

The New Criterion

Notebook

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Boxing with Mailer

by [Anthony Daniels](#)

On the ignoble science of boxing's hangers-on.

Professional boxing has not played a large part in my life, and I don't expect that it ever will. I have attended two bouts, the first in Africa (in Zimbabwe when it was still Rhodesia), and the second, more than twenty years later, in England.

I was the doctor at the first bout, which was held in the open air on a sunny Saturday afternoon. I was young and inexperienced and had very little idea of what my responsibilities (which I accepted without a second thought because I was so flattered to be asked) were. I supposed I might be expected to pronounce on the difficult question, unaddressed at medical school, of whether a man being battered by another man was fit to continue being battered by him. I supposed also that I might be expected to revive or resuscitate a man who had met with one blow too many; in which case, my incompetence would be exposed to the gaze of thousands.

Anthony Daniels's most recent book is *In Praise of Prejudice* (Encounter Books). Hewas born in 1949. After qualifying as a doctor, he worked in what was then Rhodesia, followed by South Africa, before returning for three years training as a psychiatrist in London's East End. Three and a half years in the Gilbert Islands were interspersed with some South American wandering, and then between 1984 and 1986 he worked in Tanzania. His first book, *Coups and Cocaine*, was followed by *Fool or Physician*, subtitled 'the memoirs of a sceptical doctor.' *Zanzibar to Timbuktu*, his trek across Africa by public transport was published to great acclaim in 1988, and was a runner-up in the Thomas Cook Travel Book Award.

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