

IN MEMORY OF CHRIS BUSA

MAGGIE MCKINLEY

CHRIS BUSA WILL ALWAYS STAND OUT IN MY MEMORY AS WELCOMING, open-minded, and kind; these were qualities with which he always graced me when we met each year at the Norman Mailer Conference. I remember first meeting Chris in Provincetown in 2012 at a cocktail party. He peppered me with questions, sipping his martini, eyes shining and full of warmth, listening and nodding, and then opted to introduce me to other another friend by turning around and yelling across the room: “HEY! YOU WANT TO MEET A PRETTY GIRL?” It might have been easy to be reduced or embarrassed by that introduction, or to reduce Chris himself to its potential impression (after all, we had been discussing my academic research just a second before). But Chris was so full of good humor and deliberate mischief; his light-heartedness was infectious. “Who *is* this guy?” I remember thinking to myself, laughing. I still laugh when I think of that moment: at Chris’s exuberance and bravado, the way he thrilled to company and camaraderie, clearly in his element among friends, and happy to meet new people.

In the years following this first meeting, nearly early every interaction I had with Chris further affirmed this lasting image of him. He was thoroughly interested in what people had to say, from the ideas they shared during the conference to the stories they told later over dinner or drinks. He would thank individuals profusely for opening his eyes to a new way of thinking about Mailer, about art, and about literature. Once, during a panel at our annual conference, he referred to his admiration for a perspective and argument that was shared a full year prior. I was then, and remain now, impressed with his intellectual curiosity, his love for the arts, and his appreciation for good conversation. He will be missed.