…It matters not how *straight* the gait…
Acknowledgments

I feel entitled to write this section with the intent of being comprehensive rather than succinct. It is the best opportunity I have to thank all of the people who have helped me throughout my graduate career, and probably the last good opportunity to express my gratitude, in writing, to the many individuals who have instructed and supported me throughout my formal education.

First, I shall thank my graduate advisor, George Whitesides. His outline system for constructing scientific papers, his interest in communicating scientific ideas to diverse audiences, and his willingness to tackle some of the hardest problems in chemistry are aspects of George’s leadership that I admire and plan to emulate in the future.

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One of the principal reasons I decided to pursue graduate study at Harvard was the intellectual quality of the students. Indeed, I have had the privilege of working alongside several young scientists of the finest caliber. Since to thank everyone can be
interpreted as thanking no one, I especially want to single out a select group of seven: Malancha Gupta, Declan Ryan, Brooks Bohall, Andrew Lee, Eric Mack, Adam Winkleman, and Ken Fraunhoffer. I am glad to count all of them as good friends.

Malancha influenced my graduate career in an ineffably positive way. It was her interest in gels and paper that spawned our flurry of initial experiments that blossomed into four papers and a patent application in less than two years. We made a great team. The first half of this thesis is not mine—it is ours.

Declan is an amazing scientist whose views of what the field should be doing are views I share. I can only hope I have the fortitude to put these ideas into practice when I have the chance. On our foray into the world of thioesters, it was Declan who taught me essentially everything I know about biology. Perhaps, one day, the dream of ThioTech will become reality.

Brooks was a major player in the thioester story and a principal collaborator on our work with origin-of-life chemistry. For lack of a better term, Brooks is someone who “gets it.” He could always be counted on for an honest opinion, and his objectivity and clarity of thought in both scientific and social analysis were qualities I valued greatly.

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Eric is a fantastic experimentalist and his work ethic is inspirational. He is also a hell of a lot of fun to be around.

Adam’s self-effacing humor belies his depth of scientific knowledge and his ability to piece together really interesting projects. It was Adam who introduced me to ionotropic hydrogels, and in doing so, unexpectedly and amusingly shifted the focus of my research.

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Finally, I want to take a look back at several people who pre-dated my time at Harvard and had a profound influence on my academic pursuits. It was seventh grade where school became something very serious to me, and the high expectations and
didactic rigor of Vern Williams kindled this fire more than anything else. Among high-
school math teachers, Mr. Williams is a living legend—and deservedly so. His Math 7
and Algebra/Geometry classes fueled my competitive academic drive and helped lay the
foundation on which my scientific knowledge is built.

In high school, John Liebermann first exposed me to the subject of chemistry, and
he is responsible for shaping how I approach learning new scientific material. Doc threw
down a challenge in his accelerated AP Chemistry class by not only immersing us in
difficult material, but by insisting we process it through understanding fundamental ideas
and developing our “chemical intuition.” If it were not for Dr. Liebermann, I never
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domino effect that ensued.

Words cannot express how deeply privileged I am to be able to call David
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interested in his students and colleagues. Along with my family, no one has been more
supportive of me, through both the good times and the hard ones. David is the touchstone
for what I value in an advisor.

And behind everything, throughout the entire journey, I have benefitted
immensely from the support of friends and family. My parents exposed me to all sorts of
opportunities as I grew up, and they were incredibly encouraging of all I wanted to do.
While I could expound on their impact on my life for several more pages, I can just as
easily summarize their meaning to me in a single sentence: a kid couldn’t ask for a better
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Any future success that I may enjoy will be built on the educational foundation
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the world in earnest, I will never forget the large debt I owe to these benefactors and to
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