

2008 Abstracts and Biographical Sketches of NMS Presenters

Robert Begiebing

“The Mailer Literary Legacy: The Question of His Novels”

Honored with praises and prizes, Mailer’s non-fiction contributed to a revolution in the consciousness of his time. But the Mailer Question persists. Simply put: How good are his novels? Two Mailer scholars, Robert Begiebing and Philip Bufithis, summarize their debate appearing in the current *Review* and open the session for discussion from the floor

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.

Keith A. Bergman

“Mailer, The Year-Rounder”

Norman Mailer lived year-round in Provincetown, Massachusetts from the early 1990s until his death in 2007. Provincetown’s town manager during all of those years recounts his many interactions with Citizen Mailer, including the 2003 declaration of his eightieth birthday as “Norman Mailer Day.”

Keith A. Bergman was Town Manager of the Town of Provincetown from 1990 to 2007. Bergman and his wife, former Provincetown Arts Press publisher Margaret Carroll-Bergman, were inaugural members of the Norman Mailer Society.

Philip Bufithis

“The Mailer Literary Legacy: The Question of His Novels”

Honored with praises and prizes, Mailer’s non-fiction contributed to a revolution in the consciousness of his time. But the Mailer Question persists. Simply put: How good are his novels? Two Mailer scholars, Robert Begiebing and Philip Bufithis, summarize their debate appearing in the current *Review* and open the session for discussion from the floor

Philip Bufithis, author of *Norman Mailer* (1978, Japanese edition 1981), is the former executive editor of the literary magazine *Antietam Review*. His essays on twentieth-century American literature and his stories have appeared in many publications. He is Professor of English Emeritus at Shepherd University.

Sara Cohen

“Mailer at the Movies: Making Masculinity and Unmaking Jewishness in Mailer’s Film Career”

In Part II of *The Armies of the Night*, Norman Mailer apologizes for bringing his story of the 1967 March on the Pentagon to a climax and then launching into a diversion about his relationship to film and the cameras following him through the melee of the march. Mailer writes: “he had seen in this first

documentary [Dick Fontaine's Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up?] a fatal taint, a last remaining speck of the one personality he found absolutely unsupportable—the nice Jewish boy from Brooklyn. Something in his adenoids gave it away—he had the softness of a man accustomed to mother love.” For Mailer, this reflection undermines the masculinities he works to materialize in his career as a writer— “warrior, presumptive general, ex-political candidate, embattled aging enfant terrible of the literary world”—and leads him to vow to “stay away from further documentaries about himself” (134). Despite Mailer’s assertion that he would stay away from the camera, however, he continued to work on both sides of it as subject of further documentaries, as director, and as actor. This paper reads Mailer’s relationship to the cinema in order to interrogate the ways that he employs it as a means of both working through and erasing his Jewishness, and the ways in which the cinema is a particularly ripe medium for such an enterprise.

Sara Cohen is a Ph.D candidate at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities. She is currently beginning work on a dissertation about exhaustion and masculinity in 1960s literature, film, and popular music.

Laura Adams Dunham

"One Last Conversation on God."

In 1975 my interview, "Existential Aesthetics: An Interview with Norman Mailer," was published in the *Partisan Review*. Norman liked it because it pushed him on several fronts, including his metaphysics. It pushed me, too, to enlarge my understanding of his work. After the publication of *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*, I hoped to have one last cosmic conversation with Norman. Alas, it was too late. Or was it? Here's the way the conversation might have gone

Laura Adams Dunham was an early Mailer scholar, publishing in 1974 "Will the Real Norman Mailer Please Stand Up?", a compilation of essays, and *Norman Mailer: A Comprehensive Bibliography*. In 1976, a much-revised version of her dissertation appeared as *Norman Mailer's Aesthetics of Growth*. In recent years, Laura, a retired minister, has explored spiritual and metaphysical realms from many perspectives. Her new book is *Spiritual Wisdom for a Planet in Peril: The Path to 2012 and Beyond*. She lives in Chapel Hill, NC and may be reached at lgad@mindspring.com.

James Fleming

“The Faith of Romanticism: Norman Mailer’s Post-Romantic Vision “

I propose an examination of Norman Mailer’s Post-Romantic vision. Drawing upon the writings and philosophies of such eighteenth and nineteenth century European Romantics as Lord Byron, Blake, Wordsworth, Goethe, Hegel and Rousseau, I will argue that Norman Mailer’s philosophies surrounding life, death, sexuality, nature, technology and violence are deeply influenced by the European Romantic tradition. With particular attention given to Mailer’s *The Naked and the Dead*, “The White Negro,” *Why Are We In Vietnam?*, the *Executioner’s Song*, and *The Castle in the Forest*, I will conceptualize Mailer’s philosophy as being something of a hybrid of various strains of European Romanticism, and, by extension, as a continuation (and, at points, denouncement) of the European Romantic tradition. Like Byron and Blake, Mailer recognized the ultimate futility of systematic thought and struggled to escape from the boundaries and limitations of such. Like Wordsworth, Mailer suggests that passion, division and violence are innate in man. Like Goethe, Mailer was deeply fascinated by passion and obsession,

and was prone to extremes of contradictory thought as he constructed his ontological and epistemological understandings of reality. My ultimate claim in this presentation is that Mailer did not merely repeat or rephrase the ideas and ideals of the European Romantics, but instead fundamentally reconceptualized them, furthered them and, moreover, presented them in relation to a post-industrial, highly-technological civilization standing on the brink of mutual success and collapse.

James Fleming is a Kirkland Ph.D Fellow in English at the University of Florida, where he is also a graduate teaching mentor. His research focuses on European Romanticism, Modern and Postmodern American literature, and trauma theory.

Richard Lee Fulgham

“My Thirty-Seven Year Correspondence with Norman Mailer”

Richard Lee Fulgham will discuss his thirty-seven year correspondence with Norman Mailer: its effect on him; his letters effect on Mr. Mailer; and a brief attempt at explaining the strangely close friendship that sometimes occur between pen pals, however far apart.

Richard Lee Fulgham was born in Germany in 1947. He received his BA in English from the University of Georgia. (1972) and MA in American Literature from the University of Kentucky (1985). He has worked as a professional newspaper writer and photographer and has published approximately a dozen articles and stories in national magazines. His books include *Appalachian Genesis* (Bristol: Overmountain, 2000) and *The Hogs of Cold Harbor* (Philadelphia: Whitmore, 2005)

Bill Goldstein

“Mailer’s Milton”

I focus on the implications of Norman Mailer’s unexpected description of John Milton’s influence on him, a nod that came in his final books, *The Castle in the Forest* and *On God*, and that liberates us, I argue, to see other connections and parallels in the works and careers of these two writers. Mailer’s invocation of Milton casts a new retrospective light on the question Mailer repeatedly identified as largely animating his work from *The Naked and the Dead* forward: “The question becomes on one hand enormous,” Mailer said in 1975. “Do God and the Devil war in the galaxies?” Though Mailer and Milton were born 300 years apart, their works, I demonstrate, share similar obsessions and interests, including politics, revolution, fame, the eternal battle between good and evil, God and the devil— very real presences in the universe for both writers – and not least the centrality of the writer, and his ego, as the engine of the world to come he both envisions and represents. *Paradise Lost*, the defenses of the English people, *Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*; *The Armies of the Night*, *Advertisements for Myself*, *The Executioner’s Song* – these are dazzling, and dizzyingly different, manifestations of a writer’s conviction that he, virtually alone, may be the single individual vessel of his country’s collective past, present and future. And that it is uniquely his own works, experimenting with, amalgamating and finally transcending many genres and forms--Mailer’s “history as a novel, the novel as history”; Milton’s “brief epic,” *Paradise Regained*--which are able, among all his contemporaries’, to contain the national consciousness--and unconscious. Perhaps even more vitally, I argue, there is the voice of prophecy they share, linking *Paradise Lost* and *The Armies of the Night* across time as works written at grave moments in the history of the author’s republics that also actually *will* those inchoate regions of private mind and

public sphere into new existence by the irrevocably intertwined artistic and political acts of their being written, and read. The most profound connection between Milton and Mailer, I argue, is not the particulars of their religious beliefs--though both were fascinated by (and explored in late works) the power of Jesus as a human example of leadership and love – but their quests as literary artists. In addition, there is the strangest dyslexia induced when reading criticism of Mailer— open to almost any page and one may read Milton’s name with no other change for the critique, harsh or adulatory, to ring as true of the other, and vice versa. In these and other ways I will describe, these writers’ parallel tracks across different centuries have trap doors between them that carry us from one career to another, dropping us precipitously, but with precision, from one writer’s mind and achievements to the other’s.

Bill Goldstein, former founding editor of the books site of the *New York Times* on the Web, also reviews books for “Weekend Today in New York” on NBC. He has written frequently about books, authors and the publishing industry for the *Times* and regularly interviews authors and moderates panel discussions for Times Talks, the paper’s public speaker series. He started his career in journalism at *Publishers Weekly* and was assistant book editor at *Newsday* as well as a senior editor at Scribner. A graduate of the University of Chicago, he was a National Arts Journalism Program fellow at Columbia School of Journalism in 2003-04. He is completing a Ph.D. in English at the City University of New York and teaches at Hunter College.

Alexander Hicks

Presentation # 1

“A Structural Poetics of Mailer’s Fictions”

Just as David Copperfield emerges from the structure of the Bildungsroman and the substantive specifics of David and Company (and Great Expectations emerges likewise from analogous fictive subject matter of Pip and friends), the fictions of Norman Mailer are constituted by a specific Mailerian structural poetics. The poetics is multidimensional—physiological, psychic, social, cultural and transcendental-- in its statics. It takes specific dynamic forms, most saliently that of the narrative of socio-physiological anxiety and its psychic manifestations being overcome through courage, sex --confounder of the poetical dimension-- and/or magic, forms that often sire some cultural creation or attain, albeit briefly, transcendence. The poetic’s statics are spottily present from the earliest Mailer, as in the physiologically (i.e., sexually), socially (hierarchically), culturally (ideologically), and psychically (humiliated) beleaguered, but never transcendent, Hearn of *The Naked and the Dead*. But they pervade the fictions, although more manifestly in some (*The American Dream*) than in others (*Harlot’s Ghost*; *The Executioner’s Song*, if it be fiction). Similarly pervasive are the dynamics, truncated in such early tales as that of beleaguered but never transcendent Hearn, full-blown in those of the beleaguered and heroically transcendent Rojack and (yet more heroically and robustly transcendent) Gilmore. However, the for upper reaches and sacred text of Mailer’s poetics, we must turn to *Ancient Evenings*, summary and revelation to what precedes it and template to the artistries, high and low respectively, of *Harlot’s Ghost* and *Tough Guys Don’t Dance*.

Presentation #2

“Six Theses for Reading and Assessment of *The Naked and the Dead*”

The paper presents several theses to help us read and assess *Naked*. On *Naked*'s "Time Machines" sections, one stresses their innovative adaptation of the "biography" style of U.S.A. from public figures to fictional "everymen," a second notes the playfulness of the device (e.g., Mailer's "Woodrow Wilson" evoking Dos Passos' President Wilson right down to "a pair of round, silver rimmed glasses"), and a third discusses how the adaptation dignifies everyman (for as Mailer writes, "Mexican boys also breathe the American Fables, also want to be heroes, aviators, lovers, financiers"). A fourth argues that *Naked*'s prose attains great beauty as in the passage in Seldon Rodman's 100 Modern Poem ("The wind tore through the bivouac area like a great scythe . . . a soldier would go skittering through the mud, staggering from the force of the wind with the odd jerking motion of a man walking in a motion picture when the film is unwinding too rapidly"). A fifth argues that *Naked* has a coherent, cumulatively powerful narrative resting on four legs: (a) The fascistic story of Cummings (e.g., vis-à-vis Hearn and the "patrol" as solution to Cummings' Hearn problem); (b) the fascistic assertions of Croft vis-à-vis Hearn, recon and Mt. Anaka; (c) the humanism of Goldstein and Ridges' transport of Wilson; and (d) the managerial ascendance of Dalleson. Finally, *Naked* is as incisive a sociopolitical account of War-time tendencies and as prescient a vision of Eisenhower-era managerial/centrism as one can imagine (Magic Mountain to our Great War).

Alexander Hicks is Winship Distinguished Research Professor of Sociology, Emory University, and author or co-editor of books including *Social Democracy and Welfare Capitalism*, as well as of numerous papers in leading Social Science journals. His literary credentials principally consist of the exchange of a several dozen letters with Norman Mailer, two of which (from Mailer to Hicks) are reported by editor J. Michael Lennon as forthcoming in *Selected Correspondence of Norman Mailer* (2008).

Constance Holmes

"Nabokov and Mailer: The Memories of Humbert and Dieter"

Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita* and Norman Mailer's *Castle in the Forest* both feature a first-person narrator who addresses the reader directly. The structure and style of each work allows inferences by the reader about their story teller, and each work incorporates a not-so-subtle vein of persuasive rhetoric seemingly designed to assure the reader that each narrator is not such a bad person after all.

At the root of Humbert's "notes for trial" and Dieter's book are their recollections of events now passed. By comparing and contrasting their selective memories, a pattern of persuasion develops that is inherently suspect. In the course of their reminiscences, both narrators reveal their true selves which is, of course, their authors' intention. Further, much of this rhetoric is couched in parody, satire and sly cynicism which can be somewhat overlooked due to the subject matter of each novel.

Mailer and Nabokov are similar in their approach and content to horrific scenarios, yet each has his own style and message that is convincingly delivered by a first-person narrator whose memory is plumbed with wit and style, and who repeatedly addresses their reader as a complicit party. A comparison and contrast shows Mailer to surely have been aware of Nabokov's masterful work, and Mailer's recognition and usage of similar structure and style propels his last great work as it does Nabokov's.

Constance E. Holmes is an Associate Editor of *The Norman Mailer Review*, and is a Ph.D Candidate at the University of South Florida. Her areas of concentration are Modern and Contemporary Literature and Film, with an emphasis on the Law. She has presented at national and regional conferences on *Lolita*

and the Law, and draws upon her experience as an attorney in her work. Her Dissertation in progress is *Testimony, Confession and Judgment: Seeking a Moral Verdict in Ford Maddox Ford and Vladimir Nabokov*.

Bimbisar Irom

“Memorizing/Memorializing the Old Left in *Barbary Shore*”

Norman Mailer’s *Barbary Shore* (1951) was written when the certainties of the American Old Left and of classical Marxism were being increasingly questioned, both at home and abroad. Christopher Lasch states the central question facing American radicals in this era- “The demoralization of radical intellectuals, in these darkest years of the postwar period, was very great. Nor have the succeeding years disposed of the central question (Dwight) Macdonald raised. If rebellion is futile and revolution unlikely, what can a man do *now*?” Reading *Barbary Shore* as a response to this problematic of failed revolutions and unrealized utopias, my paper analyzes how it grapples with this history of loss? In what ways does Mailer re-imagine the history of the Old Left, particularly through the figure of McLeod? And how is that memory of the failed Left related to a desire for a future world? If narrative practices are important because they combine various cultural symbols, integrating them within one symbolic space, in what ways does Mailer construct a mnemonic system, a space of remembering and forgetting in which the time orders of past and present are continuously recombined? And is that space free of the desire to analyze and critique? How does Mailer’s “anarchic Marxism” inflect his remembrance of the Old Left? What does it mean to narrate the Old Left through Mike Lovett- himself an amnesiac and whose central efforts in the text is to remember his own past?

Bimbisar Irom is a dissertator in Literary Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The fall of the American Old Left, the recession of class, and the current dominance of cultural studies has been extensively studied and theorized in a critical format. His project intervenes to study how the novel form has engaged with this crucial shift. The dissertation asks if the novel’s negotiation with this political problem changes either the form, the terms of that political problem, or both?

J. Michael Lennon

”Mailer’s Vast Correspondence: A Peek”

A brief overview of the shape of Mailer’s literary and personal life in each of six decades, 1940s to 2000s, illustrated by excerpts from his letters. In addition, the nature and scope of Mailer’s epistolarium, over 50,000 letters, will be described. Finally, a recording of one of his sessions dictating letters will be played.

J. Michael Lennon is Norman Mailer’s archivist, editor and authorized biographer and has written/edited several books about him, including (with Donna Pedro Lennon) *Norman Mailer: Works and Days* (2000), *Critical Essays on Norman Mailer* (1986), *Conversations With Norman Mailer* (1988), *The Spooky Art: Some Thoughts on Writing* (2003) and numerous essays in journals and magazines. His work has appeared in *New Yorker*, *Paris Review*, *Playboy*, *Provincetown Arts*, *New York, Modern Fiction Studies*, *New England Review*, *Narrative*, and *Journal of Modern Literature*, among others. His latest book, co-authored with Mailer, is *On God: An Uncommon Conversation* (October 2007). Lennon is

currently editing Mailer's letters and researching the biography. Lennon's documentary, *James Jones: From Reveille to Taps*, was shown on PBS in 1985. He is Emeritus Vice President for Academic Affairs and Emeritus Professor of English at Wilkes University, where he continues to teach in the MFA Program, and is current President of The Norman Mailer Society.

Peter Levenda

“The Metaphysical Mailer”

A look at the clues scattered throughout Mailer's work--in particular *Ancient Evenings*, *An American Dream*, *The Gospel According to the Son*, and *The Castle in the Forest*--that hint of a metaphysics of God and the Devil, life after death, reincarnation, and the nature of Evil. Recourse will also be had to Mailer interviews and other source material. While not conventionally religious, Mailer expressed a respect for the forces that seemed to be at work in the world and struggled to understand what they were.

Peter Levenda is a writer on esoterica and politics, whose work *Unholy Alliance* bears a foreword by Norman Mailer. This foreword was reproduced in Mailer's *A Spooky Art*. He has an M.A. in Religious Studies and Asian Studies from Florida International University.

Anthony Levin

“The Metaphysics of Norman Mailer”

Of all the great American writers of the 20th Century, perhaps none is more misunderstood than Norman Mailer. Although he was much-lionized for works such as *The Armies of the Night*, he is better remembered by critics for making public self-sabotage a central part of his artistic agenda. What critics have always missed about Mailer is that he was a “free-lance explorer of spiritual dangers.” When he set himself the goal of revolutionizing the consciousness of his time, he did so with scant regard for his reputation. Attempts to reconcile Mailer's work with his life are impossible unless we appreciate his peculiar brand of metaphysics. Mailer spent his entire career exploring the themes that coalesce at the juncture between Art and God. With the benefit of frank disclosure in his life's bookend, *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*, we now know that his conception of the Cosmos was much like his conception of the Novel: a place where the artist plays out his dreams as the “Supreme Creator.” Life for Mailer was simply another branch of Literature; through his actions, Mailer advocated a style of living that pushed the boundaries of reality and revealed the structural relations between good and evil in the human condition. Mailer therefore presented us with a new vantage point for experiencing literature: cosmic consciousness, from which we may understand Art and Life without judgment. His transgressive behavior helps us to see that Mailer's greatest masterpiece was his life, which prompts us to reflect on our own lived creativity.

Anthony Levin is a human rights lawyer from Sydney, Australia who has also written comedy for television both in Australia and the United States. In his spare time, he writes freelance for journals and magazines. He is about to move to Italy with his partner for a year to begin work on his first novel.

Gerald Lucas

“Mailer vs. the Southern Baptists: The State of the Religious South in the New Century”

I moved to the American South almost six years ago. About that time, I was introduced to Norman Mailer's work. Both gave me an interesting perspective on America, its values and its problems

(sometimes stemming from said values). This presentation will examine Southern religious values (mostly conservative Baptist) vis-a-vis those of Norman Mailer, particularly in his later work, including *The Gospel According to the Son* and *On God*. I will include a short multimedia presentation that documents some of my experiences, interviews members of the Baptist church, and attempts to come to terms with seemingly disparate perceptions on the place of religion in America.

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.

Deborah Martinson

“Sex and God Writ Large”

Sex and God—both powerful instigators--form Norman Mailer’s cosmos. In Mailer’s work, spirits both holy and unholy erupt in intense passions and wayward rhythms, connecting man to forces outside the self. The struggle of desire mirrors the struggle of the spirit, for in sexual desire and expression is the power to experience the world’s mystery. Sexual power, for Mailer, closes the distance between man/woman and God. He approaches both with veneration.

Deborah Martinson is primarily interested in women’s lives and writings; she published *Lillian Hellman: A Life with Foxes and Scoundrels* (2005), *In the Presence of Audience: The Self in Diaries and Fiction* (2003) and is currently working on a biography of Virginia Durr. Martinson’s interest in Mailer comes from his power as a writer and his bold sexual/political identity. Martinson is on the Editorial Board of *The Mailer Review* and is Associate Professor of English Writing at Occidental College in Los Angeles.

S. A. McLaughlin

“His Love Affair with America: Mailer on the Political Responsibility of the Writer in *The Armies of the Night*”

There is often conflict between the interests, impulses, and desires of one’s two selves—the private individual and the public citizen. This is not intended to suggest a “rigid binary” between one’s personal life and one’s political and social commitments, but it is undeniable that the two are often at odds—the individual is often put in the position of having to place his or her own interests secondary in order to better serve the cause that he or she has espoused. This general problem of the self-sacrifice that might be required in order to fulfill the individual’s own perception of his or her political responsibility can be specifically applied to the situation of a writer in a democracy—to the particular demands, obligations, and tensions that are a part of the singular function that a writer can perform in his or her own engagement with political movements and forces. I believe that in *The Armies of the Night*, Mailer delineated this struggle between two sometimes opposing interests—the imperatives of the writer’s political responsibility, versus the demands of the literary life and career. Mailer articulated ideas on the political responsibility of the writer specifically in *The Armies of the Night*, but also in other texts and forms throughout his long career. This essay will discuss Mailer’s own role as a politically engaged writer, and his “love affair with America”—his own vision of America as it is presented in *The Armies of the Night*.

S.A. McLaughlin first began studying Mailer's work with J. Michael Lennon when she was his student at Wilkes University—she received her B.A. in 2004, and an M.A. in English Literature & Creative Writing from SUNY Binghamton in 2007. She teaches at a community college, and she is also a poet and writer, currently working on a creative non-fiction project about the 2008 presidential election. She has a lifetime membership in The Norman Mailer Society.

Michael Meloy

“Was it Good for You? Remembering Sexuality in Mailer's Early Work”

Since the ideology of Norman Mailer's work has been primarily existential, the sexual present in his fiction tends to be a small, finite, transitory space. The present exists as a place where sexual desire occurs but does not remain, dissipating into a rapidly fading nostalgia and, then, a desperate yearning for the next sexual experience. In that sense, sexuality exists in Mailer's work largely as memory. As characters embark on what is often a book-long quest for sexual gratification, the sexual craving that drives them forward to the future constitutes a remembering of the past—an often romanticized and memorialized recollection of sexual experiences that the characters long to recreate. The plot of *An American Dream* is initiated by such a memory: disheartened by the inherent emptiness of his present marriage and love life, Rojack's story begins with a remembrance of things past—“the night I met her we had a wild ninety minutes in the back seat of my car”—that compels him to not only commit murder but also to recreate or surpass that experience, an desire that culminates in sex with a character aptly named “Cherry.” My paper examines this tendency in Mailer's early work to remember sexual experience, to memorialize it in a way that makes sense of the present and defines the future. I analyze Mailer's first four published novels—*The Naked and the Dead*, *Barbary Shore*, *The Deer Park*, and *An American Dream*—briefly delineating how sexual memory operates in each text and framing the issue within an existential philosophical viewpoint.

Michael Meloy currently teaches American literature and composition courses at Villa Julie College in Stevenson, Maryland. He received his Ph.D. from the University of South Carolina in 2007 with a dissertation titled *Sex Fiends of the Fifties: Intersections of Violence, Sexuality and Masculinity in the work of Norman Mailer, William Styron, and Ken Kesey*.

Jason Mosser

“Style is the Man: A Pedagogical Approach to Mailer's Literary Nonfiction”

One way to approach Mailer's texts in the classroom is to focus on style. Mailer employed a variety of styles over his career, and in a work like *The Armies of the Night*, his style is often highly self-conscious and opaque, calling attention to itself as language. At its most opaque, his style displays the qualities of play and delight in language that Kenneth Burke, in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, calls “pure persuasion” (267-94). At the same time, Mailer has a rhetorical purpose: to persuade his readers to share his beliefs, attitudes, and prejudices. His prose thus creates what Burke calls formal “identification” (*Rhetoric*, 55-59). The formal “identification” in Mailer's prose becomes closest when his emotional involvement in events is most intense, or when his musings cause him to digress from the narrative itself. Many critics have written on Mailer's style, but none has analyzed his style in great detail. I propose to adopt the method of analysis advocated by Richard Lanham in *Analyzing Prose*, the use of rhetorical terms from classical rhetoric, to identify stylistic features in Mailer's prose and to

demonstrate how Mailer uses his style to create his unique rhetorical persona. I will focus on a selected passage from *Armies* in which Mailer, marching with the other anti-Vietnam War protestors, first glimpses the Pentagon and shares his reactions. This pedagogical approach serves two purposes: (1) to teach students close reading and explication skills; (2) to increase students' appreciation of the work of a master American stylist.

Jason Mosser is Associate Professor of English at Georgia Gwinnett College, the first new American college of the twenty-first century. Most of his scholarly work is devoted to literary nonfiction, particularly New Journalism. He has presented several conference papers on Norman Mailer, Hunter S. Thompson, and Joan Didion. His presentation derives from his chapter on Mailer in his soon-to-be-published book: *Style, Persona, and Protest: Four New Journalists*, by Edwin Mellen Press.

Erik Nakjavani

“Norman Mailer and Ernest Hemingway: Visionary Appropriation as Influence “

Ernest Hemingway as a writer and a way of life manifestly affected Norman Mailer's writing life. Yet, there would be little evidence to claim that Hemingway's fiction and creative nonfiction directly influenced Mailer's writings, either stylistically or thematically. How can one then understand Mailer's seemingly paradoxical preoccupation with Hemingway? I would suggest that Mailer provides abundant and compelling evidence of how Hemingway is a source of visionary inspiration rather than influence to him. The ancient Greek philosophers would have designated such inspiration as a veritable *theoria*, or vision, with all its religious implications. In this presentation, I would expand on what I would call Mailer's visionary appropriation of Hemingway as a writer and as a way of life. By “visionary appropriation,” I mean to delineate a way of making an understanding of the human condition one's own flesh and blood through *interpretive* reflections and action. Among the constituents of Mailer's visionary appropriation of Hemingway, I would put physical and creative courage, nonconformity, maximal ambition, and the assumption of freedom and responsibility in the midst of the dreaded unpredictability of the outcome of one's action. These existential components of creative life enable the writer to defy the world's irreducible quotient of hostility toward human aspirations. Therefore, humiliations, failures, losses, and even eventual death and disappearance cannot defeat the creative imagination. This no doubt also guaranteed an afterlife as reincarnation for Mailer and immortality for Hemingway.

Erik Nakjavani is professor Emeritus of Humanities at the University of Pittsburgh. Although he has specialized in Hemingway scholarship, he has had a long-standing interest in the interdisciplinary relationship between psychoanalysis, philosophy, literature, and the arts. His latest publications include “Hemingway on War and Peace” (*North Dakota Quarterly*, 2001), “The Prose of Life: Lived Experience in the Fiction of Hemingway, Sartre, and Beauvoir” (*North Dakota Quarterly*, 2003), “The Poetics of Lacan's Theorization” (*Clinical Studies: International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 2001).

Victor Peppard

"The Coronation Digression--or is it?-- in *The Castle in the Forest*"

Is Chapter VIII, "The Coronation of Nicholas II," in Norman Mailer's *The Castle in the Forest* just an entertaining digression, or is it an integral, perhaps even crucial part of the novel? The narrator, the ever devious and dissembling Dieter, claims that his participation in the Coronation was crucial to his

development as a "high devil," while at the same time inviting us to skip the chapter altogether. In order to answer this question, we need to cut through Dieter's diversions and examine Mailer's treatment of the battle between the Devil and God, here in the guise of the Maestro and the Dummkopf. Mailer's interest in Russia, most prominent in *Oswald's Tale*, is also reflected in his portrayal of the Coronation. At the end of the chapter, Dieter forecasts a possible return to Russia, for which Mailer has powerful motivation, if, as he surely does, he wants to get at the roots of how the 20th century turned out the way it did.

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 of Russian and Soviet sport. He is also the author of a handful of short stories.

Kerri Provost

“Political Intersections: Norman Mailer and George Michael Evica”

Norman Mailer and George Michael Evica both passed way on November 10, 2007—Mailer from the complications of old age, and Evica from those related to lung and brain cancer. But Mailer and Evica crossed paths during life as well. We're all familiar with the political and literary work of Norman Mailer. George Michael Evica was a professor of English at the University of Hartford, wrote several books, including two about the assassination of President Kennedy—*And We Are All Mortal* and *A Certain Arrogance*—and hosted the public affairs program *Assassination Journal* on WWUH from 1975 until a few months before his death. The program began as an investigation into the JFK assassination, but was later expanded to include political commentary using alternative news sources. In my presentation I will be looking at where the two authors have intersected in terms of politics and theories, beginning with the JFK assassination, but branching out from there to also discuss their perspectives on U.S. Intelligence and war.

Kerri Provost is an adjunct professor in the Department of Rhetoric and Professional Writing at the University of Hartford and a writing tutor at Capital Community College. She has had the honor of meeting both Mr. Mailer and Dr. Evica.

Kimo J. Reder

“Norman the Rain King: Mailer’s Black Odyssey from Outer Bohemia to Pharaoh’s Throne”

Norman Mailer’s 1956 essay “The White Negro” is generally gingerly explained away as a misstep, a glitch in his writerly development, a ham-handed “tribute” whose racial suppositions induce wincing in more politically sensitive quarters. This paper argues that Norman Mailer’s White Negro theme was not a brief and callow flirtation but an obsessive motif with a much more prolonged arc across his career than is generally recognized. Mailer initiated his black odyssey in the late 1950s with a howl-provoking article praising a subterranean black anti-hero for turning to the cellular renewals of homicide, a sacramental use of narcotics, and a trek to the “mecca of the Orgasm.” Mailer would eventually revoke his endorsement of such muted, asocial rebellion for the more politicized imperatives of 60’s Black Power. In turn, this mode of infatuation reached its seeming terminus when Mailer covered the 1974 Muhammad Ali-George Foreman bout in Zaire and was confronted with native Negritude in all its

vastness and diversity. Returning to the States in some manner chastened and disabused of certain dogmas, Mailer wrote a cold-eyed epitaph for the White Negro with the Gary Gilmore saga he re-enacted in *The Executioner's Song*. On the heels of this accomplishment, Mailer finally delivered the "big book" he had been promising for decades, locating *Ancient Evenings* in Egypt and made this legend-cloaked corner of Africa the source not of enlivening chaos but of cosmogonic balance, in a maneuver that can be interpreted, in part, as an odd penance for past crimes of primitivism.

Kimo J. Reder is a doctoral candidate in UCLA's English Department. He is currently working on a dissertation titled "Seeing Tongue/Tasting Eye: Words as Food in American Bio-Poetics," which investigates avant-garde American verse of the 19th and 20th centuries via the lens of neuroscience and oral kinetics. He teaches English courses with a variety of emphases: Transcendentalism as an early mode of transgenic art, language-as-matter studies, and recent convergences between ethnopoetics and ecocriticism.

Michael Shuman

"Reconstructing Mailer: Identity, Appropriation, Desire"

Norman Mailer devoted a significant part of his professional life promoting the reputation as a contender, and indeed he finally emerges, along with Hemingway, as one of the foremost champions of the masculine voice in contemporary literature. But exactly what is Mailer's notion of identity, and how does he construct an individual and social concept of the self? This essay examines Mailer's portrayal of both fictional and non-fictional characters and investigates the way the author appropriates personality, attitude, memory, and event into a literary self-construct. Ultimately Mailer's literary approach informs both his enduring art and our perceptions of the man himself.

Michael L. Shuman received his Ph.D from University of South Florida, where he now teaches technical writing. Dr. Shuman's research interests include contemporary American fiction, the Pre-Raphaelites, and psychoanalytic criticism.

Phillip Sipiora

"Norman Mailer: Metaphysician at Work"

Norman Mailer's last book, *On God: An Uncommon Conversation*, has been reviewed widely, often through the prism of cosmological or theological analysis. I suggest that it might also be examined as a work of "cultural philosophy." Mailer has always espoused philosophical sentiments, either implicitly or explicitly, since *The Naked and the Dead* (1948). *On God*, in my view, is a more explicit exploration of strategic issues of epistemology and ontology. My presentation will identify and discuss representative illustrations of Mailer's metaphysics at work.

Phillip Sipiora, editor of *The Mailer Review*, is Professor of English and Film Studies at the University of South Florida, where he has taught since receiving his doctorate at the University of Texas at Austin in 1985. He is the author or editor of three books, over three dozen scholarly articles, and writes a bi-monthly column on Italian and Italian-American culture for *L'Unione Italiana*.

Jiena Sun

"An Invisible War: Thanatos and Eros in *The Naked and the Dead*"

Much has been written about the political connotations and social criticism suggested in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*. However, it can also be something quite different. This paper is a psychoanalytical rereading of this novel. In the light of Sigmund Freud's Instinct Theory, this paper examines the conflicts between Thanatos (Death Drive) and Eros (Life Drive) which are inseparable from the plight of servicemen in the novel. Eros suggests cohesion and unity, whereas Thanatos is characterized as the tendency towards destruction. They are fused together, but in unequal proportions which are susceptible to change. Based on close examinations of major characters, this paper ascribes disorder and atrocities in the novel to the triumph of Thanatos over Eros. Furthermore, it finds out that Thanatos demonstrates itself in different ways. For Cummings and Croft, it manifests directly and openly as external sadism (tyranny and atrocities); for Hearn and Valsen, it appears as indirect and subtle internal sadism (anxiety, failure to act and submission). At last, the paper concludes that individual plights in this novel can be traced back to the destructive Thanatos and that it is crucial to re-empower Eros.

Jiena Sun is from Southern China. She is currently a graduate student of the Masters Program in English Language and Literature in University of Indianapolis. Her research interest focuses on modern American literature and postcolonial literature. She had presented her paper in the Practical Criticism Midwest conference held at Ball State University in February 8th, 2008.

K. Vivian Taylor

“Blurred Eroticism and Sexualities in Mailer's *Prisoner of Sex* and *An American Dream*”

I examine Representations of masculinity, femininity, and sexuality as manifested in *An American Dream* and the possible ties between those and Mailer's later examinations of gender roles in *Prisoner of Sex* will be my presentations main focus. Other works that could possibly be drawn upon are *The Big Empty* and *Deaths for the Ladies*. The intention is to examine Mailer's fictional characters' representations of his non-fiction philosophical explorations and cultural conclusions of gender and sexuality.

K. Vivian Taylor is currently preparing for doctoral exams in Modern and Contemporary British and American Literature, Film Theory, and Sexualities Studies at University of South Florida under Drs. Phillip Sipiora, Margit Grieb, and Michael Clune. Additionally, Ms. Taylor is revising essays for publication in *Sexualities and Men and Masculinities*, completing post-production stages of her (Portal Productions) second film, and transcribing her first novel. She is eager to begin her doctoral dissertation and live blissfully ever after.

Shannon Zinck

“The Biography of Sound: The Musical Background of *The Castle in the Forest*”

Since the absolute complexity and mystery of the events that led to the man Adolph Hitler cannot be understood, much less represented, by traditional forms of historical representation in which language functions as a transparent code through which we can achieve a clear, distinct, and objective representation of past events, Norman Mailer chose the form of the fictional (auto)biography in *The Castle in the Forest* in order to reflect and even concentrate the complexity and ambiguity of the events

themselves. The narrator D.T. is extremely conscious of his role in shaping a narrative in which he himself plays a significant role, and he certainly does privilege form in his narrative since he exhibits self-conscious structuring of the content. While he employs the narrative form to give shape and meaning to the events represented, Mailer himself incorporates music as perhaps one of the novel's most important structuring principles. I intend to examine this musical framework in order to reveal the significance of the demonic orchestration of which D.T. is simply an instrument.

Shannon Zinck 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 focuses on the impact of place on memory and identity in the fiction of the Anglo-Irish writer Elizabeth Bowen.

Matt Tribbe

“When *They* Took the Moon: *Of a Fire on the Moon* and Mailer’s Melancholy at the End of the Sixties”

Commenting on the Apollo 11 moon landing, a writer in Detroit’s underground newspaper the *Fifth Estate* noted, “Somehow the moon voyage will not be complete until Mailer digests it and spits it out.” Yet when Mailer’s account finally appeared over a year later as *Of a Fire on the Moon*, responses were ambivalent. Space buffs found Mailer’s philosophical ruminations insufferable, while readers expecting the Mailer of *The Armies of the Night* were baffled by the hundreds of pages he devoted to technical descriptions of the moon flight. As Mailer himself recognized, “he might have blundered into accepting the hardest story of them all, for it was a sex-stripped mystery of machines which might have a mind, and mysterious men who managed to live like machines.” The result is an often maddening account that, in its more “Mailer-esque” moments, uses the moon trip to speculate on the nature of God and the Devil, the human condition on earth, in space, and the afterlife, magic and the demystification of the universe, along with more concrete subjects like the increasingly technological society of 1960s America, all the while exuding the apocalyptic aura of American life at the turn of the 1970s. Taking advantage of the Mailer Papers recently opened to researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, this presentation will revisit *Of a Fire on the Moon* from a historical perspective, exploring what it can reveal about that strange summer nearly forty years ago when human beings first walked on the moon.

Matt Tribbe is a graduate student in U.S. history at the University of Texas at Austin, writing a dissertation that explores how Americans made sense of the Apollo moon landings amid the turmoil of the late 1960s. His interest in Norman Mailer grew after he realized he’d better study reactions to Apollo that were more insightful than “Golly, that’s just great!” and “Gee whiz, ain’t that somethin’?”

Marc Triplett

“Mailer and Presidential Politics: Where Was He and What Does He Leave Us?”

Many of Norman Mailer’s works chronicled American presidential politics. In fact, he once said that he was “running for president in his mind.” The volume of writing that Mailer did on the subject of the American presidency and its politics is indeed daunting, and an effort to reduce that body of work to a few principles or a simple sound-bite philosophy would be foolhardy. Mailer, however, did have some well-developed ideas about the qualities that best moved the United States in positive directions. These

ideas related less to political ideology than they did to personal qualities that best comprehended the times. Mailer's descriptions of presidential candidates he knew, studied, and interviewed were themselves instructive: Richard Nixon was a "computer;" Hubert Humphrey was a "hysterical computer;" Adlai Stevenson "had the sweet happiness of an adolescent lover who has just been given his first major kiss." In *George Magazine*, Mailer described the 1996 presidential race as "The Pharaoh vs. Bogey." Mailer's writings on American presidential election campaigns made full use of the novelist's tools in evaluating candidates and meaning of their risings and fallings on the political landscape. His use of metaphor never failed to capture the essence of a candidate's politics as it reflected social forces. A review of Mailer's sense of our presidential politics from 1960 to 2004 will serve to remind us of a unique brand of commentary we may never see again.

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.

Raymond Vince

"Reflections of Time Past: Time, Memory, and Home in Norman Mailer"

T. S. Eliot said, "Home is where one starts from. As we get older / The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated" ("East Coker"). Reflecting together on Norman Mailer's life and work, what roles did *time*, *memory*, and *home* play in his writing and in his critical reflections upon American society and literature? With sadness we realize that not only has Norman left us but also that the World War Two generation--his generation--is fast disappearing. How do *we* understand today's world: what kind of sense can *we* make of Eliot's "complicated pattern?" In his poem "In Memory of W. B. Yeats," Auden said, "The words of a dead man / Are modified in the guts of the living." Remembering Mailer and his work from *The Naked and the Dead* (1948) onwards, we ask *how* might his words be "modified" in our guts? Specifically, what does Mailer's work--reflecting his generation's *time past*--say to us about our critical task in America today?

Raymond Vince is Visiting Assistant Professor at the University of Tampa and has also taught at the University of South Florida. His interests include Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Mailer, Heroism in War, medieval literature, and the Spy Novel. He has published on "Alienation," "*The Great Gatsby* and the Transformations of Space-time," and on William Morris. His first book, *Heroism, War, and Narrative*, is published by VDM of Germany. He is an Associate Editor of the *Mailer Review*. With previous careers as scientist and priest, Ray 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.