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Presenters' Biographical Sketches and Abstracts of Presentations The Norman Mailer Society 2007 Conference

David Anshen is Assistant Professor of English at the University of Texas-Pan American. His doctoral dissertation focuses on late 20th century political literature with special attention to the novels of Norman Mailer. He has published essays on the challenges of historical representation in fiction and film with attention to popular culture and “postmodern” works. He is currently writing on why Norman Mailer’s *Harlot’s Ghost*, a major work of politically engaged literature, cannot be finished.

The Writer Who Came in From the Cold War:
Failure of Nerve or a New Politics of Form in Norman Mailer’s
Harlot’s Ghost.

I consider why Norman Mailer never wrote a sequel or ending to his long, ambitious novel about the CIA and the Cold War, *Harlot’s Ghost*. This disappoints many critics and readers since Mailer ends the novel, after over a thousand pages, with none of the issues resolved and with the protagonist, in Moscow, determined to find his mentor, Harlot, and ask the truth about missions they have shared. Harlot’s anticipated answers promise to shed light on major aspects of the Cold War and explain the events of the novel. Given Mailer’s celebrated promise, at least since *Advertisements for Myself*, to “tell the truth of our times” and to “create a revolution of consciousness,” *Harlot’s Ghost* seems the culmination of a political/literary project. Mailer has been a prominent voice in literature and contemporary society defending the political and creative possibilities of writing to transform America. Why then the unwillingness or inability to resolve the work? The novel remains as unresolved as American society and its internal conflicts.

Robert J. Begiebing, author of over twenty articles and six books, directs the Low-Residency MFA at Southern NH University, where he has won three awards for excellence in teaching. His books include two on Norman Mailer and a trilogy of novels. His novel *Rebecca Wentworth's Distraction* won the Langum Prize for historical fiction in 2003. His fiction writing has been supported by grants from the Lila-Wallace Foundation and the New Hampshire Council for the Arts. .

Castle Mailer

Examining human manifestations of demonic power in the modern world, *The Castle in the Forest* (2007) completes a sort of diptych with Mailer's last novel *The Gospel According to the Son* (1996), a novel examining human manifestations of divine power in the ancient world. The recent novel is more ambitious, perhaps less successful; *The Gospel* presents Mailer at his least self-conscious, his rhetorical quirks and idiosyncracies held in check--similar, say, to *The Executioner's Song* or even to *Why Are We in Vietnam?* Nonetheless, Mailer's new novel is striking for its audacity and ambition and may well demonstrate a complexity worthy of three full novels at once: the fabulous demon's tale, the researcher-clinician's reductive psychoanalysis of a tyrant, and the shaman's uncovering of our collective Shadow-world, of humanity's deepest potential for cataclysm and destruction.

Joseph Berenguel was born May 6th, 1980. After a less than inspiring high school career, Berenguel worked his way up from Middlesex Community College to Graduate School at the University of Connecticut. Berenguel studies Norman Mailer under Barry Leeds in 2004. Berenguel has had short stories published and given talks on Romanticism and the teaching of writing at several conferences. He currently teaches writing at UConn and lives in Meriden, CT, with his wife and daughter.

God, Devil and Man: Narrative Progression in Mailer's Novels

In recent novels by Norman Mailer, Mark Twain's famous statement "truth is stranger than fiction" is tested. Three major works, *The Executioner's Song*, *Gospel According to the Sun*, and the recent *The Castle in the Forest*, combine historical events with an innovative narrative technique. The narrative voices of the novels are able to become the

voices of history, while also giving attention to private thoughts. Resulting from this combination is a hybrid genre. Mailer has long been cultivating this hybrid and his readers have come to expect it. While some scholars such as Barry Leeds praise Mailer, others such as Roger Kimball claim that Mailer is more a cultural than a literary phenomenon. Looking briefly at narrative patterns employed in *Song* and *Gospel*, I will focus on how these patterns are employed in *Castle*. The progression from public to private transforms a reader from historical witness to existential judge of man.

Mashey Berstein teaches in the Writing Program and the Media Studies Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. He holds a PhD on Mailer from the same institution. He has written on various aspects of Mailer's work for *Studies in American-Jewish Literature*, *The London Jewish Chronicle*, *the Kansas City Jewish Chronicle* and *San Francisco Review of Books*. He prides himself on his long standing friendship with Mailer. His favorite memory of this friendship the Passover seder he conducted for him—Mailer's first in over fifty years. .

The Heart of the Nation: Jewish Values in the Fiction of Norman Mailer

While Mailer has never denied his Jewish heritage, it would seem to play a small role in his ideology or in his fiction—although his characters are certainly obsessed with spiritual values, whether good or bad. Furthermore, Mailer has always been presented as outside the mainstream of the American –Jewish genre in fiction, those novels that draw either on specific Jewish religious experiences or the history of American Jews

(Yeserska, Bellow, Malamud and Philip Roth et. al.); nonetheless, Mailer has never argued against being included in that category either. This paper will argue that Mailer indeed belongs in the tradition of Jewish writers both in philosophical terms as well as religious ones. Drawing on Jewish philosophers like Abraham Joshua Heschel and Judah Halevey, this paper places Mailer firmly in a Jewish prophetic tradition and shows how those values play a prominent role in his fiction, esp. *The Naked and the Dead*, *An American Dream* and *The Castle in the Forest*.

Philip Bufithis, author of the critical study *Norman Mailer* (1978, Japanese edition 1981), is former executive editor of the literary magazine *Antietam Review*. His articles on twentieth-century American literature and his

stories have appeared in numerous publications. He is Professor of English Emeritus at Shepherd University and a member of the graduate creative writing faculty at Wilkes University.

Ezra Cappell is Assistant Professor of English and Director of the Inter-American Jewish Studies Program at The University of Texas at El Paso, where he teaches and publishes in the fields of 20th Century and Contemporary American Literature. He has published numerous articles on American and Jewish American writing and he is the author of the book *American Talmud: The Cultural Work of Jewish American Fiction* (SUNY Press 2007).

Norman Mailer: Jewish American Writer?

The Castle in the Forest is a work of Holocaust fiction and more generally I will be speaking about the ways that Mailer might be considered a Jewish American writer. In my just released book *American Talmud: The Cultural Work of Jewish American Fiction* (SUNY 2007), I argue that contemporary Jewish American fiction writers have increasingly assumed the role of theologians for a secular America. I suggest that the literary production of Jews in America be seen as one more stage of rabbinic commentary on the scriptural inheritance of the Jewish people. In my paper I will discuss Mailer's work in the context of Jewish textual history and in so doing I will make a case for Mailer's work as codifying what I term an "American Talmud."

Michael Chaiken is film curator and writer living in New York City. He recently organized the eMistress & the Muse: The Films of Norman Mailer at Lincoln Center and Anthology Film Archives and is co-editor of the forthcoming book, *A Maysles Scrapbook: Photographs/Cinmagraphs/Ephermera (Stedl) and Arthur Penn: Interviews* (U Press of Mississippi).

Public Virtue, Public Vices: An Evening of Norman Mailer on Film and Television

Lionized at the age of 25, Mailer quickly became acclimated to the vicissitudes of fame, celebrity and growing up in public. One of the most consistently controversial (and entertaining) intellectual gadflies in American public life over the last sixty years, Mailer's legendary rep is due in large part to his many appearances on television and in interview with talk show legends Dick Cavett, Merv Griffin, Bill Buckley and Mike Douglas. All but forgotten in the age

of Dr. Phil, these talk shows (once forums for the public airing out of feuds old and new) had Mailer on as a frequent guest to discuss his new books and other topical issues of the day. This program, looks back at some of Mailer's more notable television appearances through the years. Also screened will be the recently rediscovered NORMAN MAILER VS. FUN CITY, USA (1970) by documentarian Dick Fontaine. Capturing Norman on the campaign trail in the 1969 New York mayoral election (with Jimmy Breslin as Sancho P.), FUN CITY reveals as much about Mailer's public persona as it does about the mechanizations of city politics.

Tad Davies teaches as an Instructor in the Literary and Cultural Studies Department at Bryant University. He is, simultaneously, in the final stages of revising his dissertation, *Institutional Characters: The Embodiment and Effects of Governing Institutions in American Political Narratives, 1959-1972*, and will receive his doctorate from the University of California, Irvine.

Conventional Authority: Mailer and the Democratic Party Reform Movement

Mailer, in *Miami and the Siege of Chicago* (1968) and *St. George and the Godfather* (1972), performs and critiques a paradox of authority faced by Democratic Party reformers in the late sixties and early seventies. He does so primarily through his dynamic use of a third-person alter-ego-as-protagonist. The Democratic reformers seek to extending participatory power to a broadening electorate through two principal mechanisms: binding primary elections and midterm party conventions. The first of these ostensibly gives the electorate the power to make a national party's most defining decision, its selection of a presidential nominee. The second reform—intended to produce strong platforms on which candidates would be required to run—would transform the party into a policy-oriented instrument, offering voters well-defined choices with which to ally themselves. The excessive ambition of “the reporter” and the novelistic form of identification he inspires end up serving as parodic literary consolations for the unattained political transformation in which Mailer had hoped to participate.

Michael K. Glenday is Honorary Research Associate in the Department of Literature, The Open University, United Kingdom. Amongst his publications are *Saul Bellow and*

the Decline of Humanism (1990) and *Norman Mailer* (1995). More recently he has co-edited *American Mythologies: Essays on Contemporary Literature* (2005). He is an editor of *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review* and one of its founding editors

Mailer Then and Now

This paper will offer an assessment of Mailer's recent fiction, in the context of the arc of his life as a writer of fiction. Rather than focusing upon any particular novel the paper will seek out the pivotal, the concentrate that might be termed as essential to Mailer's imaginative life. This is at least partly to be found in the paradox between what is most singular, most intimate in the life of his characters, and the all-but-mastering ingress of more formulaic discourses to which they are exposed. So, be it located in Sam Croft, the self-exalting visionary of *The Naked and the Dead* or in the crazed unison between the somatic and the deadly imagination of Hitler's youth, ready 'to fulfil the destiny of his family' in *The Castle In the Forest*, readers will find in Mailer 'then and now' a dramatic reckoning of the self as participant in systems both subversive and commanding.

Alan Green received degrees in English Literature from St. Leo University (B.A.) and The University of South Florida (M.A.). He is currently enrolled in the Ph.D Program at The University of South Florida. Having served two tours in the Marine Corps, Mr. Green readily identifies with *The Naked and the Dead*.

Representation, Earthiness, and Political Commentary in *The Naked and the Dead*

The Naked and the Dead, Mailer's instant masterpiece, stands alone in the cannon of war novels. With a total abandonment for the Hollywood version of combat, Mailer allows the readership a firsthand glimpse of the realness of combat, the insanity of military hierarchy, and brotherhood. The experience, and the angst of these characters is told through a writer with "eye-witness" account accuracy. Specifically, I will be looking at the portrayal of "the soldier," the earthiness of the text, and the believability of the subject matter.

Christine Grogan is a Ph.D. student at the University of South Florida, specializing in modern and post-modern American Literature and feminist theory. She teaches First-Year Composition

courses at the University of South Florida and the University of Tampa. Christine holds an M.A. from the University of Richmond and a B.A. from the University of Delaware

**Daddy's Girl:
Phallic Power and Perverse Paternity in Mailer's *An American Dream***

Although many critics have shied away from making comparisons between Fitzgerald's and Mailer's work, quite possibly because of Mailer's self-proclaimed favoring of Hemingway in his prose, in "Mailer and the Fitzgerald Tradition," Richard Foster provides a compelling argument for why Mailer's writing is in the Fitzgeraldian tradition. Foster rightly contends that "[t]he kinds of men and women inhabiting their fictional worlds, and the archetypal relationships obtaining between them – the women as promissory images of value and possibility, the men as agents of motive and choice – are clearly similar" (220). "Women as promissory images of value and possibility" is undeniably evident in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* and Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*, with Nicole Diver and Deborah Kelly as American dream girls and Rosemary Hoyt and Cherry as daddy's girls. Similarly, "men as agents of motive and choice" can very well describe not only Mr. Warren and Mr. Kelly, but also Dick Diver and Stephen Rojack, all of whom believe that they have free will and all of whom represent phallic power gone grotesque.

Walter Grünzweig, a native of Austria, is professor of American literature and culture at Universität Dortmund, Germany. He is adjunct professor at University of Pennsylvania (where, in fact, he spent a year as a resident scholar under Robert F. Lucid's mentorship in 1988), the State University of New York at Binghamton and Canisius College. He has had several ACSL and Fulbright grants and has taught in Austria, Germany, the U.S., Senegal, Yugoslavia and Italy. His articles and books deal with 19th century American literature, European-American literary and cultural relations (including a book on Whitman's reception in Germany) and international educational exchange. He has translated a volume of Jimmy Carter's poetry into German and, since 1990, has been responsible for the Mailer entry in the German loose-leaf encyclopedia on international literature (KLF) where he also serves the function of a German bibliographer of German writings by and on Mailer.

The Hitler Family: A Relational Approach to Norman Mailer

In *Oswald's Tale* (1995), Norman Mailer attempts to understand the personality of Lee Harvey Oswald through a large number of interviews which lead the reader into areas far away from the actual worlds of the Kennedy killer. Nevertheless, and this is the fascinating aspect, for *none* of the details that are brought out in the life stories of the many people responsible for Marina's development can it be completely ruled out that they have not possibly affected the negative development of her relationship with Oswald and thus influenced or even caused the Kennedy murder. What Mailer in effect does is to demonstrate and to speculate on the influence of relationships on his protagonist's actions. My presentation will briefly touch on *Oswald* and then use this relational model in the interpretation of Mailer's most recent book, *The Castle in the Forest*. Initial criticism has focused on--and partially dismissed--the important role of father Hitler. I will look at the way Mailer explains Hitler through family relationships. In conclusion, will argue that Mailer's "novelistic approach" to biography manifests itself in fact in the (fictional) investigation of relational contexts and networks.

Marie Hendry is finishing her second master's degree in English at the University of South Florida. She is currently a Graduate Teaching Assistant at USF.

The Book of the Teacher: Norman Mailer's Role in *Ancient Evenings*

Norman Mailer said in an interview about his forthcoming novel, *Ancient Evenings*, that "I want people to realize, my God, there are wholly different points of view that can be as interesting as our own. In other words, probably a social evening in Egypt ... that period 3,000 years ago was as interesting as an evening in New York today." However, scenes such as the extravagant "Feast of the Pig" and the various war scenes seem to promote lewd behavior and barbarism. Do the scenes, which disgust many of the readers, show Mailer's view of contemporary life comparable to the times in which he was writing? An important question that revolved around the reception of the novel in 1983 was why did Mailer write such a book? In an interview for the New York Times Mailer remarked that he wanted to take risks and write a long novel. What was

the point of these risks? If Mailer sees his role as a novelist as teacher, could *Ancient Evenings* be seen as a tale of social mock epic, as well as a historical analysis of ancient Egypt? This paper will look at certain scenes of the book in order to discuss his risks as an author in order to locate his role as teacher.

Brittany Hoerner is an undergraduate student at the University of South Florida majoring in pre-medical sciences.

The Pull of the Moon in *An American Dream*: An Examination of the Moon's Effect on Human Behavior

In Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*, the moon serves as more than just a literary symbol; in fact the moon has an actual influence on Stephen Rojack's thoughts and actions throughout the novel. Mailer combines America's deeply imbedded superstitions of the full moon and its association with madness to explore on some level the recreation of the self. As Rojack constantly slips in and out of dialogue with the moon, his morality and his actions fluctuate. This presentation will explore the dynamic relationship between Rojack and the full moon in terms of Rojack's shifting perceptions and his recreation of self.

Constance E. Holmes, JD, is a Ph.D student at the University of South Florida and Assistant Editor of *The Mailer Review*. A former attorney, she concentrates in Modern and Contemporary Literature and Film with special interest in legal rhetoric, depiction of legal events and legal issues in literature and film, with emphasis on testimony and recollection. In her dissertation she analyzes these issues in novels by Dreiser, Nabokov, Mailer, and others.

D.T., A Decidedly Unreliable Narrator

D.T. or Dieter in *Castle in the Forest* is a versatile and intrusive narrator whose presence permeates the novel; he insists that the reader participate in the creation of his work by regularly asking that we do so through direct address. Comparing this technique to that of Humbert Humbert in *Lolita* compels exploration of the character's chosen recollection and the rhetoric of selective memory. The underlying influence of selective memory and recollection shape Mailer's novel, ultimately giving a

specific structure to the novel that contributes to the overall experience that Mailer conveys through his work.

Bimbisar Irom is a dissertator in English at the UW-Madison seeking to explore the meaning of the term “political” in the American novel from the earlier moments of the American social movement (around the 1930s) to the contemporary discourse of cultural studies. What did it mean to be ‘political’ then, and what does it mean to be ‘political’ now? What are the gains and losses in the shift to recent recuperations of the ‘political’?

Individual Narcosis and the Politics of *The Armies of the Night*.

Christopher Lasch delineates the complex situation confronting American radicals in the post World War II era as “the difficulty...of opposing capitalism without endorsing Communism.” My paper critiques the political efficacy of Mailer’s response to this ‘crisis’ through a reading of *The Armies of the Night*. Mailer’s prescriptions are symptomatic of a larger intellectual trend that adheres to a loose definition of ‘Left’ politics, but seeks to brace Marxian categories with psychoanalysis and existential philosophy. While I acknowledge Mailer’s challenge to Marxism as the inescapable horizon of radical activity, I ask if the attempt to reorient the political from shared truth to monadic response adequately grapples with the burden of reformulating solidarity on newer grounds. Marrying Marx, Freud and the code of personal penance, Mailer’s hipster prototype withdraws from the burden of establishing consensual norms, and continues the struggle in the inner realms of feelings and urges. I argue that Mailer’s protagonist in the novel attempts to answer the political query of whether the alienated stance is always productive; and if productive, in what ways?

Donald L. Kaufmann is Professor of English at the University of South Florida, where he has taught American literature and creative writing since coming to USF from the University of Alaska in 1965. He is the author of *Norman Mailer: The Countdown: The First Twenty Years* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1969), one of the first two books to appear on the work of Norman Mailer. He has also published essays on Mailer, Updike, Bellow, Hemingway, and other twentieth-century American writers. Professor Kaufmann holds one of the largest Mailer collections of books, stories, essays, memorabilia, and

ephemerals.

An American Dream: High Quotient Legacy Novel

As viewers continue to displace readers, so do the criteria for establishing literary legacy. Within this context, Mailer's *An American Dream* (with its array of pop culture antics) foreshadows Mailer's final literary Assessment as Mainstream Novelist or Popular Journalist or Creative Non-Fiction Extraordinaire.

Randy Laist is a doctoral candidate at the University of Connecticut where he is doing his dissertation on Don DeLillo. This will be his third year presenting at the Mailer Society conference. Last Spring he spoke at Westminster University in London on Mailer's response to 9/11. He has also presented papers on Melville, Hawthorne, DeLillo, and Pynchon.

American Existentialism and Narrative Technique in *An American Dream* and *Why Are We at War?*

A common critique of Norman Mailer is that his understanding of existentialism is facile and even constitutes an artistic liability. As Mailer's most trenchant and accessible articulations of his "American existentialism," the essays in *Advertisements for Myself* are the most common target of such criticisms. Charles I. Glicksburg, in a 1960 critique of *Advertisements*, claims that not only is Mailer's existentialism un-Sartrean, but, unlike Sartrean existentialism, which propels the artistry of Sartre's novels, Mailerian existentialism – his philosophy of Hip – "has no direct bearing on the problems a writer faces when he settles down to the task of composing fiction," and thus betokens his doom as a novelist. *An American Dream*, however, clearly belies Glicksburg's diagnosis. The translation of Mailer's philosophy from the provocateur rhetoric of the *Advertisements* into the more nuanced medium of narrative discloses the subtlety and creative potency of his existentialism.

Barry H. Leeds is CSU Distinguished Professor Emeritus at Central Connecticut State University and Vice President of the Association. His books include *The Structured Vision of Norman Mailer* (NYU Press, 1969) and *The Enduring Vision of Norman Mailer* (PBS, 2002).

J. Michael Lennon is an Emeritus Professor of English at Wilkes University, he continues to teach in its MFA in

Creative Writing Program. He is the author (with Donna Pedro Lennon) of *Norman Mailer: Works and Days*, and the editor of *Critical Essays on Norman Mailer*, *Conversations with Norman Mailer*, *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing* and is currently editing Mailer's letters for 2008 publication by Random House. He is currently the Society president and chair of the editorial board of *The Mailer Review*.

Gerald R. Lucas is an Assistant Professor of English at Macon State College. His interests and teaching include contemporary fiction, new media studies, and technological literacy. His forthcoming book chapter, "World Lit," addresses the teaching of literature online and the future of literary studies in the age of digital media.

The Demons of Media in *An American Dream*

Stephen Rojack is haunted many demons, demons that make him play certain roles: murderer, lover, drinker, politician. This paper examines Rojack's attempt to exorcise the Demon of Television and its influence on his actions. Rojack walks that thin line between the abyss and living his life free of social influences; television's glow follows Rojack like a dream--linked symbolically in the novel with death and the moon--but ultimately, I argue, he must escape its influence if he is to begin his own healing. This presentation will also make connections between Mailer's public life in front of the camera and Rojack's experiences and lessons in the *An American Dream*.

Deborah Martinson's *Lillian Hellman: A Life with Foxes and Scoundrels* (2005), followed her research on *The Lives of Lillian Hellman* for PBS. *In the Presence of Audience: The Self in Diaries and Fiction* was released in 2003. Her interest in the blurring of auto/biography and fiction within particular historical and political contexts informs her research and her teaching. Martinson is on the Editorial Board of *The Mailer Review*. She is Associate Professor of English Writing at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

Mailer's Place in the Literary Canon: Everywhere (Almost)

This paper explores Norman Mailer's place in two disparate but parallel canons of American literature. From the release of *Naked and the Dead* in 1949 to his most recent 2007 publication of *The Castle in the Forest*, Mailer's bold experiments in form, style and content have evoked critical

comparison with the best American novelists-- from Melville to Faulkner to Capote to Pynchon. Mailer's mythic forays into the worlds of psychology, metaphysics, political/historical nightmare give him a contested entry into another literary list: Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison as examples. These canonical pairings illustrate Mailer's distinguished place in contemporary American literature, a place earned because his novels deepen our understanding of life's terrifying complexity.

S.A. McLaughlin received her B.A from Wilkes University and this year she will receive her M.A. in English Literature and Creative Writing from the State University of New York at Binghamton. Her scholarly interests include American war literature and literature of the Cold War period, contemporary Irish and Irish American literature, and the works of Norman Mailer—she has a lifetime membership in The Norman Mailer Society. She is also a poet, currently at work on a full-length manuscript.

Mailer's 'True' War Story: Authentic Representations of the
Existential
Experience of the Combat Soldier in *The Naked and the Dead*

Hemingway is acknowledged as an omnipresent influence for those writers who emerged during and after World War II who chose to take on the war and the soldier as their subject. In turn, it follows that this generation of writers—Norman Mailer, James Jones, Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, Herman Wouk, etc.—inspired subsequent generations of novelists and memoirists who concerned themselves with the sub-genre of war literature. For example, both Tim O'Brien and Tobias Wolff—two writers who have made essential contributions to the literature of the Viet Nam War—have readily acknowledged Mailer's influence on them. It was Tim O'Brien who puzzled over "How To Tell A True War Story" in his combat novel *The Things They Carried*. This essay will examine how Mailer's novel *The Naked and the Dead* is reflective of a "true" war story—that is, the presentation will inquire into how Mailer's novel as a fictional representation is expressive of the authentic—and peculiarly existential—experience of the combat soldier. Since Mailer based the novel on his own experiences during his tour of combat duty as an enlisted man in the U.S. Army, the manner in which this lends authenticity and authority to the novel as a "war story" will

be discussed.

Michael Meloy is a Visiting Assistant Professor at North Georgia College and State University. He recently finished his dissertation, which examines American masculinity in the 1950s and 1960s. His research interests include Southern Literature, gender studies, the Beat Generation, and Cold War literature.

Tales of the “Great Bitch:
Murder and the Release of Virile Desire in Norman
Mailer’s *An American Dream*

In 1960, in *The Politics of Hope*, Arthur Schlesinger Jr. referred to the previous decade as a “period of passivity and acquiescence in our national life,” adding concerns regarding the nation’s “vitality.” Schlesinger’s comments regarding an emasculated national character come out of a particularly volatile postwar era, where overtly sexualized figures like James Bond serve as a subtle cultural response to growing accusations and increasing fears that men in America are becoming homosexual, weak, and feminine. The fiction of the 1950s and 1960s reflects this cultural phenomenon of the early Cold War, often featuring an angry defensive male figure who finds his manhood threatened and retaliates through a violent sexual act. Where modernist male heroes often lacked sexual virility, post-World War II writers began creating male protagonists on the other end of the spectrum: virile animals with lustful ambitions that cannot be quelled by a civilizing society. My presentation examines the relationship between sexual violence and masculinity in the work Norman Mailer, and argues that the increased representation of violent sexual acts during this period was linked to an evolving masculine identity that re-emphasized an essentialist conception of gender, in which gender criteria are believed to be biologically determined rather than socially constructed, thus associating manhood with virility and a male need for sexual release. I focus primarily on *An American Dream*.

James H. Meredith has recently retired from the U.S. Air Force and from the Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He is an internationally respected scholar on the literature and films of twentieth-century wars and remains a contributing editor of the Academy’s *War, Literature & the Arts: An International Journal of the Arts*. He currently serves as President of The Ernest

Hemingway Foundation and Society and has served on the board of The F. Scott Fitzgerald Society for over two terms. Today, he serves as a Mentor in the Writing Program for Northcentral University and continues to lecture on war and literature and film in the United States, Europe, and most recently in China.

“Tender Is An American Dream: Diving into Mailer’s Broken Universe”

This presentation will discuss the influence of F. Scott Fitzgerald on the work of Norman Mailer, especially how the tragic vision of *Tender Is the Night* relates to his *An American Dream*. Like Dick Diver, the great Rojack is charming, intelligent and self-destructive. However, unlike the earlier protagonist, Rojack is comfortable in his own naturalistic skin. Unlike Fitzgerald, Mailer’s vision of the modern world is not a failed romanticism but rather a complicated acquiescence and appraisal of a savage world, largely within the American context. Despite his attempts otherwise, Fitzgerald could never accept that the American dream was in reality a nightmare. He died broken-hearted, still believing that one fine day. . . Mailer on the other hand, not only faces the dark side of American life, his fiction thrives in it.

Robin Metz has published poetry, fiction, and nonfiction in the *Paris Review*, *International Poetry Review*, *Visions International*, *Epoch*, *Other Voices*, *Abiko Quarterly* (Japan), *New Welsh Review* (Wales), *The Wolf* (UK), *Van Gogh’s Ear* (France), *Rosebud*, *Calypso*, *Fourth River*, *Writers’ Forum*, *ArtLife*, *Oberon*, *Mississippi Review* and many other journals. His book *Unbidden Angel* was awarded the Rainer Maria Rilke International Poetry Prize, cited for excellence by the Clinton White House Commission on Complementary and Alternative Health, and nominated for the London *Guardian* Book of the Year Award. The winner of numerous additional writing awards and fellowships (including PEN International, NEA, Illinois Arts Council, Harper and Row, Music Corporation of America, *Other Voices*, *Literal Latté*, *Best American Stories*, etc.), he has presented performance-readings of his work in more than seventy US cities and in eighteen nations, including, most recently, United Kingdom, Cuba, Kosovo, Greece, Czech Republic, Netherlands, and India. He is Director of Creative Writing, Knox College and co-founder, producer, and contributing artist for Chicago’s acclaimed Vitalist Theatre.

Teaching *An American Dream* to American Undergraduates (1967-2007)

Like many American writers and readers, I first encountered *An American Dream* in the pages of *Esquire*, but my first impassioned discussion of it was with Richard Baron and E. L. Doctorow, publisher and editor, respectively, at Dial Press, which had just brought out the hardcover edition. This was in the Carousel Restaurant, near Iowa City, Iowa, in the fall of 1964, and I was a first semester graduate student in the Iowa Workshop. Also present were Paul Engle, R.V. Cassill, Richard Yates, Vance Bourjaily, and Andre Dubus, Jr., as well as a few additional graduate student writers, and a further smattering of New York editors and publishers. Richard Yates (who was to become my mentor and friend, and with whom I had just heatedly debated the literary merits of early Phil Roth, my previous mentor at Princeton) was particularly incensed by the “self-indulgent excesses” of *An American Dream*, but I was insistent on defending what I then described as its “mythic qualities” and its “prescience” regarding the American decade to come. Throughout the ensuing decades, I have continued to take soundings of the minds of American undergraduate students—their anguishes and aspirations, their grounded pragmatism and mystical soarings—yet no work of high art has provided a more accurate measure, I believe, of the sunny shoals and murky, deep channels than Norman Mailer’s *An American Dream*.

Taylor Joy Mitchell received her B.A. in American Literature and Religious Studies from Hartwick College, New York. She was tired of being cold and drove across the country to San Diego where she completed her M.A. degree in Twentieth Century American Literature. She is now working towards the Ph.D at the University of South Florida, where she is a Graduate Assistant and never cold.

American Dreamers: Norman Mailer and Amiri Baraka

Like Amiri Baraka’s work, Norman Mailer’s writing embodies particular impulses of the 1960s. These impulses range from spontaneity to violence, but there is always a critical mind behind the driving force of these authors’ texts. In the thirty-hour tour of Mailer’s *An American Dream*, readers are shocked by the cruelties of the failing American myth that promised so much. Forty years ago, Mailer used a hostile and anxious tone to warn readers of the dangers of the American dream before it was too late. When the

Towers spread their ashes from Hell's Kitchen to the Hudson River, Mailer was able to hark back to his original American Dream warnings. *Why Are We At War?* is an spontaneous and violent argument that scrutinizes the American administration. When compared to Baraka's equally accusative account in "Somebody Blew Up America," readers can no longer ignore Mailer's premonitions. Both, *Why Are We At War?* And "Somebody Blew Up America," persistently expose the politicians who create battlefields from the rubble of the Twin Towers.

Myla Morris is on faculty at Hillsborough Community College in Tampa, Florida. She has also taught at the University of South Florida where she earned her MA. Her studies have focused on Modernism and particularly gender studies and the literature of Ernest Hemingway.

"Disharmony Foretold: Shago and Cherry as Racial Barometers"

Mailer's *An American Dream* presents complicated issues of racial relations on several levels. Shago, the "negro" antagonist, who is presented in opposition to Rojack and his wife Deborah, is reflective of the opposition of the Black and White communities of 1960's America. Further, the failure of Shago and Cherry's relationship, as well as their murder, foretells the inability of racial harmony to fit into the "American Dream" the novel was so ominously labeled for. While other aspects of this so-called "Dream" are highlighted as deadly pursuits, Mailer's subtle commentary on the need for racial harmony for America's growth as a nation is a sentiment that still reverberates in America's consciousness today.

Jason Mosser is an Associate Professor of English at Gainesville State College in northeast Georgia where he teaches composition and American literature. His dissertation, *Style, Persona, and Protest: Four New Journalists*, a rhetorical analysis of selected texts, includes a chapter on Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*. He has presented numerous conference papers on Mailer and on other New Journalists, specifically Hunter S. Thompson, Joan Didion, and Michael Herr.

Genre-Bending in Norman Mailer's *The Armies of the Night*

Norman Mailer subtitled *Armies of the Night*, his account

of a 1967 anti-Viet Nam march, *History as a Novel, the Novel as History*. His subtitle further problematizes an already problematic sub-genre, New Journalism, a hybrid of fiction and journalism. As journalism, *Armies* contains a multitude of objective facts about the anti-war demonstration, but Mailer's primary concern is with emotional factors that cannot necessarily be conveyed by the conventional journalistic 5Ws approach—Who, What, When, Where and Why. Mailer's extended "Novel Metaphor," which introduces Book Two of *Armies*, makes the point that "the novel must replace history at precisely that point where experience is sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural to expose that fact that the historian in pursuing the experience would be obliged to quit the clearly demarcated limits of his historical inquiry" (284). Mailer's subjectivity and personal involvement in the anti-war demonstration allow him a closer perspective than an historical account, based on secondary research (newspaper reports, interviews, etc.), can achieve. History, Mailer says, is "interior" (284), indicating that history is a lived experience, not a compilation of data which bear a purely external relation to the individuals involved.

Victor Peppard is Professor of Russian and Chair of World Languages at the University of South Florida, Tampa. His main scholarly interests are in 20th century Russian literature, and he has published on the history or Russian and Soviet sport. He is also the author of a handful of short stories

Getting the Story of Yeshua Straight: Mailer and Bulgakov

Among the several 20th century versions of the Yeshua/Jesus story, two of the most interesting are by the Russian writer Mikhail Bulgakov and Norman Mailer. Bulgakov's novel *The Master and Margarita*, 1967-68, contains a portrait of Yeshua Kha Notsri as a self-effacing philosopher who believes that all men are inherently good. Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son*, 1999, depicts Yeshua's struggles to realize the true nature of his own identity and to live up to the obligations inherent in his role as the Son of God while battling the temptations of the Devil. Indeed, both writers describe a familiar cast of characters, including the Devil, Pontius Pilate, Mathew, and Yehuda/Judas in both original and provocative ways that force us to rethink who they are as well as who Yeshua is. My purpose in this paper is to examine how the two stories

of Yeshua illuminate each other and at the same time she light on what might be called the Uhrtext of the story. I will also speculate on what these two tales of Yeshua tell us about the ways in which modern writers constantly retell "sacred texts;" are they de-sacrilizing them or are they re-sacrilizing them to suit their own purposes?

Steven Rubin is the Associate Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and Professor of English at Adelphi University. He is the author of a critical biography of the American Jewish novelist Meyer Levin, and the editor of three anthologies of American Jewish literature: *Writing Our Lives: Autobiographies of American Jews*; *Telling and Remembering: A Century of American Jewish Poetry*; and *Celebrating the Jewish Holidays: Stories, Poems, Essays*. His play, *The Goldenh Medina Blues or Making it in America*, had its premier this summer in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

J'aimé Sanders is a PhD Candidate at the University of South Florida. Her dissertation, *The Art of American Existentialism: F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, Norman Mailer and the American Existential Tradition*, serves as an examination of the underlying existential philosophical perspectives from which *The Great Gatsby*, *Death in the Afternoon*, and *An American Dream* take shape. She is also working on a Florida Cultural Studies Book, *Faces of Florida: Critical Studies of the Sunshine State*, a collection of teaching materials and student essays that focus on Florida Studies in the 20th century.

Mailer's "Professor" of Existential Psychology and the American Existential Experience

After voicing his distrust of psychoanalysis in 1959, Mailer calls for a "new psychology, a new consciousness," one that addresses what Mailer sees to be the unique, psychological experience of "Being" American. Significantly, Mailer's call for "new psychology" to understand American experience is met by the growing popularity of existential approaches to psychotherapy in America and world-wide. This presentation will focus on Mailer's turn to existential psychology, his development of an American brand of existentialism, and how he puts his philosophy in motion in his novel *An American Dream*.

Melissa Schuck is an undergraduate student at the University of South Florida majoring in magazine journalism.

The Role of Women in Stephen Rojack's Transformation in An American Dream

Stephen Rojack plays an important role in *An American Dream*--as both the antagonist and the protagonist. Throughout the novel, he waivers between the two ends of the spectrum and his transitions back and forth can be exemplified by the women with whom he surrounds himself. These women prove influence his decisions and cause his transitions, ultimately causing Rojack to question whether or not he is innately evil.

E. Stone Shiflet directs the Writing Program for Northcentral University in Prescott Valley, Arizona, from her home in Tampa, Florida. She is active in establishing writing standards for Distance Learning in Higher Education. Literary interests include F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, and Florida Studies. She has connected these three interests in several article publications, including her forthcoming chapter on the Tampa Bay Area's history of piracy for an upcoming publication on Florida Icons.

The American Moment of *An American Dream*

This presentation will highlight key issues in American culture in the early 1960s. The outline of the important American cultural issues will be examined in the context of the publication of *An American Dream*. Of particular focus: the litigation and political musings surrounding America's radical 1964 shifts in class and race. The relationship to these cultural fractures will connect to key concepts in the Mailer text.

Phillip Sipiora is Editor of *The Mailer Review* and Professor of English and Film Studies at the University of South Florida. He is the author or editor of three books, two dozen scholarly articles, and has lectured nationally and internationally on twentieth-century literature and film.

Mailer's Figural Architecture as Exemplary of the Contemporary Novel

The craft of making metaphors has characterized Norman Mailer's art and act of writing for more than 65 years, going back to his 1941 unpublished novel, *No Percentage*. The 2007 publication of *Castle in the Forest* is very much a novel within the powerful Mailer tradition: rife in themes of memory, recreation, and the con-fusing of events and their meanings through the richness of metaphor. *Castle* is

built upon a foundation of master tropes: Europe in chaos during the latter part of the 19th Century and well into the 20th Century; the complex evolution (devolution?) of a dysfunctional family; the complex organization structure and biological intricacies of bee-keeping (apiculture). Yet human metaphors (synecdoches) provide a kind of interior reinforcement of metaphoric vision: D.T., the conniving, seductive assistant to the Devil; Alois Sr., the besotted, befuddled, and beguiled father to Adolf; Der Alte, an ancient bee-keeper and client of the devil, a smarmy and lecherous elder; and, of course, Adolf (Adi), the precociously mischievous child and future mass murderer and tyrant of Europe.

Gregory Specter is a 2003 graduate of Wilkes University and is currently working on his Master's Degree at the University of Delaware. His interest in Norman Mailer started while at Wilkes and continues to grow during his graduate work.

Why Are We in Vietnam?

Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, a novel not about the Vietnam war, but at the same time about the Vietnam war, occupies a strange position in the twentieth century's response to war and the conflict in Vietnam. Without a doubt, though, Mailer manages to connect the idea of ecological waste not only to Vietnam, but also to technology and warfare in general—even if only in the gray area of the readers' mind. Admittedly, Mailer utilizes the plot of the novel to further his point about the corrupting nature of humanity's gravitation towards destruction; but it is more complex than that. For the purposes of this presentation, I will focus on how Mailer, moving beyond plot and characterization, utilizes the structure of the novel to refine his position. To this end, I argue that the version of *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, which includes a conventionally crafted (and grafted) Preface, is the one that best demonstrates Mailer's observations and ideas on man's corruption of nature. My paper also will explore how the character of D.J. and the chapter structure interact with each other and the grafted Preface in order to show how corrupted the natural world has become due to man's interference. I argue that it is exactly because of this cacophony of ideas—humanity and its misuse and corruption of nature by technology and warfare—that makes a (re)consideration of this novel important given the geo-political situation in today's world.

K. Vivian Taylor completed her B.S. in Journalism and M.A. in English at Arkansas State University; she is currently seeking the Ph.D. in English Literature from University of South Florida. Her extracurricular interests are songwriting, film, aesthetics, creative nonfiction, fashion, and orchids.

Mailer's Maddening, Murderous, and Framing Moon
In this presentation, I will explore the function of a particular scene involving Rojack and the moon within the wider scope of Norman Mailer's *An American Dream*. I will closely examine Mailer's use of apostrophe, dialogue, diction, syntax, figuration, and synecdoche in the moon scene, and the scene's function as an introduction to Rojack's compulsive behavior throughout the novel and a structural framing device. After the moon scene, unassigned voices, which Rojack often associates with his instinct, urge him to act, often strangely, throughout the novel. The parapet scene near the end of the novel mirrors the moon scene; the two scenes frame the novel. Both scenes are chronologically tied to the murders of Rojack's wife and his mistress. Mailer uses the moon scene and the parapet scene as signs of Rojack's mental states and to structurally frame the novel.

Shannon Tivnan is a Ph.D student at the University of South Florida. With a B.A. from Duke University and a M.A. in English from the University of Virginia, she is currently concentrating in 20th century British and American literature with a special emphasis on postcolonial texts for her doctorate. Her dissertation will focus on the impact of place on memory and identity in the fiction of the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen.

Authority and Narrative in Norman Mailer's *The Castle in the Forest*

In Norman Mailer's *The Castle in the Forest*, the history of Adolf Hitler's family and the defining events of his adolescence are recounted by the mysterious narrator Dieter, a former member of the SS in Nazi Germany. Even as these often surprising events of Hitler's young life are revealed, we also learn more about the identity of our knowledgeable narrator, including the fact that is an "officer" of the Devil who was assigned to Hitler in order to turn the boy into a "client." In his process of narratively constructing these events from the past, Dieter frequently attests to his truthfulness and even offers detailed

explanations of his ability to know of events at which he was actually present. In choosing such a demonic narrator, Mailer succeeds in conferring a supernatural authority on this literary historical narrative that is complicated by the fact that Dieter, as a demon, admittedly lives “in both the lie and the truth.” These simultaneous acts of both establishing and undermining narratorial authority serve to challenge the possibility of ever asserting complete knowledge of the nature of Hitler’s evil.

Marc Triplett is a lawyer with a criminal defense trial and appellate practice. He is a 1974 graduate of the University of Delaware (B.A.), and received his J.D. from Cumberland School of Law, Samford University, Birmingham, Alabama, in 1977. Mr. Triplett is a lifetime member of the Norman Mailer Society and has maintained an interest in Mailer’s works since first reading *The Armies of the Night* in 1968.

Why Every Death Penalty Defense Lawyer Should Read
The Executioner’s Song and What Mailer’s Work Tells us
About Executions

One of the recently exposed problems with America’s death penalty system is its failure to avoid condemnation of innocent persons. DNA evidence has been instrumental in exonerating former residents of death rows throughout the country. To lawyers who have dedicated their efforts to the representation of the capitally accused, however, innocence is usually not the issue. Many death row inmates have much in common with Gary Gilmore, the subject of *The Executioner’s Song*. The “true death penalty case” is one in which the evidence of guilt is clear and the explanations of the accused and his conduct are hard to find, much less express to a jury. The task of the death penalty lawyer is to find mitigation of punishment of the defendant among the remnants of his past. Norman Mailer’s work provides a roadmap and an example of the fruits of such an effort, even though his purpose was not to find mitigation for Gilmore. This presentation will discuss the relevance of Mailer’s literary effort to the task and goals of defending the damned. What does Mailer teach us about the nature of conflict within an individual who commits a “senseless” murder, the conflicts between such individuals and American society, this novelistic treatment of its subject and the death penalty itself?

Raymond M. Vince is a Visiting Instructor in English at the University of South Florida, teaching American

Literature, Modern Literature, and the Bible as Literature. His interests include Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Norman Mailer, medieval literature, Heroism in War, and the Spy Novel. His article on “Alienation” appeared in *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, 1988) and he has a forthcoming article, “*The Great Gatsby* & the Transformations of Space-Time: Fitzgerald’s Modernist Narrative and the New Physics of Einstein” in *The F. Scott Fitzgerald Review*. He is Assistant Editor of the new *Mailer Review*. With previous careers as scientist and priest, he holds a Ph.D. in English from USF and four degrees in Theology, English, and Logic & Scientific Method from the Universities of London and Bristol in England.

The Grammar of God and the Contingency of Evil:
Mailer’s *The Castle in the Forest* and the Boundaries of
Language

That which we call *Divine* and that which we call *Evil* are two entities that appear at the boundaries of our language. Both appear in a *liminal* no man’s land between familiar and uncanny, disturbing our knowledge on the threshold of what we naively label the *natural*. Both seem to exist in some strange *twilight zone* of reality. Norman Mailer’s *Castle in the Forest* (2007), in an imaginative and challenging reconstruction of the genesis of Adolph Hitler, explores these two mysterious and opposing entities – God and the Devil. Like Mailer’s work a decade previous, *The Gospel According to the Son* (1997), his current novel interrogates the borders of grammar and of metaphor – but also charts deeper realms of cosmology and theology. But in our enlightened time, what could be the grammar of God, and what ought to be an appropriate language for the Devil? Arendt wrote of the banality of evil; what does it mean to claim that evil is also *contingent*? In other words, was Hitler in some sense necessary, or might history have been different?

**Wilkes University’s Graduate Creative
Writing Reader’s Theatre
Directed by Bonnie Culver**

Bonnie Culver’s play *Sniper* completed a successful run at Center Stage in NYC in 2005. Previously, it was distinguished with the NJ Perry Award for Best Production of an Original Play. In 2006, *Sniper* was included in Florida Studio Theatre’s Richard and Betty Burdick National

Reading Series, which features three plays annually that “are of the best of contemporary American theater.” Her screenplays have been finalists in the Sundance Institute's Feature Film Development Program and a semi-finalist twice. Marlee Matlin's film company, Solo One Productions optioned her screenplay *Raining Rainbows*. Dr. Culver is the co-founder and director of the M.A. and M.F.A. in Creative Writing Program at Wilkes University.

Ronda Bogart is currently a student in Wilkes University's Master's of Creative Writing Program, Ronda Bogart holds an undergraduate degree from the University of Southern California. She lives in Northeastern Pennsylvania

Joe Cetta is a playwright with his MA in Creative Writing from Wilkes University. His one act play “Biography” was recently performed by the Actors Circle of Northeastern Pennsylvania.

Wendy Cunningham, a technical writer and editor by day, is working on her master's degree in Creative Writing at Wilkes University and is writing her first novel. Wendy lives in Montoursville, Pennsylvania.

Nicole DePolo is an illustrator, graphic designer, journalist and author who has worked with the Seattle Poetry Festival and Northeast Pennsylvania's free entertainment weekly *The Weekender*. Currently, she is working on her first novel at Wilkes University's MFA Creative Writing program.

Matthew Koch is a poet and writer from Forty Fort, Pennsylvania. He is currently working toward his MFA in Creative Writing at Wilkes University and completing his first novel.

Douglas Reid Mosley teaches English and Journalism in Reading, Pennsylvania. He completed his MA in Creative Writing at Wilkes University.

Jim Scheers is pursuing an MA in Creative Writing at Wilkes University. He has worked on his novel with Wilkes Advisory Board member J. Michael Lennon.

Ken Vose has written for television, film, and stage. His play *PAPA*, based upon the life of Ernest Hemingway, is touring the country. His produced theatrical films include *GREASED LIGHTNING* (Warner Bros.). Ken's most recent books are, *INSIDE MONSTER GARAGE*, and *MONSTER NATION*, both based on the Discovery Channel hit series

MONSTER GARAGE.

Jim Warner is Assistant Director of Wilkes University's Graduate Creative Writing program. He is the host of Manuscript Radio, Wilkes University's art, culture, and news program. Jim's first book of poems, TOO BAD IT'S POETRY, was released in September by Paper Kite Press.

Last updated: September 23, 2007