The New York State
Edith Wharton Citation of Merit

NORMAN MAILER
State Author
1991-1993

The New York State
Walt Whitman Citation of Merit

AUDRE LORDE
State Poet
1991-1993
The New York State
Edith Wharton Citation of Merit

State Author Advisory Panel
Russell Banks
E. L. Doctorow
Bharati Mukherjee
William Kennedy, chair, ex officio

The New York State
Walt Whitman Citation of Merit

State Poet Advisory Panel
Robert Creeley
Molly Peacock
Charles Simic
Tom Smith, chair, ex officio
The New York State Writers Institute
of the
State University of New York
on behalf of
Governor Mario M. Cuomo
welcomes you
to the presentations of

The New York State
Edith Wharton Citation of Merit
as State Author
to the distinguished
New York State Author

NORMAN MAILER

The New York State
Walt Whitman Citation of Merit
as State Poet
to the distinguished
New York State Poet

AUDRE LORDE

4 P.M.
Wednesday, November 13, 1991
Legislative Office Building
The Hamilton Room

Welcoming Remarks
Commentary on the Awards
H. Patrick Swygert, President
The University at Albany
State University of New York

Tribute to Audre Lorde
Robert Creeley
Outgoing State Poet

Tribute to Norman Mailer
William Kennedy, Director
New York State Writers Institute

Presentation of Citation
State Author and State Poet
The Honorable Mario M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York

Closing Remarks
H. Patrick Swygert
The Well
Legislative Office Building
5:00-6:30 P.M.

Interpretation for the hearing impaired provided by the
Center for Independence for the Hearing Impaired

The New York State Writers Institute gratefully acknowledges the generous support and
assistance of The University at Albany, State University of New York and
the Governor's Office in presenting today's ceremony and reception.
from the works of Norman Mailer

“Ron Stanger’s first impression was how many people were in the room. God, the number of spectators. Executions must be a spectator sport. It really hit him even before his first look at Gary, and then he was thankful the hood was not on yet. That was relief. Gilmore was still a human being, not a hooded, grotesque thing, and Ron realized how he had been preparing himself for the shock of seeing Gary with his face concealed in a black bag. But, no, there was Gary staring at the crowd with an odd humor in his face. Stanger knew what he was thinking: ‘Anybody who knows somebody is going to get an invite to the turkey shoot.’”

— from The Executioner’s Song

“One of the oldest devices of the novelist--some would call it a vice--is to bring his narrative (after many an excursion) to a pitch of excitement where the reader no matter how cultivated is reduced to a beast who can pant no faster than to ask, ‘And then what? Then what happens?’ At which point the novelist, consummate cruel lover, introduces a digression, aware that delay at this point helps to deepen the addiction of his audience.

This, of course, was Victorian practice. Modern audiences, accustomed to superhighways, put aside their reading at the first annoyance and turn to the television set. So a modern novelist must apologize, even apologize profusely, for daring to leave his narrative, he must in fact absolve himself of the charge of employing a device, he must plead necessity.”

— from The Armies of the Night

“But this frustration was replaced by another. What if he had been present, had directed the climactic day himself? What really would it have meant? The Japanese had been worn down to the point where any concerted tactic no matter how rudimentary would have been enough to collapse their lines. It was impossible to shake the idea that anyone could have won this campaign, and it had consisted of only patience and sandpaper.

For a moment he almost admitted that he had had very little or perhaps nothing at all to do with this victory, or indeed any victory--it had been accomplished by a random play of vulgar good luck larded into a causal net of factors too large, too vague, for him to comprehend. He allowed himself this thought, brought it almost to the point of words and then forced it back. But it caused him a deep depression.”

— from The Naked and the Dead

“He did not. said Kittredge. He had died in the hospital.

That may have been his end, but since I had thought of him as near to dead for many years, I pondered his slow extinction. Had his soul died years before his heart and liver and lungs? I hoped not. He had enjoyed so much. Espionage had been his life, and infidelity as well; he had loved them both. Why not? The spy, like the illicit lover, must be capable of existing in two places at once. Even as an actor’s role cannot offer its reality until it is played, so does a lie enter existence by being lived.”

— from Harlot’s Ghost

from the works of Audre Lorde

THE BLACK UNICORN
The black unicorn is greedy. The black unicorn is impatient. The black unicorn was mistaken for a shadow or symbol and taken through a cold country where mist painted mockeries of my fury. It is not on her lap where the horn rests but deep in her moonpit growing. The black unicorn is restless the black unicorn is unrelenting the black unicorn is not free.

NEVER TO DREAM OF SPIDERS
Time collapses between the lips of strangers my days collapse into a hollow tube soon implodes against now like an iron wall my eyes are blocked with rubble a smear of perspectives blurring each horizon in the breathless precision of silence one word is made. Once the renegade flesh was gone fall air lay against my face sharp and blue as a needle but the rain fell through October and death lay a condemnation within my blood. The smell of your neck in August a fine gold wire bejeweled war all the rest lies illusive as a farmhouse on the other side of a valley vanishing in the afternoon.

Day three day four day ten the seventh step a veiled door leading to my golden anniversary flameproofed free-paper shredded in the teeth of a pillaging dog never to dream of spiders and when they turned the hoses upon me a burst of light.

WHO SAID IT WAS SIMPLE
There are so many roots to the tree of anger that sometimes the branches shatter before they bear. Sitting in Nedicks the women rally before they march discussing the problematic girls they hire to make them free. An almost white counterman passes a waiting brother to serve them first and the ladies neither notice nor reject the slighter pleasures of their slavery. But I who am bound by my mirror as well as my bed see causes in color as well as sex and sit here wondering which me will survive all these liberations.
The Edith Wharton Citation of Merit
for Fiction Writers

and

The Walt Whitman Citation of Merit
for Poets

THE NEW YORK STATE WRITERS INSTITUTE of the State University of New York was mandated as a permanent, state-sponsored organization by legislation sponsored by former Assemblyman William Passannante of Manhattan and Senator Tarky J. Lombardi, Jr. of Syracuse and signed into law by Governor Mario M. Cuomo on September 12, 1984. Associated with the State University of New York system, and located at the University at Albany, the Institute draws upon and complements existing programs in imaginative writing and the sister arts throughout New York State.

By special mandate in 1985, the Institute was designated by the New York State Legislature to award both the Edith Wharton Citation of Merit for fiction writers (State Author) and the Walt Whitman Citation of Merit for poets (State Poet) every two years. Upon the recommendation of two advisory panels of distinguished authors convened under the aegis of the Institute, the Governor awards each Citation to “an author whose achievements make him or her deserving of such recognition.” Each Citation carries an honorarium of ten thousand dollars, and the State Author/State Poet “shall promote and encourage fiction/poetry within the State and shall give two public readings within the State each year.”

The State Author award is named for Edith Wharton (1862-1937), who is recognized as one of the great novelists in the history of American literature. Born in New York City into wealth and social status, she nevertheless exposed, in her darkly elegant fiction and novels, the hypocrisies and pressures of New York City society of the time, particularly examining the role and condition of women. Her prose is, in a phrase she herself used to describe successful short fiction, “a shaft driven straight into the heart of experience.”

The State Poet award is named for Walt Whitman (1819-1892), the renowned poet born in Huntington, Long Island, whose body of work, most notably the collection Leaves of Grass, represents a major contribution to American literature.

Past Recipients:

State Author  
Grace Paley, 1986-1988  

State Poet  
Stanley Kunitz, 1986-1988  
Robert Creeley, 1989-1991
Audre Lorde

State Poet
1991-1993

“Poets must teach what they know, if we are all to continue being.”

Audre Lorde, poet, essayist, novelist and teacher was born in New York City on February 18, 1934. She grew up in Manhattan where she attended Catholic school. She loved to read poetry, often reciting whole poems or individual lines to communicate with people. When she could no longer find poems that expressed her feelings, she started writing her own poetry. Her first poem to be published appeared in Seventeen magazine when she was still in high school.

Lorde attended Hunter College, graduating in 1959 with a bachelor’s degree. In 1961 she received a masters in library science from Columbia University and worked as a librarian at Mount Vernon Public Library until 1963. From 1966 to 1968 she worked as head librarian at Town School Library in New York City.

In 1968, Lorde received a National Endowment for the Arts grant and became poet-in-residence at Tougaloo College in Mississippi. Her first volume of poetry, The First Cities, was also published in 1968. Dudley Randall, a black critic and poet described The First Cities as a “quiet, introspective book,” focusing on feelings and relationships.

Lorde’s second volume, Cables to Rage (1970) was published outside the United States. The poems focused on several themes: the transience of human love, the existence of human betrayal, birth, and love.

In 1972 Lorde received a Creative Artists Public Service grant. A year later she published her third book of poetry, From A Land Where Other People Live. Nominated for a National Book Award, this volume portrayed a quiet anger of global injustice and oppression along with more personal themes of nurturing, tenderness and love for her children.

New York Head Shot and Museum, probably her most political and rhetorical work was published in 1974. Writing from the perspective of a city dweller, the poems in this volume express her visions of life in New York City, intertwined with themes of what it is like to be a woman, a mother and Black.

Coal, published in 1976 by W. W. Norton was the first of Lorde’s books to be released by a major publisher. A compilation of her first two books, it brought her work to a broader readership.

Her seventh book of poetry, The Black Unicorn (1978) is considered to be her most revealing work and the apex of her poetic and personal vision. Poet and critic Adrienne Rich said of The Black Unicorn: “refusing to be circumscribed by any simple identity, Audre Lorde writes as a Black woman, a mother, a daughter, a Lesbian, a feminist, a visionary; poems of elemental wildness and healing, nightmare and lucidity.”


Her most recent poetry collections include Chosen Poems Old and New (1982) and Our Dead Behind Us (1986).

Lorde has worked intensively with women of color in many different countries and is a founder of Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, a press which concentrates exclusively on publishing and distributing works of women of color from various communities. She is also a founding mother of Sisters in Support of Sisters in South Africa.

Lorde was professor of English at John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York City from 1979-81. From 1981–87 she was poet and professor of English at Hunter College of The City University of New York where she was named Thomas Hunter Professor in 1987. Her poetry and prose have appeared in numerous periodicals and anthologies here and abroad, and her work has been translated into seven foreign languages.
BOOKS BY AUDRE LORDE

COLLECTIONS OF POETRY

PROSE

SELECTED RESOURCES

CRITICISM
BLACK WOMEN WRITERS AT WORK by Claudia Tate. New York: Continuum, 1984.

PROFILES/INTERVIEWS
GRACEFUL PASSAGES. [11 of the finest black women reflect on the last 20 years and what they have learned for the future.] In Essence Magazine, May 1990, p. 130.

SELECTED READINGS ON TAPE AND VIDEOTAPE
A NEW SPELLING OF OUR NAME. Sound cassette (2). North Dartmouth, MA: Southeastern Massachusetts University Library, Audiovisual Department, 1985.
Norman Mailer

State Author

1991-1993

“A really great novel does not have something to say. It has the ability to stimulate the mind and spirit of the people who come in contact with it.”

Norman Mailer, novelist, nonfiction writer, essayist, screenwriter, ex political candidate and public persona was born in Long Branch, New Jersey on January 31, 1923. In 1927 his family moved to the Eastern Parkway section of Brooklyn, where he attended P.S. 161 and Boys’ High School. At the age of 16, he entered Harvard University to study aeronautical engineering. While at Harvard he developed an interest in writing. A short story, “The Greatest Thing in the World,” which he wrote for the Harvard Advocate, won Story magazine’s college fiction prize.

Mailer was inducted into the army in March 1944, less than a year after graduating with honors from Harvard with a B.S. in engineering. His experience in the army as a surveyor in the field artillery, an intelligence clerk in the cavalry and a rifleman with a reconnaissance platoon in the Philippine mountains, gave him the idea for a novel about World War II. Shortly after his discharge he began writing The Naked and the Dead which was published in 1948. The novel, a critical and commercial success, was at the top of the New York Times best-seller list for eleven weeks, and brought Mailer immediate recognition as one of America’s most promising writers. The Naked and the Dead remains one of the classic novels of World War II.

Mailer’s next two novels Barbary Shore (1951) and The Deer Park (1955), which was rejected by six publishers before being accepted, were not well received, and he turned his literary energies to journalism. He helped found The Village Voice in 1954 and wrote a weekly column for it for a short time. In 1959, Mailer published Advertisements for Myself, a collection of essays, letters and fictions on the subjects of politics, sex, drugs, his own writing, and the works of others. It received considerable attention as it contained autobiographical passages of the pressures of success, money, liquor, and the literary marketplace on the serious American writer.

Mailer returned to the novel with the publishing of An American Dream (1965), and Why Are We in Vietnam? (1967), which was nominated for a National Book Award. During the 60s he also developed a hybrid literary form, combining fiction and nonfiction narrative in The Armies of the Night (1968) which won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award and brought Mailer both popular and critical acclaim, and Miami and the Siege of Chicago (1968), which won a National Book Award for nonfiction. In The Armies of the Night he used the techniques of a novel to explore an October 1967 anti-Vietnam march on the Pentagon, a protest during which he was arrested.

During the next ten years, Mailer continued to write prolifically, publishing a wide range of books including Of a Fire on the Moon (1971), a book on the Apollo 11 moon landing; The Prisoner of Sex (1971), an essay in response to the women’s liberation movement; Marilyn (1973), a novel biography of Marilyn Monroe; The Fight (1976), a book-length description of the Muhammad Ali-George Foreman fight in Zaire, Africa, among others. His body of work displays a wide scope, a willingness to explore controversial themes and to experiment with different forms and styles.

Mailer returned to a book of the same intense proportions as The Naked and the Dead with The Executioner’s Song (1979), a nonfiction novel on the life and execution of convicted murderer Gary Gilmore. The Executioner’s Song won Mailer his second Pulitzer Prize and it also was nominated for the American Book Award and National Book Critics Circle Award. All reviews lauded Mailer’s artistry and agreed that The Executioner’s Song was a substantial book produced by a literary master.

Long promising an epic multi-volume novel of major importance, Mailer published Ancient Evenings, a work of mythic themes, in 1983. Billed as the first of a two-to-four part cycle, Ancient Evenings, an ambitious and daring work of fiction, is set in Egypt during the nineteenth and twentieth dynasties (1290-1100 B.C.).

In addition to his books, Mailer also has written, produced, directed and acted in several films. Wild 90 (1967), which Mailer produced and directed was an adaptation of his book The Deer Park. Despite terrible reviews, it ran for four months at New York’s Theatre de Lys. His second film, Beyond the Law (1968) received positive reviews but did not draw audiences, and his third film, Maidstone (1971), based on The Armies of the Night received mixed reviews. He returned to the cinema to write a screenplay for his murder mystery novel of the same name, Tough Guys Don’t Dance and to direct it himself. This film was well received at the 1987 Cannes film festival. Mailer also wrote the script for the film version of The Executioner’s Song and received an Emmy nomination for best adaptation.

Mailer’s most recent work is Harlot’s Ghost, which was published in the fall of 1991. At 1,310 pages, it is a work of epic proportion and ambition about the people and the plottings of the C.I.A. during the crucial decades of the “American Century.”
BOOKS BY NORMAN MAILER

SELECTED FICTION
BARBARY SHORE. New York: Rinehart, 1951.

SELECTED NONFICTION AND COLLECTIONS
THE WHITE NEGRO. San Francisco: City Lights, 1957.
ADVERTISEMENT FOR MYSELF. New York: Putnam’s, 1959.

BIOGRAPHY [IN NOVEL FORM]

SELECTED RESOURCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIOGRAPHY

CRITICISM

PROFILES/INTERVIEWS

SELECTED READINGS ON TAPE AND VIDEOCASSETTE
ANCIENT EVENINGS. Sound cassettes (2). New York: Caedmon, 1983.
The New York State Library

The New York State Library has served New Yorkers and State government for over 170 years. It is the principal reference library for State government, serves as a resource library and referral center in the New York State Interlibrary Loan Network, and operates the regional library for the blind and visually handicapped. The collection, which totals over 6 million items, is particularly strong in law, medicine, social sciences, education, history (particularly American and New York State), 19th Century American literature, certain pure sciences, technology, and Federal, State and international documents. Its information resources include books, periodicals, government documents, pamphlets, newspapers, microforms, films, special media materials for the blind, and access to over 700 computerized databases. It is the largest state library in the nation, and the only state library member of the Association of Research Libraries.

Called by one writer, “a source of pride for Empire Staters,” the State Library is both a repository for materials that record and explain New York State history and culture, and a valuable resource for researchers and writers.

The bibliographic research on Audre Lorde and Norman Mailer that appears in this brochure was provided by Melinda Yates, Senior Librarian, Reference Services, New York State Library.

For more information contact:

New York State Library
The State Education Department
Cultural Education Center
Albany, New York 12230
(518)474-5355

The New York State Writers Institute

The New York State Writers Institute has a mandate to provide “a milieu for established and aspiring writers to work together to increase the freedom of the artistic imagination,” and “to encourage the development of writing skills at all levels of education throughout the state.” Since its inception, the core of the Writers Institute programming has been its Visiting Writers Series, public readings, lectures, or seminars by internationally renowned writers in the fields of fiction, nonfiction, poetry, playwriting, and journalism. Among the over 150 writers who have appeared for the Writers Institute have been Saul Bellow, Carl Bernstein, Gwendolyn Brooks, E. L. Doctorow, Nadine Gordimer, Seamus Heaney, Stanley Kunitz, Norman Mailer, John Montague, Toni Morrison, Gloria Steinem, William Styron and Richard Wilbur.

Framed around the Visiting Writers Series are a number of diverse programs and special events such as the Classic Film Series, weekly screenings of classic films supplemented with mini film festivals featuring the work of a particular director, producer or screenwriter, The New York State Summer Writers Institute, two and four week workshops in fiction, playwriting, poetry and editing, held at Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, The Bookshow, a half-hour weekly radio interview program featuring some of the most celebrated names in literature, produced by WAMC-FM, Albany’s National Public Radio affiliate and heard on over 40 stations throughout the United States.

In addition, the Institute has sponsored and collaborated on a number of special events which have benefitted populations statewide. The Institute’s most recent special event, held in the spring of 1991 was Telling the Truth: A Symposium on the Craft of Nonfiction. This symposium, termed a once-in-a-lifetime event by panelists and attendees alike, assembled 37 of the country’s most noted nonfiction writers for a three day series of presentations and panel discussions.

For additional information on the Writers Institute and to receive a schedule of events, please contact:

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