

ONE EDITOR TO ANOTHER

PHILLIP S I P I O R A

I MET CHRIS BUSA IN OCTOBER OF 2004. It was the first Mailer conference held in Provincetown and Mike Lennon had mentioned that Chris was a person whom I should get to know as Chris was well known as the “Voice of Provincetown.” I don’t think that anything or anyone happened in P”Town without Chris knowing about it, and I refer not only to artistic and cultural events, but just about anything taking place in what is a relatively small town with only two streets.

So, Mike introduced me to Chris at a welcoming reception at the Provincetown Inn in the Fall of 2004. Chris gave me his signature hard handshake and we immediately dug into common topics of interest. I have been a lifetime reader of D.H. Lawrence and Chris told me that he had worked for years on Lawrence, and all that was left for him was his dissertation. I don’t recall how long our spirited conversation lasted, but DH dominated it and I left our encounter having been very impressed. I recall an animated discussion about *Lady Chatterly’s Lover*, a favorite work for both of us because of its groundbreaking exposition of powerful motifs and stylistic originality. We would return to passionate discussions of DH over the coming years.

I happened to connect with Chris the next day and he gave me a detailed account of Provincetown, his family’s history, especially his father, Peter Busa, who was a celebrated abstract expressionist painter. Chris identified himself as the publisher and editor of *Provincetown Arts* and he explained how his magazine had been exploring local culture and personalities since he launched it in 1985. Chris had known Mailer for a very long time and he always had interesting anecdotes.

At the time, I was not an active editor, although I had been an editor earlier at the University of Texas at Austin. However, somewhere in my head (and heart) there was an implanted seed about a scholarly journal devoted

to the work and life of Norman Mailer. I was (and am) active in the Hemingway Society and the Fitzgerald Society and I thought that Norman surely deserved a journal devoted to him. I discussed this idea with Mike Lennon and several others, including Chris, over the of the next couple of years and *The Mailer Review* was unanimously approved by The Norman Mailer Society in 2006. Our inaugural issue was published in 2007.

Chris has been an active scholarly contributor and a fervent supporter of the *Review*, as well as a Board member of The Norman Mailer Society. Years ago, Chris and I reached an agreement to trade advertisements each year and we are very proud to have published a series of advertisements featuring the *Provincetown Arts*. In return, our ads have been honored to grace the pages of Chris's magazine.

I believe that Chris and I had a special relationship because we were more than two editors facing the usual challenges faced by all editors, especially the nuts and bolts business of dealing with contributors and massaging prose as needed. We both agreed that the mechanical part of editing a journal was just as important as anything else, including fundraising and promotion. And we both subscribed to a cliché in our business—"an editor is only as good as the last issue."

Chris and I were inextricably bound together, of course, by our intense appreciation of the staggering body of work of Norman Mailer. Chris was particularly interested in, and proud of, his scholarly penetration of Norman's work and cultural contexts, as Ray Vince notes in this volume. Chris and I shared an interest in metaphor, both as a theoretical issue and its strategic function(s) in literary language. Chris examined figural language, crisply and cogently, in his 2007 essay on Mailer and his last novel, *The Castle in the Forest*. Chris remained a scholar until the very end and his analytical instincts were present in every encounter that I had with him at our annual conference and also at special events, such as gala events, created by Larry Schiller and his Mailer Center.

Chris Busa, at the helm in Provincetown, will endure in my memory.