

Mailer and *Maidstone*: When *Cinéma Vérité* fiction becomes real

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Abstract:

During the 1960s several cultural fields asked questions about distinctions between fiction and reality. As well, underground cinema and *cinéma vérité* breached these boundaries through various shooting tactics. In 1967-68, Norman Mailer applied his 'new journalism' strategies to film, directing *Wild 90* (1968), *Beyond the Law* (1968), and *Maidstone* (1970). While all three films exemplify Mailer's work, *Maidstone* is infamous for a scene in which the actor Rip Torn attempts fictionally to assassinate Mailer who is playing Norman T. Kingsley, a famous movie director. The fictional encounter becomes 'real' when Torn hits Mailer over the head with a hammer. Mailer responds, biting Torn's ear. This essay examines the critical reception of this scene. It considers how reviewers place the scene within Mailer's contemporaneous celebrity reputation and philosophical treads of the 1960s. This contributes to understanding 1960s and subsequent postulations about the narrativization of history, celebrity culture, and fascinations with watching 'reality'.

Key Words: celebrity culture, historiography, new journalism, Norman Mailer, reality TV

During the 1960s several experimental threads opened questions about relations and distinctions between fiction and reality in the United States: in theater: happenings; in documentary filmmaking: both *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema¹; in experimental and indie cinema: John Cassavetes's films, Andy Warhol's 'psychodramas,' and Haskell Wexler's *Medium Cool* (1969); and in reporting: the 'new journalism', considered started by Norman Mailer's 'Superman Comes to the Supermarket' (1960) and his further work and that of Tom Wolfe, Truman Capote, Hunter S. Thompson, and others. In 1968, Mailer won the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award for his coverage of the 1967 march on the Pentagon published in book form as *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, The Novel as History*. Mailer also applied some of his prose strategies to film in 1967-68, writing and directing

Wild 90 (1968, cinematographer is D.A. Pennebaker, already a famous documentarian), *Beyond the Law* (1968, cinematographers are Pennebaker and 2 others), and *Maidstone* (1970, cinematographers are Pennebaker, Richard Leacock, and 5 others).²

While all three films exemplify Mailer's themes and styles, *Maidstone* is infamous for an event in which Rip Torn, playing Raoul Rey O'Houlihan, unexpectedly attacks Mailer who is playing Norman T. Kingsley, a famous movie director. Mailer had given the large group of friends gathered on Long Island, New York, for the five-day shoot general directions about what to do but counted on them to improvise the scenes. Torn had been told to try to kill Kingsley if the situation required it. Rather than attempting the assassination at the final night's big ball, Torn chose to have a go at the killing the following morning after Mailer considered the filming to have ended. Torn-the-actor hits Mailer on the head with a hammer; Mailer-the-person responds, biting Torn's ear, and blood streams down both men's heads and necks. Mailer's children who were there as part of the general party-filming happened to be walking by, and they burst into hysterics, further upsetting Mailer.³

This scene in particular provokes critical questions about its reception. It is certainly a famous cinematic moment, but did reviewers and audiences respond to this irruption of the 'real' within an improvised fictional film and, if so, how? Thus, this essay examines the reception of this scene in particular.⁴ In earlier work, I argued for a contextual/historical approach to understanding reception, one which considers positioned identities and 'circulating discursive propositions and ideologies'.⁵ For this case, the specific research question is, how did reviewers of the era understand and evaluate the blending and confusion of fiction and reality? What strategies did they use to explain it and its impact on them as viewers?

In most ways, the reviewers' possible confusion ended up to be a 'non-event' although they seemed compelled to mention or even foreground the scene in their reviews of *Maidstone*. However, why this 'non-event' was so and how the scene was analyzed does depend significantly on the historical context and prevalent discourses of the 1960s. This broader context also ends up preparing for subsequent end-of-the-twentieth-century postulations about the narrativization of history so important to historiography, about performance and celebrity culture, and about the fascination of watching 'reality'. This reception then is symptomatic and indicative of important trends in culture and in cultural analysis.

The Context: 1960s Politics, New Journalism, Celebrity Culture, and Experiments in Documentary and Fictional Styles

The contexts for this film scene's reception are multiple, complex, and contradictory and benefit from focusing particularly on Mailer's position within several wider developments: 1960s activist politics, the appearance of new journalism, creation of celebrity brands, and innovative approaches to documenting – and questioning the documentation of – history.⁶

By the 1960s, Mailer was a well-known fiction writer, earning his first significant attention with *The Naked and the Dead* (1948), a realistic novel that displayed the horrors of World War II and used the profane language of the soldiers to vivid and naturalistic effect. During the next couple of decades, Mailer expressed socialist and existentialist positions typical of the era. In 1955 he co-founded New York City's *The Village Voice*, now considered one of the earliest alternative/underground newspapers.⁷ In early 1960, Mailer turned to essay-writing which provided him an income and a platform. Moreover, it was an era of serious magazine writing, especially for the publications for which he wrote: *Esquire* and *Harper's*. Usually in need of money, Mailer learned to capitalize on his writing and, soon, his personality. He rapidly collected his shorter magazine essays into books, and he also serialized continued stories over several magazine issues and then quickly published them in a single tome. An example of the former is his 1959 aptly named *Advertisements for Myself*; the latter is his *The Armies of the Night* (1968), an account of the 1967 March on the Pentagon, which won a Pulitzer and a National Book Award.

Mailer exploited himself. A hard-drinking, partying New York intellectual, Mailer developed a persona and a reputation, at least within his own circles, as combative. He also engaged in volatile contemporary politics, taking strong and often unpopular positions which he believed were radical (as well as correct). Mailer's 'The White Negro' (1957) is still discussed for its provocative analysis of the Beat and Hips' appropriation of black culture.⁸ He ran unsuccessfully for mayor of New York City in 1969. His volatile town hall debate over 'women's lib' in 1971 with Jacqueline Ceballos, Germaine Greer, Jill Johnson, Diana Trilling, Susan Sontag, Betty Friedan, and others about his disagreements with Kate Millett in his 'The Prisoner of Sex' article for *Harpers* emphasized a particular male perspective seen as increasingly out-of-step for liberal politics.⁹

Equally significant is his smart analysis of the national political scene. Mailer's 1960 *Esquire* essay, 'Superman Comes to the Supermarket,' is a savvy and biting analysis of the 1960 Democratic Party convention. Now considered a signal opening to 'new journalism,' as Mailer biographer Michael Lennon argues, the essay was recognized as an important piece of writing even as it was published. Lennon quotes New York journalist Pete Hamill: "Rather than just a political sense there was a moral sense that came out of the piece"¹⁰

By the early 1970s, what distinguished this new style of prose was being widely discussed. Michael L. Johnson defines new journalism as referring to a 'new subjective, creative, and candid style of reportage and commentary'.¹¹ Johnson, furthermore, argues that 'the principle distinguishing mark of New Journalistic style is the writer's attempt to be personalistic, involved, and creative in relation to the events he reports and comments upon. His journalism, in general, has no pretense of being "objective" and it bears the clear stamp of his commitment and personality' (46). Tom Wolfe, himself a practitioner of new journalism, recalls the term appearing around 1965 and proposes that four devices typify the style: scene by scene reporting; full dialogue; a story told through the characters, especially what they feel; and the details of everyday life which become 'symbolic' of the

situation.¹² These strategies are evident in Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* (1966) which Capote claimed at the time was 'a new literary form that he called "the nonfiction novel"'.¹³

Mailer's writing in the 1960s evidences these features, but *The Armies of the Night* makes an innovative move: rather than refer to himself as 'I' or 'one,' Mailer labels himself as 'Mailer' in the text. This creates a distance that allows Mailer-as-author to comment on Mailer-as-participant. What becomes endearing but also provokes a bit of skepticism is how Mailer constructs 'Mailer'. For example, early in the march to the Pentagon (in a chapter called 'The Historian'), Mailer writes:

For [someone needed to resolve the ambiguity of the meaning of the march], an eyewitness who is a participant but not a vested partisan is required, further he must be not only involved, but ambiguous in his own proportions, a comic hero, which is to say, one cannot happily resolve the emphasis of the category – is he finally comic, a ludicrous figure with mock-heroic associations; or is he not unheroic, and therefore embedded somewhat tragically in the comic? Or is he both at once, and all at once?¹⁴

Mailer seems to enjoy and even exploit the confusion of categories that he constructs.

Mailer also notes, 'Yes, Mailer had an egotism of curious disproportions' (138). Mailer explains elsewhere that the decision to call himself Mailer was the result of editing his first film: he became used to watching himself on the screen and thinking he needed to move 'Mailer' to another spot.¹⁵ Such a narrational construction *also* allows Mailer a certain claim to his understanding of existentialism, of creating his own self. He is the writer of his own persona and destiny; he stages his selves.

Furthermore, this writing choice produces an inventive approach to writing history. Mailer points out:

... the difficulty is that history is interior – no documents can give sufficient intimation: the novel must replace history at precisely that point where experience is sufficiently emotional, spiritual, psychical, moral, existential, or supernatural to expose the fact that the historian in pursuing the experience would be obliged to quit the clearly demarcated limits of historic inquiry.¹⁶

Whatever were the causes for the narrational choice, the effect is a distancing to permit the analysis of Mailer as a performer within the events of history. Moreover, as Richard Poirier notes, 'One reason that Mailer is a great journalist is that he manages to be a witness of the present as if it were already the past. He experiences it from the perspective of his future talk and writing about it'.¹⁷ So in some sense, Mailer narrativizes what is occurring to him, blending present and future, Mailer as 'real' with Mailer as 'character'.

For the purposes here, it is also important to emphasize as well how new journalism as a whole collaborated with celebrity culture. Mailer – and Capote, Wolfe, and Thompson

– become national personalities about whom the public might wish to know the authentic and the scandalous. Each writer developed vivid personalities and projected them through national media outlets. Mailer certainly was aware of these branding expectations, telling *The New York Times* film critic, Vincent Canby, in 1968 that Mailer knew he was a ‘public character’.¹⁸

This sort of creating and blurring – of making *subjective* – reality has important concurrent expressions in documentary, fiction, and experimental filmmaking. In France, in the 1950s, Jean Rouch’s innovative documentaries which promoted combining reality and fiction gained important notice, including attracting the attention of early French new wave filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard and Jacques Rivette who took up some of his tactics in their early movies. In 1961 Rouch and Edgar Morin’s *Chronicle of a Summer* won the International Critics Prize at the Cannes Film Festival and was shown in New York City in 1965.

In the United States, *cinéma vérité* and direct cinema documentaries such as the works by the Drew Associates Pennebaker and Leacock created questions about the influences of cameras (and journalists) on events. Future Mailer collaborator, Pennebaker, was well-known for his ground-breaking documentaries such as *Primary* (1960, on the 1960 Democratic primary in Wisconsin) and *Dont [sic] Look Back* (1967, on Bob Dylan) which took a ‘fly on the wall’ approach to shooting, using new lightweight camera and sound equipment. Although film scholars now label Pennebaker’s and his compatriots’ work direct cinema, Mailer (and others) used the allied French term from Rouch’s work of *cinéma vérité* to brand Mailer’s work.¹⁹

U.S. fiction filmmakers also explored a more improvisational style imitating documentaries while still making fictional films. *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1959), *Faces* (Cassavetes, 1968), and *Medium Cool* (Haskell Wexler, 1969) all shot with roving cameras and dialogue that was – or appeared to be – improvised. *Medium Cool* is famous for a fictional scene set amongst the demonstrations of the 1968 Democratic Convention which is interrupted by the real police attacking the real protestors. By the end of the 1960s, experimental filmmakers began shooting *pseudo*-documentaries: Jim McBride’s *David Holzman’s Diary* (1967, opening in 1973), William Greaves’s *Symbiopsychotaxiplasm: Take One* (1968), and Yoko Ono and John Lennon’s *Rape* (1969), all of which provoke questions about previously obvious borders between reality and fiction.

Mailer and His Directing Career

Living in New York City, Mailer was very much a part of the art and downtown Village scene, with filmmaker and critic Jonas Mekas escorting him to underground and experimental cinema. Canby quotes Mailer as really liking Godard’s *Weekend* (1967),²⁰ and Mailer also took Andy Warhol as a model, particularly Warhol’s ‘scripting’ practices.²¹ As J. J. Murphy describes Warhol’s production routines, ‘Warhol conceived of narrative as a series of situations in which his nonprofessional performers would engage in improvised role playing His films were highwire acts in the sense that his strategy involved putting certain

elements into play and merely recording what happened'.²² This 'psychodrama,' as Murphy notes, should result in 'the artifice of the performance or situation suddenly break[ing] down, and the performer as well as the audience experiences a heightened sense of reality' (9).

In 1967 Mailer began *Wild 90*, using four friends, no script, and some generalized situations to be improvised. His friend Pennebaker and the actors shot it in four nights. *Wild 90* premiered January 7, 1968, but received 'abysmal' reviews.²³ Before *Wild 90* was exhibited, Mailer began *Beyond the Law*, employing a similar production strategy. The film received better reviews in part because, as some reviewers noted, the sound was decipherable.²⁴ *Variety* was rather ecstatic about the film, proclaiming: 'strangely and marvelously, it all makes organic sense as demonstrating that the "social truth" of real life leads inevitably to the "aesthetic truth" of fiction'.²⁵

In summer 1968, Mailer shot *Maidstone* in a very ritzy part of Long Island, New York. Beginning planning the film a week after Valerie Solanas shot Warhol and Robert Kennedy was assassinated, Mailer set out the premises to his large group of friends and performers. Mailer would star as Norman Kingsley (Kingsley is Mailer's middle name) who is a famous filmmaker considering running for President. Kingsley is filming a parody of Luis Buñuel's 1967 *Belle de Jour* with a male prostitute brothel and female clients. Also in the mix is the possible conspiracy that Kingsley's own security staff would assassinate him. The directions for Torn's character were that he should attack Kingsley 'if the situation called for it'.²⁶

Because of Mailer's celebrity status, the local papers covered the party-filming.²⁷ Mailer described his directorial approach as a military operation which was 'making an attack on reality, on what is the nature of reality'.²⁸ He also said, 'You're still thinking of movies being carefully structured. ... What I'm doing has five realities; you're going to slide from one reality to another' (12W). Indeed, a viewer of his movie did. However, so did Mailer. Having forewarned the camera personnel of his intentions, Torn enacted his 'assassination attempt' the morning after Mailer thought filming had finished.²⁹ The fight between the two men made the papers, preparing well the audiences of the film to expect the scene when *Maidstone* was finally edited and shown beginning in September 1970.

The Reception of *Maidstone*

This essay focuses specifically on the public response to the Torn/Mailer fight incident. The scene was not a surprise; indeed, it was one major reason to see the film. However, the incident did provoke critics to consider questions about fiction and reality and about celebrity culture and performance, especially since the film was as much about 'Mailer' as about any fictional plot.

First reception theme: *fiction and reality*

Although famed *cinéma vérité* filmmaker Jean Rouch who was at the 1970 Venice Film Festival screening of *Maidstone* stood up at the end of the movie and declared the hammer scene was all fake and walked out,³⁰ U.S. spectators thought the scene was real in that

Torn's dramatic gesture impinged on Mailer's assumptions about what reality in which they were and that the fight was genuine. For example, Leo Braudy advises watching the film twice because the ending 'makes the viewer immediately want to re-evaluate what came before, so authentic is the emotion released'.³¹ So the response question becomes not authenticity of the scene on its own narrative merits but definitions and evaluations of the existential situation within and between Torn-as-actor and Mailer-as-person.

As a result of an early campus screening at Rice University in May 1971, one student who liked the film writes to Mailer: 'My main impression is that "Maidstone" directly concerns itself with the question of reality – personal reality, and "objective" reality'.³² Professional critics agree but are often less tolerant of Mailer's project than was the student. Archer Winsten praises the 'extemporizing' as 'of a superior sort, very spontaneous,' but thinks the scene does not prove anything and 'Hollywood's better (arranged and choreographed) fights are much more impressive'.³³ Leo Mishkin summarizes the film as a 'hodge-podge of lunatic plot, Pirandello ambiguity between fiction and fact, and various assortments of weird episodes'.³⁴ Canby is a bit kinder in an essay entitled 'Norman Mailer – An Ego to Cherish': 'This sequence is real and it is spooky, but it is rather small compensation for more than 90 minutes of other footage that ranges from the simply amusing to the simply wretched. Still I wouldn't have missed it'.³⁵ Canby does place the scene within a valuable historical context: 'If Allen Funt, who began with nothing more than a *Candid Microphone*, is the Robert Flaherty of provoked cinema, then Mailer is its Cecil B. DeMille'. (D5)

Perhaps most positive about the fiction/reality conundrum is Bob Porter who emphasizes Mailer as author: '[The film] does all of the things you would expect of Mailer. By turn the film is brilliant, crash [sic], boring, vulgar, narcissistic, obsessed with sexuality, tender, tasteless, fascinating – and it is violent'. Moreover, the hammer scene 'is horrifying, terrifying. Where is the division line between reality and fantasy? What has Torn become? Is he still an actor? Has fantasy turned into reality? ... What does it mean?'.³⁶ Jay Cocks agrees about the final scene: 'In this scene Mailer achieves his objective: the melding of screen illusion and reality'.³⁷

It seems fair here also to report on Mailer's reception, especially since the hammer attack surprised him. Part of the difficulty in finishing the film was whether he could become reconciled to that moment, which embarrassed him before his family. In an interview, Cocks reports Mailer as claiming the film is like cubism, an attack on post-impressionism. Mailer says, 'In *Maidstone*, I was making an attack on reality. Fact and fantasy keep coalescing'.³⁸ In his book about *Maidstone*, Mailer goes further (typically):

It was a species of realization – that the hide of the real remains real only so long as the psychologically real fails to cut into its existence by an act which makes psychology real – the tongue would twist in its turnings on such a philosophical attempt faster than the film. For it was possible *Maidstone*

inhabited that place where the film was supposed to live – that halfway station between the psychological and the real which helped to explain the real.³⁹

Thus, the scene, while not surprising any viewer, permitted discussion of various sorts of ‘reality’ as well as the potential ambiguities of making a clear distinction between reality and fiction. It also allowed some conversation about emotional or intellectual transitions when what the viewer was conceiving as ‘filmic fiction’ turned into ‘filmic documentary’.

Second reception theme: *celebrity culture and performance*

Actually, given the ‘public character’ that Mailer was,⁴⁰ an argument and interpretation could easily be made that the film is a factual document of Mailer’s celebrity performance. This is a point Judith Crist rather obliquely makes in her negative review: ‘Mailer as superstud and superstar; [the film] comes to life only in a pseudo cinema-verite [sic] finale wherein Rip Torn, the only pro on hand takes to the great auteur with hammer in hand. The two survive to yell obscenities at each other. Ho hum’.⁴¹ Less negative is Canby’s conclusion that the scene is ‘complex and dense and very much in keeping with what a major author is required to give his public in this era of Total Revelation’.⁴² Joseph Gelmis provides a psychological thesis:

If Thomas Alva Edison hadn’t invented movies, Norman Mailer would have had to do it. Movies for Mailer are an extension of an irrepressible personality. How else could he have satisfied his frustrated ambitions to be a Mafia chief (‘Wild 90’), a homicide squad detective (‘Beyond the Law’) or a presidential candidate (‘Maidstone’) except by bankrolling, directing and starring in his own movies?⁴³

However, in a 1971 essay, ‘Stars and Celebrities’, Richard Schickel uses the scene to make even broader comments about ‘public performance – the art of it and the changing expectations all of us, actors and audience alike, now entertain for it’.⁴⁴ Because one of Schickel’s points is to argue that the auteur director is taking over control of scenes which actors used to run, which he does not think produces better films, he applauds what he considers to be Torn’s revolt against Mailer. Schickel contends that Torn’s actions force Mailer to stop playing ‘avant-garde film artist and multi-media celebrity’ and become ‘an aggrieved parent’ because the events happen ‘in front of the children’. Schickel concludes: ‘And so, in a further ironic twist, Torn accidentally enhances [Mailer’s] celebrity, providing one of those off-guard snapshots of the famous that have traditionally enlivened mass-magazine profiles and which have the effect not of diminishing the celebrity in size but of humanizing him for the audience’ (65).

Observations

The aesthetic and socio-political contexts of the late 1960s – sliding definitions of reality and fiction, purported existentialist creations of the self, branded and commodified celebrity performances – end up preparing for subsequent transformations in the 1970s in the writing of history, performance and celebrity culture, and, ultimately, the opportunities for watching ‘reality’. For instance, new journalism as a subjective description of events becomes a popular and widespread approach to recounting contemporary occurrences. Related to new journalism are also shifts in historiographical theory. In particular, academic historians take up the 1973 observations of Hayden White in ‘Interpretation in History’ and *Metahistory* to reconstruct ‘history’ and historiography as ideological acts of narrative and narration.⁴⁵ These discourses and shifts have had both good and ill consequences for what is at stake in claims about ‘reality’ and ‘facts’.

Additionally, describing Mailer (as well as other filmmakers such as Warhol) as one of the major forefathers of reality television may now seem less provocative than had this essay initially stated this thesis. Indeed, while Funt’s surreptitious filming of how people responded to awkward situations in the television series ‘Candid Camera’ (1960-67) documents reality and while game shows on both radio and television from the 1940s provide scenarios of engaging people in scripted circumstances, Mailer’s house-party-making-a-fiction-film documents an event of both fiction and reality. ‘Reality TV’ as a genre of television programming is now so normalized as to have specific strictures for construction (‘real’ or celebrity participants, controlled spatial and event situations) and tropes of plot (confrontations, confessions).

The reception of Mailer’s *Maidstone* foregrounds the spectatorial fascination with the authentic and the celebrity-as-actor. Reviewers and audiences engaged in the provocation of reality and fiction mixing to reveal, in this case, the spontaneous reaction of celebrity Mailer to an unexpected fictional/real narrative event. In particular, this study suggests that the context of the 1960s – increasing analysis of the arbitrary definitions and ambiguities of fiction and reality and the ubiquity of celebrity culture – prepared audiences for this film. While *Maidstone* gave critics some opportunity for speculation about the medium, it did not incite any critical or philosophical confusion about the achievements of the movie. That finding illuminates the history of the reception of transitions of genres of films and television and approaches to understanding them.

Postscript

This essay has focused on the contemporaneous reception of the Torn-Mailer fight scene in *Maidstone*. It is worth considering that the scene has a history of reception since 1971 and has a place in the broad cultural memory of Mailer. As a consequence of seeing the Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker’s documentary, *Town Bloody Hall* (1979), which recorded the 1971 debate with Mailer on women’s liberation, actress Maura Tierney began working on a theatrical production with Elizabeth LeCompte, artistic director of the New York City-based

Wooster Group. That production, 'The Town Hall Affair,' had its premiere February 4, 2017. As a multi-media presentation, the production incorporates screen images that display what the characters are saying.

The synchronicity with which the cast members say what their alter egos onscreen are saying is a jaw-dropping marvel. ... And for pure, mind-boggling theatrical bravura, there's the uncanny spectacle of our two-headed Norman Mailer [Ari Fliakos] becoming the man he plays in 'Maidstone' and the actor Rip Torn (Mr. [Scott] Sheperd) from that same film. Mr. Fliakos and Mr. Shepherd proceed to enact the movie's notorious on-camera fight, which involved a hammer and a badly bitten ear. The impression is of Mailer wrestling with himself. But everybody on-stage, it seems, is truly divided and truly alone.⁴⁶

As a cultural memory, this scene has become a palimpsest, circulating within histories of the late 1960s and early 1970s, as an icon of its times. Following through the meanings of its reappearances over the past forty-five years may illuminate on-going lines of cultural discourses about reality and fiction and the production and performance of selves.

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Notes:

¹ See discussion about these terms further below.

² For further placement of Mailer's work within film practices of the 1960s, see Janet Staiger, 'Proto-Indie: 1960s "Half-Way" Cinema', in *A Companion to American Indie Cinema*, edited by Geoff King (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), 209-32.

³ This scene is easily accessible on the Internet. For example on YouTube access it via 'Norman Mailer and hammer.'

⁴ Mailer took nearly two years to edit the film. *Maidstone* was initially shown at the 1970 Venice Film Festival, then in 1971 at the Whitney Museum and elsewhere.

⁵ Janet Staiger, *Interpreting Films: Studies in the Historical Reception of American Cinema* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 47.

⁶ A standard biography is J. Michael Lennon, *Norman Mailer: A Double Life* (NY: Simon & Schuster, 2013). Good on his filmmaking activities are Patricia Bosworth, 'Mailer's Movie Madness', *Vanity Fair*, no. 571 (March 2008): 398-437, and Michael Chaiken, 'The Master's Mercurial Mistress: How Norman Mailer Courted Chaos 24 Frames per Second', *Film Comment* 43 (July-August 2007): 36-42. An extensive bibliography is J. Michael Lennon and Donna Pedro Lennon, *Norman Mailer: Works and Days* (Westport, MA: Sligo Press, 2000). Mailer's papers are at the Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas. References to materials held there will be HRHRC Mailer and box and folder number.

⁷ Michael L. Johnson, *The New Journalism: The Underground Press, the Artists of Nonfiction, and Changes in the Established Media* (Lawrence: University of Kansas, 1971), 7.

⁸ Also see his important 1954 essay, 'The Homosexual Villain', which is a self-examination of his own biases about homosexuality.

⁹ See the recently restored documentary of this event, *Town Bloody Hall* (Chris Hegedus and D. A. Pennebaker, 1979).

¹⁰ Lennon, *Mailer*, 270, quoting Pete Hamill.

¹¹ Johnson, *New Journalism*, xi.

¹² Tom Wolfe, 'Seizing the Power', *Esquire* (n.d.), rpt. in edited by Tom Wolfe and E. W. Johnson, *The New Journalism* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973), 23.

¹³ Charles H. Brown, 'The Rise of the New Journalism', *Current* 141 (June 1972), 31.

¹⁴ Norman Mailer, *The Armies of the Night: History as a Novel, The Novel as History* (New York: New American Library/Signet, 1968), 67.

¹⁵ Vincent Canby, 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling, It's Norman Mailer', *New York Times*, 27 October 1968, D15, in HRHRC Mailer, 583.14.

¹⁶ Mailer, *Armies*, 284.

¹⁷ Richard Poirier, *Norman Mailer* (New York: Viking, 1972), 45.

¹⁸ Canby, 'Irish Eyes', D15.

¹⁹ Direct cinema tries to be a fly on the wall; *cinéma vérité* takes a more interventionist, provocative approach, often displaying the filmmaker's interference with reality. For an example of Mailer's statements about this, see Mosk, 'Reviews at Venice Fest; *Maidstone*', *Variety*, 16 September 1970, 14, in HRHRC Mailer 612.10. The differences between these two approaches to filmmaking were marked out at the time, helpfully by Eric Barnouw in *Documentary: A History of the Non-Fiction Film* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974), 254; rev. ed. (1983), 254-55. A recent discussion on the Visible Evidence's listserv in December 2015 indicates a large literature on the terms and their shifting meanings. Frank Verano notes that Pennebaker used the term *cinéma vérité* (as did Mailer); Frank Verano, 'Direct Cinema vs. Cinema Verité Bibliography – Part Deux', VisEv listserv, 8 December 2015. I would argue that *Maidstone* is a sort of hybrid: part set-up and provocation; part fly-on-the-wall.

²⁰ Canby, 'Irish Eyes', D15.

²¹ Joseph Gelmis, 'Mailer Uplifts the Underground', *Newsday*, 1 October 1968, 28A, in HRHRC Mailer 577.5

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- ²² J. J. Murphy, *The Black Hole of the Camera: The Films of Andy Warhol* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 7.
- ²³ Lennon, *Mailer*, 376.
- ²⁴ Lennon, *Mailer*, 379-81; 398. See, for example, Gelmis, 'Mailer Uplifts', 28A; Amos Vogel, letter to Norman Mailer, 11 October 1968, in HRHRC Mailer 557.5; Vincent Canby, 'Norman Mailer Offers "Beyond the Law"', *New York Times*, 30 September 1968, 60; but also Judith Crist, 'The Allegory Bag', *New York*, n.d., n.p. in HRHRC Mailer 583.14.
- ²⁵ Byro, 'Beyond the Law', *Variety*, 2 October 1968, n.p. in HRHRC Mailer 583.14.
- ²⁶ Lennon, *Mailer*, 402. Also background and synopses are in Chaiken, 'Master's', 36-42.
- ²⁷ Jack Graves, 'Weekender: Mailer Films Ad-Lib Epic', *East Hampton Star*, 25 July 1968, 1 and 7; Harvey Aronson, 'Starring Norman Mailer', *Newsday* [Long Island, New York], 27 July 1968, 10W-13W, 38W, in HRHRC Mailer 80.8. Other contemporaneous accounts include Sally Beaumont, 'Norman Mailer', *New York*, 19 August 1968, 50-57, in HRHRC Mailer 80.8; Joseph Gelmis, 'Mailer Reviews a Chaotic Year', *Newsday*, n.d. [ca. 1969], 40A in HRHRC Mailer 75.3; Jan Pieter Welt, 'Maidstone: The Film As Game', *Filmmakers Newsletter* 4, no. 11 (September 1971), 23-24, in HRHRC Mailer 80.8; Norman Mailer, *Maidstone: A Mystery* (New York: New American Library, 1971).
- ²⁸ Aronson, 'Starring', 10W quoting Kingsley speaking in *Maidstone*.
- ²⁹ Lennon, *Mailer*, 400-05, 453. Justin Bozung questions this often repeated statement by Torn; email from Justin Bozung to Janet Staiger, 'Mailer *Maidstone* piece notes', 26 March 2016.
- ³⁰ Mosk, 'Reviews', 14.
- ³¹ Leo Braudy, 'Maidstone [the book]', *New York Times*, 19 December 1971, 3.
- ³² Bill Haymes [Houston, Texas], Letter to Norman Mailer, 19 May 1971 in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ³³ Archer Winsten, 'Mailer's "Maidstone" at Whitney', *New York Post*, 24 September 1971, 34, in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ³⁴ Leo Mishkin, 'Mailer's "Maidstone" at Museum', *Morning Telegraph*, 24 September 1971, 3, in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ³⁵ Vincent Canby, 'Norman Mailer – An Ego to Cherish', *New York Times*, 26 September 1971, D1 and D5. Also see his 'Screen: "The Last Movie"', *New York Times*, 30 September 1971, 58.
- ³⁶ Bob Porter, "'Maidstone" and "Glen and Randa"', *Dallas Times Herald*, n.d., n.p., in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ³⁷ Jay Cocks, 'Norman's Phantasmagoria', *Time*, n.d., n.p. [probably 15 November 1971, 97], in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ³⁸ Cocks, 'Phantasmagoria'.
- ³⁹ Mailer, *Maidstone*, 178.
- ⁴⁰ At that time, Robert Brustein uses Mailer as one of his three contemporaneous examples in a discussion of 'cultural schizophrenia', writers and artists as celebrities; 'If an Artist Wants to be Serious and Respected and Rich, Famous and ...', *New York Times*, 26 September 1971, SM12+. The other two people are Erich Segal and Susan Sontag.
- ⁴¹ Judith Crist, review, no citation information, in HRHRC Mailer 612.10.
- ⁴² Vincent Canby, 'Film: Mailer's "Maidstone" Opens Whitney Series', *New York Times*, 24 September 1971, 31.
- ⁴³ Gelmis, 'Mailer Reviews', 40A. Mailer would run for mayor of New York in 1969, losing in the Democratic primary.
- ⁴⁴ Richard Schickel, 'Stars and Celebrities', *Commentary*, 1 August 1971, 61.

⁴⁵ Hayden White, 'Interpretation in History', *New Literary History* 4, no. 2 (Winter 1973), 281-314; Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973).

⁴⁶ Ben Brantley, 'Yelling About Sex', *New York Times*, 11 February 2017, C4. Also see Alexis Soloski, "'The Town Hall Affair' Recreates a Feminist Firestorm', *New York Times*, 6 February 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/02/06/theater/wooster-group-town-hall-affair.html, accessed 14 February 2017; Ben Brantley, 'Review: It's Norman Mailer vs. Feminists in "The Town Hall Affair"', *New York Times*, 20 February 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/02/10/theater/review-the-town-hall-affair.html, accessed 14 February 2017.