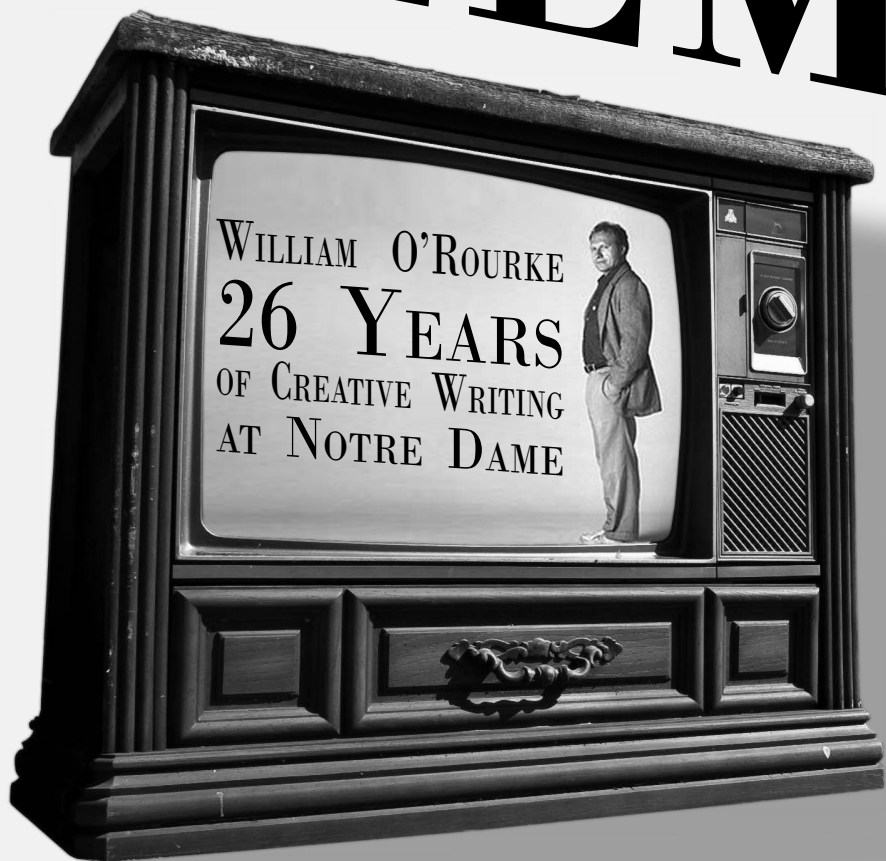


THE VIEW  
FROM THE  
COUCH  
HELM



WILLIAM  
O'ROURKE

26 YEARS (1989–2015)

OF CREATIVE WRITING AT NOTRE DAME

This booklet was produced by the Notre Dame Creative Writing Program in the Spring semester of 2015 to honor boundless contributions by its founder, and long-time faculty member, (now-Emeritus) Professor William O'Rourke.

William was instrumental in founding the program, which began in the Fall of 1990, first as an MA degree, then in 1996 changing to an MFA degree.

To congratulate him on well-deserved retirement, these pages bring together acknowledgements from faculty, as well as former students in fiction to whom William served as thesis director, telling of his distinguished influence, support, and friendship.

Designed by Christopher Holdaway.

The cover image incorporates the cover photograph from William's book *Signs of the Literary Times: Essays, Reviews, Profiles* (SUNY Press, 1993) and a photograph by Greg Turner (CC BY-NC-SA 2.0 flickr.com/photos/gregturner/2330176277), with text in reference to William's other book *Campaign America '96: The View From the Couch* (Marlowe & Co., 1997). This cover image is licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0. The back cover uses images of all William's books.

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*Introduction by*

Valerie Sayers

## *William O'Rourke, Literary Soul*

William O'Rourke is not only a celebrated man of letters and a distinguished professor; he is a hyper-concentrated literary being. Some students claim to have seen tiny leather-bound volumes circling around his head like planets in the halls of O'Shaughnessy. He knows about everything—he's up on politics, labor, opera, science—but a far-ranging conversation with him always comes back to the written word.

William's first book, *The Harrisburg 7 and the New Catholic Left*, appeared in 1972, and started his literary career off with big-deal notice and four weeks on the *New York Times Book Review* editors' recommended list. If Garry Wills called *Harrisburg*, a nonfiction account of activist idealism, "a clinical x-ray of our society's condition," the O'Rourke novels that followed, *The Meekness of Isaac* and *Idle Hands*, might be called MRIs of a generation's political, social, and sexual realities. *Criminal Tendencies* was published in 1988, full of surprises: set in Key West, the novel demonstrates a knowledge of art and ornithology that is matched by supremely confident portrayals of '80s politicians, writers, and lowlifes. In 1996, *Notts* appeared, its account of striking coal miners in Margaret Thatcher's England making it as fine and disciplined a novel of the labor movement as we are likely to see. William has also edited a collection of fiction about work, and over the last twenty-odd years has continued to publish incisive nonfiction focused on literature, politics, and his own heart attack, much of it collected in four volumes. He is rightly proud of his four years of columns for the *Chicago Sun-Times*: contentious, incisive, and

original in equal measures. The range of his interests is matched by his devotion to precision, clarity, and intensity. Small wonder his writing has earned a long string of literary honors, including two fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts.

After several teaching appointments on the East Coast, William O'Rourke arrived at Notre Dame in 1981 and began lobbying for a graduate creative writing program in the late '80s. With gleeful ingenuity, a little arm-twisting, a minuscule budget, and the help of John Matthias and Sonia Gernes, he founded the program in 1990. Despite the initial lack of funding, he envisioned a journal, a visiting writer series, literary prizes published with the UND Press, and a small, highly selective cohort of graduate students who would revitalize the university with their own literary ideas and innovations. All these elements came into miraculous being, coaxed and nudged along by William. Within a decade, the MFA program was flourishing and graduating the kind of superb students who continue to do us proud; the *Notre Dame Review* was providing them training in editing and publishing, as well as establishing itself as an important national journal with William himself joining John Matthias as co-editor and his former student Kathleen Canavan as executive editor; and three prize series—the Sandeen & Sullivan prizes and the *Notre Dame Review* Prize series, sustained writers struggling as conglomerate corporate publishing houses sought higher and higher profit margins. The kind of work William does for the program's literary series—reading manuscript after manuscript, year after year, faithfully inviting and hosting visiting writers—has been largely unsung, but we sing it out now, his legacy to us.

William O'Rourke is also a generous soul who has had a vital impact on several generations of writers: he championed students like Michael Collins, the program's first graduate, who had been an undergraduate at Notre Dame and who has gone on to a distinguished publishing career; and he published his own youthful mentors, including the great Richard Elman, at the end of his distinguished career. William always let MFA students know that one of their jobs as writers was to create a culture of literature. He guided them into creating their own publications, on and off campus, on the page and on the screen, and urged them to keep at it through years

of discouragement, even as he has provided the same kind of moral support to his colleagues.

William has also inspired undergraduate writers for decades. He often invokes the Mount Holyoke student who called him the “uneffusive Professor O’Rourke,” and he has done his best to live up to the name, with his imposing demeanor and authoritative pronouncements about what makes a piece of literature successful or un-. He theorizes everything from similes to semicolons (which he calls “speedbumps on the narrative highway”). He has always put a word in the ears of undergraduates ready for graduate school, and he corresponds with them after they have become writers and editors and literary presences of their own. He advised the organizers of the Notre Dame Literary Festival and was instrumental in introducing the undergraduate concentration in creative writing. But he never saw his role at Notre Dame as exclusively, or even primarily, in the Creative Writing Program. Rather, he envisioned the Creative Writing Program as one red-hot area of a jumping English Department, where crucial committees benefited from his years of experience, wise counsel, and support of colleagues. He has also been an eloquent and funny contributor to department meetings; in gatherings where it can be hard to get a word in edgewise, William O’Rourke has both the word and the edge.

He also has his colleagues’ and his students’ deepest affection. He is the kind of friend who shows up in emergency rooms and at hospital bedsides to offer his reassuring presence. He opens his home up, again and again, for literary parties where kitchen talk goes on into the small hours, and where itinerant writers and colleagues with failing furnaces can find a bed and kind hospitality. He is the most loyal literary companion and friend most of us will ever hope to meet, and while we tremble a little at the idea of his retirement, we are pretty gleeful ourselves about the prospect of William O’Rourke with more time to write. We can’t wait to read what comes.



# *Student recollections*

(2014)

Leo Costigan

**William O'Rourke's Crank Theories:**

1. Good stories always have five or more characters.
2. All fiction should be able to be appreciated by people ages 15-25.
3. Daniel Alarcón is a fine template for the "Good Looking Male Writer".
4. People like reading about work. Write a story about a guy constructing a table, and somebody will want to read it.
5. Don't use apostrophes to signify dialogue. This approach is only for British people.
6. Question your impulse to use the first person. Where is this voice coming from? Who is it speaking to? Is it emerging from somebody alone in a dark room?
7. You can always tell the length of a short story by the opening line.
8. A complaint can be disguised as insight if you give it to the right character.
9. Don't start a story with somebody waking up.

Finally: "The experiences in these stories feel lived."

This last one isn't a crank theory, only a small comment given to me during one of our first advisor meetings, and a comment that struck me hard because it summarized my approach to voice in a way I hadn't been able to get at before.

All to say — thanks for teaching us, William. Though we're not in the Bend anymore, your absence from the program will still be felt.

Thanks for making us better (or, at least, crankier) writers.

Courtney McDermott

(2011)

William,

One of the first things I remember about you is the ND hat you always sported, reminding me that I was studying at a place I have loved since childhood.

As your one and only advisee in my year, I received your undivided attention and careful critiques of my drafts, which we discussed over coffee at the LaFortune Starbucks. Your thorough and spot-on advice spurred me to write a memoir that I am incredibly proud of. Though it isn't published yet, I wrote a story about my Peace Corps experience that needed to be written out of me and you encouraged me to do so. Your suggestion to write it in the present tense took the memoir to an entirely different plane, for which I am incredibly grateful.

You also introduced me to Craig Nova, praised my stories of the motel in Iowa where I grew up and Craig encouraged me to submit my work to his agent. I am grateful to have had an advisor who took that much interest in my work.

Did you know that one of the stories I workshopped in your class (*How They Spend Their Sundays*) is the title story in my collection? The revisions I received in your class were invaluable in making that story publishable.

Notre Dame is going to sorely miss you, but thank you for all you have done in creating and shaping the program and the writers who have gone through it.

Best,  
Courtney McDermott



The first time I met William, his office door was made up with newspaper clippings. He (or could it have been somebody else?) had taped them to his door on the side facing the hallway. This meant anybody walking by, not just those granted entry, had access to his thoughts or at least his thoughts in black and white, meaning a hint of what was really going on inside. I wondered if this was his way of starting a conversation. Was it his way of saying: these are important things we should be talking about? Maybe even: we don't talk about these things enough? Was I reading too much into it? Probably.

But I must have left with the anxious feeling I still carry around that there is so much to say and so little time. Also: here was a writer who, even when he wrote fiction, remained involved with the world. Writing wasn't just art or entertainment but a way to do something about what you disliked; fixing something you thought wrong. Maybe even: fiction wasn't a way of fleeing reality but engaging with it more forcefully. That was my first impression of William. I may have completely manufactured it to fit my purposes; he was the kind of writer I wanted to be.

Later I learned that my future professor was a writer of both fiction and non-fiction. Even better! William wrote a political column for the *Chicago Sun-Times*. I was freelancing for the *South Bend Tribune* and a career in journalism was where all the road signs seemed to point. I felt I had something in common with my future prof, and he became not just someone who critiqued my work, but a writer I could try to emulate.

So that's what's stayed with me ten years later. I've forgotten about every single piece of writing advice that was ever given to me. I remember the kind of writer I wanted to be, and the person who inspired him.

(2006)

Renée E. D'Aoust

Caslano, Switzerland  
December 10, 2014

Dear William,

It is my pleasure to congratulate you on your retirement and to thank you for the many blessings you have brought to my life. Many years ago, when I was still a grad student and you were my advisor, you told me that I could stop thanking you. We had the connections of NYC, theatre, a love of enormous fiberglass animals (okay, I love them, maybe you don't?), skepticism, and writing, of course.

But you remember the history, right? You brought me to Notre Dame. You agreed to be my advisor. You helped me sort through a lot of feedback: "Now you know some different opinions about your work. If it fits, keep it. If it doesn't, ignore it."

You made space for me at Notre Dame. The reason there was space for me at Notre Dame was because you had fought for the program and created it in such a way to give writers TIME & SPACE to write, to read, to be, to do, to get lost in wonder, to sob over crappy first drafts, to stare at ducks.

At Notre Dame: I wrote my first book. I taught my first creative writing courses (to the Sisters of the Holy Cross!). I met a quirky Italian named Daniele & played water polo with him on the MFA creative writing team (started by Tom Miller!).

After Notre Dame: Daniele and I got married, and I followed him to his postdoc in southern Switzerland. (Here I am now at my writing desk in our home.) That book got published. Big. Life. Events... touched by you. Thank you.

(Okay, you didn't help me find my dachshund Tootsie. But you might have!)

From the time my father ran out of my house in Idaho to say, "the author William O'Rourke's voice is on your answering

machine!” ... to the time I asked Joe if he wouldn’t consider playing the sousaphone... to the time you submitted my work to the AWP “Intro Journals” project (we won!)... to our most recent dinner over sushi in Seattle, I am full of gratitude for your kindness, generosity, presence, support, & honesty. Thank you, William.

With love,  
Renée

(2002)

## Michael Richards

The first time I visited William O'Rourke in his office at Notre Dame, I believed that I was about to die of suffocation. Not from the weight of his criticism of my latest literary submission to the workshop (as heavy as those could be), but due to an avalanche of yellowed papers balanced on the shelves around the office. Whenever I think of William, I imagine him surrounded by these papers, and I imagine them filled with the gritty and elegant writing that attracted me not only to his work but also to the Writing Program.

I read works by several writing program gurus as one criterion for selecting a program to attend. *Notts: A Striking Novel* by William O'Rourke — devoured on a plane between San Antonio and South Bend — sealed the deal for me on Notre Dame. I found it gritty and real and profoundly larger than life.

Later, I worked with William on the *Notre Dame Review* and made him my thesis adviser. When he blurbed my first collection of short stories, calling them “both gritty and elegant,” I knew that my two years at Notre Dame had been time well spent.

Thank you, William. I hope that your retirement affords you more time to write!



In time, I learned that William was spending most of our workshops telling us literary jokes, teasing us, going off on these really colorful and insightful riffs about the nature of the writing art, from the very beginnings of literature to today. His humor is for the literate 1%, likely even half of that; he treated us like post-doctoral students; he'd allude to anything, the French Revolution, Nabokov chasing butterflies, whatever was on his mind, and he'd expect us all to be right there with him, as though we all had the depth of reading and ability to see the interconnected tapestry of the disciplines as he did. (You know, some of the people in those workshops were writing vampire novels, William!). You had to know quite a bit of Latin to follow William's train of thought, you had to be able to reference the origin myths of the Vikings. We students would go to a bar afterwards and people would eventually get up the nerve to ask each other what William had been talking about.

William was a great Ozymandias of thought, a proto-version of Wikipedia. The smart thing to do was to stay with him, to sit in those lectures and just jot down the things he was saying that you didn't know. Then you could go and find them out. If you did, you'd soon know that he was a standard bearer of the educated Irish; proof that Celts had brains, too, though the Romans had won; an immigrant descendant made good, a worker-intellectual, a Commie, a Red, a Democrat, a South Sider; I learned to just pull the voting lever from him, even if it turned out an occasional Blagojevich, or, sigh, Obama.

You learned that he believed that meaning is important in writing, that books should have words in them, that writers limit their own territories and not vice versa. You learned that it's okay to not write for everyone, and that by not writing for everyone, you actually are doing just that. And if the Notre Dame sophomores decided to bring in Tom Clancy for a reading, that was all right, because the school itself would soon bring in people like Charles Bernstein and Terry Eagleton, and

who in the end wrote things that were actually readable by humans? Plus, wasn't it all just too funny?

There was a great egalitarianism in William, a baseline understanding that he would treat us like writers, whether we deserved to be or not. Because who should be more well-read and intellectually fearless than writers? I learned a lot of big words from him, bigger ideas, many new writers, and was handed a wonderful template for going about living the literate life; that it should be pursued with pride.

Then there was this: William was also the first father I had ever heard call his own son 'Honey.' They were standing by the faculty mailboxes one day; his son was seven or eight. I'd never heard a man speak to a male child with such clear and tender love, and William wasn't even ashamed of it. It's the first thing I always think of when I think of William, that whispered 'Honey.' I call my own son Honey now, as well as Sweetie, Dear, Darling and Baby, a fine collection of Anglo-Saxon, as William would let you know.

When I first read a William O'Rourke book, I thought, this guy writes a lot about sex. My mentor, Jaimy Gordon, had turned me on to him. I think that at the time I was also writing a lot about sex but doing it poorly and she wanted to set an example for me.

When I started graduate school at Notre Dame, and finally met William in person, I was disappointed. I had expected him to be an overt sex fiend, maybe one of those professors with long hippy hair and a permanent leer. The pensive and understated man I met seemed a letdown, but only for a matter of days.

Soon, he took on a stature I had previously only reserved for movie stars and Franz Kafka. Professor O'Rourke — as I called him, because addressing him as William almost seemed disrespectful — left me spellbound with his lectures, his voice, his delectable humor.

Yes, this all seems obsequious and maybe pathetic of me. But William was a figure in my life that never disappointed, and I am proud to say he made my life remarkably better and brighter.

Another MFA student — an equally deep admirer of William — and I would follow his class with a breakfast or lunch, so that we could discuss whatever he said that day. We had nicknames for him — the dark lord, the master, and so forth — and we would imitate his voice and its cadence, laughing and repeating his theories, musings, and pronouncements.

Being invited to a party or function at his house felt like an honor, and I remember being nervous and excited in his home. A favorite memory was when William came with us to a local poetry reading at the Oyster Bar. Ever respectful and polite, he finally let out a laugh when one of the readers went into a diatribe about how if chivalry wasn't dead, then could somebody please put it out of its misery? To this day, I don't know if William liked that sentiment or if he found it ridiculous. We laughed too. We just wanted to be like William.

William taught me how to turn phrases and examine literature, popular culture, and styles of writing. It was all a wonderful web only he knew how to spin and that we were all happily captured in. It was a gift only a great teacher can give. It was a gift he gave hundreds of others.

I haven't talked to William in years. I have followed him through his books and articles, and I'm not even sure he knows what an effect he has had on me as I have grown older, and less impressionable. I wonder sometimes, how enchanting it would be to be around William now, as he considers the next phase in his life. As he does, he should know that I hold him in as high esteem now as I did then. I hope he understands that he moved people and opened their minds, and that he's long from done doing so.

It's been more than 20 years since I sat across his desk, trying to figure out how in the world I could expand my writing toolbox to include all the things William O'Rourke thought should be in there. For all my training and practice as a writer, he asked me to stretch far beyond where I thought I was capable of going.

But what he pointed out has stuck with me. "You're masking what you don't know" has become my mantra when I know I need to dig deeper to find out what's really going on with my characters and their story. "You have a certain facility with words" is a reminder that I can't just create a nice gloss on the surface. The words have to be more than models on a catwalk, stalking and stretching. They also have to be a scaffold that holds everything together.

With his help I not only became more aware of my writing but of others'. I began to see the craft that lay beneath excellent writing and what separated the excellent from the merely good. And perhaps most importantly, how to apply that — in fits and starts that continue today — to my own work.

(1995)

## Timothy Worrall

Unfortunately, I did not get to take a class from Professor O'Rourke because he was recovering from a heart attack and was not teaching classes the year that I was at Notre Dame, and then I finished the program early and returned to Dallas to begin working on my PhD.

He did work with me individually on a couple of my short stories, and his feedback was incredibly insightful and helpful. I really wish I had had the opportunity to work with him more.

I do remember clearly the advice he gave me when I was beginning my thesis. I had never attempted writing a novel before, and so I asked William if I needed to approach writing a novel differently than writing a short story and he said "Yes, just keep writing when you get to page twenty."

# Matthew Benedict

(1994)

William — it always has been and always will be “William” — was the first Notre Dame Faculty Member I met when I drove out from Rhode Island to secure housing in the Summer of 1992 for my impending Fall enrollment. From that moment forward, I’ve felt privileged and honored to know him, first as a Mentor, then a Colleague. But more importantly, as a Friend.

Whether it be advice on writing projects — listening tolerantly, then very presciently walking me away from them — interior design — “Yes, this room does have a Nantucket-Porch-of-The-1970s feel, right down to the naugahyde” — or diet & food — “There are no expiration dates on canned tuna” — William has always been one with a certain gravitas buttressed with an impish mirth.

In all seriousness ... always a sounding board for weighty, painful matters — family mostly. A shared kind of life 1400 miles and decades apart, yet each of us sitting as a bookend to the Post World War Two Baby Boom. Coupled with an appreciation for narrative, for language, for what all of that means for the other 99 percent. Especially those with no voice within that 99 percent. The ones who are truly Left Behind. And in the classroom, the Benefit of the Doubt. The dazzling gem that knows not its own brilliance. And for being the stalwart, uncompromising Defender.

All of that. And Friendship, too.

“Privileged” and “Honored” are not hollow words when they are Evidentiary. For that, they become doubly strong.

William. Always has been, always will be.

(1994)

Catherine Denby

William O'Rourke deserves volumes of praise, or at least praise shouted at high volume.

He was my thesis advisor, and gave me excellent advice, as well as one apt sarcastic comment. With his inspiration I was able to turn my thesis into a book that got me an agent from Literary Market Place. The book wasn't placed, but I found a place at Ivy Tech and became an assistant professor, after he wrote me a letter of recommendation.

I don't teach creative writing; I feel I never could, for his example far overshadowed any other writing teacher I ever had. I doubt I could be as brutally honest as he was. He was able to start his classes with lectures that had substance. He was also funny and passionate about politics as well as writing.

I hope he will write more books!



I had the great good fortune of being one of the founding members of the UND Creative Writing MA program in fiction writing (there was no “F” in it back then, and it was easy to get in to).

One day, prowling for students, Bill approached me (I was nearing the end of a the PhD that brought me to ND), and said, “I understand you write fiction. What would you think about joining the new MA program?” “Sure,” I said, “love to.” (Fiction had always been my heart’s desire; the PhD was just a hedged bet.) “Get me a writing sample,” he said. So I did — *Ambagum*, a strange quasi-sci-fi novel I’d begun in high school. Some days later, invited to his office to “review my manuscript,” I sat down, checked out the wall art that informed me of all that he had published and watched as Bill pulled the manuscript out of its fat envelope for what I suspected might have been the first time. He felt the heft, looked toward me, and gave his verdict, “You know just the willingness to stick to it to produce this many pages is worth something.”

And thank God that’s true, because had he read it, I can hardly imagine he’d have let me in. (Fortunately for me, my meager talents were balanced by those of my only classmate at the time, Michael Collins — still one of the greatest successes of the program.) So I added a year to my PhD and figured out, under Bill’s expert guidance, most of what I could and could not manage as a writer of fiction.

What did I learn? Well, I remember him in class utter the one sentence that worked more magic for me than anything else — even more than his eye-popping distinction between the “capital intensive” nature of the short story and the “non-capital intensive” nature of the novel — and it was this: “Think of all the great stuff you get to describe!” That exclamation embodied the attitude of a successful writer like nothing else I learned at Notre Dame.

Having just finished only the second novel I've managed to finish since leaving the program (in 1992, but that's another story), I could not be more grateful. All my best to Professor O'Rourke on his well-earned retirement.

# Michael Collins

(1991)

William O'Rourke, in his novels, charts an American menace of downward expectations and an underlying seediness to modern American life long before his contemporaries dared. His collective work is a brilliant blend of storytelling, sociological intrigue and political commentary.

William O'Rourke, the person and the writer, spoke to me of hidden truths that a writer might spend his life uncovering, and that such a pursuit was a noble and necessary profession. I had never met a living writer before, and to meet one as accomplished and philosophically in line with my eventual preoccupations is one of those great and marvelous coincidences that can change one's life. It did mine. Specifically, for a scholarship athlete at Notre Dame, looking to hitch athletic intensity to a more sustaining and lifelong occupation, I found my calling in reading and listening to William O'Rourke. He became the prototype of the man I wanted to become. I felt like an apprentice to a great mind.

*The Meekness of Issac* inspired within me a reflective poetics of how the personal could be woven into a novel of self-discovery, but I think *Criminal Tendencies* is his seminal work. It became a luminous and prophetic work that I've returned to time and again — and borrowed from. I understand the perils of being too ambitious, and especially in a country that values its freedoms and right to speech, there is too often a disquieting censure, and I think the wound of the book not receiving the recognition it deserved was deep and cutting. Perhaps this is too much of an overreach or comment, but I understand a writer's heart and sometimes we can become punch drunk and disoriented, not by the flurry of punches, but by being left eerily alone, by the bewildering emptiness of silence, standing in the ring without an audience. You're left swinging at windmills.

It is the fate that some writers and their greatness is left to the scavenging of some PhD candidate, and I hope this happens with

William O'Rourke's work, because amidst the cutthroat life of his characters, he quietly asserts a philosophical critique of life as we did not fully understand it to be when he wrote at his best. I say this in the past tense, when there is evidence that William O'Rourke can write the wrongs against him, and the teaser of his new work suggests that, now decades later, he has begun the process of casting a cold eye on what has passed and what is to become of us.

As to the man himself! A writer should try to avoid bureaucracy and stand within the dominion of human compassion and understanding. It is difficult to uphold such standards in an academic institution rife with red tape, but in my first year taking an undergraduate creative writing course, William O'Rourke cared to look and see that I was struggling. He quietly suggested options, a course of independent study could be arranged, and that there was a way to navigate and work toward graduation. With his help, I settled into finding a way of expression that would become my life's passion. He even allowed me to begin the creative writing graduate program a year before it was officially launched because I had gone simply insane as a newlywed working at the mall. Such is the peril of an English degree.

What I hope for with William O'Rourke's retirement is that he reinvigorates that latent, ironic genius of his early novels that so deftly allowed for the full measure of his talents. My wish on his retirement, after a yeoman career, founding and guiding the graduate creative writing program, is that he returns to national prominence and finds again that great and deliberate judgment borne of what he has experienced and endured in a grand opus to all that has come before and what we might anticipate is yet to come.

*From*

Coleen Hoover

You hired me when I needed a job. Thank you.

I knew you were addressed by many names, Will, Bill, Willie, Billy, and Professor O'Rourke. I asked you, "What shall I call you? You said, "William." I never knew you to hesitate.

At our English department staff meetings I did not speak, there was no need. You were in charge as the director. Throughout our years together you always had an answer for whatever came up in the office, with the program, dealing with authors, professors, students and the varied situations. Your kindness and guidance was a consistent staple.

For the Human Resources evaluations you chose not to participate. Having been selected by you indicated my value.

After attending my first and only AWP conference I realized you accomplished your vision for a creative writing program in every detail. I cannot imagine the program without your presence. Mixing metaphors, you are the backbone and the guiding light.

You are a man of integrity, wisdom, grace, humor, warmth, generosity, trustworthiness, and such a charming fellow. I have deep respect for you and gratitude in regarding you as a friend. My love and appreciation is clearly abundant. Your strength of character and leadership cannot be replaced and will be sorely missed.

I don't reach the retirement age for three more years. I wonder if you could assist in my un-hiring.

Thank you.

WITH CONTRIBUTIONS FROM:

Valerie Sayers

Leo Costigan  
Courtney McDermott  
Pablo Ros  
Renée E. D'Aoust  
Michael Richards  
Tony D'Souza  
Kurt Haenicke

Cynthia Searfoss  
Timothy Worrall  
Matthew Benedict  
Catherine Denby  
Michael Collins  
Alan Lindsay  
Coleen Hoover

