

THE NORMAN MAILER SOCIETY

2005 CONFERENCE

PROGRAM SCHEDULE

All events are at the Provincetown Inn unless noted otherwise.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 3

After 2:00 PM **Check-In** (Provincetown Inn)

8:00-10:00 PM **Screening of *Ragtime***
(Mayflower Room)

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 4

8:00-9:00 AM **Continental Breakfast**

9:00-10:00 AM **Business Meeting**
(Mayflower Room)

Panel # 1 and Panel # 2 will run concurrently

10:00-11:30 AM **Panel # 1: Mailer and Gender**
(Mayflower Room)

Linda Miller (Penn State University), "Mailer vs. Hemingway in the Gender Wars of the 20th Century." Feminist criticism initially fostered the prevailing view of Hemingway as a woman hater, but a band of women scholars' more recent examinations show that Hemingway's nuanced texts capture emotional complications of both heroes and heroines. Hemingway's public persona tended to overshadow the art. Mailer, often aligned with Hemingway, is the white male writer women most love to hate. But a re-examination of Mailer's books might raise questions about the accepted view of Mailer as demeaning to women or devaluing women within a combative male-dominant world. Mailer is due, at the least, an unbiased reassessment for the 21st century.

Tara Carlin (Central Connecticut State University), "Norman Mailer's *Of Women and Their Elegance*." Mailer is preoccupied with Marilyn Monroe as a sexual icon and "female existentialist." His first person narrative in *Elegance* especially demonstrates his personal identification with her.

Scott Morrison (Central Connecticut State University), "Behind the Bathroom Door: Gallagher's Wife as a Female Human Being in Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*." This presentation identifies the environmental factors that contribute to Roy Gallagher's inability to accept his wife's imperfections, explores such factors as symptomatic of blue-collar American male views during the World War II era, and establishes the character's dysfunctional vision of femininity and humanity as a naturalistic psychosexual paradigm that Mailer refutes in his later work.

10:00-11:30 AM

Panel # 2: Mailer and Gender
(Alfred's Room)

Ashton Howley (University of Ottawa), "Mailer Again." To what extent has Mailer's falling out of critical fashion come from his views on sex and gender? Those views are Mailer's biggest problem within the academy. Reviled by feminists, considered homophobic, Mailer has been largely misunderstood. However, Mailer's prolific obsession with men's psychosexuality constitutes one of the most interesting features of his late work, particularly. Mailer still deserves recognition as one of his nation's most notable iconoclasts.

Robbin Martinelli (Central Connecticut State University), "The Eve Syndrome in *An American Dream*." This novel represents Mailer's Eden where a woman is paramount to a man's direction, provides for order or disorder, and is a haunting voice that calls to his soul, leaving him a lonesome contender in the Manichean ring.

11:30 AM- 1:00 PM

Panel # 3: Collecting Mailer
(Mayflower Room)

David Light (Scituate High School, Principal), **Don Kaufmann** (University of South Florida), **Allen Ahearn** (Quill and Brush Books). Book collecting is a passion; it is this passion that makes collecting interesting and lifts it above a crude amassing of possessions. Three collectors (a Fan, a Scholar, and a Bookseller) will share their passion for collecting Mailer, describing the nature of their personal "Mailer habits" as well as discussing the defining pieces of their collections.

1:00-2:30 PM

Lunch (on your own)

2:45-4:15 PM

Dramatic Readings from Mailer's Work
(Provincetown Fine Arts Work Center)

Reading # 1: A dramatic reading of the climactic final scene of Chapter One of *An American Dream*, in which Stephen Rojack strangles Deborah after a heated argument. **Tara Carlin** plays Deborah, **Philip Bufithis** (Shepherd University) plays Rojack, and **Barry Leeds** (Central Connecticut State University) reads the authorial narrative of Rojack's inner thoughts.

Reading # 2: Bonnie Culver and Students (Wilkes University). This readers theater group will dramatize several cuttings from Mailer's work, including the "Chow Line" Dialogues from *The Naked and the Dead* and scenes from Mailer's play *THE DEER PARK*. Assisting Bonnie will be Master of Arts in Creative Writing Faculty members **Ken Vose** and **Jan Quackenbush**. Creative Writing students are **Daniel Burda**, **James Warner**, **Jennifer Diskin**, **Christopher Hodorowski**, **Drew Amoroso** and **Nicole DePolo**

4:30-6:00 PM	Social Hour / Refreshments (Provincetown Fine Arts Center)
6:00-7:30 PM	Dinner (on your own)
7:30-8:30 PM	Mailer Family Reading (Provincetown Theater)
9:00 PM	Mr. & Mrs. Mailer's Reception for Society Members Only (Commercial Street Residence)

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 5

8:30-9:30 AM	Continental Breakfast
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Panel # 4 and Panel # 5 will run concurrently

9:30-11:00 AM	Panel # 4: Life and Art: Biographical Windows (Mayflower Room)
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Robert Begiebing (Southern New Hampshire University), "Mailer on the Eve of *Ancient Evenings*." A personal view of Mailer at home and on edge just before the publication of his most anticipated and prototypical novel, a novel that fueled speculations and expectations for a decade. Mailer saw this novel at the time as his defining moment. "If the book is not good enough, then I'm not good enough," he said. "I feel that kind of peace about it." This personal essay considers Mailer as he awaited the imminent

publication and reception of that long ball he hoped to hit up into the air of American letters.

Deborah Martinson (Occidental College), "Norman Mailer and Lillian Hellman: 'Half Friendly; Half Chilled'." These two American authors maintained an often difficult friendship, beginning in 1948. They both assumed the role of intellectuals appealing to a broad public, confronting the "political establishment" in ways that shaped their future literary reputations and the nature of their personal celebrity. What, ultimately, was the impact of their personal politics and personalities on their literary reception? In part, their bold and radical political passions have caused critics, filmmakers, publishers, and journalists to diminish the importance of these two authors in the world of letters. Yet Hellman's and Mailer's political provocations are also a source of their lasting legacy and our interest in them as outspoken citizens and public intellectuals.

Marc Triplett (Esq.), "The Political Mailer: The Left Conservative through the Decades." Tracing the evolution of Mailer's personal politics from the Henry Wallace days of his youth, Triplett examines Mailer's evolving political philosophy by capturing the author's words from video and audio archives and by assessing their intellectual and moral value for today. Understanding the connections between the political activism that has been a part of Mailer's life and his novelistic vision clarifies his analysis of America's travails—an analysis that still resonates in the political arena of the 21st century.

9:30-11:00 AM

**Panel # 5: American Dreams and Christian
Gospels
(Alfred's Room)**

Randy Laist (University of Connecticut), "Slimy Vampires and Sliding Saints: Dispersal of Being in *An American Dream*." Mailer's protagonist Rojack in *An American Dream* appeals for the survival of his being to the starting point of Sartre's ontology. Being develops out of the rejection of the transcendental ego and plumbs primordial modes of consciousness: especially phenomenological magic. In the process of re-creating himself, Rojack learns that fear, doubt, and dread are contemporaneous with freedom.

Constance Holmes (University of South Florida), "The Law and *An American Dream*." Stephen Rojack begins the novel with the murder of his wife, but criminal acts continue unabated in *An American Dream*. Aggravated battery, perjury, murder, Mob activities, and dubious international espionage are among the crimes committed by a host of criminal personalities. This is the outrageous and chilling milieu Mailer evokes as the contaminated world of the American Dream.

Raymond Vince (University of South Florida), "Novels, Gospels, and the Struggle for Reality: Norman Mailer's *The Gospel According to the Son*." Despite the praise and blame of this 1997 novel, the relationship between the genres of the novel and the gospel has rarely been studied, nor has the capacity of human words to reveal the divine.

Historically, gospel antedates both romance and novel by a thousand years, but how does gospel tell its story: mimeses, diegesis, or both? Only as we explore the question of the literary relationship between gospel and novel can we see Mailer's achievement in its true light.

Panel # 6 and Panel # 7 will run concurrently

11:00 AM-1:00 PM **Panel # 6: Mailer and Technique**
(Alfred's Room)

Sabrina McLaughlin (Binghamton University), "Saints and Sinners 'Over the Mountainous Abode': The Role of Place in *The Executioner's Song*." Mailer's deep research into the settings of his novels is a major element of his writing technique. Physical topography profoundly affects characters. Focusing on *The Executioner's Song* we see one example that artfully invokes the history, social tensions, and the tremendous mythos of Utah and the American West. This deeply researched environment and culture—particularly their repressive, conformist, and conservative subcultures—allow Mailer to suggest the wider condition of middle-class mainstream American society.

Mark James (Wilkes University), "A Second Look at Authorial Intentionality and Norman Mailer's Revisions of *An American Dream*." Mailer's close revisions of the 1963 version of the novel published in *Esquire* for the later Dial Press book version of *An American Dream* caused some controversy when Hershel Parker challenged the merit of the revisions in *Flawed Texts and Verbal Icons*. James's second look at the debate argues that Mailer's careful revisions reveal his intentions and did not weaken the novel; they improved it.

11:00 AM-1:00 PM **Panel # 7: Mailer and Others**
(Mayflower Room)

Phillip Sipiora (University of South Florida), "Norman Mailer and Ernest Hemingway: The Hand and the Fist." Mailer and Hemingway share much in common. Both wrote powerful fiction and nonfiction, as well as poetry. They each married multiple times, admired and participated in the "sweet science" of boxing, and enjoyed an international reputation for hard-edged masculinity and a personal aesthetics of style that lasted several decades during their separate generations. This presentation focuses on the common elements of those prose styles, especially the use of metaphor, in the writers' major works.

Lawrence Broer, "Identity Crisis: A State of the Union Address by Norman Mailer and Kurt Vonnegut." No two contemporary writers have looked harder or with greater analytical intelligence at the forces undermining the American Dream than Norman Mailer and Kurt Vonnegut. Whatever individual differences of vision or temperament may separate these brooding seers-- Mailer, the mystic Existentialist, Vonnegut, the

comic Absurdist--both serve as Shaman, spiritual medicine men whose function is to expose various forms of societal madness. In their most recent diagnosis of national ills, Mailer's *WHY ARE WE AT WAR*, and Vonnegut's *A MAN WITHOUT A COUNTRY*, Mailer argues that America presently suffers an "identity crisis" of tragic proportions, a crisis that not only threatens America's most treasured Democratic values--justice, equality, freedom of speech--but a foreboding, deeply personal crisis that each writer feels in his very bones.

Dick Russell, "The Dynamite Club." In the late 1980s, while working on his novel "Harlot's Ghost," Norman Mailer organized a regular conclave of researchers and writers into the dark side of recent American history. This was known as the Dynamite Club. The meetings included Don DeLillo, Jim Hougan, Edward Jay Epstein, attorney Bernard Fensterwald, Jr., and others who met for dinner in Washington, D.C., and New York. This writer was invited to participate, and attended a number of the gatherings, after each making extensive notes on what had transpired - including a memorable evening when none other than G. Gordon Liddy of Watergate fame showed up to parry with Mailer across the dining table. The rendezvous' at the Dynamite Club led to several private meetings between Mailer and this writer, to discuss various subjects of skullduggery.

1:00-2:30 PM

Luncheon / Keynote Address : *E.L. Doctorow*
(Tiffany Room)
Cash Bar

2:45-4:30 PM

Panel # 8: Mailer Makes Movies
(Mayflower Room)

Michael Chaiken , Michael Mailer and Robert L. Lucid. Clips from Mailer's three experimental films from the late 60s, "Wild 90," "Beyond the Law," and "Maidstone," will be shown. The clips will be preceded by introductions and followed by comments from the panelists (all of whom are familiar with Mailer's moviemaking) who will also answer questions from the audience.

4:30 PM

Conference Debriefing / Feedback

5:00-6:00 PM

Cash Bar (Provincetown Inn)

6:00-7:30 PM

Dinner (on your own)

Society Executive Board Dinner Meeting
(Napi's)