REFLECTIONS

THIS YEAR AND THE YEAR AHEAD ARE PARTICULARLY NOTABLE AND PROSPEROUS TIMES FOR Mailer Studies. The long-awaited authorized biography by J. Michael Lennon will soon be published. The Norman Mailer Center and The Norman Mailer Writers Colony are thriving with exciting growth, innovative programs, distinguished speakers and faculty, and enthusiastic participation by gifted young writers. Random House is publishing a collection of Mailer's germinal essays. TASCHEN has paired Mailer's original text (his 1973 biography *Marilyn*) with Bert Stern's extraordinary photographs, a book conceived by Larry Schiller. Further, Criterion has recently released a new master set of all four Mailer films, and there is an HBO film of Mailer in the plans. We have much to look forward to over the coming year.

The 2012 volume of *The Mailer Review* marks our sixth consecutive year of a substantial life span for our kind of magazine/journal—and we believe that we are in our infancy in ideas, enthusiasm, and dedicated readers. One might reasonably conclude that times have never been better for those interested in nurturing and expanding the legacy of one of America's most important writers across several genres. And it should not be forgotten that Mailer was a public intellectual of the first rank, as well as a serious filmmaker.

Yet, one of the major motifs of this issue, "Why Mailer Matters," may strike some readers as implying that Norman Mailer requires a defense or justification for his significance, for his presence in the contemporary, swirling world of ideas, particularly as new media have come to play a leading role in the dissemination of so many aspects of cultural and intellectual life. Our theme was not chosen to suggest a sense of urgency or the necessity of defense. On the contrary, the staff of the *Review* believes, strongly, in the fundamental, enduring strength of the Mailer legacy. However, we also believe that it is important for our pages to articulate, regularly and systematically, a range of seminal reasons why Mailer continues to have relevance in a world and nation changing more rapidly than ever, in evolving dimensions of culture, ideology, economics, and, of course, the importance of the

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word and its uneasy relationship with the importance of the image. Mailer anticipated some of the changes that would come about as electronic and print media face one another. We hope that the pages of this issue provide a glimpse into the complexity of Norman Mailer and his relationship(s) to the matters of his time and our time.

The articles selected for this issue were chosen to represent a range of perspectives on the Mailer legacy. Robert Begiebing, Ray Elliot, J. Michael Lennon, and Warren Mason discuss why Norman Mailer and James Jones do matter. Lennon subsequently provides a glimpse into Mailer's relationship with Gore Vidal. Morris Dickstein reveals his 1980 letter nominating Norman Mailer for the Nobel Prize. Sean Abbott chronicles the salience of his 1998 interview with Mailer and explores its relevance to an expanding understanding of Mailer in the technological era. Richard Stratton examines the influence of Mailer in literary interpretation, particularly within the context of theoretical shifts in criticism over the past generation. John Whalen-Bridge discusses his education and Mailer's influence on him. Mashey Bernstein depicts his first encounter with Mailer. Barry H. Leeds recalls the influence of Mailer and *An American Dream* in his life. Nicholas Samaras, in poetic language, probes the necessity of Mailer. Other writers examine complex connections between Mailer's writing and the work of other germinal writers, including Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Burroughs, and Updike. And yet other analysts examine the role of genre in the interpretation of works of Mailer.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to our benefactors, without whose generous nourishment *The Mailer Review* could not exist. And thank you, dear readers, for your enthusiastic, steadfast support over the past six years. We look forward to continuing our role in nurturing the legacy of Norman Mailer, who matters in ways heretofore unrecognized and unacknowledged.

Phillip Sipiora