REFLECTIONS

The phone rang early morning on Saturday, November 10, 2007. It was Mike Lennon, long-time Mailer friend and authorized Mailer biographer. "Phil, Norman has died." I had readied myself for this news for several weeks, but the shock and sadness were not blunted by my preparation. That sad, long morning brought forth powerful memories of Norman Mailer, the world-class writer and the man I had been fortunate to know.

As the Editor of *The Mailer Review*, I knew that there would be calls from the media. The calls soon came, including a request for a live interview on the BBC at 2:00 eastern standard time. As I thought of what I might say, my mind raced back to my first encounter with Norman Mailer. I strove to remember this amazing man in personal, emotional ways.

I met Norman at Harvard in early July of 1990. He was the keynote speaker at a Hemingway conference and I was a minor participant. We met quite by accident. I was milling about among a large group in a large room at the Kennedy Center. I saw Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis talking to a small group of conferees, distinguishable by their conference badges. I hoped to eavesdrop on this American icon, whose husband had awakened my adolescent political sensibilities in his 1960 campaign. After a couple of minutes, others drifted off and I was alone with the former First Lady. I chattered away, a scene surely familiar to her. Mrs. Onassis impressed me with her focused attention on what I was saying.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw Norman Mailer approaching. The celebrities hugged. Mrs. Onassis remembered and correctly pronounced my uncommon surname, even though I had not been wearing my badge. She introduced me to Mr. Mailer, who shook my hand with a powerful grip, connecting to me with a powerful right hand, one that had thrown many thousands of punches in the boxing ring and on his writing pad. His left hand squeezed my right forearm. Piercing blue eyes flashed into mine. "My God," I thought, "Norman Mailer thinks that I know Jackie Onassis." I later witnessed Norman's enthusiastic greetings of other participants, welcomes that were not unlike mine. I then realized that Norman was naturally outgoing and instinctively friendly. He seemed, intuitively, to enjoy meeting strangers.

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I would later come to know and appreciate Norman Mailer. My first impressions were reconfirmed over time. I am honored to have been invited to his homes in Brooklyn Heights and Provincetown. My wife and I held a reception for Mailer in our Tampa home a few years ago and I was once again reminded of the graciousness of the man. The guest list was short, intentionally designed to avoid overtaxing the guest of honor. There were no more than forty people. As is always the case when Norman Mailer is present, everyone stood nearby, waiting for an opportunity to speak to him one on one. Norman disappointed no one, giving each person his full attention as he or she settled into the "conversation seat." I was a few feet away, making sure that no one monopolized the guest of honor too long.

One guest, a teacher, told Mailer that she was a great admirer of his. He asked her which books of his she had read. She replied, apologetically, that she had never read any of his books. Norman's intense blue eyes burst into flames and, *sotto voce*, he said: "Don't ever tell a famous writer that you have not read his work!" The reproach was well deserved, yet Norman did it with a touch of consideration and theatrical flair, signaling perhaps mild irritation, yet doing so in such a way as to acknowledge that he was deliberately having some fun with her *faux pas*. This exchange was illustrative of Mailer—a demonstration of his razor-sharp ability to use words and actions as vehicles carrying multiple meanings, occasionally seemingly contradictory ones, yet richly layered in nuance. Norman could criticize you and actually make you feel good about it. (I know this from personal experience.) There was a spirit of theatre in Norman Mailer and it is not surprising that he had a lifelong love affair with cinema.

As I think of what I have learned from Norman Mailer, the list grows long. His love for probing, exhaustive interrogation of ideas, positions, and perspectives is infectious. His respect for and abiding interest in metaphysical uncertainties is both refreshing and regenerative. His fierce and uncompromising devotion to political ideals is irresistible, even if one does not share all of those ideals. Norman Mailer continues to remind me of the healthy importance of a skeptical attitude toward received opinion. And a penetrating sense of irony, often laced with humor, has been an imitable gift from Norman to so many, as many of the memoirs in this issue recount. Norman, by example, taught the importance of observing and acknowledging the ridiculous, particularly when it is sometimes cloaked in one's own deeply held beliefs. Socrates exhorted his students to seek to know themselves through rigorous probing of their beliefs. Norman Mailer also encouraged the strategic importance of evolving self-

knowledge, not only in others but in one's own life. Like Socrates, perhaps the most important teacher in Western history, Norman Mailer strove to practice what he preached.

Since that tragic day nearly one year ago, I have thought about the impact of Norman Mailer's passing, both in terms of the world of American letters and for the future of *The Mailer Review*. When we launched the inaugural issue in October of 2007, our mission was to promote Norman Mailer's life and work. We endeavor to play a role, however large or small, in the shaping of his legacy. Our first volume was met with acclaim, both nationally and internationally. The vibrations from readers were positive as we went into our second year. The mission of the *Review* has not changed because of the passing of Norman Mailer, our *raison d'être*. Indeed, the loss of the source of our inspiration may prove to be a catalyst in energizing the world of Mailer Studies.

It is not uncommon for renewed interest to take place after an author is gone. I fully expect this to be the case with Norman Mailer. The Norman Mailer Writers Colony, launched by Norris Church Mailer, Larry Schiller, Sam Radin, Mike Lennon, and Tom Staley, is located in Provincetown. It promises to be a thriving, birthing place for generations of writers who have been inspired by the life and work of Norman Mailer. There is renewed interest in Mailer's work in cinema and future issues of the *Review* will reflect this interest from a range of perspectives. There is a substantial body of unpublished fiction in the archives to be analyzed by scholars and we hope to offer selected excerpts to our readers. *The Mailer Review*, as the journal of record for all things Mailer, dedicates itself to playing an integral role in participating in the evolving legacy of Norman Mailer.

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Editors receive far too much credit when a journal is successful. Indeed, no serial publication could achieve respectability without the critical contributions of many individuals. However, there is often one person without whom an editor could not function. In my case, it is Mike Lennon, my friend and chief counselor—an Ur-editor with a stunning depth of experience and a bottomless reservoir of ideas, energy, and factual assistance. He is also a strategic source connected to a significant number of artists, scholars, public intellectuals, and others.

USF English Chair Hunt Hawkins' depth and intensity of support cannot be overstated. In a time of statewide financial crisis, Prof. Hawkins has always been

a strong and steady supporter of the *Review*. English staff members Deedra Hickman and Daniel Kanouff have been especially important in assisting the *Review*, from design to transmission. David Light, Chris Busa, and Mark Olshaker have been pillars of strength in generating new ideas nurturing the *Review*.

I am deeply appreciative of the generosity of our donors, especially Neil Abercrombie and Nancie Caraway, Mike and Donna Lennon, Larry and Kathy Schiller, Lawrence Shainberg and Vivian Bower, and the Provincetown Arts Press. Our advertisers, Random House, Sligo Press, the Berta Walker Gallery, and the Provincetown Arts Press have been exceptionally generous in their support. To Nancy Crampton, Stephen Mielke, Barbara Wasserman, Michael Chaiken, and Jessica Oreck, I offer a special nod of thanks for their generosity and work in providing cover photographs for this issue. Mary Bitting provided superb aesthetic and technical counsel. And to Carol Holmes, she of the keen eye, my deep thanks for being a vigilant force in sustaining the factual integrity of our work. Gerri Quashnie of Beljan Ltd. is a consummate professional and an editor's dream. Any errors of omission or commission are solely those of the editor.

I would like to express my special gratitude to those who gave memorial tributes at the Celebration of the Life of Norman Mailer at Carnegie Hall on April 9, 2008. I deeply appreciate the opportunity to publish their remarks, especially those of the Mailer family. Indeed, these poignant testimonies are the cornerstone of this issue.

I am most thankful to Cary Sipiora, my wife of twenty-nine years, for her cheerful surrender of family time in taking second place, often, to the work of the *Review*. We have no stronger supporter than she.

A special debt of gratitude is reserved for Norris Church Mailer, who has been an inspirational source of encouragement, support, and vision. She graciously has given us permission to publish the works of Norman Mailer. Further, she has been a critical link to other authors whose thoughts grace these pages. *The Mailer Review* would not be what it is and where it is without Norris Church Mailer, who has been not only an advocate and enthusiast of the *Review* from the beginning, but continues to inspire us by her formidable courage in this most difficult of years. Thank you, Norris, for being who you are and for giving so much of yourself.

Phillip Sipiora

CARNEGIE HALL MEMORIAL

On April 9, 2008, approximately 2,400 family, friends and admirers gathered at Carnegie Hall for a three-hour tribute to Norman Mailer. The event was sponsored by Mailer's publisher of twenty-five years, Random House, and was hosted by Charlie Rose. Random House Publisher Gina Centrello welcomed the guests. The program was produced by Norris Church Mailer, Lawrence Schiller, Carol Schneider, and J. Michael Lennon, with able assistance from Donna Pedro Lennon and Maria Braeckel. The event included spoken tributes from twenty-five individuals, including twelve members of the Mailer family, and musical tributes from his wife, Norris Church Mailer; Mailer's son-in-law, Peter McEachern (trombone); and his daughter-in-law, Sasha Lazard (voice). In addition, there were photographic montages and video tributes. At the end of the program, the establishment of The Norman Mailer Writers Colony was announced by Sam Radin and Lawrence Schiller. Credits for visual tributes appear below; spoken tributes follow. *The Mailer Review* is grateful to the Mailer Family, Random House, and all the other participants for permission to reprint their tributes.

Credits

Photographic montages: Edited by Lawrence Schiller and Sara Egner.

Photographs: Courtesy of Jill Krementz, Nancy Crampton, Diane Arbus, Robert Belott, Alex Webb, *Esquire* magazine, Duilio Pallottelli, C.J. Zumwalt, Ira Mandelbaum, Jerry Bauer, Rita K. Katz, Yeshiva University, Hans Pettersson, G. Maillard Kesslere, B.P., Patrick McMullan, John H. Popper, Timothy Greenfield-Sanders, Lawrence Schiller, Dmitri Kasterine, Metropolitan Photo Service, Aspirin, Inc., Mark James, Petra Lukoschek, Ken Regan, Elke Rosthal, Donna Pedro Lennon, Christina Pabst, and the Mailer Family Archives.

Video Tributes: Edited by Michael Chaiken, Ian Markiewicz, and Lana Jokel.

Filmmakers, Part One: Richard Copans, Stan Neumann, Michael Seiler, Jean-Pierre Catherine, Dick Fontaine, Jeffrey Van Davis, J. Michael Lennon, D.A. Pennebaker, Chris Hegedus. Sean Williams.

Filmmakers, Part Two: Peter Alson, Hans-Jorg Weyhmuller.

"Autumn in New York" Music and lyrics by Vernon Duke; played by Sonny Stitt.

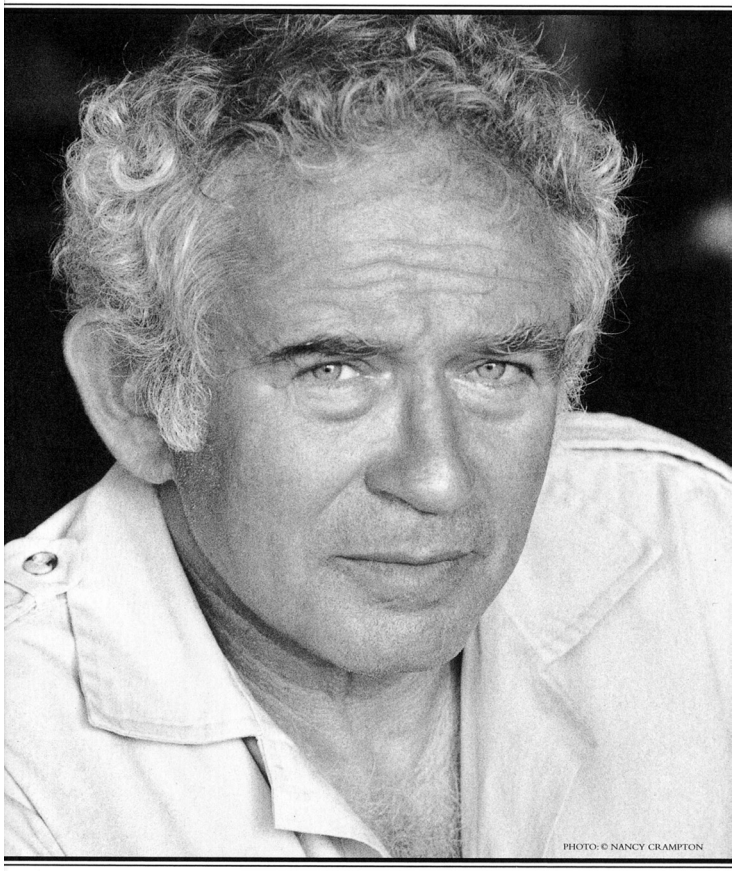
"Requiem for a Boxer" By Peter McEachern.

"Romance" By Georgi Sviridov.

"You'll Come Back (You Always Do)" Music by Angelo Badalamenti; lyrics by Norman Mailer.

The Time of His Time

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF
NORMAN MAILER



CARNEGIE HALL • NEW YORK CITY
APRIL 9, 2008 • 4:00 P.M.