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CONGRATULATIONS
CLASS OF 2016

Dianisbeth Acquie
Emma Adler
Kaara Barrow
Julia Becerra
Sophia Becker
Zoe Burgard
Lauren Claus
Eric Corcoran
Lev Craig
Camille Crossot
Ellie Crowley
Otto Eckstein
Robbie Eginton
Marlee Ehrlich
Bryan Ellis
Katie Farineau
Phillip Golub
Brandan Griffin
Julia Haney
Annie Harvieux
AnnMarie Healy
Ema Horvath
Bridget Irvine
Naomi Lang
Sherry Liu
Joey Longstreet
Brianna MacGregor
Kate Massinger
Kelley Guinn McArtor
Moira McCavana
Paul Meosky
Olivia Miller
Olivia Munk
Gideon Nachman
Tree Palmedo
Rebecca Panovka
Min-Woo Park
Aemilia Phillips
Sam Reynolds
Molly Roberts
Mike Ross
Karla Samaya
Tony Schiappa Pietra
Daniel Schwartz
Hannah Sears
Maddie Sewani
Ethan Simon
Jared Sleisenger
Megan Taing
Teoh Ren Jie
Bailey Trela
Sindhu Vegesena
Camila Victoriano
Jake Wilder-Smith
Stella Wong
Mindy Yi
Catherine Zuo
Frankie Zwick

4 Concentrators Receive
Thomas Temple Hoopes Prize

Great news! Harvard University honors four of our graduating concentrators with the 2016 Thomas Hoopes Prize:

Emma Adler for her submission entitled “The Revivalists” nominated by Professor Sam Marks
Moira McCavana for her submission entitled “86 Ways of Becoming José Manuel Elosegi” nominated by Professor Bret Anthony Johnston
Stella Wong for her submission entitled “Trites of the De Capo” nominated by Professor Jorie Graham
Mindy Yi for her submission entitled “Modernism with a Human Face: Asterios Polyp’s Visual Language” nominated by Professor Steph Burt

Congratulations to them all!
Departmental Prize Winners

Academy of American Poets Prize
Stella Wong ’16

Boston Ruskin Prize
Tess McNulty, G5
for “Joyce Adapting Shelley: The Social Function of Lyric Form”

Boylston Prize for Elocution
First place
Matthew Barrieau ’16
Second place
Cherline Bazile ’17

Charles Edmund Horman Prize
Fiction
Al Fernandez ’17
Poetry
Miles Hewitt ’17

Cyrilly Abels Short Story Prize
First place
“Receive us Everyone” by Erica Eisen ’16
Second place
“Sugarman” by Christina Qiu ’19

Edward Eager Grant for Continued Studies in Creative Writing
Kate Massinger ’16
MFA, Columbia University

Edward Eager Memorial Fund Prize
Poetry
Josh Asherman ’17
Miles Hewitt ’17
Daniela Muhleisen ’19
Annie Wei ’16
Daniel Schwartz ’16
Luke Pizzato ’16

Fiction
“Chapter XV” by Bailey Trela ’16
“Good Fences Make Good Neighbors” by Olivia Munk ’16
“The Forgiver” by Ansha Bhoomi ’18
“Season’s Greetings from the Moon” by Sam Reynolds ’16

Francis James Child Prize for Excellence in Teaching
Taylor Cowdery, for his fall tutorial “Medieval Feminism”

Harvard Monthly Prize
Alexandra Grimm ’17

Helen Choate Bell Prize
First place
Olivia Munk ’16
for “Call it Fuku Americanus: The uses and abuses of the term “immigrant literature” in critical receptions of Junot Diaz and Henry Roth”
Second place
Thomas Dolinger
for “Out where the poem ends: Jack Spicer’s Bibliographic Poetics”

Joan Gray Untermyer Poetry Prize
Alyssa Moore ’16
Stella Wong ’16

Le Baron Russell Briggs Fiction Award
Emmie Atwood ’16

Le Baron Russell Briggs Grant for Continued Literary Studies
Olivia Munk ’16
MSt. English, Oxford University

Le Baron Russell Briggs Traveling Fellowships
Emma Adler ’16
Lauren Claus ’16
Katie Farneau ’16
Brandon Griffin ’16
Bridget Irvine ’16
Naomi Lang ’16
Sam Reynolds ’16
Daniel Schwartz ’16
Megan Taing ’16
Bailey Trela ’16
Stella Wong ’16

Le Baron Russell Briggs Thesis Prize
Moira McCavana ’16
for her thesis “86 Ways of Becoming José Manuel Elosegi”

Lloyd McKim Garrison Prize
Lev Craig ’16 for “We Were All There Weren’t We”

Robert Kiely Prize for Outstanding Junior Essay
Faye Zhang ’17 (fall)

Roger Conant Hatch Prizes For Lyric Poetry
Joanne Koong ’17 for “Face”

William Harris Arnold and Gertrude Weld Arnold Prize
Matthew Franks, G5
for “Ephemeral Repertoire: Virtual Databases and Edwardian Subscription Societies”

Winthrop Sargent Prize
Stella Wang, G6
for “Remembering Corpus Christi: The ‘rude mechanicals’ in A Midsummer Night’s Dream and the Defense of Dramatic Imagination”
Post Graduation Plans

Dianisbeth Acquie will be returning to New York City to work for DigitasLBi, a digital marketing and technology agency. She will be joining the media planning team as an associate and learning how to use technology to craft compelling narratives. Wherever her career takes her, she will be bringing her passion for storytelling along.

Emma Adler will spend next year completing a MFA in playwriting at the Lir (the dramatic academy of Trinity College in Dublin), as a Mitchell scholar.

Zoe Burgard was awarded a two-year DAAD fellowship to get her Masters’ degree in Germany, so she is headed to either Munich or Berlin in the fall to study European Literature.

Eric Corcoran will be traveling to Seoul to study Korean pop music (K-pop) as Gesamtkunstwerk, thanks to a John Knowles Paine Traveling Fellowship from the music department. After that he will begin work at William Blair in Chicago as an investment banking analyst.

Camille Crossot will begin a two-year Masters program at the Peabody Institute of Johns Hopkins University, where she will study Vocal Performance.

Phillip Golub will be going to the Guildhall School of Music & Drama in London for an M.Mus in composition. His teacher will be Julian Anderson. He will also study privately with Michael Finnissy. A Booth fellowship is helping fund his studies and travel. He will return the following year to NEC to finish his jazz performance degree there.
Bridget Irvine will be traveling to Portugal through the generosity of the Le Baron Russell Briggs Traveling Fellowship this summer. She will embark on a non-fiction project on the issue of identity and authenticity in today’s globalized world, through the lens of her experience as she visits friends in Lisbon and travels the rest of the country. Upon returning to the U.S., Bridget hopes to secure full-time work in the publishing or creative content industries as she continues to consider what writing personal narratives can offer others in this era of immediate online connection.

Kate Massinger will begin a two-year MFA in Nonfiction at Columbia University School of the Arts. She is so grateful for encouragement from the Creative Writing faculty, and funding from the Edward Eager Grant for Continued Studies in Creative Writing.

Naomi Lang will be remaining on campus for a week to continue training for the IRA rowing championships that are held on Mercer Lake in NJ. June 5th will be a momentous day as it will be the culmination and end of her 10 year rowing career. Afterwards she will be combining four of her favorite activities: traveling, eating, visiting friends, and interviewing inspirational female athletes for her website Female Athletes Network (FAN). Thanks to her family at the English department, she will be using a Le Baron Russell Briggs traveling fellowship to explore the east and west coast cities with the goal of collecting stories and images of powerful women in sport. Her aim is to portray them as they are: ATHLETES. She cannot wait to spend the rest of her life pursuing her passion: empowering, inspiring and connecting women through sport.

Annie Harvieux is pursuing work in the publishing industry, which she will start by taking a great editorial internship at Graywolf Press in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She has admired Graywolf for years— they are a place that she thinks publishes some of the best contemporary lit for all audiences, along with being an independent business with social equality values that she believes in. She will also probably be taking a side job at a bookstore or restaurant, along with some dog walking around the Twin Cities area. In the fall, she hopes to start full-time work as an editorial assistant or lit agency assistant in Minneapolis or NYC.

Brandan Griffin will be attending Columbia University’s MFA program in creative writing this fall. He will be concentrating in poetry and studying with Timothy Donnelly, Lucie Brock-Broido, and Dorothea Lasky.
Olivia Munk will be pursuing a M.St. in English (1900-Present) at the University of Oxford, St. Catherine’s College this fall.

Mike Ross will be in New York next year working as a writer’s assistant on The Bad Years, a new off-Broadway show. He will be living with good friends including fellow English major Joey Longstreet and writing partner Micah Leslie, with whom he hopes to pursue comedy and screenwriting.

Rebecca Panovka will be studying at Cambridge on a Marshall Scholarship next year.

Maddie Sewani, as an English concentrator with a secondary in Economics, she is excited to begin working at the intersection of her interests at Kekst & Company—a strategic, financial, and corporate communications firm in New York City. Maddie is also looking forward to continue reading contemporary fiction, writing creative nonfiction, and training for her first marathon.

Aemilia Phillips will spend her summer in New York, continuing with her literary interests while studying publishing at Columbia University. She then plans to work for a year or two, before deciding to either pursue a career in the real world or follow the tempting path of a graduate student.

Hannah Sears is very excited to be moving to New York City to live with her roommate of the last three years. She will be working in Manhattan as an Associate at Alphasights, a fast growing startup that connects companies with professionals who have specific industry knowledge. While there she hopes to continue playing Ultimate Frisbee on a NYC team.

Molly Roberts will be interning with the editorial board of The Washington Post.

Teoh Ren Jie will be returning to Singapore to finish his compulsory military service. He hopes to keep writing, and eventually apply for an MFA program somewhere here in the States.
Senior Thesis Excerpts

Our Undergraduate Honors Program supports students who want to do ambitious scholarly, critical or creative work involving literature in English. Here are a few excerpts from this year’s submitted senior theses.

From Allegory in Gesamtkunstwerk: Wagner’s “Ring of the Nibelung”
Critical Joint Thesis by Eric Corcoran

Last January I attended a production of Richard Wagner’s Der Ring des Nibelungen at the Vienna State Opera. Directed by Sven-Eric Bechtolf and conducted by Adam Fischer, this production sought to minimize the distractions of the plot and provide a more abstract staging, inviting allegorical interpretation. I was intrigued, and eager to witness in person how Wagner’s music interacts with and supports his allegory. Having studied the score, I was familiar with the complexity of its leitmotivic structure: short, recognizable melodic instances that recur throughout the work, leitmotifs develop an association with a particular dramatic symbol. But I was eager to discover whether this idea would really work in practice. In a live performance, would the sound of a leitmotif in one scene successfully recall characters and events from previous scenes? Would anticipatory leitmotifs add a layer of suspense, furthering the work’s sense of overbearing fate? Would I, the listener, be able to recognize connections between related leitmotifs, mentally cataloging them into some semblance of an intelligible structure? And, if so, how well would this understanding hold up over the course of four long evenings at the opera? But I was after a bigger question as well: Does the entire system work as a whole? Is it, as Bechtolf and Fischer sought to demonstrate, a versatile system that is simultaneously accessible and elusive, luring the listener into an active engagement. The interpretive process of reconciling this additional layer of meaning, the leitmotifs, with the dramatic action seems on stage and heard through the words is a process closely related to allegorical interpretation. For Wagner, the leitmotif is a versatile tool employed in a variety of ways, from straightforward signification to abstract symbolism. Similarly to how he facilitates allegory through simpler literary techniques, Wagner paves the way for complex leitmotivic functionality by including simpler leitmotifs with clear associations. Two factors influence the amount of interpretive effort required for the understanding of a given leitmotif: first, its innate compositional characteristics, and second, its context. By including variously complex leitmotifs, Wagner creates a versatile system that is simultaneously accessible and elusive, luring the listener into an active engagement.

Gesamtkunstwerk ultimately represents a totality of art in more than one sense; in addition to embodying this unification of genre, Gesamtkunstwerk reflects a unification of interpretive planes. Alongside the literal narrative of the plot is an additional layer of allegorical meaning. While the status of the Ring as a work of allegory is broadly accepted, interpretations of how allegory functions within it vary considerably. While certain stock figures are hard to deny, the work transcends allegorical rigidity. Throughout the Ring, the orchestra plays a vital role in sewing together the literal and allegorical interpretive planes: the music simultaneously brings the plot to life and functions as an extension of the allegorical framework. The totality of Wagner’s art is not merely a sum of the various generic branches involved (symphonic music, poetic text, deliberate staging), but also a sum of its interpretive layers: the literal story, the allegorical meaning, and the interstitial music. ...

“Are the arts one, or are they many?” asks the late Daniel Albright at the outset of Panaesthetics. Gesamtkunstwerk certainly seems to endorse the former viewpoint, and indeed Albright claims that “Wagner’s music dramas offer spectacular examples in which the music, the text, and the stage action all come together to produce an oceanic experience.” In the Ring, however, music does not always “come together” with the text and stage action in pursuit of a single purpose; rather music operates as a discrete force, at times reinforcing its sister arts and at times pushing against them. Music functions as the narrator of the Ring, guiding the audience through their experience of the complex work. The messages conveyed by this narrator, however, are not always objective: by engaging in a kind of free indirect discourse, the musical narrator conveys a variety of perspectives. Individual characters frequently appropriate the music to reflect their different viewpoints, while elsewhere the music functions as an omniscient force, aware of all that has happened and all that is to come. Just as the allegorical text of the drama requires interpretive oscillation between the literal plot and its figural implications, so too does the music jump between interpretive valences, alternating between mimetic and symbolic functions through the use of leitmotifs. Through the different roles it assumes, the music of the Ring functions as the instigator of interpretive oscillation, guiding the audience in their navigation of the literal and allegorical environment of the drama. The primary mechanism through which the music of the Ring accomplishes its narrative function is the leitmotif. The objects represented by these leitmotifs can be either tangible (a character or object) or intangible (an abstract idea or emotion). Wagner described his vision of such a concept in Opera and Drama: “These Melodic Moments, in themselves adapted to maintain our Feeling at an even height, will be made by the orchestra into a kind of guides-to-Feeling through the whole labyrinthine building of the drama. At their hand we become the constant fellow-knowers of the profoundest secret of the poet’s Aim, the immediate partners in its realisation [sic].” This guide to feelings functions as a web-like framework encompassing many of the significant ideas of the work and guiding the listener through their experience. The interpretive process of reconciling this additional layer of meaning, the leitmotifs, with the dramatic action seems on stage and heard through the words is a process closely related to allegorical interpretation. For Wagner, the leitmotif is a versatile tool employed in a variety of ways, from straightforward signification to abstract symbolism. Similarly to how he facilitates allegory through simpler literary techniques, Wagner paves the way for complex leitmotivic functionality by including simpler leitmotifs with clear associations. Two factors influence the amount of interpretive effort required for the understanding of a given leitmotif: first, its innate compositional characteristics, and second, its context. By including variously complex leitmotifs, Wagner creates a versatile system that is simultaneously accessible and elusive, luring the listener into an active engagement.

“elegy for elvis presley”
from Elegies and Aliens

Poem by Kelley Guinn McArtor

you two were born in honey, though you cling the bluff a twin in the honeycomb never grows a stinger & a twister tells the gospel to mama’s boy in moldy cotton. you ain’t a mama’s boy, you say, & honey hardens to flash & fringe. you stick a spoon on the piano & stir: i say you sing for the sun, & you sweeten the moon & its spots instead you ain’t a mama’s boy, you say, & steer trucks & girls & war. twisters of flare & flash shake on a black stage. i thought your heart broke somewhere in honeycomb, but you show it to me in two cases of suede: you ain’t a mama’s boy, you sing, & paint the circles on the bedside table. i see it’s all right, but you insist the moon is blue. pills make her tender again you ain’t a mama’s boy, you hear, & pinch the circles on the bedside table. i see scripts make you sleep, but you slur it’s the hotel. you ain’t a mama’s boy, you creak, & the tiles hush the rockabilly baby to beale street.
I will die on a turbulent day in the spring when lightning opens electric wounds in the sky and thunder crashes in a discordant fugue. Or perhaps Death will stop in his carriage on one of those deceptively beautiful winter days when the cold ravages the young lovers who have been fooled by the sinister serenades of the sun.

It does not matter how it will happen. The point is that it will. You will look around at the heavy crucifix that hangs above my bed (foul’s gold, my darlings) and at the mirrored jewelry case sitting on my vanity (stuffed to the brim with fantasy gems, in case you were wondering) and imagine who will be charged with disposing of these seemingly precious possessions after the musty smell of mortality fades. You will ask yourselves if you made enough of an effort to speak to the grandmother who spoke a melted Spanish and a jagged englês with knotty vowels, enough to be allowed to weep without feeling like a hypocrite. You will briefly wonder if you should have taken Spanish instead of Latin or Ancient Greek, whichever language is fashionably on the brink of oblivion by the time you reach high school. Yet you will not truly lament that you never learned to speak the language of Neruda and García Márquez and possibly the one other Latin American writer you know.

On that day, while the Grim Reaper skirts around the corners of my bedroom, careful to not let his robes drag across the feet of any attendants, you will wonder what I have left you. After all, your grandmother, the briefly popular writer of harlequin stories, must have had some money somewhere (false, by the way – I lost the last banknotes to someone’s ashes, I will haunt you in your sleep if you fail to remember that Arosemena is the cornerstone of her name. I forgive not only me but also your mother. Forgive her dedication of this phantom book. Regardless, do not take your chances. Someone’s ashes, I will haunt you in your sleep if you fail to remember this). You, who despite having a last name that tastes funny in your mouth (Jones, a name with which I am not unfamiliar on a page, still sounds like a hasty exhale), carry with you the last bits of the family name that I managed to keep by opening my legs but never my heart to the various young men I imagined myself with. If I do my job well, and you find yourselves absorbed in the history of kin and country, you will wonder if we are related at all to the illustrious, knitted together the threads of our respective stories, we are about as far away from that particular Arosemena clan as we are from the Vanderbilts.

You, who are currently tucked into bed somewhere (it is four in the morning – I cling to the hopes that the insomnia that plagues this family, like Spanish, will skip your generation), are still too green to find yourselves in the murky depths of these stories. Yet I believe that after I am gone and this is found, you will discover yourselves absorbed in the fading palimpsest of this family and in the legacy that has been transcribed by the hand of an occasionally long-winded, melodramatic woman in her third age. Perhaps you think that you cannot see your reflections in any of these people and that history is entombed in books for a reason. En mis años mozos, I too believed that I would be the sole exception to my family’s history. But I will let you come to terms with the future on your own.

I have the vain hopes that your mother will either present this to you in its mango-sweet original form or do me one final favor and translate it to the sophisticated English that spills from your slurring mouth for apple pie and her toca puerta hair for sleek, relaxed tresses and trips to Bocas del Toro for family vacations to Key West or Orlando or some other simpering beach spot, but this is not her fault as much as it is my own. I was so instilled in her a love of the language that I had hoped (and now rue to confirm) would be her saving grace. I allowed her to privilege Robert Frost over Rogelio Sinán. I have allowed her to forget that Arosemena is the cornerstone of her name. I can say this in full confidence because I am dead now and she will not call me up to remind me that her new name is Hope Jones, not Esperanza Arosemena.

Please do not sell these pages in an attempt to profit off a dead woman’s (pitiable) literary legacy. As my dear best friend Oléha does to me whenever I slander someone’s ashes, I will haunt you in your sleep if you allow this to happen. Or perhaps I will be too lost in the labyrinth of Purgatory and will be unable to reach you. Regardless, do not take your chances. I am starting to ramble. Let me get to the dedications of this phantom book. Esperanza, my beloved if stubborn daughter, the Arosemena blood fills your veins. Embrace it before it is too late. Forget what your Wonder Bread husband tells you.

Josephine and Simone, hold to your chests the ephemeral and eternal and bitter and glorious shards of the Arosemena dynasty. These stories are for you and for your mother and for the family that you will never meet but that lives deep within your bones.

And for myself, of course, so that I may have a fleeting taste of immortality.

Génesis Arosemena
January 2010
From *The Authorial Use of The Footnote (Or: A Supposedly Fun Thesis I’ll Never Write Again)*

Critical Thesis by Molly Roberts

No one ever wants to read the footnotes. Writing an entire thesis on them, then, may seem entirely beyond the pale. But that’s what I’ve set out to do, and just under a year later I don’t regret it. For one thing, I’m glad to pay some attention to a widely underappreciated mechanism: footnotes get a bad rap for being boring, or worse, useless. In the course of writing this thesis, I’ve learned that authorial footnotes have the power to change how a text is read—and, often, are the most interesting part of the text altogether.

This thesis will examine footnotes across genres, focusing primarily on one author in each: T.S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* and its endnotes offer insight into paratexts in poetry; Suzan-Lori Parks’s *The America Play* brings footnotes to drama—but not, as it turns out, to theatre. And David Foster Wallace’s essay collections *A Supposedly Fun Thing I’ll Never Do Again* and *Consider the Lobster*, along with his novel *Infinite Jest*, show how footnotes and endnotes can enhance nonfiction and fiction alike.

These very different authors do very different things with their notes. Eliot theorizes the relation between the past and the present, pushing his reader to grapple with traditional texts yet all the while casting doubt on their ability to elucidate. Parks is also fascinated with history, but she skewers our willingness to accept as truth documentary narratives written by those whose social or cultural power gives them the privilege of writing. And Wallace is more concerned with contemporary life, and how modern magazine journalism opts for formula over frankness or the note over the real.

Yet, distinct as these authors are, they’ve chosen footnotes to make their critiques for a reason. No one ever wants to read the footnotes because they’re the stuff of serious scholarship. Eliot, Parks, and Wallace all seize on the medium of the footnote because their arguments involve the historical element of the footnote to a work skewering the composition of the cultural canon helps her insert herself into that same literary timeline. For Wallace, using the non-creative citational convention to mock magazine writing’s originality deficit makes his work more creative than anything it criticizes.

By harnessing the power of the footnote, these authors at once take down parts of scholarship and become scholars themselves. Now, here’s my own attempt.

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1. The use of the word ‘footnotes’ here includes endnotes, which T.S. Eliot and *Infinite Jest* both use instead of the bottom-of-the-page variety of paratext.

2. Beyond their utilitarian value as bibliographic references, that is. It’s generally agreed on that footnotes can be very useful indeed for orienting oneself in the intellectual tradition of a text or its author.

3. Footnotes written by the author of a text, rather than by critics. In the case of the footnotes I’ll go on to examine, these are better viewed as creative parts of the text than as purely supplementary critical material.

4. Footnotes in the primary chapters of this thesis don’t endeavor to be interesting, while the main text does its best. Don’t worry, the author will not be joking in the footnotes that appear in the body of the essay.

5. The first two chapters focus on one work by one author in one genre. The third focuses on three works by one author in two genres, because it’s just not right to ignore *Infinite Jest* in a David Foster Wallace argument.

6. Drama being a written play, and theatre its performance.

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“Notes for listening to the 2012 Berlin Philharmonic Mahler 9” from *Preparation Ritual*

Poem by Lev Craig

so it’s like this that it builds: the prolonged exposure, the unstable safety in the extension of the tonic before it opens into the dominant; the woman sitting in front of you with turquoise nails at least two inches long; the choreographed tone of the gesture, the spine bent, the arm bent, as you hand your lover a glass of water. How on the walk home there were dogs everywhere, and you remembered seven years ago, walking down the hill behind the duomo with your hands full of grapes, chin burning from the stubble of the boy you kissed whose name you could barely parse out. At the end of the recording there is a separate track called “Applause” for the final movement which is the 38 seconds of silence & one cough before the bodies rustle into upright positions, the wild clapping, the surprise of this gone with the Spotify counter 0:36, 0:37. When you reach the bridge at this hour, it is too dark to track individual flights in the flock of birds: there is just this heavy movement against the light, and then a burning.

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“Flooding Sonnet to Anchor” from *To Anchor*

Poem by Julia Haney

In a biding pinch of blue, we placed my body down, in the throws of this flaky rhythm, in these last ribbons of dusk, postscript.

If you take something from these last moments know we are not our best—bodies, souls, cannot be here in this place, this foam left behind on our cramped shore, our fingers curled around this yellowing soil as the coastline ticks and still the sleep won’t come and we look down at earth trying to see it, this blackened thing its skin, puckered, thick, crawling…

We cannot help but see our own little bodies. I do not know if the skull of this sun will crack but know we are trying to sift though this smoke to find a burnt piece of what remains.

Somewhere there is an explanation, but I’ve never found you justification enough for this.
On The Way is a tripartite work of narrative journalism covering three Christian communities in Cambridge, MA: the Friends Meeting (Quakers), the Society of St. John the Evangelist (an Episcopal monastery), and Pentecostal Tabernacle (a church in Central Square). The “pilgrimage” asks a simple question, “How do you encounter God?” It learns how communities access the divine through ritual and narrative; it engages in those encounters alongside them. Written in the first person, On The Way combines immersive reportage—including extensive interviews, weekly attendance at services, dinner parties, and even a weekend stay at the monastery—with candid memoir, weeknight attendance at services, dinner parties, and even a weekend stay at the monastery—with candid memoir, candid memoir of a monk and sandals. The cell has just enough floor space for a couple of blue armchairs; it’s a sort of office where the monks hold spiritual consultations. It isn’t barren, as its name implies—rather, warm and intentional. Everything seems carefully placed: a print of a saint hanging on the wall, a curved sea foam green clock, a red lantern, a gold crucifix lying on a strip of purple fabric. There’s a window with delicate iron bars on it, giving glimpses of the river, russet tiles, and a silent fountain.

Back to Keith the Baptist. As a teenager, he steeped himself in mythology and Bible stories. He devoured C.S. Lewis. He trudged through a torrential downpour of middle school abuse. He felt tremors of hypocrisy in church leadership, began to trace hairpin cracks in his theological convictions. He moved to a private high school and studied world religions with Buddhists and Jews. Sophomore year, he came out of the closet. By the end of high school, Keith couldn’t reconcile the warm and fuzzy Jesus with the wrath of an “infinitely offended” God. His Bible Belt disillusionment helped. When he got to college, Keith became a Buddhist.

Are you with me? Keith, the present-day monk, the former Baptist, was a Buddhist. For seven years! He found a meditation center. He went to India and interviewed Tibetan monks. But Keith couldn’t quite empty his head of Bible stories. That trip to India morphed into a comparative study. He interviewed Benedictine monks in Minnesota, found himself astonished by their Gospel-sans-hypocrisy lifestyle. As Keith put it, his “Jesus seeds,” dormant for a few seasons, were watered by Midwest data collection. Then Keith, still Buddhist, got hired by a Catholic school.

The weekly mass confused him. The preaching wasn’t particularly good, and the liturgy wasn’t poetic. But the communion—the assembled body moving hand to mouth, the echoes of saints in the eaves—Keith loved that part. Then Keith, still Buddhist, got hired by a Catholic school. The weekly mass confused him. The preaching wasn’t particularly good, and the liturgy wasn’t poetic. But the communion—the assembled body moving hand to mouth, the echoes of saints in the eaves—Keith loved that part. Then Keith, still Buddhist, got hired by a Catholic school.

Keith studied in the Divinity School library. Perhaps he had a cup of herbal tea next to him. He was reading Athanasius, an ancient bishop from Alexandria, researching a paper for his course. And then; “something electric went through my whole body,” insists Keith. He’s animated as he tells me this, hands coursing through the air. “I have to receive the Eucharist as soon as I can.” Keith got an extension on his paper with the classic ‘I’m having a conversion experience’ excuse. At the Divinity School, they take that sort of thing seriously. Keith knew the monastery’s worship schedule; it was printed on a poster hanging near his dorm room. He went to St John’s. He took communion. Before my eyes, Keith transforms from scholar to lover. ‘It was everything my heart had been looking for,’ he tells me. He describes the sacrament like a first kiss: an ‘electric moment’ of clarity. ‘I’m in love.’

Keith’s story isn’t what I was expecting. Once a monk, always a monk—that’s what I would have anticipated. I imagine these men born solemn and reclusive, eyebrows always furrowed. I imagine them tracing their love of dusty pages through adolescence and into adulthood with no deviation—faithful spouses to the book. How could a monk have ever kissed a lover, or held a teaching job, or tasted cheeseburgers, and then go live behind stone walls? And how could a Christian monk have ever been a Buddhist? How could you be a monk once, and not like it, and then come back? For me, monasticism seemed like an all-or-nothing commitment—a contract with no loopholes, signed early and enthusiastically. Keith reminds me that fates aren’t easily succumbed to. That’s okay. Even if you’ve wandered from yours, you can always come back.
Alison Bechdel by Henry Vega Ortiz

It was just before 11:00 AM and waiting in the lower level of the Northwest building were eager undergraduates waiting to see author Alison Bechdel give the guest lecture for Visiting Professor Hillary Chute’s course, English 190gn: The Graphic Novel. The energy and enthusiasm were high as demonstrated by the students’ early arrival, which English Teaching Fellow Chris Spade pointed out was the first time the class had done so. The majority of them foregoing the “Harvard 7-minute rule” to get the best seats. But who could blame them, this was a unique opportunity to see and hear the author of the graphic memoir Fun Home, share her process of fusing drawn lines with text.

When the clock hit the top of the hour, the doors opened and students quickly sought seats towards the center of the lecture hall. Many had their copies of Bechdel’s book ready in hand, while others prepared handheld devices to capture each moment. Conversations centered on projects and findings related to the art of the graphic novel but were quickly brought to a hush as Professor Chute emerged from behind the seated students leading Bechdel to the podium.

Bechdel began her lecture by confessing—somewhat apologetically—her use of digital fonts for Fun Home, which were based on her own handwriting. It was a convenient tool that allowed for edits early in the planning stages without having to recreate things by hand. Otherwise, drawing would be too laborious, slowing down her initial thought process of verbal, literary based constructions. But before any text appeared, she filled blank pages with grids using Adobe Illustrator, drawing empty black-bordered boxes sized equally with neatly spaced gutters (the blank spaces that fall between). The pages lacked any hierarchy, which allowed her to work in what she described as a non-linear “2-D” process. As digital boxes, she resized them as she filled the spaces—a premium in her craft—above, below, and within them with narration and scene descriptions. These thumbnail sheets were then shown to editors for feedback before committing to any drawing. What followed was a process where both writing and drawing happened simultaneously. The two equally informing the visual and text based narrative arcs of the novel. The page became both canvas and manuscript.

Fun Home is a memoir before anything else, drawing it’s richness of imagery from Bechdel’s real life childhood, documented with an obsessive and compulsive passion. It was a germ of an idea that began with photography. Specifically, a photo of her father’s private life, a blurred image of a man, her father’s boyfriend, shirtless on a bed. Her curiosity lead her to draw the image, large scale, repeatedly, spending a lot of time with it, connecting to her father through it. Taking form into what became the central focus of the book, his secret closeted life as a gay man (and as the town’s mortician).

Bechdel recalled that her obsessive compulsion as a memoirist began as a child on a trip to Europe when she was given a sketch book. She remembered keeping track of their trip, which transformed into tracking daily life. It was a “charged activity,” which she used as a way of responding to a lack of familial affection. It allowed her to convert neurotic behavior into a living document.

Many of the drawings are inspired and at times appropriated from a wide variety of resources, which include photos, dictionary entries, maps, wall paper patterns. She also relied on stories her mother told her as she laid the groundwork of the book’s story for nine-months—a number she finds strangely telling—before revealing to her mother what she was working on. “I had a right to tell this story, therefor their lives...are something I’m allowed to use,” said Bechdel about the ethics of writing her family’s story before telling them. After Bechdel revealed her intentions, her mother stopped telling stories but did provide a collection of her father’s letters, which she incorporated, sometimes redrawing the letters by hand and including them within the novel.

With Fun Home, She found the process challenging because she was not accustomed to drawing real people. She used the process of sketching family members from photographs, distilling their features, as a way to enter back into the memory of them and most especially her father who killed himself soon after Bechdel came out as a Lesbian. Coinciding events she held as connected feeding a belief that the declaration of her own sexual orientation is what drove her father to end his life.

She began her book when digital photography made images cheap and easy to acquire. This gave her the ability to create staged moments, which she posed in as herself and as other family members. She projected the posed shots next to the pages they inspired. They included shots of herself dressed in a necktie, taken from a low perspective looking up to recreate her father. Another shot showed her in mid-action, leaving a car to represent her mother. And, a shot of her, alone in bed, to recreate the teenage version of herself. Over time she has accrued thousands of photos, which all live on her laptop and phone, blurring the lines between her real life and an imagined one. However, as she continues her work, she relies less and less on basing things from photographs and choosing to draw from imagination.

Graciously, she remained behind to spontaneously sign copies of her books as the line threaded from the podium, to the landing, and up the stairs past the rows of chairs. Students reflected on their experiences reading her work, one sharing an info-graphic based on the Bechdel scale. Many sought autographs for siblings, and even I took a moment to gush, asking Professor Chute to take our picture.
In the excellent *Boston Globe* obituary for Daniel Aaron, the Victor S. Thomas Professor of English and American Literature Emeritus, novelist Louis Begley, in an interview with the reporter, remarks: “Not many men 103 years old have young friends. Dan did.” I first met Dan, who was born in 1912 in Chicago and died this past April 30 in Cambridge, when I was 31 and he was 94. (Later, when I got my first teaching job, at the University of Chicago, Dan, who was pleased, exclaimed, “I haven’t lived in Chicago since the 1920s!”—a comment that sounds like a joke, but wasn’t.)

In 2007, Dan and I happened to sit together for a meal in Eliot House, where the Harvard Society of Fellows, in its beautiful private dining room, holds dinners every Monday night during the term, preceded by sherry (or, in Dan’s case, Campari with a splash of water). I was a just-arrived Junior Fellow in English (a three year postdoctoral position), and Dan had been a Senior Fellow in English and, ever sociable, always attended the weekly gathering. Immediately after meeting him, I thought, dazzled—as a twentieth-century American literature scholar—about how the arc of Dan’s life seemed to map out so beautifully onto the century I studied, and how fascinating it was that he spent social time, some of it quite intimate, with so many writers so key to the shape of American literature, like Ralph Ellison (we had many detailed conversations, all initiated by me, about Ellison’s natty suits in addition to his novels).

Shortly after that first meeting Dan and I stumbled into the fact that Dan had known my grandparents. My grandfather had been an English professor at Williams College during much of the period that Dan taught at Smith College (1939-1971), and both had eventually moved to Cambridge: my grandfather to MIT, and Dan to Harvard, where he was a key presence in the English department from 1971 right up until his death. In my first visit to Dan’s office in the Barker Center, with its central location directly above the entrance—the most gorgeous window of the building from both the exterior and the interior—he handily produced for me something I had never seen: my grandfather’s *Boston Globe* obituary, which was glued into his red leather-bound datebook from the mid-1980s.

Dan and I became allies: we started eating dinner together, side by side, every Monday night at the same small table in Eliot House, and we also began having dinner together at his home in Harvard Square, on Farwell Place, about once a week, and sometimes more (he once looked at me and declared, with characteristic economy, “you’re not scared of old people”—certainly not). He would cook, and then we would sit and talk at his kitchen table, covered in its distinctive red check oilcloth, for hours and hours, usually with a whiskey in front of each of us. Both the very first time and the very last time I visited Dan at his home, just a few weeks before his death, he made me a gin martini, which he prepared in a Mason jar.

We also met, often with others from the Society of Fellows, for drinks, walks, and movies. I distinctly remember taking Dan, on the recommendation of Elaine Scarry—a current Senior Fellow in the Society of Fellows—to *Whitestar*, the 2009 film about John Keats, and Dan’s pronouncement that the Kendall Square Cinema parking garage was “the third circle of hell.” When going out became more arduous in recent years, we watched movies at his house—most often gangster movies (such as 1927’s *Underworld*, 1931’s *Little Caesar*, and 1937’s *Miller’s Crossing*), and Humphrey Bogart titles. We watched the famous smoking scene from *To Have and Have Not* (1944)—in which Bogart tosses Bacall a matchbox, she lights a cigarette, and then dramatically tosses the spent match over her shoulder—on repeat, laughing.

Dan had catholic tastes and unparalleled intellectual range and exuberance, as many recent Harvard profiles—especially from around the time he turned 100—have pointed out. In conversation at Dan’s desk or kitchen table, he would often punctuate a discussion about an esoteric text or figure by singing, word for word, popular songs from the first third of the twentieth-century, or even earlier: one song he taught me, “Daisy Bell (Bicycle Built For Two),” was originally recorded and released in 1893. The very first page of his *American Notes*, an indispensable collection of essays from 1994, includes a reference to Hollywood’s first popular Western star: “On my ninth birthday, I saw Tom Mix ‘plain.’ He wasn’t riding his famous horse, Tony. He was driving a slinky Locomobile, and he waved his white sombrero at
literature that has issued some 300 or so volumes. What is classic? Morris Dickstein has correctly noted “the Library of America has done more to establish the American canon than any other institution.” The first volume to appear, in 1982, was a collected edition of Herman Melville's *Typee, Omoo, Mardi* (not *Moby Dick*, as the New York Times obituary reported); Dan's first two academic essays, written when he was 23, and both published in *New England Quarterly* in 1935, are on *Typee* and *Omoo* ("Melville and the Missionaries" and "An English Enemy of Melville"). But Dan not only helped to make accessible editions of field-defining figures such as Melville—he also brought his distinctive open-mindedness and his discerning, democratic taste to the Library of America, as the remembrance on their website makes clear. "His eclectic taste and wide range were embodied in the LOA series, which quickly earned a reputation for challenging assumptions about what constituted essential American writing," the statement reads. So in the Library of America's first year they published both Melville and Jack London, to critical acclaim. This editorial ethos established by Dan and others has continued meaningfully. The Library of America went on to publish science fiction writers like Philip K. Dick alongside Saul Bellow and Hart Crane. In 2010, the Library of America published its first graphic author with *Lynd Ward: Six Novels in Woodcuts*, the complete collection of the artist who helped develop the important form of the so-called "wordless novel" in America in the 1920s and 30s. Lynd Ward was on the syllabus for my spring term lecture course at Harvard on The Graphic Novel—the English Department's first dedicated course on the subject—and I was proud to note to my students the key repositioning of his work proposed by the Library of America volume.

Friends, mentor, and intellectual exemplar, Dan Aaron was the most elegant person I have ever known. One of the last essays in *American Notes* is one I have taught in graduate literature seminars: "How to Read Don DeLillo." In addition to the fact that it adroitly appraises one of the most contemporary major American authors in Dan's long purview—Dan nails it with his proclamation of DeLillo as "a crypto-Christian and profane moralist who finds his most rewarding subject matter in the precincts of a fallen world"—it is also extremely funny, as is so much of Dan's prose. My students and I laugh at dryly witty sentences like "The sexual episodes in his novels, of which there are a good many, are at once 'explicit' and lust-chilling."

Writers on the Left: Episodes in Literary Communism (which first appeared in 1961 and was reprinted in three subsequent editions, including a mass-market paperback) and The Unwonted War: American Writers and the Civil War (1973) are classics of American literary studies and Dan's most widely celebrated books, models of his preternatural talent to diagnose the intersection of American aesthetic and social forces and its lasting impact. But the creative work he produced, which I think of, perhaps, as post-academic or para-academic, was a prominent, delightful feature of his later life for him and his readers—loose and keen at once, whimsical, poetic and poetical, formally innovative. About ten years ago, he published two handsome pamphlets in small, private editions: *Mortuary Airs*, a light, winning 4”-by-5” collection of verse, and *Daniel's Dictionary: A Handbook For Metaphor* (which was picked up by *The Baffler*). In 2014, Dan published *Scrap Book*—a reprint of the scrapbook of newspaper clippings he had been keeping continuously since the 1930s—with acclaimed independent publisher Pressed Wafer (founded by poet William Corbett, among others, with a detailed attention to the art of bookmaking). *Scrap Book* includes an interview with Dan conducted by me and Noah Feldman, a professor at Harvard Law School and Dan's close friend, on his sense of the grotesque in American life. This past year, the final one of his life, Dan published *Commonplace Book, 1934-2012: Quotations (Books, Articles, Reviews, Letters), Recollections (Persons, Places, Events), Words (Archaic, Obsolescent, Technical), including Story Plots, Fancies, Sententiae, Verse, and Nonsense*, also with Pressed Wafer, which was read aloud, gloriously, by a good number of English Department faculty at a celebratory event in the fall.

Speaking of publishing: Dan was, famously, a founder and the founding president (1979-1985) of the Library of America, the nonprofit publisher of classic American literature that has issued some 300 or so volumes. What is classic? Morris Dickstein has correctly noted "the Library of America has done more to establish the American canon than any other institution."
Spring Term Scrapbook
Dear Harvard Class of ’16 English Concentrators,

The period between the Senior Thesis Reception and Commencement makes our love more strong, to love that well which we must leave ’ere long. We have been aware both of how accomplished and how delightful you are for a long time—ever since you became concentrators, in fact—but now that we see the limit of your time with us, our admiration becomes poignant.

So diminish the poignancy of our plight! Come to the At Home for Graduating English Concentrators and their Parents on Tuesday 24 May, 12-2 p.m., and, above all, stay in touch.

Each faculty and staff member of the English Department thanks you for the gift of your presence with us over the past four years.

All good wishes,

James Simpson