



October 11, 2006

Greetings:

I'd like to wish everyone at the History and Literature Department a happy and joyous centennial celebration. Like many members of the Class of 1985 I'm still trying to figure out what to do with my life, so you can imagine how terrifying it was to be asked, as a freshman over twenty-five years ago, to choose a major. I wasn't ready to limit my horizons in any way. Then I heard about this amazing department where I could major in both History and Literature. And even better, I found out I could major in the history and literature of England and America. For anyone with a fear of commitment, this was the perfect department. The only thing that would have been better was a department called the History, Literature, and Possible Science, including Dance and Film, of Land Masses on Earth.

For the next three years I was happy, studying a smattering of everything: Dickens, Twain, depression era Flappers, Napoleon (because, after all, he did fight the British), Huey Long, Ezra Pound, Sputnik, and, for reasons no one understands, Urban Planning in Modern Cairo. Like an intrepid explorer I pushed the already vast frontiers of my department, arguing that deep sea diving and puppetry were tangentially linked to the economy, hence history and literature, of these two great countries. Picking a thesis topic Senior Year was difficult, but I soon settled on the obvious: "Literary Progeria in the Works of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor." I'm told it's the seminal, and only, exploration of "Literary Progeria in the Works of William Faulkner and Flannery O'Connor", and though it received three different grades from three different professors, everyone in the department agreed on one thing: I should probably go work in television.

All these years later I'm grateful to the good people at Hist and Lit who tolerated my young, scattered mind and patiently shepherded me safely away from Law, Science and Government, where I could do real harm. I honestly don't think I could have found a better home for myself than your department. So congratulations on 100 Years and please enjoy the kind of raucous festivities that have made Harvard College the 8,436th ranked Party School in America.

Best Wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Conan O'Brien", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Conan O'Brien