竞争性和智慧等特质。他对这位追求个性独立，为了理想而拼搏的女性极为欣赏，也能理解这位在婚姻中寻求灵魂伴侣未果而产生婚外情的女性。然而，作为一位男性，诺里斯无法摆脱父权制对其道德观的影响和束缚，对新女性的性意识觉醒以及欲望膨胀等现象持坚决反对的意见。故此，诺里斯指出了女性走向男性化并不是解决女性问题的最终出路。他认为：由于新女性丢弃了传统的女性气质，同时其所处的社会体制并没有随之变革，男性也一时难以随着时代而转变观念，这些男性化女性不再自愿作为男性的伴侣，她们的涌现自然会加剧两性矛盾。

笔者在第三章中重点讨论诺里斯为缓解当时日益激烈的两性矛盾而创造的双性气质女性——特拉维斯。通过分析《布利克斯》中的女主人公，笔者发现该女性不甘命运的摆布，拒绝将自己作为一件婚姻商品而出售。她先是与旧观念决裂，然后自主安排自己的生活，凭借坚定执着的信念和锲而不舍的精神，身体力行地去争取实现自己的梦想。小说分析中，我们可以发现：她一方面拥有自主、自立、自强、坚毅和执着等传统定义下男性才具有的男性特质，另一方面也具备温柔、耐心和无私奉献等女性气质。这就是诺里斯所敬佩的并予以着力描写的理想女性形象。笔者在研究中得出：诺里斯认知中的两性婚姻不再是一种生活方式，而是一种灵魂的碰撞与情感的结合。他提出的理想两性

婚姻关系是思想与灵魂融合的婚姻模式。诺里斯双性气质女性的塑造体现了男女两性共同的人性的元层面，从而模糊了传统的性别界限，从观念上使女性成为与男性一样的平等的“人”。由其创造的这些女性形象颠覆了父权社会对女性作为“客体”、“他者”和“第二性”的规范以及男权中心文学塑造出的逆来顺受的“家中天使”形象以及一些女性主义者倡导的独立自主的新女性形象。纵观女性主义研究，诺里斯所塑造的双性气质女性与弗吉尼亚沃尔夫的雌雄同体女性有异曲同工之处，其两性平等互补的主张也与后现代女权主义者的社会性别观也不谋而合。

作为男性作家，诺里斯能够站在女性的立场关注女性命运，了解和体会女性狭窄的生存空间，同情女性的不幸遭遇，尖锐地批判了男性社会对女性意识的禁锢与身心的摧残，并将社会敏感的女性社会角色作为他创作的重大主题贯穿其终身写作。另外，不论是从双性气质女性的塑造、两性平等互补模式的提出还是从缓解 19 世纪晚期两性关系紧张和社会性别混乱的局面的初衷来看，诺里斯的女性观无疑具有超越性别超越时代的意义。然而，诺里斯并不是女权主义者，其女性观也不是现代意义上的女权思想。与同时代的女性作家福勒、福恩和肖宾相比较，诺里斯作品中只有少数女性形象体现出父权社会对其精神上摧残和迫害，对此的批评也远不如女性作家的批评来得强烈。此外，诺里斯所塑造的理想女性表现出的双性特征与现代女性主义所提倡的“双性气质”有着较大差距，其女性观仍存在一定的局限性。

作为关注人类命运特别是女性命运的作家，诺里斯对 19、20 世纪之交的女性社会角色有着复杂矛盾的情感，我们对此的认知有待发展。本文是一次对诺里斯笔下女性形象的重新解读、归纳总结。更为重要的是，本文作者运用女性主义的理论分析诺里斯作品中女性人物的复杂性是一种尝试。从这一尝试中了解了诺里斯的女性观以及其创造这些女性形象的意图和手法。本研究对小说读者和研究者更好地认识诺里斯以及 19 世纪末的美国社会及其意识形态有着积极的导向作用。

## **Résumé and Publications since Entering the Program**

### **Résumé**

Date of Birth: October 26, 1981.

B.A. Degree: Bachelor of Arts in Literature, Hunan University of Science and Technology, June 2003.

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