Dear Alumni and Friends —

This issue begins with texts delivered at a Wednesday Lunch on February 18, 2015. At this Dean’s Forum, Professors Wendy Doniger, (the Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of the History of Religion), and Brook A. Ziporyn, (Professor of Chinese Religion, Philosophy, and Comparative Thought), discussed the groundbreaking work of Anthony C. Yu, the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus: *Journey to the West*.

We continue with texts from a panel discussion event held to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Civil Rights march on Selma, Alabama.

This issue also contains texts from the June 2, 2015 reception in honor of Dean Margaret M. Mitchell, the Shailer Mathews Professor of New Testament and Early Christian Literature, on the occasion of her return to the full-time teaching faculty.

Our issue closes with a sermon—on the theme ‘how did I get here?’—delivered in Bond Chapel by Maggie Potthoff (MDiv'15).

Many of our public events are made available for online viewing. You can watch the Wednesday Lunch and the Selma panel discussion by visiting http://divinity.uchicago.edu/multimedia.

My thanks to Ken Janssen, designer, for his work on this issue.

I hope you enjoy this issue.

Terren Ilana Wein, Editor
Dean’s Forum on Anthony C. Yu’s Journey To the West

Journey to the West by Anthony C. Yu (1938-2015), initially published in 1983 (new edition, University of Chicago Press, 2014) introduced English-speaking audiences to the classic Chinese novel in its entirety for the first time. Written in the sixteenth century, Journey To the West tells the story of the fourteen-year pilgrimage of the monk Xuanzang, one of China’s most famous religious heroes, and his three supernatural disciples, in search of Buddhist scriptures. At a Dean’s Forum Wednesday Lunch on February 18, 2015, Wendy Doniger, Mircea Eliade Distinguished Service Professor of History of Religions, and Brook A. Ziporyn, Professor of Chinese Religion, Philosophy, and Comparative Thought, discussed this work. Professor Yu, the Carl Darling Buck Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus, also spoke.

Anthony C. Yu

I am honored to have been invited by Dean Mitchell for this forum on most likely the last major work of my career, and I am doubly grateful for my two commentators here—one who is now my oldest active colleague and one who is among the newest that I am meeting for the first time. A second happy coincidence is that Professor Wendy Doniger, as many of you know, is the first person featured on the University website’s write-up this February celebrating scholarly translations by faculty.* Finally, tomorrow happens to be new year’s day for the lunar calendar, ushering in the Chinese Year of the Goat, Sheep, or Ram, the animal—whether male, female, or kid—that rhymes with one of the two fundamental forces (i.e., Yin and Yang) governing the ancient Chinese cosmos. Today’s event is an auspicious one, because the number three is said to bring good fortune. Whereas a student writing on some foreign text may pick and choose what portion accommodates a person’s level of comprehension and labor, a plenary translation of any text offers such a third choice. That is why Professors David Tod Roy, Doniger, and I all affirm that our kind of translation likely makes the most severe demand on one’s ability to read a text. I’d hasten to add that close reading is not the only difficult demand of such translation, because another aspect of the labor requires rigorous attention to such other features as rhetoric, style, tone, and an educated calculation of comparably intended effects in two languages. I’ll give one example by citing the famous episode when the mischievous Monkey hero made fun of the wayward Daoist priests, actually animal spirits, by making them drink his—and his companions’—urine as holy water. Arthur Waley’s translation of this and other selected portions of the novel almost seventy years ago was justly praised for conveying the rollicking humor—often scatalogical—of the original. But his abridgment also leaves out parts that are crucial to one’s understanding of the story here. If one looks at my version of the same episode now excerpted in Vol. II of the new Norton Anthology of World Religions, one will find that the narrative is dramatically punctuated by four sets of hilarious limericks. Monkey declared two of them in brazen mockery against the Daoist Trinity and their deviant disciples, and his declamations bookend two other limericks chanted by the animal spirits to plead for the gift of holy water. Granted due attention, the four slapstick poems present a hilarious mimicry of religious and ritual poetry. The clipped brevity metrical rhythm (mostly four syllables) and rhyme no less than the incongruous pairing of classic and demotic diction deliberately parodies lines of the Classic of Poetry, one foundational text of ancient Confucianism, the prosodic patterns of which were mimed by both Daoist and Buddhist liturgical texts and performance. In this manner, the comic narrative actually satirizes all three religions.

Religion brings me to my second point: the story’s one human protagonist. A devout and courageous Buddhist monk defied imperial prohibition and went from the ancient capital Chang’an to India, mostly on foot, to acquire more Buddhist scriptures. Xuanzang left China in the early seventh century as a treasonous criminal subject to immediate execution if caught, but his triumphant return seventeen years later was marked by imperial pardon, unbroken patronage, and continuous service to the court as revered cleric and renowned translator. The modern view of this classic novel began with the unquestioned assumption in the early twentieth century that it was about an actual Buddhist priest, Xuanzang of the sixth century CE.

If Xuanzang’s journey and accomplishment were well known, the question that sorely baffled modern scholars was how and why the novel’s presentation of his familial background, upbringing, and undertaking of his pilgrimage would stray so far from attested events and circumstances...
I did not share this opinion, but I could find no alternate argument.

The multiplication of allegory already richly funded the syncretistic usurpation of Zen Buddhist discourse.

imperial commission of his famous mission, and exciting accomplishment of four supernatural attendants. The historical pilgrimage of a solitary unknown cleric now has the emperor himself as bond-brother and partner. All these motifs in narration and art were in place by late Ming when the full-length novel reached its published form.

My work on the novel profited initially from the standard modern Japanese translation which already identified the specific Daoist origin of its about half a dozen poems in the novel. Further research was constantly stimulated by an unusual source of knowledge: the ongoing volumes in Joseph Needham’s massive Science and Civilisation in China. My translation and teaching during the last three decades also coincided luckily with the international community’s accelerated research in Chinese Daoism, led in Europe by the erudite Kristof Schipper and his collaborators. Rick himself is an ordained Daoist priest who has contributed a meticulous, encyclopedic, attested by the three-volume historical companion to the Daoist Canon he co-edited with Francisca Verellen and published in 2004 with UC Press It represents the first complete survey, in any language, of all two thousand-plus titles of that scriptural thesaurus.

Despite the novel’s explicit use of the quest for Indian Buddhist scripture theme, criticism of the novel’s linguistic content increasingly recognizes its diversity that dramatizes the so-called Three-Religions-in-One rhetoric and practice. The growing consensus from both Chinese and non-Chinese scholars is that the tale is arguably more Daoist than Buddhist or Confucian, thus confirming some insights by the yet unknown but named author of the 1592 preface to the earliest printed version and by most of the pre-modern commentators. That classification, however, is controversial.

Historical Daoism of almost two millennia is less a homogenous phenomenon than a tradition of variant organizations, doctrines, and practices. The novel’s manifest character seems to orient itself deeply towards the Quanzhen Order, two main divisions or lineages (south and north) of which were founded in the 11th and 12th centuries. Despite some important doctrinal differences, the two divisions’ most significant contribution to the history of Chinese religion is their unambiguous appropriation and adaptation of Zen Buddhist to reformulate its teaching on mental discipline as an integral path to alchemical self-realization. Formation of the inner elixir in one’s body with implications for attaining longevity becomes synonymous with perceiving the true Buddha nature in one’s own life, the manifestation of Buddhahood. An immense physical distance intimidating paradoxically protracted travel or instantaneous traversal provides apt metaphors for gradual or sudden enlightenment.

As I have tried to indicate throughout my Introduction in the revised edition, and the copious annotations of identifiable Daoist sources, the novel’s use of language seems to reveal something much more than substituting one belief or meaning for another. What the author or final redactor has grasped instinctively is the native emptiness of the verbal sign and thus its boundless freedom for random association with sound and sense. The multiplicity of allegory already richly funded the syncretistic usurpation of Zen Buddhist discourse. In the novel, this conception of language even more ingeniously enables the writing of one epic story, beginning with the naming of the stone-born monkey of chapters one and two by etymological allegory as inventive as Greek decipherment of Homeric poetry. Sun Wukong, the simian disciple of the fictive monk, can signify zodiac periods; temporal units by the hour, day, or year; the mind and its recalcitrant double; loyal acolyte and adversarial demon; phallic energies construed as metal; and stages in self-cultivated enlightenment—all of which significance weaving continuously a patterned tapestry of captivating narration. Such understanding of language, so strikingly modern, is rooted firmly in Daoist thought. “I don’t know its name,” declares the ancient Laozi, “and so I style it Way, reluctantly assigning it the name Great.” Philosophically minded readers may detect in this blatant bit of nominalism a promising hint of metaphysics. The novel’s author, however, might have been irresistibly inspired to write incomparable fiction. Hu Shi—eminent Chinese philosopher and literary historian, and John Dewey’s pupil who delivered the first Haskell Lecture on this campus—wrote in his preface for Arthur Waley’s 1943 translation that Journey to the West is “a novel of profound nonsense.” Today, he tempts me to reply by paraphrasing Winston Churchill’s famous jibe at cowardly French generals: “Some profundity! Some nonsense!”

in both secular and ecclesiastical histories. Concerning the priest’s background, the novel drew on strands of fiction that related Xuanzang’s father as a Confucian scholar of the highest rank who married a prime minister’s daughter, his death by poison on route to his first appointment, the pregnant mother being forced to be the pirate’s wife after rape, Xuanzang’s abandonment as a baby in a river raft until rescued by a Buddhist abbot, and eventual historical pilgrimage of a solitary unknown cleric now has the emperor himself as bond-brother and partner. All these motifs in narration and art were in place by late Ming when the full-length novel reached its published form.

When I began work on my translation, I did not share this opinion, but I could find no alternate argument. The displacement of the hero’s birthplace and his youthful experiences is indeed incredible: from inland western China to the coastal area of the modern city Nanjing that spans spatial and social disparity much greater than that between Minneapolis and Philadelphia. I was haunted by this strange fable and its setting in life even as I translated and taught it. Only recently do I believe I may have a partial answer for at least the genetic matrix of the five pilgrims’ journey to the West for scriptures, and this insight is very much an ironic bequest of my father’s writing in the revised edition, and the copious annotations of identifiable Daoist sources, the novel’s use of language seems to reveal something much more than substituting one belief or meaning for another. What the author or final redactor has grasped instinctively is the native emptiness of the verbal sign and thus its boundless freedom for random association with sound and sense. The multiplicity of allegory already richly funded the syncretistic usurpation of Zen Buddhist discourse. In the novel, this conception of language even more ingeniously enables the writing of one epic story, beginning with the naming of the stone-born monkey of chapters one and two by etymological allegory as inventive as Greek decipherment of Homeric poetry. Sun Wukong, the simian disciple of the fictive monk, can signify zodiac periods; temporal units by the hour, day, or year; the mind and its recalcitrant double; loyal acolyte and adversarial demon; phallic energies construed as metal; and stages in self-cultivated enlightenment—all of which significance weaving continuously a patterned tapestry of captivating narration. Such understanding of language, so strikingly modern, is rooted firmly in Daoist thought. “I don’t know its name,” declares the ancient Laozi, “and so I style it Way, reluctantly assigning it the name Great.” Philosophically minded readers may detect in this blatant bit of nominalism a promising hint of metaphysics. The novel’s author, however, might have been irresistibly inspired to write incomparable fiction. Hu Shi—eminent Chinese philosopher and literary historian, and John Dewey’s pupil who delivered the first Haskell Lecture on this campus—wrote in his preface for Arthur Waley’s 1943 translation that Journey to the West “is a novel of profound nonsense.” Today, he tempts me to reply by paraphrasing Winston Churchill’s famous jibe at cowardly French generals: “Some profundity! Some nonsense!”
What Anthony Yu’s *The Journey to the West* Teaches Us About World Literature

WENDY DONIGER

Clearly this is a work of extraordinary undulation, not just within Chinese literature but throughout world literature. How many scholars in the world could write a sentence like the one citing “distant Western parallels” that incorporate poetry into prose narration, including “the early satiric fragments of Menippus, the later Consolations of Philosophy by Boethius, a work like Aucassin and Nicolette, and the writings of Bunyan and Rabelais”? But we should value the work even more simply as a great translation, and appreciate Anthony Yu’s decision to undertake this enormous life’s work, to devote decades of his life to it. For in the present academic world, translations are not usually honored as “original” works of scholarship; often they do not count for tenure. A work such as this is living proof of the learning and talent and inspiration that is needed to produce a great translation. It demonstrates that, without translation, there cannot be culture and there cannot be knowledge. It brings honor to the task of translation, and hope to other translators, especially in this new edition, which has greatly simplified the transliteration in order to welcome in more readers.

The new introduction is also a major contribution to our understanding, not only of this text but of the history of Buddhism in China, the nature of Chinese satire, the aesthetics of Chinese poetry, the relationship between Chinese and Indian religious and literary traditions, and much more. Professor Yu writes of “the supramundane, the mythic, and indeed the religious themes and rhetoric that pervade the entire work,” an entire aspect of it that is recognized that [the] ‘fund of shared motifs’ [with India], a rather large one, cannot be easily ignored. There is a convergence of Chinese and Indian motifs, clustering around the monkey Hanuman (a hero of the Sūrīkrit epic, the Ramayana, c. 200 BCE to 200 CE) in a larger body of “monkey lore”; the monkey’s “depicted action irrefutably constitutes one fundamental element of Indian religiosity encompassing both Hinduism and Buddhism, in which a huge variety of known animals and mythical beasts has been pressed into ritual service to the gods.” I would add that there is a great deal of humor associated with monkeys in the Indian text; the monkeys get hilariously, destructively, drunk on ripe fruit, falling down, making obscene gestures, ruining the trees; and Hanuman himself worries obsessively, also hilariously, about all the possible disastrous outcomes of his planned action. This humor gets into the Chinese work too, and humor is notoriously hard to capture in translation, but Professor Yu succeeds brilliantly here too.

Certain narrative themes in the Chinese text immediately reminded me of important Indian parallels, particularly but not only from the *Ramayana*.

Chapter 9 of *The Journey to the West*, about the birth of the hero, the pilgrim Xuanzang, seems particularly attractively to sinologists find it problematic,” and it has been “the editorial practice of some of the more recent critical Chinese editions to exclude chapter 9,” but Professor Yu writes that he is “persuaded that [this episode] is essential to the plot as a whole, even though it was not part of the hundred-chapter novel’s earliest known version.” Moreover, “Whether the problematic chapter 9 is authentic or not is a moot question, because all the Ming and Qing full-length editions of the novel known to us, or without this chapter, include all of these fictional details.” And even though this popular story, “so at odds with known history,” does try the patience of “historically aware readers, . . . [it] links the human pilgrim and the Tang court . . . That linkage—most false but also most true—has profound implications for shaping the meaning of both human pilgrimage’s character and his mission.”

What is this controversial story? It begins with the pilgrim’s prenatal identity as the Buddha’s disciple, who is exiled to the human world for inattentiveness during a lecture by Buddha. Right here at the start we are in Indian territory; this is the framing motif of the great compendium of Indian stories, *The Ocean of Streams of Story (Kathāsaritasagara)*, composed around the 12th century CE in Kashmir, the crossroads of the silk trade, a place frequented by pilgrims between India and China. This part of the story may well have moved from China to India; it is more likely that both of these extant texts drew upon an earlier, now lost version of the Indian story.

The story continues with another episode in the prenatal life of Xuanzang, and his early life: Xuanzang’s father, Guangrui, saved the life of a golden carp. Some time later, Guangrui was murdered by a pirate who threw him into the river, took his pregnant wife, and pretended to be Guangrui. (But the carp found Guangrui’s body, revived him, and kept him safe under water). When Guangrui’s wife gave birth to a son, she was afraid that the bandit would try to kill the child; she floated him on a plank down the river. To be sure of recognizing him later, she placed a letter and a garment beside him, and she bit off a little toe from his left foot. The abbot of a temple fished him out and named him Xuanzang. After eighteen years, Xuanzang learned the story of his birth and resolved to find his mother and avenge his father. He found her, and “She noticed that in speech and manner he bore a remarkable resemblance to her husband.” He showed her the letter, and the garment. “One look told her that they were the real thing.” Still, she asked him to show her his feet, just to make sure; she noticed that there was, indeed, a small toe missing from his left foot, she embraced him and wept. Eventually they were also united with Guangrui.
Some of these motifs are Indian. The fish that returns a life-saving favor appears in Indian texts as early as 800 BCE, the son whose mother abandons him to the river and later recognizes him by his feet (though someone else nurtures him) is Karna in the Mahabharata. But many of these details are also part of a theme much broader even than the great ocean of Indian stories: what Freud called the family romance, the child threatened by a wicked ruler, abandoned by his mother, raised among animals, often by, or with the help of, a fish or another animal—think of Romulus and Remus, and finally recognized when he is grown up through multiple forms of evidence, like the letter and the garment kept with the abandoned Xuanzang. This always available, never copyrighted folklore has been brought in, from India or elsewhere, to establish the magical birth of the hero, to plug a hole in the narrative—as, indeed, it was in the end to his true father in a higher world.

The Journey to the West drew on a world of stories, and made them uniquely Chinese. Anthony Yu’s translation is, in addition to everything else, a major contribution to this great wealth of mythology.

The Journey to the West

THOMAS HANSEN

First, I would like to thank the Dean for inviting me to participate in this discussion today, among this very distinguished company and on such an entirely agreeable occasion. For it is indeed a great pleasure and honor to have the opportunity to celebrate the new edition of Professor Yu’s Journey to the West translation, a chance to explore in depth the excitement and insights of the new version, and share some thoughts on this monumental scholarly achievement, which has for the first time brought to the English-speaking world complete access to this masterpiece of Chinese literary and religious culture. The Journey to the West (Xiyuji) is one of those rare works in world literature that bears an instantly recognizable flavor which is saturated in equal measure both with playful humor and with high seriousness, addictively entertaining as a reading experience and yet wonderfully engaging and thought-provoking as an exploration of the deepest conundrums of spiritual life, as experienced and experienced in the idiom of the religious traditions of late imperial China, in particular those of late Chinese Chan Buddhism and Quanzhen Daoism, which remain somewhat poorly understood and understudied in the Angophone world. It is of course one of the great virtues of Professor Yu’s edition that it has flawlessly and effectively bucked the trend in post-May Fourth Chinese scholarship to marginalize the religious allegory of the novel, which he has shown in his Introduction to have been central to the traditional reception of the work, and which his own reconstructions in the hard detailed labor of translation have restored to the reader’s eye in all its deep intertextual symbolic intricacy. To have made this available to an English reader, not only in the abstract demonstrations of the Introduction and supporting scholarly apparatus, but even in the surface prose of the prose, is an especially great and exciting achievement of the current edition especially. The new edition, besides converting the transliterations into the Hanuy pinyin system which has now become standard, thereby integrating the work into the present-day internationalization of Chinese culture, is also noteworthy for the revisions of the prose style, which have achieved a greater economy and

Allusively treats the heaviest subjects, even in the midst of its vastness and its leisurely expansiveness through a hundred chapters. I know well from my own experience attempting to translate the Zhuangzi how difficult it is to calibrate the tonal qualities of particularly idiosyncratic Chinese writing, trying to calculate in the total sweep of implications of the words in both the source and the target languages, trying to recreate somehow not just the meaning but the overall visceral impact of a particular left-turn of phrase or unexpected leap in the language. To do this successfully requires an almost impossible mastery of a vast network of semantic and phonetic traces and echoes and resonances in both languages, and an intuitive sense of the particular morphology of that language at the particular time and place of its production, and of this language as the current state of play in our own culture. I feel keenly the limits of my own abilities in this regard when I am forced, with great reluctance, to revisit my Zhuangzi translation—and I find that there is almost no line in that work which I have not reconsidered and wished I could tweak or invert since it was published: the translation of such a work is a constant work-in-progress, a process that doesn’t end when the manuscript goes off to the printers. To put it in words variously attributed to both Stravinsky, Da Vinci, W. H. Auden, and the Music for Airports composer and Roxy Music keyboardist Brian Eno, works like these are never really finished, just given up on. So I can well understand if Prof. Yu has been ceaselessly haunted by the possibility of adjusting and reworking details of his original already surpassingly excellent translation over these many years. I envy him both the opportunity to put out a new edition which can reflect so many decades of intense engagement with the text, and in surveying the new translation, I can only conclude that this must be the only way to really do it right. Witnessing Prof. Yu’s successes in this endeavor makes me acutely aware of how difficult and rare it is, and yet holds out the hope that it is really possible to accomplish. It is a great fortune for the Angophone world to have in its hands now the fruit of this long labor’s completion such a statistically unlikely combination of deep knowledge, innate intellectual skills, iron discipline and abundant expanses of available time, all converging in a single scholar. Such a convergence doesn’t happen often, and we are lucky to have the resulting crystallization in the gem of a book we have palpably before us today.

I would like to say some words about some of the thematic currents identified in Prof. Yu’s introductory discussion to the text. Prof. Yu’s scholarship has laid bare a key concept of the novel in the poetic license taken with
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The convergence of these two registers of meaning in this Chan metaphor perhaps points to a deep intertwining of these themes in the Chinese religious traditions under consideration here.

its protagonist and his relationship to official power. The historical Xuanzang was a brilliant independent thinker and translator in his own right, and also an intrepid religious outlaw, strictly speaking, undertaking his journey to India in a spirit of heroic defiance, braving not just great physical danger but also explicit imperial interdiction, moved not by loyalty to the state but by religious fervor and a rare intellectual probity, an undaunted will to pursue at any cost the truth on which, in his view, his spiritual liberation depended. The Xuanzang of the novel, in sharp contrast, is on an official mission from the emperor, and is moved not by loyalty to the state but by religious fervor and ingenious of the inventions and impasses of the rhetoric, and the engine for many of the most memorable and ingeniously invented upaya—skillful means. That is, by virtue of the author’s ingenious self-commentary, whereby his own allegorization is part of the subject matter of his allegory. This of course echoes the ancient dynamic of the Two Truths doctrine, brilliantly ramified in this masterpiece of Chinese elaborations of the implications of the Two Truths, cast in the metaphor of public and private, of strict official public policy and private transgression on the one hand, and, two, between words and wordlessness on the other—to which Prof. Yu so effectively draws our attention in his introduction, reminded me of a brilliant human religious practitioner working through his attachments, his biases, his fears, his illusions on the way to a fervently sought total transformation and integration at the end of his journey. Prof. Yu draws an interesting parallel between this shift in the private-public, obedient-attachment coexisting happily with under-the-counter backdoor folk practice. In this sense, the metaphor seems to be one of a customs official, all the more apt for our surreptitiously border-crossing Xuanzang and his ambitious fictional counterpart; the question is what is or is not permitted to go through. Official policy stipulates that nothing shall pass, but privately anything goes—not a bad description of many situations even in present-day China. The phrase is used in Chan dialogues in a typically compressed way, for maximal ambiguity: it expresses on the one hand disapproval at a hypocrisy, suggesting that someone has not really attained the high level of insight he had officially claimed, allowing huge errors to get through, but at the same time, in typical Chan fashion, showing the literary ingenuity of the tradition which is writ large in its continued ramifications in the novel we have before us, the phrase is a folktale encapsulation of the technical Buddhist philosophical doctrine of the Two Truths, else in the metaphor of public and private, of strict official interdiction coexisting happily with under-the-counter backdoor folk practice. In this sense, the simultaneous meaning is: “Although in Ultimate Truth, nothing exists, not even a needle, not the slightest emptiness, not the slightest conception, not the slightest language, yet in Conventional Truth, all and everything exists, a veritable circus of horses and carts and comings and goings and forms and fashions and characters and narratives.”

The convergence of these two registers of meaning in this Chan metaphor perhaps points to a deep intertwining of these themes in the Chinese religious traditions under consideration here.
Letters from Selma: Then and Now

On March 2, 2015, the Divinity School commemorated the 50th Anniversary of the Civil Rights march in Alabama from Selma to Montgomery. Our panel for this discussion included emeriti faculty Franklin I. Gamwell and Martin E. Marty, who were participants in the original march. Curtis J. Evans of the Divinity School and Jane Dailey of the Department of History also participated; Dwight N. Hopkins moderated.

Video of this event is available. Please visit http://divinity.uchicago.edu/lessons-selma-then-and-now. You may hear remarks by all speakers, including Professor Evans, who spoke extemporaneously and is therefore not included in this issue.

Franklin I. Gamwell

Fifty years ago, I was a young pastor at the West Side Christian Parish, an inner-city ministry on Chicago’s near west side, involving several store-front churches along Roosevelt Road and orchestrated by a group ministry. Five of this group drove to Selma on the Friday preceding the March to Montgomery. As it happens, as we apprehensively crossed the Alabama State border, well below the speed limit, I assure you, we were stopped by two Alabama State troopers—but we faced, I see in hindsight, no danger. By this time, the risks in Selma were taken and the brutality suffered, evoking national attention and offense—and President Johnson had eloquently sent us on our way.

Friday evening in Selma (or maybe Saturday), we attended a mass meeting in Brown Chapel—packed to the rafters. The atmosphere was electric; one sensed being present for a singular, perhaps historic, venture. Several people spoke, but I recall especially Andrew Young and James Bevel, two gifted members of Dr. King’s staff, exceptional in their capacity to articulate the issues and inspire commitment. Dick Gregory, a comedian of that era (still alive, I believe) also spoke, and I recall one line that brought down the house: “I ran into Jim Clark [sheriff of Selma County] today,” Gregory said, “and told him we were going to march to Montgomery. ‘Over my dead body,’ he replied, and I said that would be a good route.”

For our small company from the West Side Parish, our experience in Selma was felicitous. In Chicago at the time, the principal resource for organizing inner-city communities against poverty and racism was led by a man named Saul Alinsky and called the Industrial Areas Foundation. It was widely thought to be marked by its complete social realism. On that account, politics is solely a conflict of power, where each of many contenders acts strategically for its own self-interest and achieves it in the measure its power permits. Likely this does an injustice to Alinsky, but something like it was a widespread perception. There had been talk of inviting him into the larger west side, and some in our group ministry dissented, principally because the IAF seemed to have no social ideal of its own. The Civil Rights Movement and, specifically, our experience in Selma, presented a compelling alternative.

Here was a display of nonviolent power wielded to a moral appeal for the beloved community. This was Reinhold Niebuhr at his best.

The March to Montgomery itself began on Sunday, sometime between noon and one o’clock, although we had assembled much earlier. More than 3,000 people walked out of the black community and over the Edmund Pettis Bridge (named, I subsequently learned, for a confederate general). We were all allowed to march to the first camp site, some seven miles away, where a far more limited number would spend the night and continue for the next two days, including through ominous Lowndes County. I cannot begin to imagine the logistics of caring for 3,000 people and simultaneously planning a five-day march through hostile Alabama. In any case, a truck arrived late in the evening with an apple and a peanut butter and jelly sandwich for each of us. I have never much liked peanut butter, but I’d not eaten all day, was wasted by the walk, and treasured being there—and it was, hands down, the best sandwich I’ve ever had. Most of us, then, were motored back to Selma.

After the first day, I joined a crew that was trucked each morning to the previous campsite, where we broke down the huge tents in which some three hundred people slept and then reset them at the next site, and I was grateful to have some continuing participation in the event. All of the camp sites were properties owned by African Americans, who assumed a considerable risk in granting use of their fields. On the fourth day, we could rejoin the march for the few miles to the outskirts of Montgomery, where many hundreds spent the night on the spacious grounds of a Roman Catholic School for blacks—entertained there by a long list of celebrities. And the next day, many thousands, the number multiplied by morning arrivals, marched to the Alabama State capital for the final rally and speeches.

Now, there’s a sequel to this modest narrative, which I beg your further patience to explain. After our return to Chicago, the West Side Christian Parish chose, not an invitation to Alinsky but, rather, something like a movement in this city. At much the same time, Dr. King decided to take the Southern Christian Leadership Conference north. So, in early summer 1965, Jim Bevel and a group of some ten young people fresh from Selma’s campaign came to Chicago, intent on preparing the way for King’s arrival and a movement here during 1966. The West Side Christian Parish in fact hired Bevel, making him Director of Parish Program, and, in effect, merged our group ministry with his workers as one staff seeking social change—even while some of us had continuing responsibilities at the several churches. In the meantime, Andrew Young and others of Dr. King’s associates were active with other protest groups elsewhere in the city.

On the west side, it was a heady time. The group from Selma was flash with victory, and the optimism about equal success in Chicago, encouraged by Bevel, was staggering. I recall a staff meeting during early Autumn 1965, at which Bevel delegated to his company their several tasks: one person was to organize the suburbs, another the city colleges, a third the city high schools, another the youth gangs in Chicago—and by Spring and Summer of ’66, tens of thousands would be ready and eager for a movement to end slums, through which the national conscience about urban poverty and racism would be summoned forth and responsive federal action would follow.

“In the end,” Dr. King once said, “we will remember not
Democratic change is difficult without focused purpose.

In 1963, the 100th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, James Baldwin published a letter to his nephew: “You know, and I know,” he wrote, “that the country is celebrating one hundred years of freedom one hundred years too soon.” Fifty years after Selma, the color line in our country transparently persists. In thinking about the problem, I’ve been forced to see that practical wisdom is not something my kind of academic work cultivates. For one long, I fancied that this life of ideas would somehow give me special purchase on particular political problems and the achievement of political success. But I have met some people of practical wisdom, and I’m not one of them. So, some lessons for our time. I’ve taken from the Civil Rights movement are bound to be general and, perhaps, prosaic.

For one, moral appeal to the democratic promise was vindicated—although here, alas, I must wait on people of practical wisdom. Unlike the March on Washington in August 1963, the first Selma march was not intended as spectacle. And a final legacy: the justice pursued belongs to a beloved community and thus, among other things, to an integrated democracy in which diversity is cherished. This was the inclusive telos the movement’s specific purposes should advance. Against voices calling for a more separateness political commitment, Dr. King, his staff, and John Lewis never compromised that ideal. Also, justice and its beloved community are, Dr. King professed, authorized by and only by the divine purpose—a conviction reason commends, I think, and thus will well abiding assessment by “we the people.”

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God on your side. Recently I was asked by the American Civil Liberties Union to be an expert witness in an anti-discrimination suit from Washington State, in which a florist refused to sell flowers to a gay couple for their wedding. Her reason: providing flowers for a same-sex wedding compromised “her relationship with Jesus.” Her lawyers, representing the Alliance Defending Freedom, wanted a religious exemption to Washington State’s antidiscrimination law. The ACLU wanted to prevent the ADF from sanctioning discrimination against same-sex marriage. My role in this drama was to compare her argument with similar ones made against interracial marriage in the 1950s and 1960s; to show that they were perfectly legitimate arguments from a religious point of view, but that they were inconsistent with laws dedicated to non-discrimination in the public sphere. The analogy wasn’t perfect, but it was good enough: we won.

Martin E. Marty

The assignment was specific: focus on what we at the Divinity School learned from the Selma march of fifty years ago, and what that experience might mean at the School today. Observances of that “ Jubilee,” recalling and celebrating a major event in the struggle for civil rights in America, occurred at the small Alabama city of Selma and at most points around the nation where publics are sensitive to issues of rights and an ever more perfect experience of freedom.

So widespread and thorough was the fiftieth anniversary event and discussion of the well-timed film Selma that there is no need here for me to rehearse all the details. To the point: “Braids to the left, Selma to Montgomery March, The Shelby County reports!” What we were ushered to the soon-to-be-crowded Brown Chapel, by now a virtual landmark of the religious scene in Selma. Word quickly spread that a federal judge had issued an injunction against marching, and Dr. King acquiesced and, through his lieutenants, told us there would be no march that day. That news was greeted gruffly among our cohorts: we had interrupted class schedules or various religious duties, bought tickets, and come to Selma. Word quickly spread that a federal judge had issued an injunction against marching, and Dr. King acquiesced and, through his lieutenants, told us there would be no march that day. That news was greeted gruffly among our cohorts: we had interrupted class schedules or various religious duties, bought tickets, and come to Selma. But religious leaders were equally important for their theological imprimitur. Calling the Selma march a “pilgrimage,” as the black press and leading rights workers did (including King, in his end-of-the-march speech at the “pilgrimage,” as the black press and leading rights workers did (including King, in his end-of-the-march speech at the

picture six: Divinity professors crammed into a car, driving (upon advice) less than thirty-five miles per hour, gabbing and—admit it—trembling a bit.

Which raises the question again: why does a Divinity School commemorate the Selma March?

. . . to join me in Selma for a ministers march to Montgomery on Tuesday morning, March ninth.” The response was overwhelming; by March 9 more than 450 white clergymen, rabbis, and religious women (including a contingent of nurses) had gathered in Selma, with more on the way. Contemporaries remarked on the sense of pilgrimage shared by those who traveled to Selma that March. Arriving from New York, NAACP lawyer and longtime King adviser Stanley Levison was “struck by the unfamiliarity of the participants. They were not long-committed white liberals and Negroes. They were new forces from all faiths and classes. Believers who did not themselves journey to Selma could still participate vicariously in the march: denominational leaders in New York and Washington urged that the coming weekend’s sermons be on Selma. And that Sunday (March 14), upwards of 15,000 people gathered across the street from the White House in Lafayette Park to make an ecumenical protest sponsored by the National Council of Churches. There are many ways to read this march, but one way to read it is as a contest over Christian orthodoxy—as a collision of religious communities presenting themselves as defenders of two conflicting theological views. As its very name implies, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was always aware that men of the cloth lent the movement moral and social power. King and other preacher-politicians encouraged the conflation of black protest and Christian righteousness throughout the civil rights era; King used it to particularly good effect, as when he chose to be arrested in Birmingham on Good Friday. But religious leaders were equally important for their theological imprimitur. Calling the Selma march a “pilgrimage,” as the black press and leading rights workers did (including King, in his end-of-the-march speech at the "pilgrimage," as the black press and leading rights workers did (including King, in his end-of-the-march speech at the

Martin E. Marty

The mood changed when the hero-of-the-day (and ever since) John Lewis, now congressman and tireless leader, led a kind of chapel service or sort of rally, and certainly educational forum. We were to keep cool, not march, not provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to provoke violence, and trust King and company to work on the politics of setting a march days later. There were signals to
We returned safely to our teaching and editing roles and mental images to last a lifetime. What did we learn, to carry back?

We went back to live with the mix of the prophetic and the political, as professors and editors of those days got to live it.

point rather consistently religious commitments to non-violence.

An aside: the film Selma portrays President Lyndon Johnson as politician, not prophet, which means as someone who, protecting himself and his vision and approach, almost sabotaged the march-movement. Many insiders, including Bill Moyers—once a right-hand man to Johnson—give a more positive reading to the President, whose plate was full with proposals and programs, and, rightly or wrongly, he had to balance protest-march activities with uphill legislative efforts. We Divinity School people had no inside or insight about that. We marched when Dr. King thought it wise and delayed when he was emphatic about delay. We went back to live with the mix of the prophetic and the political, as professors and editors of those days got to live it.

We learned that theological and religious inquiry did color our commitments those March days. Sometimes these showed up in almost amusing incidents. We were busy learning why Jews (Abraham Joshua Heschel most notably) and assorted Protestant and Catholic theologians and preachers interpret events as they did. Conversations in the buses and other vehicles during the longer march to Montgomery inspired many discussions of motivations, from pacifist to radical, from explicit believers to agnostics, conversations which—like all the civil rights moves—enhanced awareness of pluralism. Arlie Schardt, who covered the day for Time magazine, had rented the car into which five of us were crammed. As he drove, he listened, and at the end said, “Listening to you theologians, I wonder how you ever got out of your chairs and put one foot in front of the other in the march.” Why? To paraphrase, he said something like: “I heard two Baptists who had a hierarchy to worry about and no being prophetic did not mean stepping out of all other roles to pursue immediate ends. King was facing a federal judge whose signals inspired hope that was to be projected backward, and so he engaged in dialogue and arguments, with an end in view. This was to make progress for civil rights, but to persist in following commitments to—at this
Honoring Dean
Margaret M. Mitchell

On June 2, 2015, the Divinity School held a reception to honor Dean Margaret M. Mitchell, Shailer Mathews Professor New Testament and Early Christian Literature, on her tenure as Dean. Among those who offered tributes were faculty colleagues David Tracy, Paul Mendes-Flohr, Wendy Doniger, and Richard B. Miller.

David Tracy

When five years ago Professor Mitchell agreed to become Dean of the Divinity School, I thanked her for taking such a task but could not resist stating then that I hoped her new position—a complex, often an all-consuming position—would not keep her from her important scholarship which, like so many others, I deeply admired as in fact ground-breaking.

As the years wore on and the tasks of the deanship exponentially grew, I noticed with increasing admiration that, overwhelming as the Deanship duties sometimes were, Margaret kept her scholarship both alive and productive. She did so in several ways: in her legendary teaching, through her papers at conferences here and abroad and above all through her publication of articles on the rhetorical analyses of both the New Testament, especially Paul, and several texts of the first four centuries of Christian theology. Hence I have remained Professor Mitchell’s avid reader since she first started writing many years ago.

Moreover, as a student of the history of hermeneutics I can usually recognize the signs of a major scholar in hermeneutics when I read one. Margaret Mitchell is clearly such a scholar. In fact what intrigues me most about Professor Mitchell’s recent scholarship is her bold claim that the first Christian hermeneutics occurred in First Corinthians. As someone who recently started writing many years ago.

It is clear that Margaret Mitchell, for all her scholarly originality also remains a committed student of her two major mentors, the rhetorical methods of Professor Hans-Dieter Betz and the more empirical-historical studies of the late Professor Robert Grant. At the same time, Dean Mitchell has developed her own distinctive scholarly voice by means of her unrelenting philological care and her reader of the vast field of New Testament scholarship and, even more so, a committed reader of the splendid exponentially increasing international scholarship on the first four centuries of Christian theology. Hence I have remained Professor Mitchell’s avid reader since she first started writing many years ago.

Moreover, as a student of the history of hermeneutics I can usually recognize the signs of a major scholar in hermeneutics when I read one. Margaret Mitchell is clearly such a scholar. In fact what intrigues me most about Professor Mitchell’s recent scholarship is her bold claim that the first Christian hermeneutics occurred in First Corinthians. As someone who has worked for over forty years in Christian hermeneutics I was originally somewhat dazzled by this bold claim. It took me a while, indeed several readings of Professor Mitchell’s book, to become convinced that her claim, a hermeneutical claim—historical, rhetorical and, at times, theological—is a persuasive and very important one.

It is clear that Margaret Mitchell, for all her scholarly originality also remains a committed student of her two major mentors, the rhetorical methods of Professor Hans-Dieter Betz and the more empirical-historical studies of the late Professor Robert Grant. At the same time, Dean Mitchell has developed her own distinctive scholarly voice by means of her unrelenting philological care and her richly scholarly standards in rhetorical and historical critical analyses. Those high standards of scholarship have characterized not only Professor Mitchell’s scholarship. They have also characterized Dean Mitchell’s untiring work as Dean, upholding these same high standards, for example, in her many searches for new colleagues in every field of this pluralistic community of scholars.

Paul Mendes-Flohr

To do great things is difficult; but to command great things is more difficult. —Friedrich Nietzsche

I recently had the occasion to contribute an essay to a volume on leadership. As I wrote the essay, I had Margy—our beloved and esteemed Dean (and a dear friend)—in mind. In framing the essay, I made reference to a disquisition of 1921 on the subject by the German philosopher Max Scheler, in which he makes a typological distinction between a Führer and a Vorbild. The former, a Führer serves as the head of an organization and duly exercises administrative and executive authority. It is the Führer’s task to ensure that the ship at his or her command sets sail on an even keel, and to chart its voyage through thick and thin. In assuming this demanding responsibility, the Führer must give maximal attention to detail. Indeed, he or she must adhere to the adage that “God dwells in
... scholarship as a spiritual and intellectual, indeed as an ethical calling.

In contrast to the Führer, Scheler’s Vorbild is a leader who assumes no administrative responsibility. Rather the Vorbild is a moral and spiritual leader, who embodies in an exemplary fashion the values and ethos of a given community. The Vorbild thus serves as an ethical and axiologial compass by which the members of his or her community can orient and live. Choosing his or her shipmates not to lose sight of those values as they move about the globe of Swift Hall’s faculty to the farthest reaches of the planet, Margy’s deanship brought us diversity not just in theory but in practice. The captain of the ship knows that the vessel at her helm goes astray, stuck on the shoals of directional uncertainty. Details. To be sure, those who are impatient with details claim in their exasperation that it is rather the devil who dwells in the details. But the captain of the ship knows that Providence has commissioned her to attend to minutiae, lest the vessel at her helm goes astray, stuck on the shoals of directional uncertainty.

As one of your shipmates, Margy, I salute you as our Captain, as our consumate Führer and Vorbild. If I may, I should like to add a postscript: In inviting me to pay tribute to Margy’s deanship, Wendy beseeched me not to yield to my incorrigible predilection for lachrymose schmaltz. But I do hope that Margy appreciates that behind each word of this all too brief laudatio palpitates unbridled affection and admiration.

Wendy Doniger
For Margy

Clearly we are all talking about the same person, shining light from different angles but coming up again and again with the fierce loyalty, the vision, the sharp intelligence, the mind like a steel trap, but also the compassion, the humor, the passion, the humanity. Margy’s deanship brought us diversity not just in theory but in practice, in the appointment of women as well as an object lesson in the female exercise of power, bartering all the obstacles that that implies. She also extended the religious globe of Swift Hall’s faculty to the farthest reaches of geography and history, as well as into other disciplines that intersect with the more central issues of the study of religion. Her deanship deepened our concern for teaching, in the Craft of Teaching program, in the more extensive practice sessions for job talks, in a closer relationship with the Graham School, and a host of other small but telling interventions in the training of our students. Moving about in my own worlds in this university, in the Humanities for South Asian Languages and Civilizations (SALC) and the social sciences for the Committee on Social Thought, it was always good to hear people speak of their deep respect for, even awe of, Margy, and affection, too, from students right up through presidents and provosts and deans. And I always encountered that same respect and warmth in academic communities far afield.

For me, the most astonishing thing about Margy’s deanship was the way that she got to know each one of us and genuinely cared about each one. She understands what we—students and faculty alike—are doing with our own work because she gets it from the inside, as a scholar who has herself produced ground-breaking work dealing with ancient languages and fragile manuscripts and archeology, and has dealt with competing theories and complex political issues. She has given me stunningly insightful help with much of what I’ve written over the years, reading it with a fine-tuned editorial eye and a real knack for creative interventions. And the way she speaks about the books and articles that my colleagues and students are working on has made me realize that I am not special in this regard, that Margy just reads everything, reads what we write, what all the people whom we might appoint here write, reads all of all of our publications, reads far beyond her own field. And she finds brilliant ways to make it all useful to us and to her in the tasks she undertakes for our sake, to think in new and useful ways about the work we do together.

There are too many of my former, and present, deans standing in this room for me to be so tactful as to say that she is the best dean I’ve ever served under, but for me she has certainly been a very very very good dean. No matter who ends up in that office in the future, I will miss Dean Mitchell, though I am so grateful knowing that I will continue to rejoice in Margy’s company as a cherished colleague and beloved friend.

And it is now my honor to present her with a gift from the faculty.

That is the end of the formal part of the party. Now you are free to go on eating and drinking and rejoicing in one another’s company.

Richard B. Miller

Thanks and a bittersweet tribute to Margy Mitchell, whom I’ve had the privilege of working under for only one year. But in that brief time span, a number of virtues were made plain to me. I’d like to share a few observations, thinking generally and also in light of some of our own interactions, to honor your achievements.

The first thing to note about the Dean—any dean—is that she is a double agent. You once said this to me yourself. On the one hand, you represent us—principally the faculty—to upper-level administrators and the broader public. You present our concerns to them. On the other, you represent central administration to the faculty, conveying messages and initiatives to us in ways that do justice to the work of the U of C’s academic leaders. These are the dual tasks of being a representative. The best book for all budding administrators is Hannah Pitkin’s The Concept of Representation, because Pitkin nicely captures the requirements of being a “double-agent” for those who must re-present and thus mediate ideas to different constituencies and groups. “Representation” Pitkin writes, “means the making present of something which is nevertheless not literally present.” It means “making the represented present,” and that is no small task. It means wearing two hats at once. There is a “real and unreal” dimension to being a dean, as I suspect you know all too well. But I’ve only identified two groups in this dance of representation—the faculty and what is called here the 5th floor. You've also represented the Div School to prospective students, to donors, to alumni, to job candidates, to our students, and to the wider academic community in ways that reflect the traditions and values of the institution and its highest ideals. You’re actually far more than a double-agent, you’re a model ambassador, and anyone stepping into your shoes has big ones to fill. You are also a scholar-dean: This is becoming an increasingly rare phenomenon, something like the “student-athlete.” But you are both a first-class scholar and an academic dean, juggling both tasks with aplomb. I remember well showing you a book prospectus recently, and in very short order you developed a set of very precise, careful, and nuanced suggestions that captured the broad spirit of the project and, with that in mind, made well-targeted suggestions as to how I should improve my pitch. I’ve chopped this prospectus around to several others in the guild, and received nothing from them on the order of what you brought to the table. I’m very grateful to you for that.

But it’s not just that you carry out both duties of being a scholar and a dean, you integrate them in your administrative work. It’s clear that, for you, being a dean is not a mindless task, but one to which you address yourself as a reflective and thoughtful person. You are an intellectual dean, one who tackles a problem as one that is amendable to reason, not incorrigible to reason simply because it may be a feature of institutional life and bureaucracy.
… institution not only as one that is shaped by thought and reason, but also as one that is embodied—fragile, needy, and vulnerable.

This fact of being in intellectual dean was made evident to me in my own recruitment/discussion: an argument. When you called to recruit me, you began by giving me reasons to come to the U of C. You grasped that this is not an obvious or self-evident matter, and that a case had to be made for changing institutions and joining this intellectual community. You focused on the educational values of the institution, and how they aligned with my own. Your argument was one of congruence and compatibility, not one that appealed to the usual incentives. You were right.

But you are not only an intellectual dean, you also are one committed to strengthening the health and body of the institution. You understand the institution not only as one that is shaped by thought and reason, but also as one that is embodied—fragile, needy, and vulnerable. What brings me to this insight is your hard work with alumni and donors, especially your success with the Development Office in securing two enormous gifts, one of $900K from John and Jane Coleman to launch the Craft of Teaching Program, and the recent gift of $1.5M from Julie Noonan to honor the life of her late husband, Daniel T. Carroll, with a scholarship in his name.

These gifts, as you know, take deep commitment and an ability to secure the confidence of donors, confidence that rests on their trust in you and the institution to represent and carry out their wishes. These gifts strengthen our collective body by broadening our base of support, expanding our resources, and developing opportunities to train the best of the next generation.

You have been an exemplary double-agent, scholar-dean, intellectual dean, and a dean who knows the body, heart, and soul of this institution. I want to say thank you for all that you’ve brought to the office during the past five years. We’ll miss you on the first floor, but we look forward to the fruits of your next scholarly project and all of those that you develop as our colleague and friend. As you step into this new chapter of research and teaching, please make sure that we all continue, as you say, to “play with fire.”
We need not only to discover our identity by reference to constant features in the objective world and by the creative work of memory giving patterns of meaning to our relationships. We need also to strike root in a definite plot of soil. We need somehow to find our place in a continuing and promising tradition with its sacred books, its communion of saints, and its discipline. This is just what academic life for most students seems to prevent. We get ourselves into a spectator attitude. We get into the habit of classifying religious movements and ideas according to historical, philosophical, theological, or psychological terminology. We can perhaps name the many seeds, the potential rootings that are blown our way by the winds of doctrine, but we do not actually strike root into the soul ourselves. This is the reason the university is not wholly adequate for nourishment. We need the church's community of memory and hope. In the church, we accept the truth: By their fruits shall ye know them; but we also accept the truth: By their roots shall ye know them. Where there are no roots, there will be no fruit.

My grandparents had this big tree stump in their backyard that has been seen better days—that is, when it was a tree—remained a central feature of their landscaping. They’d built a flowerbed around it, filled with white and red impatians and edged rather precisely with a wooden border my engineer-grandpa had cut in his woodshop. Some years, they’d even place a pot of geraniums on the stump itself. That would’ve stop me from stomping through the impatians, straddling the pot atop the stump, and belting out whatever Broadway tune I’d learned most recently. I loved that stump stage, and not only because my being up there made my grandma laugh pretty hard. I especially loved that it used to be something else.

“Used to be” is a familiar phrase in small towns like Muscatine, Iowa, where that tree stump is. It’s a signifier used to help people navigate: “oh, yeah, you’ll need to stop by the Smiths’ on your way home for supper—they just live around the corner from where the Dairy Treat used to be.” Or, “did you hear they’re building a new church? Right on the land where the Bosch’s farm used to be.” It’s not so helpful to anyone who’s new in town, but it cuts right to the chase for people who favor narrating the past in terms of relationships or who are just kind of terrible at cardinal directions, which is a common problem to have in Muscatine, since there the Mississippi River turns and so flows west-to-east for a bit before it heads south again.

Even though two months is the longest period of time for which I’ve lived there, I consider that river town my hometown. It is the town where I broke my arm, learned to drive, spent summer afternoons on my grandmother’s back porch, and Christmas Eves lying awake. It is the town where my parents were born and my grandparents are buried. As the backdrop to those decidedly life-changing events in the lives of those closest to me as well as to so many more mundane memories of my childhood, Muscatine became not only familiar to me as a young person but also formational to the person I am today.

In the spring of my freshman year of high school at Lyons Township in LaGrange, Illinois, I learned my family would be spending the summer in Muscatine. As a teenager ripped from her highly anticipated summer social engagements, I was dismayed at the decision. But my grandfather was dying and we knew it. This would be his last summer, and we would be around for it. Our days there were filled with lots of time to just be around. My eight-year-old brother and I had water balloon fights, and read a lot in lawn chairs, and played cards with our grandparents. No matter the days’ course, they always ended the same way: with dinner eaten all together—my mom, dad, brother and I, with my grandma and grandpa around their dining table, enjoying summer tomatoes and each other’s company. Each meal was as slow and deliberate as our summer morning decision-making when the day stretched long before us. At this pace, I began to understand a new relationship to time and space. One of the few times in my life where the day after next was not planned, that summer and those meals created a space for simply being present: not only to the moment, but most especially to each other.

Experiencing rootedness like this has animated my subsequent decisions, and is the answer to how I got here, both to the Divinity School and more existentially—as in, how I am the person you know, and not some other self I...
So I came to the Divinity School to engage with faith questions from inside a tradition, so that I could speak with a community and not just to one or for one.

could have grown into. I’ll connect the dots after I tell you one more story.

Just as the stump stage used to be a tree, and the church used to be a farm, and the car lot used to be a Dairy Treat, I used to be a Catholic. The shift away from attending CCD on Monday nights at the 10,000 member Catholic parish in the western suburbs to going to Unitarian Universalist Youth Group with ten other kids on an average day understandably presented a lot for me to process as a twelve-year-old. In particular, the religious education curriculum for my age group focused not on UU tradition as I’d expected based on my experience in Catholic Catechism, but on “Neighboring Faiths”; we traveled together to a mosque, a Quaker meeting house, a synagogue, and even another Catholic church to learn about these faith communities. I engaged immediately; experiencing the ways other people worshipped and hearing their stories. My journey through faith had taken a very literal turn.

As an undergraduate, I chose to double-major early on in Religious Studies and English. Both, I argued, offered methodologies to better understand people and to situate their stories into a particular and appropriate context. At that moment in my education, my rationale was articulated from a scholarly distance: I wanted to understand other people, why and how they were religious. I befriended a 95-year-old minister who could recite Chaucer from memory as accurately as his stories of chaplaincy in WWII. I studied abroad in India to tease out what an explicitly ‘secular’ nation-state means for faith communities’ worship lives. When pushed to explain my degree, I’d make clear that I was studying world religions so the questioner—whoever it was—would not confuse me for one of my objects of study: a religious person.

Somewhere along the line, though, as is likely obvious from the space which I inhabit now, I began to include myself in my work. I’m not sure when the moment came exactly, but I realized that for all my confusion about the distance I’d travelled from my grandparents’ Catholic faith, I in fact still had a stake in how religion was talked about in our world not only as a scholar but as a religious person as well. So I came to the Divinity School to engage with faith questions from inside a tradition, so that I could speak with a community and not just to one or for one. Taking that position felt more honest for me, as I feel most like myself when I’m working alongside people rather than from a distance. With James Luther Adams’s (a twentieth-century Unitarian theologian and graduate of this place) words echoing in Bond Chapel, here I am striking root in a definite plot of soil. Just as my parents had when they committed a summer of our lives to dwelling in an familiar-yet-uncomfortable place, a place of sadness and grief for my grandfather’s decline, to get here, I had to let go and accept that what “used to be” shapes what is now.

A tree stump holds geraniums and a singing child on a summer day. And a journey through other people’s faiths becomes a call to claim my own. ✪

Delivered at Open Space in Bond Chapel on November 18, 2014.
Phyllis D. Airthart (MA’81, PhD’85) was a finalist for the 2015 Canada Prize in the Humanities for her book, A Church with the Soul of a Nation: Making and Remaking the United Church of Canada (McGill-Queen’s University Press). The Canada Prizes are awarded annually by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences to recognize books that make an exceptional contribution to scholarship, are engagingly written, and enrich the social, cultural and intellectual life of Canada.

Matthew Becker (MA’90, PhD’91) is associate professor of theology at Valparaiso University, Valparaiso, Indiana. His book Fundamental Theology, A Protestant Perspective, was published last month by Bloomsbury/T&T Clark. The book’s Afterword is by Martin Marty.

Michael Joseph Brown (PhD’98) has assumed the position of VP of Academic Affairs and Dean of the seminary at Payne Theological Seminary, the oldest African American theological institution in North America.

Anthony Cerulli (MA’07, History of Religions), Assistant Professor of Religious Studies and Asian Studies, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, was named a 2015 Fellow of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation (JSGMF). This year 175 scholars, artists, and scientists were named fellows (out of a group of over 3,100 applicants). Prof. Cerulli received the sole fellowship in South Asian Studies for his project, “Sanskrit Medical Classics in Crisis: Language Politics and the Reinvention of a Medical Tradition in India.”

Robert D. Denham (MA’64, PhD’72 in English) has recently published his thirty-eighth book, an edition of Northrop Frye’s Uncollected Prose (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015). His thirty-ninth book is in press—Northrop Frye and Others: Twelve Writers Who Help to Shape His Thought (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, forthcoming 2015). Denham is John P. Fishwick Professor of English Emeritus, Roanoke College. He remembers Swath Hall in the early 1960s as an intellectually invigorating place.


Courtney Fitzsimmons (MA’03, PhD’10) has accepted a position as Assistant Professor of Religion at Whitman College.

Daniel Gold (PhD’82) is Professor of South Asian Religions, Department of Asian Studies, Cornell University. He recently published Provincial Hinduism: Religion and Community in Guwahati City (New York: Oxford 2015).

Dale Goldsmith (MA’64, PhD’73) has two new books to announce. Growing in Wisdom: Called to the Adventure of College was published in 2014 by Wipf & Stock; the same publisher is putting out Look – I Am With You: Devotions for the College Year in 2015.


Richard Hutch (MA’71, PhD’74, Religion and Psychological Studies) recently retired from a long academic career in Studies in Religion, School of Historical and Philosophical Inquiry, University of Queensland, Australia. His public lecture, “Marching to the courthouse for freedom” on his experiences as a volunteer in the American Civil Rights Movement in the SCOPE Project (“Summer Community Organization and Political Education”), which was sponsored by Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Southern Christian Leadership Conference in 1965, will be delivered on May 29th at the University of Queensland, Australia.

Dr. Hutch recently delivered the keynote address on a symposium on the Civil Rights Movement at Gettysburg College in Pennsylvania, where he was an undergraduate, 1963-67. His presentation in the town where Union troops turned back Confederate troops in 1863, which represented the beginning of the end of the Civil War, marked not only the 50th anniversary of the SCOPE Project, but also the 150th anniversary of the end of the Civil War (on April 9, 1865 at 3:15 pm). Video of the address is available on YouTube.

Kevin Jung (PhD’04) is Associate Professor of Christian Ethics at Wake Forest University. He has recently published Christian Ethics and Communal Morality in the Routledge Studies in the Philosophy of Religion.

Meira Kensky (MA’91, PhD’09) has recently been tenured and promoted and awarded an endowed chair. She is now the Joseph E. McCabe Associate Professor of Religion at Coe College.

Emily J. M. Knox (MA’00) is an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. She recently published Book Banning in 21st Century America (Rowman & Littlefield).

Ted Peters (PhD’73) is Emeritus Research Professor of Systematic Theology and Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary and the GTU. He has two new books for 2015, both with Fortress Press: Sin Boldly! Justifying Faith for Fragile and Broken Souls and God —The World’s Future, 3rd edition.

Benjamin C. Ray (MA’67, PhD’71) is Professor in the Department of Religious Studies at the University of Virginia. He recently published Satan and Salem: The Witch-Hunt Crisis of 1692 (UVA Press).

Clare K. Rochschild (PhD’03, New Testament/Biblical Studies), Robert Mathew Calhoun (PhD’01, NTECL) and Thomas R. Blanton IV, editors, have published The History of Religious School Today: Essays on the New Testament and Related Ancient Mediterranean Texts. This volume offers a glimpse at one current thriving expression of the
distinguished history of religions school approach to the New Testament and Early Christian Literature. The University of Chicago has long been a hub of this type of investigation and over the last century, many of these Chicago studies have produced groundbreaking results. The book is dedicated to Professor Hans Dieter Betz, Shailer Mathews Professor Emeritus of New Testament in the Divinity School, the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Literature, and the Committee on the Ancient Mediterranean World. Divinity contributors include Mark Reasoner (PhD’90 NTECL), Meira Z. Kensky (PhD’09), Jeffrey Asher (PhD’99 NTECL), Laurie Brink (PhD’99), David G. Monaco (PhD’11), Paul B. Duff (PhD’88), Matt Jackson-McCabe (PhD’98 NTECL), and Jeffrey A. Trumbower (PhD’89).

Franklin Sherman (PhD’61), former Professor of Christian Ethics and Dean of the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, has recently published an edited volume, Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Vol. 2, Building a New Relationship (1986-2013) (New York and Mahway, NJ: Paulist Press). This completes his long-term project of assembling the most significant documents on this subject from Christian, Jewish, and interfaith sources around the world. The first part of the collection was published by Paulist in 2011, with the title Bridges: Documents of the Christian-Jewish Dialogue. Vol. 1, The Road to Reconciliation (1945-1985). Both volumes include introductions by a leading Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish scholar in the field as well as a Preface and interpretive comments by Dr. Sherman.

Michael Sohn (PhD’12) is currently Visiting Assistant Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Comparative Religion at Cleveland State University. He recently published The Good of Recognition: Phenomenology, Ethics, and Religion in the Thought of Levinas and Rovean (Baylor University Press, 2014).

John G. Stackhouse, Jr. (PhD’87) recently published his eighth book, Need to Know: Vocation as the Heart of Christian Epistemology (Oxford, 2014). This summer, he will leave Regent College, Vancouver, after 17 years in the Sangwoo Younong Chee Chair of Theology and Culture, to take the Samuel J. Mikolaski Chair of Religious Studies at Crandall University in Moncton, New Brunswick.

Jonathan Stockdale (MA’93, PhD’04), associate professor of Japanese religion at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington, has published a new book, Imagining Exile in Heian Japan: Banishment in Law, Literature, and Cult (University of Hawaii Press).

Alan Verskin (MA’04) is assistant professor in the Department of History at the University of Rhode Island. He just published Islamic Law and the Crisis of the Reconquista: The Debate on the Status of Muslim Communities in Christendom (Leiden: Brill, 2015).

Bill Wright (PhD’06, Theology) has recently published Calvin’s Salvation in Writing: A Confessional Academic Theology (Bol).
## Alumni News Information

CRITERION solicits your participation in keeping the Divinity School up-to-date on alumni professional accomplishments. Please use the form below, or write to us separately, and mail to the address listed below. Alumni news can also be submitted online by visiting [http://divinity.uchicago.edu/share-your-alumni-news](http://divinity.uchicago.edu/share-your-alumni-news)

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