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MAGAZINE

SEPTEMBER-OCTOBER 2009 • \$4.95

*The Surgeon*  
as Writer

—  
Atul Gawande



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Reprinted from Harvard Magazine. For more information, contact Harvard Magazine, Inc. at 617-495-5746

# HARVARD

MAGAZINE



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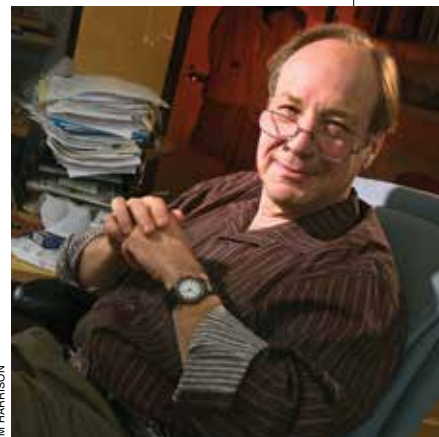
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JIM HARRISON

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DAN PAGE



# Cambridge 02138

*Liquidity and layoffs, a legal citation, revamped reunions*

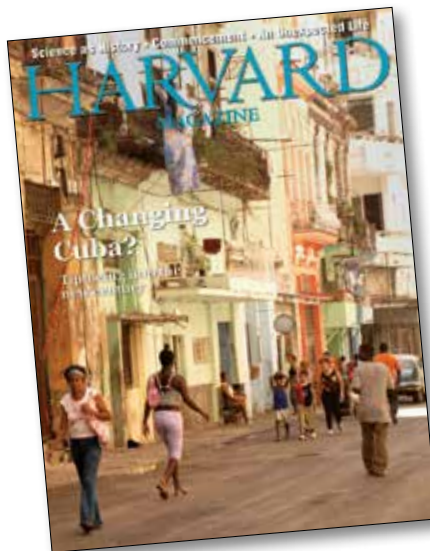
## CONTEMPORARY CUBA

THANK YOU for the customarily thoughtful piece by Jorge Domínguez on today's Cuba ("Hello from Havana," July-August, page 24). My work has taken me there about a dozen times over the last few years, and every note struck by Domínguez rings true. I would add only a little. The great challenge to the Cuban economy is to increase agricultural production. One of the most fertile countries on the planet now imports about 80 percent of its foodstuffs. How can the Raúl Castro regime incentivize farming without undermining the dominance of the state in other enterprises?

Until that puzzle is solved, the *pollo* in your *arroz con pollo* will still probably come from Tyson's in Arkansas. Perhaps the agriculture planners will find an answer in Vietnam: every Havana dinner conversation I've heard in the last year features confident assertions that Raúl will follow "the Vietnamese Model," although the speakers tend to be a little wobbly as to what that might mean. The funny thing is that many U.S. officials are saying the same thing in a different context: that the Obama administration should re-establish formal diplomatic relations with Cuba the same way the United States did with Vietnam; foster trade; and thereby deny official Havana a convenient bogeyman to excuse its own economic and civic shortcomings.

CONN NUGENT '68, J.D. '73  
New York City

JORGE DOMÍNGUEZ is incorrect when he writes that Raúl Castro "made a specific proposal to exchange such political prisoners...for five Cuban spies in U.S. prisons." In a legal context, spies obtain classified national security information, but the Cuban Five never even saw, much less possessed, a single classified document.



They came to the U.S. not to spy on the government, but to infiltrate gangs of anti-Cuban terrorists in Miami who have been responsible for acts of terrorism spanning decades, including a series of Havana hotel bombings in 1997 that killed an Italian tourist, the notorious 1976 mid-air bombing of a Cubana Airliner which killed 73 people, and many, many more. Two Salvadorans sentenced to death for those hotel bombings are, ironically, on the list of so-called "political prisoners."

The Cuban Five are heroes. Information they uncovered foiled terrorist plots, including two plane bombings. They were convicted by a biased Miami jury in the only trial in U.S. history condemned by the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Their imprisonment for nearly 11 years represents a gross miscarriage of justice. The president of Cuba's parliament, Ricardo Alarcón, said recently that "As long as this injustice continues, it will be a formidable obstacle, insurmountable, for having normal relations between the two countries."

Raúl Castro spoke not of "exchange" but "gesture for gesture." The distinction is critical, because precisely that formula

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Tel. 617-495-5746; fax: 617-495-0324  
Website: [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com)  
Reader services:  
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*Harvard Magazine* (ISSN 0095-2427) is published bimonthly by Harvard Magazine Inc., a nonprofit corporation, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138-4037, phone 617-495-5746; fax 617-495-0324. The magazine is supported by reader contributions and subscriptions, advertising revenue, and a subvention from Harvard University. Its editorial content is the responsibility of the editors. Periodicals postage paid at Boston, Mass., and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send address changes to Circulation Department, Harvard Magazine, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138-4037. Subscription rate \$30 a year in U.S. and possessions, \$55 Canada and Mexico, \$75 other foreign. (Allow up to 10 weeks for first delivery.) SUBSCRIPTION ORDERS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE INQUIRIES should be sent to the Circulation Department, *Harvard Magazine*, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge, Mass. 02138-4037, or call 617-495-5746 or 800-648-4499, or e-mail [addresschanges@harvard.edu](mailto:addresschanges@harvard.edu). Single copies \$4.95, plus \$2.50 for postage and handling. MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSIONS are welcome, but we cannot assume responsibility for safekeeping. Include stamped, self-addressed envelope for manuscript return. Persons wishing to reprint any portion of *Harvard Magazine's* contents are required to write in advance for permission. Address inquiries to Catherine A. Chute, publisher, at the address given above. Copyright © 2009 Harvard Magazine Inc.





## A REPORT TO READERS

LAST SPRING, we made an extraordinary appeal to you to support *Harvard Magazine* during challenging times: both advertising revenue and contributions had declined sharply during the autumn and winter. Now we write to thank all of you who responded with generous support for continued publication of an editorially excellent magazine that serves your needs. The magazine still faces adverse financial conditions, making your donations an essential source of support, and we are extraordinarily grateful for your enthusiastic response.

We continue to make adjustments to the difficult economic environment (including painful cuts in staff hours and compensation). Effective with this issue, the size of *Harvard Magazine's* pages has been trimmed slightly, reducing costs for paper and postage. We have taken great care to minimize the effect of this change on you.

As always, we welcome your comments.

CATHERINE A. CHUTE, *Publisher* JOHN S. ROSENBERG, *Editor*

was used in 1979, when four Puerto Rican prisoners were released by the U.S., followed 10 days later by Cuba's release of four Americans imprisoned in Cuba. If President Obama wants to see normal relations with Cuba, releasing the Cuban Five as the first "gesture" would be a huge step towards that goal.

STEVEN PATT, Ph.D. '75  
Cupertino, Calif.

*The writer maintains the National Committee to Free the Cuban Five's website, [www.freethefive.org](http://www.freethefive.org).*

## SCIENTIFIC HISTORY

ALTHOUGH I ENJOYED "Who Killed the Men of England?" (July-August, page 30), I would question the notion that the lines between history and prehistory/archaeology have been blurred. As I see it, the study of the human past is by nature an inherently unified discipline, and the division of this endeavor into separate academic fields has often amounted to little more than artificial classification arbitrarily imposed by the academic establishment. What this article clearly demonstrates is not so much that barriers between academic disciplines are being torn down, but that many of them were illusory in the first place.

MARK CALLIS, A.L.M. '05  
Jupiter, Fla.

## LESSONS IN LIFE—AND POLITICS

THE CURRENT ISSUE was one of the best in my recent memory in the variety and quality of articles. I was particularly impressed by "Lessons from an Unexpected Life" (by David G. Nathan, July-August, page 36). The interplay among patient, hospital, attending doctors of such a wide range of specialties, and the pharmaceutical indus-

try was truly remarkable. I found the article fascinating—until the gratuitous slam at the Bush administration was slipped in near the end [*Editor's note: in a recounted conversation between doctor and patient*]. This apparently had nothing to do with the subject matter of the article. If it did, it was not developed in any reasoned manner so that the reader would know in what way the Bush administration had affected the treatment of this patient and the development of treatments for him. Tossing in an extraneous political opinion indicates that the author has some agenda to promote besides the treatment as described. It makes suspect the whole article and the message that otherwise appeared to be factual and unbiased. If you can keep your authors on point, the magazine will be able to maintain its quality and credibility.

ROBERT STANTON, A.M. '56  
Thousand Oaks, Calif.

AS A PHYSICIAN, I was engaged by Dr. Nathan's article relating to his treatment of this case of thalassemia, and I have great compassion for his patient: undergoing this long series of unpleasant treatments as well as continuing to participate in his medical management is to be admired. Nathan's devotion to his patient, as well as his clinical judgment and research, are marvels of medical excellence.

In my opinion, this type of treatment can occur only in an academic environment where resources are plentiful and public support and interested pharmaceutical providers are available. Not many serious health issues could be managed in this fashion. Nathan's presentation is utopian and cannot be realistically applied to care in the United States. A government



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health plan would obviously be overwhelmed with requests by physicians and patients for treatment required by such complex problems that have little clinical relevance.

LELAND JOHNSON '52  
San Mateo, Calif.

#### LIQUIDITY, LEVERAGE...

I READ with considerable dismay the Comment "Liquidity and Leverage" (July-August, page 52), about the current state of Harvard's endowment. While the 30 percent decline in the endowment's value, which has been shared by investors generally, is perhaps understandable, the love affair with investment partnerships and the accumulated debt are not. If I read the Comment correctly, the present \$24-billion endowment is subject to investment calls of \$11 billion and current debt of nearly \$6 billion. It is hard to fathom how the presumably "best and brightest" portfolio managers, to whom Harvard has been paying millions of dollars annually, together with those responsible for incurring such enormous debt, could have left the endowment in such a precarious position.

Its alumni have unfailingly entrusted Harvard with generous donations to enhance its endowment. I consider the appalling state of the endowment to be nothing less than a betrayal of that trust.

BRUCE J. BETTIGOLE '61  
Pawtucket, R.I.

#### ...AND LAYOFFS

IT IS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE for Harvard to be laying off so many people [see "Looming Layoffs," July-August, page 56, and "Layoffs Begin," posted June 23 at [harvardmagazine.com/breaking-news/layoffs-begin](http://harvardmagazine.com/breaking-news/layoffs-begin)]. We know times are hard. But they are really hard on employees and their families. We urge Harvard to rehire all those laid off. If money is needed, then let the burden be shared. Cut all salaries

#### SPEAK UP, PLEASE

*Harvard Magazine* welcomes letters on its contents. Please write to "Letters," *Harvard Magazine*, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, send comments by e-mail to [yourturn@harvard.edu](mailto:yourturn@harvard.edu), use our website, [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com), or fax us at 617-495-0324. Letters may be edited to fit the available space.

by 25 percent, including professors'. See if that is enough money to make certain all have jobs. I would like to hear more about these draconian moves by the administration and why so much cutting is needed.

JOSEPH MEISSNER, LL.B. '66  
Cleveland

*Editor's note:* The magazine reports on University finances in each bimonthly issue (see page 44), with more frequent updates at [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com), under the "University Financial Crisis" heading.

#### LEGAL LEGERDEMAIN

I WAS INTERESTED to read in the July-August "College Pump" about how the *Harvard Law Record* in October 2005 made light of grads' job prospects. You write that the *Record* editors suggested a letter for students to send to the corporate law firms that rejected them: "I regret to inform you that I am unable to accept your refusal to offer me a position...." I looked up the October 13, 2005, issue to read the *Record's* piece in full. What both the "College Pump" item and the *Record* fail to acknowledge is that this "rejection letter"—nearly word for word—has been passed around via e-mail since the 1990s. I first received it as a forwarded humorous message in 1999. Shame on the *Record* for stealing its material!

WILL STEPHENS, J.D. '04  
Washington, D.C.

#### DON'T TELL

DREW FAUST's letter "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" (July-August, page 5) tells me that she should be fired.

First, she has no authority in writing, as president of Harvard University, to *Harvard Magazine* or to the secretary of defense about an issue that has nothing to do with the business or mission of the University.

Second, in arguing "for the reversal of a wrongheaded policy," she doesn't appear to understand the difference between military policy and the law of the land (see the letter of Kenneth Wells '84, March-April, page 69), which was defended in court by President Obama's justice department, which said that the law is "rationally related to the government's legitimate interest in military discipline and cohesion." Before going public, she should have cleared her letters with Harvard's legal counsel.

Third, her scholarship is suspect. The Emancipation Proclamation, as she should

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IVY LEAGUE MAGAZINE NETWORK  
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## LETTERS

know, does not “guarantee the right of military service” for anyone. It says that “persons of suitable condition will be received into the armed services of the United States,” as a matter of “military necessity.” To construe that language as “a right to military service” is nonsense.

For me, Faust’s words and actions reflect the abysmal state of the “new” social sciences at Harvard wherein political advocacy has superseded scholarship. For this I blame the Harvard Corporation as well as President Faust.

CHARLES A. JOHNSON ’52, M.B.A. ’58  
Hilton Head Island, S.C.

### HAIL, COLUMBIA!

UNDER the leadership of athletics director M. Diane Murphy, and backed by a supportive Board of Trustees and generous alumni, Columbia (my undergraduate alma mater), has recently made steady progress toward athletic respectability. Ivy championships on Morningside Heights, alas, are not yet as common as they are in Cambridge, so all Sons of Knickerbocker appreciate when they are mentioned. Please note that Columbia, not Princeton, won the Ivy men’s 2009 tennis championship (“Spring Sports, July-August, page 63).

DONALD N. JENSEN, PH.D. ’79  
Washington, D.C.

### PRE-CIVIL RIGHTS HARVARD

THE JULY-AUGUST issue noted the passing of J. Max Bond ’55, M.Arch. ’58 (Obituaries, page 68N), and his superb achievements in creating great design rooted in social-justice themes.

In mid May, I joined some 800 others in Cooper Union’s Great Hall for a celebration of Max’s life and career. This, from the biosketch distributed at the event:

He entered Harvard at age 15, and a cross was burned in front of his freshman dorm, where he and the nine other black freshmen were assigned. Outrageous enough, but perhaps not all that surprising, given the fissures the Civil Rights Movement was opening up in our society. But even more outrageous was how Harvard’s administration responded: The 10 were threatened with suspension if they reported the incident to the Boston media. When Max expressed interest in architecture as a career, one of his professors

told him there was no place for a black man in architecture; another professor trashed his design solution to an assignment, then fed his idea to a white student.

That’s all disgraceful 1950s history, and we now even have a biracial Harvard grad in the White House. But it’s important not to forget or dismiss such history, especially as it still has impact, sometimes on individual racist behavior and certainly in the powerful ways it still influences institutional racism in our society.

CHESTER HARTMAN ’57, PH.D. ’67  
Washington, D.C.

### REBOOTING REUNIONS

THE FIFTIETH REUNION of the Harvard-Radcliffe Class of 1959 was wonderful. But some events—per a Radcliffe classmate—were “faithful to the practices of a half-century ago.”

Our classmate (a Ph.D.) noted that “the women got a list only of Radcliffe attendees; the men got a list only of Harvard attendees. Radcliffe women got a single sheet listing events; Harvard men got a brochure indicating quite a number of additional activities and providing more details. And so it was that I did not know until the opportunity had passed” about various panels and other events. She added: “The Memorial Service was entirely joint!” There was no deliberate policy, but innocent failure to “connect the dots” caused more than a little distress.

Another Radcliffe classmate, and dear friend, was heard to say that 2009 may be her last reunion. Physically fit and at the top of her game, she could have been a star of our fiftieth. Now she may not return. This would be a loss on any number of grounds.

Some separate events to renew cherished Radcliffe bonds (and contain costs) are admirable. But the time for separate-and-unequal reunion guides and other disparities in essential services has long passed. Mixing an NROTC ’59 metaphor, that sunken ship has sailed.

With thanks to our organizers and all HAA staff for jobs well done, let’s provide “lessons learned” for future reunions that may be even more wonderful. Co-voyagers from Yard and Quad at 18, let’s enjoy each other’s company as we prepare for No. 75.

TERENCE ROCHE MURPHY ’59  
Bethesda, Md.



# Right Now

The expanding Harvard universe

## MUG MASTERS

### Facial Pheenums

**A**CTOR JAMES CAGNEY had an extraordinary memory. Once, while getting into a car with his wife, he noticed a man he had not seen in decades across the street. “That’s Nathan Skidelsky,” Cagney told his wife. “I sat next to him in school.” Skeptical, his wife said, “Prove it. Go say hello.” Cagney crossed the street and introduced himself to the startled childhood chum, who indeed was Nathan Skidelsky. “The only problem,” Cagney’s wife later explained, “was that he didn’t remember who Jimmy Cagney was!”

Such experiences are common for “super-recognizers,” people with a remarkable memory for human faces, even for individuals with whom they’ve had merely chance encounters. Perhaps a waiter once served them a meal: five or 10 years later and 1,000 miles away, after the waiter has grown a beard, the super-recognizers see the man and remember him. They may remember extras who appeared on long-ago TV

sitcoms, or actors whose only claim to fame is a 1982 commercial.

“Most of them not only recall the face, but remember the context in which they first saw the person”—though they aren’t

necessarily good with names, and don’t have “photographic memories,” says Richard Russell, a postdoctoral fellow in psychology who has studied six super-recognizers. He and professor of psychology Ken Nakayama recently published their findings in *Psychonomic Bulletin and Review*. (This fall, Russell joins the faculty at Gettysburg College.)

The researchers were studying the polar opposites of James Cagney and his ilk:

prosopagnosics, those with an impaired ability to recognize faces. Known as “face blindness,” prosopagnosia can, in extreme cases, extend to one’s nuclear family; prosopagnosic mothers sometimes pick up the wrong child from daycare. “It’s not an intellectual or social deficit,” Russell explains. “But it’s tricky to be in sales, for example, if you can’t recognize someone’s face.” Prosopagnosics can recognize people instantly in phone conversations; this isn’t a general memory problem, but a condition specific to faces. “We think there’s a dedicated memory system for facial recognition,” he says.

When the psychologists publicized their work, they heard from a few people who said, “I’m the opposite—I’m very good at recognizing faces.” The super-recognizers told of their ability to recognize people after they had aged, grown, shaved beards, or changed hairstyles. Typically, they discovered their talent gradually. One clue, Rus-



**Here are four youthful photographs of people who became famous as adults. Can you name them? (The answers are on the next page, at top left.) Super-recognizers excel on tests of this kind.**

sell says, was that “they almost never had the experience of someone else recognizing them, but drawing a blank themselves”—Nathan Skidelsky’s problem—although the converse happened frequently.

Super-recognizers must alter their social behaviors to avoid upsetting others. At parties, for example, they may “play dumb” and allow themselves to be reintroduced to someone they recall from a casual encounter, but who clearly doesn’t know them from Adam. “Otherwise, it might look like you are stalking them, or paying them an inappropriate degree of attention,” Russell explains.

Facial-recognition ability seems to occur along a spectrum. The scientific community long viewed the capacity as either “normal” or “disordered”—a “pathological” model. And until recently, most of the prosopagnosics studied—perhaps 100 cases in the past century—had *acquired* the deficit, via brain trauma or a stroke, for example. But

the Internet has uncovered many cases of face blindness: “It has become clear that there are a lot of congenital or developmental prosopagnosics,” says Russell. “It’s a ‘stealth’ condition, which we might loosely compare to color blindness. Unless you take a test, you may not know you are seeing things differently.” (Face-recognition tests pose tasks like recognizing childhood photographs of famous people. Super-recognizers score more than three standard deviations above the mean; the face-blind fall below the mean to the same extent.) A change in life situation, like enrolling at a college where one meets vastly larger numbers of people, may also trigger an awareness of one’s disorder—or gift.

The early findings raise numerous questions. Is it crucial, in natural-selection terms, to distinguish friendly faces from foes? “Mistakes could be fatal,” says Russell. If facial recognition isn’t an on/off ability, but distributes itself across a wide

spectrum, doesn’t this undermine the credibility of eyewitness testimony? “A test of face-recognition ability could become a new factor in courtrooms,” Russell suggests.

The researchers are also investigating whether super-recognizers have better memories, or superior perceptions, using such tools as a test of the ability to perceive subtle differences among similar faces; early data show super-recognizers one standard deviation above the mean. “You’re actually *looking* at faces differently than people without this ability,” Russell explains. “If you don’t mentally encode something as well as others do, that could affect your ability to retrieve it later on. We don’t know if it’s about memory or perception, but we do know that they’re better at both.”

—CRAIG LAMBERT

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## BIOMIMICRY

# Architecture That Imitates Life

Even at the scale of cities, planners can work with the local ecology to create lasting interventions that minimize disruptions to the landscape, such as Khed Sez (shown) and Lavasa, both in India.



**T**HE RELATIONSHIP between architecture and nature, for the last 500 years or so, has been one of juxtaposition. Architects and planners, referring to their creation as the “built environment,” have put nature—that *other* environment—into the cross-hairs, hoping either to trim it into submission or

to push it outside city limits altogether.

This is beginning to change. Increasingly, architects look to nature as something not simply to incorporate into architecture, but as an inspired model for building design. “As a practicing architect, one of the reasons I went to the Graduate School of Design was to investigate landscape ecology,” explains

Thomas Knittel, M.D.S. ’06. “Buildings are so tightly conceived—mechanical systems, structural systems, and high expectations for comfort. But with nature, there is variability built into the system, because it is in a constant state of flux.” Achieving equilibrium with the environment is “where we hope to go with architecture, designing buildings with gradients and responsiveness.”

Knittel is design principal and sustainable design leader of the New York office of HOK, one of the world’s largest architectural firms. Recently, the company formed an exclusive alliance with the Biomimicry Guild, a Montana-based consulting organization that pairs consulting biologists with designers, seating architects and ecologists together at the drawing table. When HOK is involved early in a project, an interdisciplinary team of Guild and HOK professionals visits the site to better understand the “genius of place” in order to aid the design team’s architectural approach. Faced with constructing a hypothetical building in a desert setting, for example, HOK designers drew inspiration from the barrel cactus,





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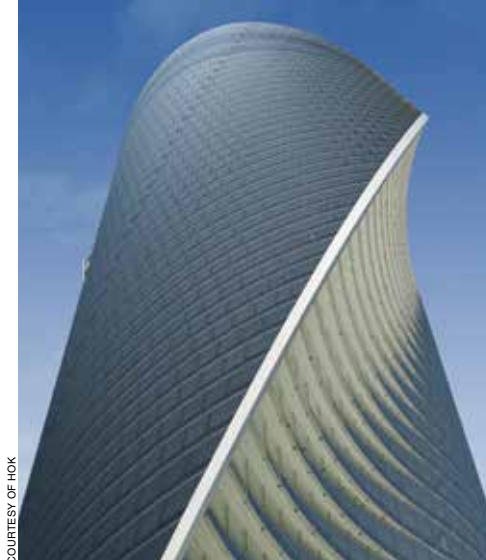
## RIGHT NOW

**By using a honeycomb-like structural system for a series of towers in New Songdo City, South Korea, instead of the standard approach—in which structural members are forced to twist—HOK was able to use less material and keep costs low.**

whose vertical ridges work as a self-shading device—something that would cut down artificial cooling loads in the finished structure.

At a much larger scale, HOK is now designing an 8,000-acre city, Lavasa, in a region of India subject to seasonal flooding from monsoons. The Western Ghats, a mountain range that hems the site on one side, cause storm clouds to empty after their long journey across the plains. Valleys fill up with as much as nine meters of water for three months, but the site remains arid the rest of the year—a condition exacerbated by modern agricultural techniques.

HOK's team determined that the site's original ecosystem was a moist deciduous forest that in recent times had become an arid landscape. In its original state, trees would have maintained soil quality, stored water through the dry season, and provided a canopy to control evaporation. The team took this as the design's point of departure. Working with engineering consultancy Buro Happold, they are designing a building foundation system to store water, as the trees once did. And for the future city's rooftops, the team is borrowing from the unusual morphology of the native banyan fig leaf: its so-called "drip-tip," a pointed spear at the leaf's end that doubles water run-off and cleans its own surface in the process. Using the leaf as a model, HOK is developing a tiled shingle system that will shed water in the same way. During the



COURTESY OF HOK



rainy season, however, there is the problem of where to send overflows; for this, HOK looked to local harvester ants, which divert water away from their nests with multipath, low-grade channels. The site's master plan will adopt this insect strategy to channel water through the city.

Elsewhere, in New Songdo City, South Korea, the developer of a 500-acre business parcel wanted HOK to design a contemporary, iconic skyscraper. Twisting forms have recently become fashionable as twenty-first-century skyline landmarks. "Normally, in these new twisting towers, the supporting columns are expressed on the façade and have to twist unnaturally, which gets expensive and wasteful," explains HOK New York's director of design, Ken Drucker, M.Arch. '87, the design principal on the project. Echoes Knittel, "We know that if we throw enough material at a building, we can make anything stand. We wanted to approach this less wastefully."

Working with the design and engineering firm Arup, the team looked to the con-

figuration of honeycomb, which retains its structural integrity even while twisting. This system, with staggered supporting walls cantilevered from the core, allows each floor-plate to pivot around the center of the building, generating a structurally sound tower based on a honeycomb pattern—and the twisting form the client wanted.

Though this approach is novel, Knittel believes it is sound. Nature has already done 3.8 billion years of research, the thinking goes, so how can architects now say it's wrong? Ultimately, Knittel hopes that buildings, like nature, will react to environmental conditions and support biodiversity. "We don't want merely to imitate the way something looks," he explains. "We are hoping to understand the logic of nature, and how it will perform in buildings." ~JOHN GENDALL

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[www.hok.com](http://www.hok.com)

## THE VIRTUE IN VICE

# The Poor Payoff of Pleasure Postponed

**F**OR ALL THE hand-wringing over their failure to amass savings, Americans may actually be *too* disciplined. So says Harvard Business School assistant professor Anat Keinan.

A need to feel efficient, and a tendency to feel guilty when we do something "just for fun," may be universally human. But the Israeli-born Keinan says productivity-ob-

essed Americans take this to an extreme, viewing pleasurable pastimes as wasteful, irresponsible, and even immoral. Keinan and Columbia Business School professor Ran Kivetz call this *hyperopia*—the habit of overestimating the benefits one will receive in the future from making responsible decisions now. They write that this phenomenon—the name, drawn from

ophthalmology, means "farsightedness"—works to our detriment by driving people "to underconsume precisely those products and experiences that they enjoy the most."

Keinan began thinking about hyperopia after noting a trend among fellow doctoral students at Columbia: she and her friends complained about not having had enough



## DYING LIGHT

# The Oldest Object

**W**HEN specialized satellites orbiting Earth detect a star exploding anywhere in the universe, Edo Berger gets an alert on his cell phone. At 3:55 A.M. on April 23, the assistant professor of astronomy learned of a gamma-ray burst (GRB) from a star almost as old as time itself. GRB 090423, which exploded more than 13 billion years ago, at a time when the universe was just 625 million years old, is the oldest object yet discovered. The find was significant, he says, because it proved that stars began forming very quickly after the big bang:

"within a few hundred million years." Further research using gamma-ray bursts may eventually pinpoint the moment when stars began to form.

Cosmic explosions emit jets of gamma rays, a more energetic form of light even than x-rays (see the artist's conception, below). But gamma rays don't tell anything about the distance to an object, so when Berger first learned of the gamma-ray burst, he asked the Gemini Observatory in Hilo, Hawaii, to train its telescope on the dying star.

The fact that there was plenty of infrared light, but no visible light, coming from the explosion was "a smoking gun": he knew at once that he had found an ancient star. That's because the early universe was filled with hydrogen gas opaque to visible light. Later, as stars formed, their radiation ionized the hydrogen, creating clear pockets that transformed the universe into something that Berger says resembled Swiss cheese, before eventually reaching its present, essentially transparent state. Because all the visible light from the star's explosion had been absorbed by hydrogen gas, Berger knew the light had begun its journey in the early universe; infrared observations confirmed that he was looking 95 percent of the way back to the beginning of time.

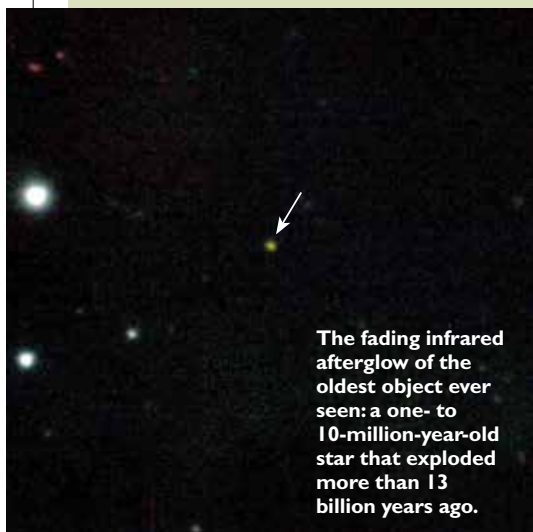
In the next five years, Berger hopes to pinpoint the period when the universe shifted from opaque to clear and also, by using more detailed observations, to learn something about when major chemical elements such as iron, oxygen, and magnesium first began to appear. "We know this process began even earlier," he says, "because in this particular case, 625 million years after the big bang, we already see stars, and they are already dying." —JONATHAN SHAW

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The fading infrared afterglow of the oldest object ever seen: a one- to 10-million-year-old star that exploded more than 13 billion years ago.



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**In her research, Anat Keinan asks people to reflect on their regrets over choices made in the near and distant past.**

fun as undergraduates, but they were still staying in on weekends and passing up travel opportunities in favor of work or studies. She wondered why they seemed stuck in these remorse-inducing behavior patterns.

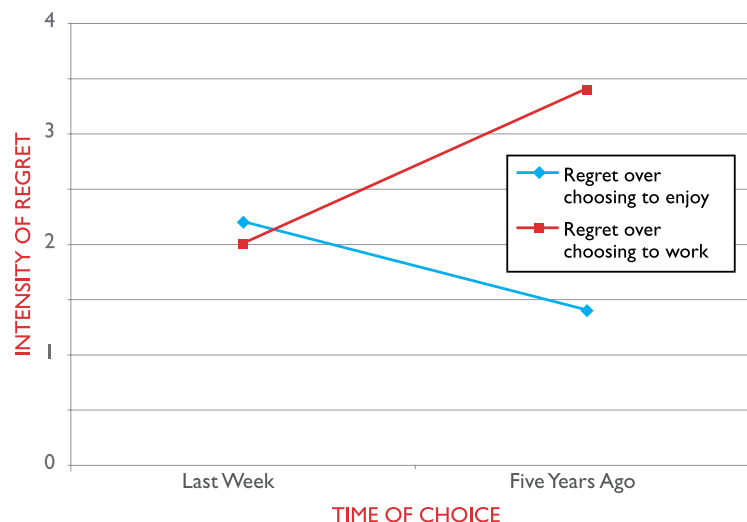
Keinan and Kivetz set out to see if they could observe, in formal studies, people overestimating discipline's payoff and underestimating future feelings of having missed out. Time after time, when subjects were asked to recall situations in which they had to choose between work and pleasure, their responses emulated those of the Columbia doctoral students. More of the subjects who'd chosen play over work *recently* expressed regret, but those numbers reversed for choices made in the distant past. For instance, college students said they'd spent too much time relaxing during a recent winter break, but when they considered the previous year's

break, they said they'd spent too much time studying and working. Whether the choices offered were a week's vacation versus a week of work with extra pay, a drug-store gift certificate versus a subscription to a popular magazine, or chocolate cake versus fruit salad, the free-spirited choice invariably induced more guilt in the near term—but over time, Keinan reports, regrets about pleasures forgone became more salient than satisfaction at having acted responsibly. These results also held true for study participants recruited in airports, bus and train stations, and public parks.

There are indications that we are aware of this psychological process, at some level: the results were the same even when subjects were prompted to consider hypothetical future regrets—or to make actual choices in real time. When offered five dollars in cash versus a box of chocolate truffles as a study-participation reward, subjects cued to think about the distant future were more likely to choose the instant gratification of sweets.

Based on interviews conducted for some of the studies, Keinan suspects that groups at each extreme are exceptions—overachievers so driven that they lose all capacity to take pleasure in leisure activi-

## REGRETS ABOUT WORK VERSUS PLEASURE



**When people are asked to recall a situation that occurred either last week or at least five years ago, in which they had to choose between work and pleasure, they rate their levels of regret differently. For decisions made within the last week, subjects are more likely to regret having chosen enjoyment over work. But when considering decisions made more than five years ago, the opposite is true: more subjects regret choosing work.**

ties, and people leading lives so thoroughly hedonistic that they have no responsible decisions to regret. But “most of us,” she says, “are in the middle. We think it’s important to work and have goals and accomplish them, but also think that other things”—family, friends, physical fitness, hobbies—“are important.”

Keinan teaches marketing, and admits that companies could capitalize on this bias in human decisionmaking (for instance, by placing ads to cue anticipation of future regret over that family vacation never taken). But a broader application is helping people make choices that make them happier. “Why,” she asks, “do we have to wait until we are 60 or 70 to realize what’s really important to us?” The formula she suggests: recognize the tendency to prioritize short-term guilt over late-in-life regrets and make decisions that emphasize the long view. This also helps determine when taking the vacation is *not* the right decision: “If you think, ‘Ten years from now I’m going to wish I finished this project on time,’ then that’s probably the right thing to do.” She even offers an approach to assuage guilt for die-hard productivity devotees: frame a frivolous choice now as an investment in fond memories and future happiness.

—ELIZABETH GUDRAIS

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# New England

## REGIONAL SECTION



## Extracurriculars

### SEASONAL

#### The Farmers' Market at Harvard

[www.dining.harvard.edu/flp/ag\\_market.html](http://www.dining.harvard.edu/flp/ag_market.html)

In Cambridge:

- Tuesdays, 12:30-6 P.M. (rain or shine)

Outside the Science Center, at the corner of Oxford and Kirkland streets

In Allston:

- Fridays, 3-7 p.m.

Corner of North Harvard Street and Western Avenue

This outdoor market, which runs through October, offers fresh produce, baked goods, jams, herbs, chocolates, and cheeses, along with cooking demonstrations. It is organized by the Harvard University Dining Services.

#### Carpenter Center for the Arts and the Harvard Art Museum

[www.ves.fas.harvard.edu](http://www.ves.fas.harvard.edu); 617-495-2317

- Opening October 15, at 7 P.M., with a reception and discussion with curators **ACT UP New York: Activism, Art, and the AIDS Crisis, 1987-1993** features more than 70 items related to the pivotal grass-

roots movement, along with the premiere of the ACT UP Oral History Project, a suite of videotaped interviews with surviving members of the organization. Other events planned in conjunction with the exhibit include a two-day **M. Victor Leventritt Symposium** exploring *ACT UP Twenty Years Later*; film screenings; lectures and gallery talks; and a poetry reading. Visit the website for details.

### THEATER

#### The American Repertory Theatre

[www.amrep.org](http://www.amrep.org); 617-547-8300

- August 21 through January 2 (for details, see [www.amrep.org/tickets/09-10\\_ART\\_Package\\_Calendar.pdf](http://www.amrep.org/tickets/09-10_ART_Package_Calendar.pdf))

The inaugural season under new artistic director Diane Paulus opens with *Shakespeare Exploded*, a festival of plays inspired by the bard's work: *The Donkey Show* (a disco adaptation of a *Midsummer Night's Dream*); *Sleep No More* (a Hitchcockian *Macbeth*); and *The Best of Both Worlds* (a gospel and rock musical based on *The Winter's Tale*, the original version of which has its own short run in early October).

### DANCE

#### The Harvard Dance Center

[www.fas.harvard.edu/-dance](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/-dance)

[www.harvardboxoffice.edu](http://www.harvardboxoffice.edu)

617-496-2222; 495-8683; 60 Garden Street

- September 4 and 5, at 8 P.M.

**Debut** features contemporary choreography by Larissa Douglas, Harvard dancers, and local musicians.

- October 16, at 7 P.M.

**Boston Ballet Dance Talks: World Passions** offers performances by and conversations with company members.

### LIBRARIES

[www.hcl.harvard.edu/info/exhibitions/index.cfm#hmc](http://www.hcl.harvard.edu/info/exhibitions/index.cfm#hmc)

#### Houghton Library

617-495-2439

- Continuing: **A Monument More Durable Than Brass: The Donald and Mary Hyde Collection of Dr. Samuel Johnson** celebrates the literary giant's 300th birthday and elucidates his life and times in London.

#### Pusey Library

617-495-2417

- Continuing: **Gleams of a Remoter World: Mapping the European Alps** explores how cartographers over the centuries have re-

A copy portrait of Samuel Johnson by Gilbert Stuart, after Sir Joshua Reynolds, from *A Monument More Durable Than Brass* at Houghton Library; Vincent Gagliostro's *Enjoy AZT* (1993), from *Re-View* at the Sackler; a scene from *Sullivan's Travels*, at the Harvard Film Archive.

FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY; ALLAN MACINTYRE; HARVARD ART MUSEUM/FOGG MUSEUM  
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## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

sponded to the challenge of portraying the Alps. A variety of genres are featured, including maps that celebrate military conquest, panoramic views, hiking and skiing trails, and transportation routes.



HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY

A work from the Harvard Map Collection's exhibit *Gleams of a Remoter World: Mapping the European Alps*

## EXHIBITIONS

### Harvard Art Museum — Sackler

[www.harvardartmuseum.org](http://www.harvardartmuseum.org)  
617-495-9400; 485 Broadway

• Continuing: **Re-View**. This survey of approximately 600 works from the Harvard Art Museum—the Fogg, the Busch-Reisinger, and the Arthur M. Sackler—is a special installation of objects historically exhibited in separate facilities.

### Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology

[www.peabody.harvard.edu](http://www.peabody.harvard.edu); 617-496-1027

• September 17, 5-7 P.M.

Reception for *Human Documents: Eight Photographers*, by Robert Gardner. The images (on display through September 20) offer a deeper understanding of humanity.

• Opening October 22

*Sacred Spaces* highlights the work of artist Samina Quraeshi, inspired by pilgrimages to Sufi sanctuaries in the Indus Valley and by the role of Sufism in South Asian society.

• Continuing: *Digging Veritas: The Archae-*





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**Cambridge...**Beautiful, fully renovated three-bedroom, two-bath condominium in nine-unit building with parking, deck, elevator, T.

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## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

*ology and History of the Indian College and Student Life at Colonial Harvard* elucidates the ongoing excavation of the Indian College (next to Matthews Hall).

• Continuing: *The Masked Festivals of Canton Bo* looks at the role of spirit dancers, singers, and performers in eastern Liberia and western Ivory Coast.

**Cristián Samper, director of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, lectures on October 27**



COURTESY OF THE HARVARD MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

## Harvard Museum of Natural History

[www.hmnh.harvard.edu](http://www.hmnh.harvard.edu); 617-495-3045

• September 9, at 5:30 P.M.

*Looking Back, Looking Forward: A Conversation with James D. Watson and Edward O. Wilson*, moderated by Robert Krulwich, of National Public Radio. Sanders Theatre. See museum website for ticket information.

Three events are planned to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the founding of Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology by Swiss geologist and ichthyologist Louis Agassiz. Two events, free and open to the public, fall in October.

• October 15 at 6 P.M.

*This Brick Ark: Celebrating the Museum of Comparative Zoology's First 150 Years and the Beginning of the Next 150* is a lecture by Museum of Comparative Zoology director James Hanken, followed by a reception in the newly renovated Great Mammal Hall.

• October 27, at 6 P.M.

Lecture by Cristián Samper, Ph.D. '92, di-

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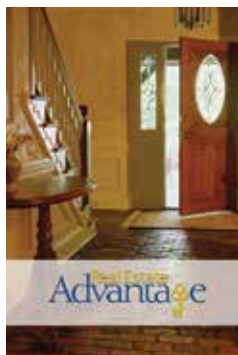
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The study of neurobiology offers compelling evidence for the need to invest in children. The importance of this investment, as the foundation for future economic productivity and strong communities, is based on scientific fact, as you'll learn in the latest Thought Series<sup>SM</sup> podcast from Cambridge Trust Company.

You'll hear some astounding facts: All children are born with the ability to speak any language in the world, fluently. In the first three to four years of life, the brain makes new connections – or synapses – at the rate of 700 per second. These connections can be strong or faulty. And once made, they can't be rewired. Essentially, early experiences literally shape the architecture of the developing brain.

*What does  
neuroscience  
have to do with  
public policy?*

The founding director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University offers a crash course in neuroscience and links scientific principles and findings with public policy needs. He also offers hard evidence to show how society as a whole

can benefit from giving children the environment they need to become healthy, skilled adults.

This informative podcast is part of the Cambridge Trust Thought Series<sup>SM</sup>, a series of events and a collection of original articles and expert insights on investing and other thought-provoking topics. We invite you to visit our Web site for more. You may also contact us directly to talk with one of our advisors about some of the many facets of wealth management that affect your quality of life.

Hear the founding director of the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University discuss how neurobiology can impact public policy.  
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## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

rector of the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, and newly elected Harvard Overseer.

Continuing: *Evolution*, a new permanent exhibit, offers fossil, anatomical, and genetic evidence of shared evolutionary history, highlighting diversity within species and cutting-edge Harvard biological research. Continuing: *Language of Color* explores how color is produced, perceived, and displayed across the animal kingdom.

### Semitic Museum

[www.fas.harvard.edu/~semitic](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~semitic)  
617-495-4631

Continuing: *The Houses of Ancient Israel: Domestic, Royal, Divine* includes a full-scale replica of an Iron Age (ca. 1200-586 B.C.E.) village house.

## FILM

### The Harvard Film Archive

[www.harvardfilmarchive.org](http://www.harvardfilmarchive.org)  
617-495-4700; visit the website for complete listings.

• September 11-21

*The Films of James Whale* features *Frankenstein*, *Bride of Frankenstein*, *Showboat*, *The Old Dark House*, and *Remember Last Night*?

• September 18-19

*New and Recent Films of Sharon Lockhart*. The West Coast artist will appear for screenings and will discuss the intermingling of documentary reportage and conceptual art.

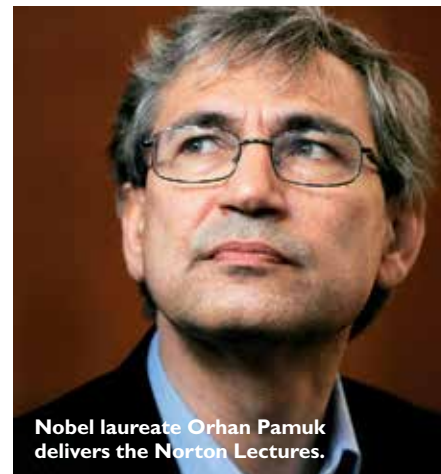
• September 25

*Sullivan's Travels*

The Preston Sturges film will be shown in conjunction with the Harvard University Press publication of *A New Literary History of America*, edited by Greil Marcus and Werner Sollors, Cabot professor of English literature and professor of African and African American studies, who will also be on hand to discuss their work.

• October 18-26

A retrospective of the files of German artist Ulrike Ottinger, who will also discuss her projects.



Nobel laureate Orhan Pamuk delivers the Norton Lectures.

SPENCER PLATT/GETTY IMAGES

## LECTURES

### The Humanities Center at Harvard

[www.fas.harvard.edu/~humcentr](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/~humcentr)  
617-495-0738

• September 22, 29; October 13, 20, 26; and November 3, at 4 p.m. Sanders Theatre. Free and open to the public.

On Sale Sept. 15th!

# Harvard Winter Sports Tickets

## 2009-10 Home Hockey Schedule

### Men

Nov. 20	SLU	7 p.m.
Nov. 21	Clark.	7 p.m.
Nov. 24	BU	7 p.m.
Nov. 29	Dart.	4 p.m.
Dec. 1	Brown	7 p.m.
Dec. 9	BC	7 p.m.
Dec. 29	Quin.	7 p.m.
Jan. 12	Yale	7 p.m.
Jan. 18	Dart.	2 p.m.
Jan. 29	Prin.	7 p.m.
Feb. 12	RPI	7 p.m.
Feb. 13	Union	7 p.m.
Feb. 19	Cor.	7 p.m.
Feb. 20	Colg.	7 p.m.

All hockey games are played at Bright Hockey Center

### Women

Nov. 6	Clark.	7 p.m.
Nov. 7	SLU	4 p.m.
Nov. 13	Quin.	7 p.m.
Nov. 14	Prin.	4 p.m.
Nov. 18	UNH	7 p.m.
Nov. 25	Dart.	7 p.m.
Dec. 4	Minn.	7 p.m.
Dec. 5	Minn.	7 p.m.
Dec. 8	UConn	7 p.m.
Jan. 15	Cor.	7 p.m.
Jan. 16	Colg.	4 p.m.
Jan. 22	Union	7 p.m.
Jan. 23	RPI	4 p.m.
Jan. 30	Prov.	4 p.m.
Feb. 2	BC	5 p.m.
Feb. 5	Brown	7 p.m.
Feb. 6	Yale	4 p.m.

## 2009-10 Home Basketball Schedule

### Men

Nov. 15	W&M	2 p.m.
Nov. 20	Bryant	7 p.m.
Nov. 25	UNH	7 p.m.
Dec. 2	Rice	8 p.m.
Dec. 28	MIT	4 p.m.
Dec. 30	GW	6 p.m.
Jan. 9	Dart.	2 p.m.
Feb. 5	Prin.	7 p.m.
Feb. 6	Penn	7 p.m.
Feb. 19	Cor.	7 p.m.
Feb. 20	Col.	7 p.m.
Feb. 26	Brown	7 p.m.
Feb. 27	Yale	7 p.m.

### Women

Nov. 14	BC	6 p.m.
Nov. 17	Maine	7 p.m.
Dec. 2	H.C.	6 p.m.
Dec. 6	BU	2 p.m.
Dec. 9	NEU	7 p.m.
Jan. 2	Navy	6 p.m.
Jan. 29	Col.	7 p.m.
Jan. 30	Cor.	6 p.m.
Feb. 12	Yale	7 p.m.
Feb. 13	Brown	6 p.m.
Mar. 5	Penn	7 p.m.
Mar. 6	Prin.	6 p.m.
Mar. 9	Dart.	7 p.m.

All basketball games are played at Lavietes Pavilion

For Tickets **GoCrimson.com** or 617-495-2211



## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

*The Norton Lectures*, delivered by Turkish author **Orhan Pamuk**, winner of the 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature, examine "The Naive and the Sentimental Novelist." *The Tanner Lectures*, delivered by **Jonathan Lear**, Nef Distinguished Service Professor at the Committee on Social Thought and in the department of philosophy at the University of Chicago, consider

- "Irony and Identity," November 4, at 4:30 p.m., Lowell Lecture Hall.
- "Becoming Human Is Not That Easy," November 5, at 4:30 p.m., Lowell Lecture Hall.
- "Ironic Soul," November 6, at 10:00 A.M., Barker Center Room 110, 12 Quincy Street.

## MUSIC

### Sanders Theatre

www.boxoffice.harvard.edu  
617-495-2222. All concerts at 8 p.m.

- October 23

*The Harvard Glee Club* joins the *Princeton Glee Club* to celebrate the next day's football game.

- October 30

*The Harvard University Bands* will commemorate their ninetieth anniversary at a concert featuring the *Harvard Jazz Band*, the *Harvard Wind Ensemble*, and guest tuba soloist Ken Amis.

- October 31

*The Radcliffe Choral Society* and the *Harvard-Radcliffe Collegium Musicum* perform "Hallelujah Halloween."

## NATURE AND SCIENCE

### The Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics

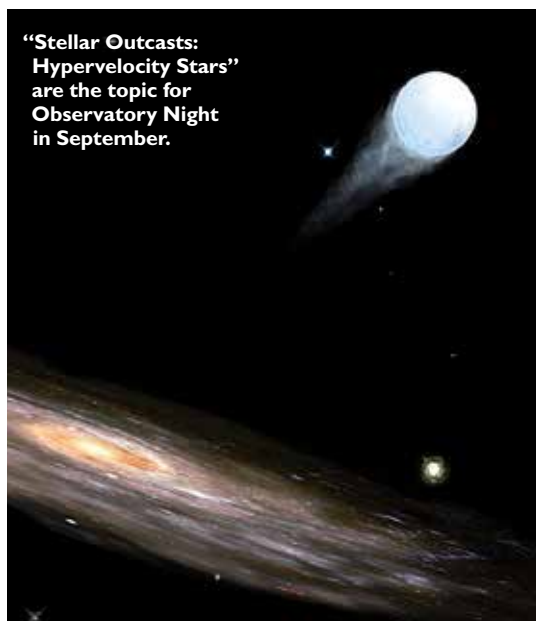
www.cfa.harvard.edu/events

617-495-7461. 60 Garden Street

- September 17 and October 15 at 7:30 p.m.

Observatory Nights offer free, nontechnical lectures on astronomy and—weather permitting—rooftop viewing.

"Stellar Outcasts: Hypervelocity Stars" are the topic for Observatory Night in September.



R. BAZINET

Events listings also appear in the *University Gazette*, accessible via this magazine's website, [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com).



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# At Your Service

*Alumni engage in new forms of volunteerism • by Nell Porter Brown*



passions and continue their education; others volunteer to increase their social or political engagement and/or get out and meet new people. For many, however, donating skills to a cause is simply a satisfying way to “give back.” “Writing a check is important, but most of us are in a position to make a greater aggregate contribution with our efforts than with our money,” says Boston attorney R. Newcomb Stillwell, J.D. ’84, chairman of the board of the Massachusetts chapter of Volunteers of America, which

“**H**ow can anyone not fall in love with a trillium?” asks Al Levin ’56, M.D. ’60, stopping to cup a starry white blossom while showing a visitor around Garden in the Woods, a trove of native plants. “These spring ephemerals thrive on early light and flower before the trees leaf out—and then they are gone.”

For 30 years, Levin has visited this “magical fairyland,” owned by the New England

**Above: Volunteer guide Al Levin at the Lily Pond in Garden in the Woods**

Wild Flower Society, in Framingham, Massachusetts. Now that he is semiretired from a career in cardiology, his volunteer post as a garden guide lets him delve more deeply into interests shelved while working. “In a very self-indulgent way,” he explains, “I’ve been able to renew my love affair with the outdoors—gardening, horticulture, botany—and the whole natural world.”

Older people with newfound time on their hands have multiple personal reasons to volunteer for a worthy cause. Some, like Levin, seize the chance to reinvigorate dormant

runs a variety of social programs. “There is no question that the more involved I am as a person, the more rewarding the work is.” Stillwell, who also serves on the board of Cradles to Crayons, which collects clothing, toys, and equipment for poor children, and has a family himself, puts in an average of four volunteer hours a week. “I enjoy working on problems and helping to manage organizations,” he says. “I hope when my kids grow up and move out that I have more time for this work in retirement—it’s fun.”

Nationwide, about 61.8 million, or 26.4





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CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Wonderful turn-of-the-century townhouse, renovated, with 3 bedrooms and slate roof. Open living/dining with French doors to deck, patio and lovely landscaped fenced yard. Kitchen with granite & stainless, master suite with cathedral ceiling and skylight, c/a and 2-car parking. \$735,000



CAMBRIDGE, MA  
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CAMBRIDGE, MA  
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CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Harvard Square - Spacious 2+ bed, 2 bath condo located in a classic brick building along the Charles River. Both the 23' Living room w/ wide bay & 17' Dining room have lovely crown molding; Guest room/study with bath; kitchen with large pantry. \$729,000



CAMBRIDGE, MA  
Harvard Square - This 3 bed condo has an open living/dining room with wood-burning stove & dramatic staircase, a 23' eat-in-kitchen with glass door to patio & garden. There are hardwood floors, skylights, 2nd floor in-unit laundry hook-ups, a storage area in the basement & parking. \$599,000



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## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

percent of the adult population, volunteered at least once between 2007 and 2008, according to data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Volunteerism among adults overall has risen since such numbers were collected in 1974 and in 1989—peaking post-9/11 before declining somewhat during the last five years.

A renewed national push through the Obama administration's United We Stand initiative ([www.serve.gov](http://www.serve.gov)) and the funding of the Hatch-Kennedy Serve America Act that passed in April could start to boost those overall volunteer rates again. Helping out will be the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that supports and promotes volunteerism. Created in 1993, the 600-employee corporation supplies grants and infrastructure for mobilizing volunteers and also runs several programs, such as Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and Learn and Serve America.

"Everybody is for service; the question is how government should participate," says

the corporation's vice chair (and former chair) Stephen Goldsmith, Paul professor of government and director of the Ash Institute's Innovations in American Government Program at the Harvard Kennedy School. "I have worked over the years to

**"Writing a check is important, but most of us are in a position to make a greater aggregate contribution with our efforts than with our money."**

find a point of agreement, which includes investing in a governmental infrastructure that manages service": for example, by in-

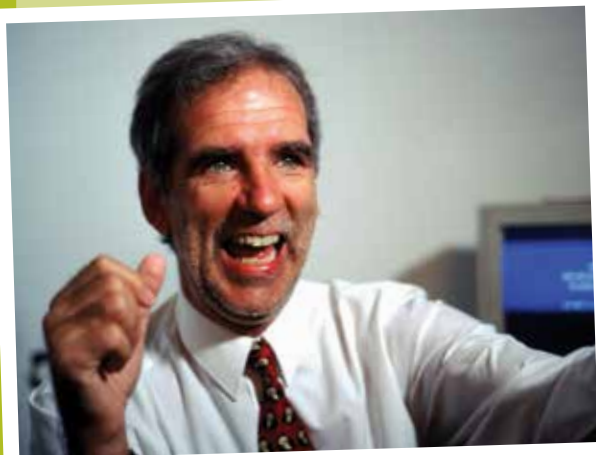
terviewing volunteers, coordinating programs and placements, making the work meaningful, and measuring progress and accountability.

Goldsmith, a former mayor of Indianapolis, was instrumental in passing the Hatch-Kennedy Act (it expands volunteer opportunities, among other things). He continues to push for novel solutions to social problems, largely through the Executive Sessions on Transforming Cities through Civic Entrepreneurship, which bring academics and civic leaders together in a think-tank environment.

Public service in America is especially critical now, he points out, given the serious needs of families in crisis: "No matter how much money we spend, the numbers and problems exceed the monies available." On the plus side, he adds, the Obama administration has put its weight behind public service as a movement, while the concurrent rise of social networking tools makes it easier to mobilize large groups

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## NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

of constituents—and for *them* to learn of events and join friends to volunteer together. Moreover, Goldsmith says, two fertile demographic bubbles portend increased public service: the post-9/11 generation, which has record-high rates of community involvement, and the baby boomers, “who are the healthiest generation to retire in the history of the nation and interested in remaining active after retirement.”

Tony Helies, M.B.A. '74, is one prime example. An entrepreneur in high-tech ventures who began his career as an engineer for the Apollo program, Helies teaches astronomy to middle-schoolers through Citizen Schools, a Boston-based organization that runs after-school enrichment programs around the nation with volunteer teachers—many of whom are retired professionals over the age of 50. Helies says he devoted most of his life to work and family, “so when I decided I wanted to give back, I focused on the K-12 education and began working in the Boston schools

10 or 12 years ago.” Why schools? Because growing up in Brooklyn, Helies earned a scholarship to the prestigious prep school Trinity, in Manhattan, and then went on to college and business school “and got the chance to do some pretty neat things in life that were lucky for me,” he says. “But it all hinged on education.”

Helies began consulting pro bono on issues concerning policy for and governance of charter and pilot schools. He still does that, but when he became curious about “customers,” he moved right into the classroom, where he teaches the ancient Greek techniques for measuring parts of the solar system. Outside on a sunny day, he and the kids use a pinhole camera made out of a shoebox to project the sun’s image and calculate its size. “My happiest day is when the kids don’t believe me and challenge the experiment and ask a lot of questions,” he says. “Unfortunately, that’s not the culture that exists in most public schools, but I try to get them going.”

Baby boomers are proving to be an interesting cohort of volunteers not only because of the sheer size of the group (and its potential, therefore, to effect change), but because of the high level of education and skills they offer organizations.

What’s also interesting is how nonprofits and the volunteer system are starting to shift to meet boomers’ requirements. “We’re finding that there is a segment of boomers who do not want to be considered traditional volunteers,” says Mal Coles, Atlantic area manager for the Corporation for National and Community Service. “But if you want to call them ‘pro bono consultants,’ then maybe they would consider the job. These are well-educated folks with successful careers who are choosy about how they want to invest their time; they are credentialed, used to being engaged at a high level, and they want to make an impact.”



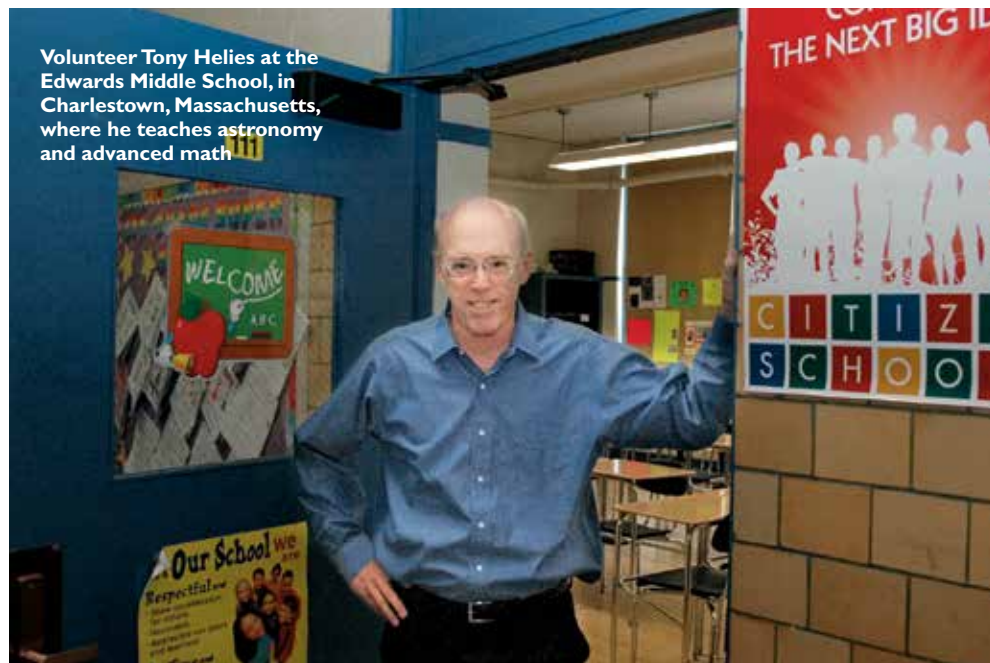
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Volunteer Tony Helies at the Edwards Middle School, in Charlestown, Massachusetts, where he teaches astronomy and advanced math

those over 65) has declined during the last five years, boomers on the whole are still serving at significantly higher rates than the previous generation did at their age, says the corporation's Robert Grimm. This activity is tied to their education levels, the fact that they had children later in life (parents tend to volunteer the most), and the fact that boomers are working more later in life. "Continuing to work is a predictor because volunteering is about social networks," Grimm says.

Yet these same qualities can engender a sense of self-worth that can make placement in traditional volunteer roles complicated. The conventional service opportunities still exist, and are critical—jobs like driving elders to appointments, delivering meals, working in hospitals, participating in phone banks, and stuffing envelopes. This type of service is attractive to people who want straightforward tasks that contribute to the common good—and also have finite hours and obligations. But increasingly, especially

in the Northeast corridor, Coles says, "a lot of high-end boomers consider their contribution valuable, and are savvy enough that if organization X doesn't appreciate them, then they can go somewhere else."

This need to find "the right fit" means that organizations in need of volunteers must approach this group more as regular employees in terms of management, training, performance, talent use, accountability, and incentives, Grimm explains: "Leaders have to take a broader view of how they can apply skills and assets in their organization and re-think the paradigm about what staff can do and what volunteers can do."

Coles says there is a "fear factor" on the part of some institutions about letting in volunteers who want to be part of the decision-making—even tension around "welcoming that high skill set. But the smarter nonprofits look at the whole mosaic of the human capital at their organization and figure out how to synchronize it."

Eric Schwarz, Ed.M. '97, founder, president, and CEO of Citizen Schools, agrees.

## A renewed national push through the Obama administration's United We Stand initiative and the funding of the Hatch-Kennedy Serve America Act could start to boost overall volunteer rates again.

Civic Ventures in San Francisco ([www.civicventures.org](http://www.civicventures.org)), for example, is a novel organization that specifically targets baby boomers who want to put their abilities to good use in the second half of life. Its Encore Fellowships generally offer paid,

one-year leadership positions with non-profit and public-sector organizations to foster volunteers' transitions to new post-mid-life service careers.

Even though the rate of volunteerism among older adults (baby boomers and

### Where the Volunteers Are

**Despite New England's** deserved reputation as an incubator of social innovation, the region's volunteer rates do not fare well in a national comparison. "The analyses we've done show that New England has an aggregated lower percentage of citizen engagement and volunteerism than the rest of the country," says Mal Coles, Atlantic area manager for the Corporation for National and Community Service, the federal agency that supports and promotes volunteerism.

Utah, Nebraska, and Minnesota have the highest numbers of volunteers across the board, followed by Alaska and Montana. Rural communities still experience more interdependence than urban locales, reasons Robert Grimm, the corporation's director of research and policy. Those in the Northeast, especially the eastern corridor, he adds, are more likely to "bowl alone."

When cutting the data by age groups, however, New England states rank a little better. Of the six, Vermont boasts the most volunteers among baby boomers and those over age 65, followed by Maine and Connecticut, respectively, a 2007 corporation study shows.



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### NEW ENGLAND REGIONAL SECTION

"Boomers have the potential to revolutionize the nonprofit sector if organizations can integrate the wealth of knowledge and experience of this volunteer group," he explains. "They are looking for long-term opportunities where they can dig into a substantial, high-impact project." The organization recently completed a study of its 55-and-older volunteers' engagement, and identified strategies for attracting and retaining that population—in part by partnering with groups like AARP, Civic Ventures, RSVP (the federal corporation's volunteer network), corporate and university retirement programs, and senior centers.

Such attention to the talent pool seems to have paid off with Helies, who thinks Citizen Schools "is a pretty good model,"

**"Boomers have the potential to revolutionize the nonprofit sector if organizations can integrate the wealth of knowledge and experience of this volunteer group."**

mixing some elective courses, like cooking, in with the heavier-duty-content courses like astronomy. He also tutors youngsters in advanced math. "A lot of these kids have been math cripples and taught to be comfortable with average results," he says. "But with these kids—it blows your mind what they're really capable of and gives you insight into what we can do when we're really pushed."

Like most volunteers, he appreciates the chance to experience such interactions, and the organizations that facilitate them: as he notes, "Citizen Schools can give you a venue and opportunities to share something you know." And everyone, he adds, "knows something they could teach a kid." 



# Bon Appétit

A French bistro springs up in SoWa • by Nell Porter Brown



days a week, plus brunch on weekends. To start, servers offer a warm, crusty loaf of bread with a side slab of fresh butter, a homey touch. We enjoyed the shaved beet-root salad appetizer (\$7.50), with crunchy toasted walnuts and cooling crème fraîche, and the special starter, an excellent vegetarian crêpe (\$9.95) filled with a zesty mélange of leeks, tomatoes, and carrots and topped with an earthy mushroom and parsley sauce (prompting memories of grandmothers who knew that any and all things cooked in Campbell's Cream of Mushroom Soup would just taste better). The only disappointment was the somewhat bland steak tartare (\$9.95); the meat was flavorful, with a woodsy mushroom edging, but lacked the rich, salty sharpness of onions, pickles, or plentiful capers that we associate with the traditional dish.

Of the *plats principaux*, the moules frites (\$15.95) was tried and true with big, juicy mussels and a little kick of pernod and lemony coriander. The *salade niçoise* (\$16.75), with braised artichoke hearts and tuna tossed in a delicate basil vinaigrette, held no surprises beyond the option of having the tuna seared for an extra \$3, which seemed petty. Best was the alluring duck confit (\$17.95), with its orange *gastrique* (a sweet and sour sauce), ribbon-thin strips of sautéed chard leaves, and garlicky roasted potatoes.

Lemon fiends must try the *tarte au citron* (\$6.95) for dessert: the curd is glassy smooth and just tart enough. For a softer finish, have the splendid cherry clafoutis (\$6.95)—airy dough with a sudden jolt of berry juice, this dish was topped with a dollop of fresh cream.

Unlike the artists who live and work nearby, Gaslight isn't likely to win prizes for extreme innovation. Yet there is great appeal in its solid rendition of foods that have been enjoyed for centuries, and in its friendly, neighborhood ambience. ~N.P.B.

**S**ERVING CLASSIC FRENCH bistro food in a warm, generous space, Gaslight seems sure to please anyone. The first of two rooms holds a curvy, zinc-topped bar with assiduous tenders pouring all forms of French wines and bold cocktails, along with a café menu (most delicious is the croque-monsieur with its gooey gruyère and accompanying frites). We loved the floor, laid with glittering, tiny square tiles; the Paris Metro-style wall tiles, and the marble-topped tables—all shades of white, mellowed by low lighting; the walnut benches and chairs; and the high-beamed ceiling. Very brasserie. We'd call the music "sassy, techno European lounge"—smooth tones with just enough spice to fend off any unpleasant thoughts of work, chores, or life outside these café walls.

**Above: Gaslight aims to offer patrons the ambience and food of a Parisian brasserie.**

The restaurant's far-end-of-the-South End location, in SoWa (south of Washington Street), is prime artistic territory. Try to go to Gaslight on a First Friday and experience some of Boston's finest home-grown art before your meal by touring the studios of a wild range of artists who freely discuss their work ([www.sowaartistsguild.com/about.html](http://www.sowaartistsguild.com/about.html)). In warmer months, these evenings take on the feel of a communal block party. On Sundays through October, also check out the adjacent SoWa Open Market ([www.southendopenmarket.com](http://www.southendopenmarket.com)), where regional artisans sell appealing products ranging from ceramic fetish bowls, knitted jewelry, and mechanical toys to twig furniture, goat cheese, and fleecy pet garb.

Gaslight sits in the heart of this creative mecca, serving up tasty, trustworthy dinner and late-night fare seven

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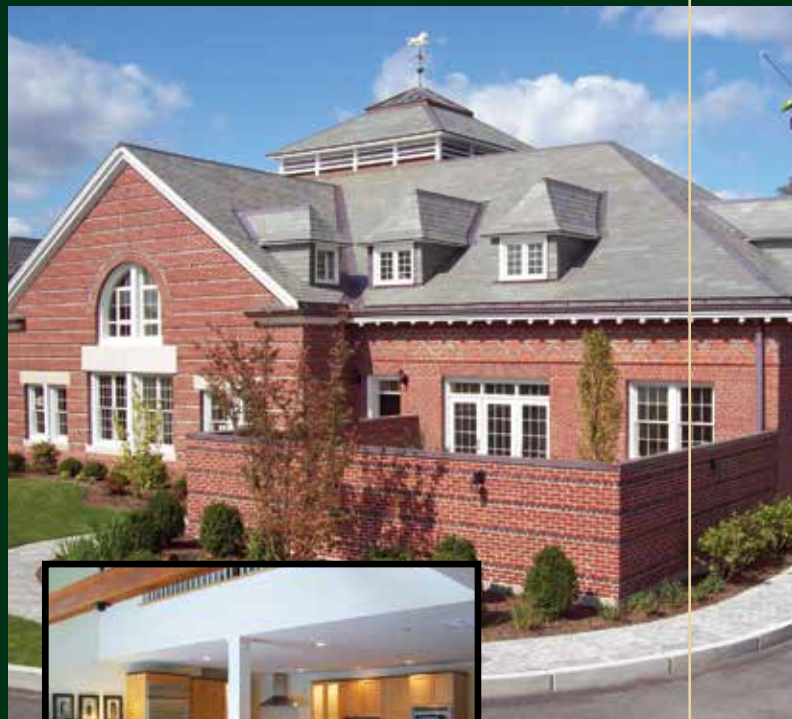
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# Montage

Art, books, diverse creations

With a front page from *The Onion* projected in the background, Thurston emcees the 2009 SXSW Interactive Web Awards.

- 14 Open Book
- 16 Chapter and Verse
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- 20 Women in a Woeful World

Last year, he directed *The Onion's* coverage of the tumultuous 2008 election; with the political intensity now dialed down, he is focusing on its online presence, including Twitter and Facebook pages and partnerships with YouTube, iTunes, and Google. He led a redesign of the website and is working to extend *The Onion's* voice into new online outlets and platforms like the iPhone.

## Twitters, Titters, and *The Onion*

*Baratunde Thurston fuses politics, portals, and punch lines.*

by CRAIG LAMBERT

**Y**OU'RE SAYING, "Not another one of these techno-geeky black guys with political passions who does stand-up comedy and blogs." But that's Baratunde Thurston '99. "I operate in three major spheres: comedy, politics, and technology," he explains. "An ideal zone for me is where all three overlap. Politics is the heart; comedy and technology are tools to amplify or deliver a message. Humor is a really effective way to talk about what I really care about: politics and justice."

The energetic Thurston ([baratunde.com/blog](http://baratunde.com/blog)) has a job that taps his triad of passions: since 2007, he's been Web and political editor of *The Onion*, the satirical weekly newspaper that appears free in sidewalk boxes in eight U.S. cities and online globally ([www.theonion.com](http://www.theonion.com)). Like Jon Stewart and Andy Borowitz '80 (see "April Fool Every Day," May-June, page 35), *The Onion* invents untrue-but-funny news stories, often based on current events. "It's ridiculous that I work here," says Thurston, in his SoHo office. "I'm still giddy about it."

"All that conversation about newspapers online," he says. "I love being a part of it." His media tastes are certifiably twenty-first century: "Twitter and Facebook are my primary means of following people and institutions." He has been booked to host a 10-part television series premiering in August on the Science Channel, *Popular Science's Future Of*, which will examine how technological innovations of today will reshape our lives five, 10, or 25 years in the future.

Thurston grew up in Washington, D.C., in Columbia Heights, where drugs and police activity were common. (His father was killed attempting to buy drugs when the boy was very young.) His politically active mother, who worked as a computer programmer in the office of the Comptroller of

O P E N B O O K

# The Slovenliness of the Intellectual

Books, \$27.95), took professor of English Elisa New to the Baltics three times to construct “a memoir in five generations.” From her researches, she emerged with details evocative, emotionally resonant, and funny—as in this excerpt from chapter nine, “The Social-eest.”

**W**hat had possessed my great-grandfather in 1914 to commit his time and energy to a run for Congress he surely knew would be unsuccessful? Like the questions surrounding Jacob's birthplace, Amelia's illness, Uncle Baron's character, and Jean's decision to send her sons to England, my aunts didn't agree on an answer. Why should their father have chosen so quixotic a way to spend the spring, summer, and fall as the Socialist Party candidate to rep-

nience. As the person who took care of her father in his later years after his wife was institutionalized and after Jean had moved on to her second of three husbands, living with him and keeping him in breakfasts and dinners, in clean shirts and pocket squares, in stamps and envelopes and typewriter ribbons, Myrtle had the experience to prove that political commitments are hell on the housekeeping. With the whole top floor of her house given over to her father's comforts, every entrance through his bedroom door was a rich tutorial in the slovenliness of the intellectual.

Cheap weeklies dropped by the armchair, books piled in teetering heaps, ashtrays overflowing, cigarettes loose, coffee dried to syrup or Scotch whisky left in a cup—such were the habits of international socialism.

For Aunt Myrtle, her father's socialism made him late to dinner, distracted with his children, tedious in company, and intolerant of what

others thought “nice.” She, who could set her boys' rooms to rights in fifteen minutes, came to know well the graceless habits of a sardonic socialist. Or at least she knew the tastes of one without a wife to keep him in line. His daughters did their best to cope.

**A meticulous excavation of personal history, *Jacob's Cane: A Jewish Family's Journey from the Four Lands of Lithuania to the Ports of London and Baltimore* (Basic**

the Currency, raised him and his sister “with a keen sense of history and justice,” he says. “Every week we worked in a soup kitchen, actually getting our hands dirty.” They also had the first computer on their block.

Life changed in seventh grade when, helped by a scholarship, Thurston entered Sidwell Friends, the Quaker private school where President Obama's daughters are now enrolled. He was already addicted to news and would keep one earphone plugged into National Public Radio or the BBC during class, “just in case I got bored with school,” he says, smiling. Sidwell was “a major reorientation, the critical thing that sets up your life,” he says. “When the Rodney King verdict came out, we protested with the support of the school. Most of the students at Sidwell are liberals from elite families who worked for places like the World Bank or the Clinton administration. They felt good about their politics. The challenge in a place like that is the *denial*. We had issues like the disproportionate punishment of black students, the traditional curriculum, hiring more black faculty. It was a little version of America, with an extra dose of self-righteousness.”

At Harvard, Thurston was “into” computer science and math, but concentrated in philosophy, which was more fun, he explains. “I see things in structural, analytic ways and found a very comfortable home in analytic philosophy. Logic is so clear, like [computer] code. But in programming, a mistyped semicolon can break down the whole thing—that's too sensitive. Philosophy made my mind a lot sharper. You learn to suss out the main point in a body of information, and to recognize an original thought after sparring with so many unoriginal ones.”

He also joined the Signet Society and the *Crimson*, on both the photo and news boards (“I couldn't choose. I'm like Winnie-the-Pooh, I've always got my hands in many pots of honey.”) He was shocked that “smart Harvard people didn't know what was going on in the world—revolution in Sri Lanka, the Tamil Tigers,” so he launched an e-mail newsletter called NewsPhlash for his black classmates, and started “to put my own attitude into the coverage,” he says. “It became my satirical take on the news, and that's when people started responding. That's when I got funny.”

After junior year, Thurston had lined

resent Baltimore in the Congress of the United States? And why, after this venture failed, did he continue to defend socialist ideas in spite of his business success and his family's bourgeois aspirations?

Aunt Myrtle and Aunt Jean each had her own way of explaining what it meant that their father—a captain of industry, as they represented him—could be a Red and a foe of unions simultaneously.

From a certain slight tightness around the mouth and the faintest wrinkling of her nose, Aunt Myrtle showed that to her socialism mostly meant domestic inconvenience.

**The Levy family in 1928; Jacob holds the cane. Only he and Rivka Levy (far left, flounced dress) survived the Nazis.**

FROM THE BOOK





up a dream summer internship at the *Washington Post*, where he had once been a gofer. But a repetitive-stress injury made him unable to type; he had to forgo the internship and worked instead with the Harvard-Radcliffe Dramatic Club, playing Iago's confederate Roderigo in *Othello*. "That summer shifted everything," he says. "I had a lot of fun being onstage, interacting with an audience."

After college, he tried management consulting in the high tech/communications area before he and two partners started their own venture-capital firm with an ill-timed 2000 launch that collapsed along with the dot-com bubble. Thurston returned to consulting with his old firm in Boston, CSMG. "I was the young, hip guy who worked on cool, techie things," he re-

Thurston's News-  
Flash bulletins  
became his own  
"satirical take on the  
news, and that's when  
people started  
responding. That's  
when I got funny."

calls. "Online video distribution, the shift from landlines to mobile communications, instant messaging, social networks, fragmentation of media."

In December 2001, he had a crucial conversation with his girlfriend (now wife), singer/songwriter Mieka Pauley '02, who asked him which he liked more, theater or writing? When he said he loved both, she followed up: "Then why aren't you doing *either* of them?" Thurston made a commitment to himself to write every week, and enrolled in a standup comedy course at the Boston Center for Adult Education and a comedy-writing workshop at Modern Humorist in Brooklyn, the entertainment company founded by *Lampoon* alumni John Aboud '95 and Michael Colton '97. Every Tuesday night for eight weeks, Thurston left work in Boston early to catch a 6:00 p.m. shuttle flight to La Guardia, where he'd rent a car and drive one-way to Brook-

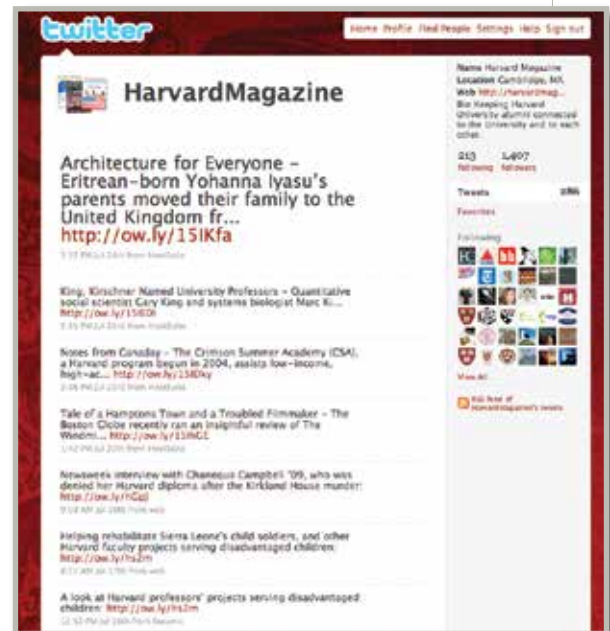
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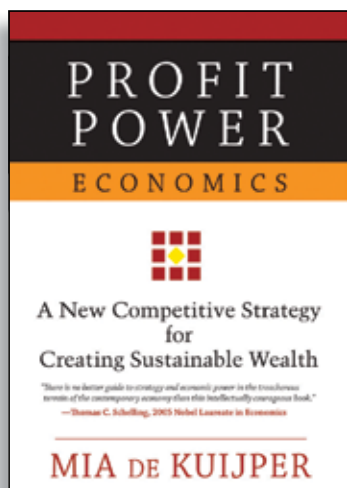
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lyn for the two-hour workshop at 8:00. Afterwards, he'd hang out in midtown until the 3 A.M. train left for Boston. He'd catch a few hours of sleep aboard Amtrak, then go straight to work and shower there.

What grew from that was an active performing career as a politically oriented standup comic, whose first home base was the Comedy Studio at the Hong Kong Restaurant in Harvard Square. (He had to pay dues, of course, like performing in places where "you were required to bring 10 people in to get six minutes onstage—a \$15 cover plus a two-drink minimum. My friends got tired of showing up, so I would offer to pay their way. You end up paying \$25 apiece in order to perform—for free!") He eventually worked with Laughing Liberally, a New York-based politically themed comedy collective, and has also played many conferences, like those of Netroots Nation. ("I'm a conference

whore now," he says.)

Besides self-publishing three humorous books, Thurston, in 2006, helped launch Jack & Jill Politics ([www.jackandjillpolitics.com](http://www.jackandjillpolitics.com)), a blog that offers "a black bourgeoisie perspective on U.S. politics." He confesses that burning so brightly on five hours of sleep per night—and consecutive weekends in Austin, Boston, and Amsterdam, for example—has one downside: he gets "pretty ill" every 18 months or so, including one bout with tuberculosis. Even so, he says, "I really do think I'm among the top 100 most fortunate people in the world." He hopes to have children, and to emulate his comic heroes, including Dick Gregory, George Carlin, Whoopi Goldberg, and Jon Stewart. "The point of being funny," he says, "is in having something to say."



Visit [harvardmag.com/extras](http://harvardmag.com/extras) to hear excerpts from an audio interview with Baratunde Thurston.

## Chapter & Verse

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

**Jane Arnold is searching** for a story about a destitute family who own a Stradivarius. When the son tries to sell the violin, the pawnbroker tells him, "I told your father a long time ago this is a fake." The boy goes home and tells his mother he has decided that having the violin is as good as money in the bank, and he won't sell it yet.

**Ernest Berge** seeks the exact reference where Sigmund Freud refers to our ability to learn about normal functioning from extreme cases.

**Constance Martin asks** for the author, title, and/or origin of a song containing the lines, "You are my Rose of Mexico/ The one I loved so long ago...." They come from a waltz that was "new" around 1909, and these lyrics might be part of the chorus.

**"in Harvard balance"** (July-August). Robert S. Hoffman writes, "The phrase 'to die in Harvard balance' is a variant of the phrase 'to die a Harvard death,' which I've heard and used fondly since starting medical training 35 years ago. We physicians on the West Coast use it

all the time. Possibly the first phrase is an East Coast variant. As the questioner correctly states, it is applied to patients whose labs and other data are normal but who die anyway. It appears on first glance to satirize academic physicians, Harvard providing handy examples, who are concerned only with the intellectual and technical aspects of practice but have little if any interest in the patients or their fate. If the lab results are normal, this proves that the care was top-notch no matter what happens to the patient. My sense, however, is that when we use the phrase we are not really targeting academicians, toward whom most of us bear no antipathy. Instead we use it to express and slightly relieve our frustration when we do everything right but the patient keeps getting worse or dies. I have no idea who first used the phrase. Probably some medical resident 50 years ago who will remain anonymous but forever be immortalized in the conversation of stressed-out physicians everywhere."

Send inquiries and answers to "Chapter and Verse," *Harvard Magazine*, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via e-mail to [chapterandverse@harvardmag.com](mailto:chapterandverse@harvardmag.com).





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## MONTAGE

# Cinéaste's Orgy

*Richard Peña works to counter the "dumbing down" of cinema.*

**T**HOUGH *Guinness World Records* doesn't track this category, Richard Peña '75 might be a movie-viewing champion. In a normal year, he will watch 2,700 films, an average of nearly seven per day. True, many aren't feature-length, and Peña doesn't watch every one all the way through, but even so, he has a fair claim as the nation's leading movie buff. "I never get tired of watching movies," he says. "And I do watch Hollywood films."

That last assertion is relevant because, as program director of the Film Society of Lincoln Center (filmlinc.com), Peña takes in works from all over the world in a kaleidoscopic variety of formats, genres, styles, and languages. About 2,000 of his annual screenings are submissions to the New York Film Festival (NYFF), the annual 17-day movie orgy at Lincoln Center. Along with a selection committee, Peña winnows these candidates down to 100 serious contenders. Then, during two grueling weeks in August, they choose an average of 28 features and 12 short films for the prestigious festival (this year's runs from September 25 to October 11), which can launch a filmmaker's career. The Spanish director Pedro Almodóvar, Ar.D. '09, for example, gained international recognition with his *Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown*, which premiered at the NYFF in 1988.

The Film Society, which publishes *Film Comment* magazine, produces the NYFF; the festival was founded in 1963 in the belief that "the greatest works of film art

are absolutely on a par with the greatest achievements in all other artistic media," says Peña. It began in the ferment of two seminal movements: the auteur theory, and filmmaking's inquiry into movies and modernism. "The film as a director's personal expression was a paramount notion," he says, "as was the breaking of convention, finding new forms and new ways of telling stories."

**Richard Peña at Lincoln Center, with a New York Film Festival banner at right, behind him**



"We show very few films and we shine a very bright spotlight on them," Peña says. "We have been the showcase where the vast majority of important filmmakers and film movements have been introduced to American viewers": including the Czech



and Hungarian cinemas of the 1960s, Rainer Fassbinder and the New German cinema movement of the 1970s, “almost every important African filmmaker,” and directors like Bernardo Bertolucci (*Last Tango in Paris*, in 1972), Martin Scorsese, (*Mean Streets*, in 1973), and Michael Moore (*Roger and Me*, in 1989). There’ve been controversies, too: a papal comment triggered round-the-clock pickets of Jean-Luc Godard’s *Hail Mary* (1985), and the Chinese government asked the festival, in vain, to remove a 1995 documentary on Tiananmen Square. (The society co-produces events like the Human Rights Watch

International Film Festival.) The society also stages special festivals, with ethnic, regional, or religious themes, for example, that include outreach to schools; classes often attend screenings.

“I was always somebody who went to a lot more movies than anybody else,” Peña says. He grew up in East Harlem and then Queens, the son of a Puerto Rican father and Spanish mother. At Harvard he specialized in Latin American history and literature. “There were very, very few Harvard courses then that focused on film at all,” he recalls. After a year of traveling in Latin

America, he eventually wrote his honors thesis on Brazilian and Argentine cinema. He taught film studies at Harvard and Berkeley and then directed the Art Institute of Chicago’s Film Center from 1981 until 1988, when he returned to New York to chair the NYFF’s selection committee and become the Film Society’s program director. He also teaches film theory and international cinema as a professor of film studies at Columbia University.

## Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

**The Future of Faith**, by Harvey Cox, Hollis professor of divinity (HarperOne, \$25.99). The retiring professor (see page 64) reflects on the decline of dogma and formal Christianity, and the rise of a new “Age of the Spirit.”

**“To Everything There Is a Season”:** **Pete Seeger and the Power of Song**, by Allan M. Winkler ’66 (Oxford, \$23.95; includes a CD). Another work about Seeger, class of ’40 (see Open Book, May-June, page 18), in his ninetieth-birthday year. Winkler, of Miami University, in Ohio, examines social protests through folk songs. Fittingly, the book opens with Seeger by the Widener steps in 1938, leafletting about the Spanish Civil War—and missing class.

**The Founding Fathers Reconsidered**, by Richard B. Bernstein, J.D. ’80 (Oxford, \$17.95). A constitutional historian aims to “take the founding fathers down from their pedestals without knocking them down,” in that rarest of recent works in Americana: a short (176 pages) book.

**Why David Sometimes Wins**, by Marshall Ganz ’64, M.P.A. ’93, Ph.D. ’00 (Oxford, \$35). An insider’s account of how resourcefulness trumped resources (other unions, agricultural employers) in the Cesar Chavez-era United Farm Workers; Ganz worked for the union for 16 years, becoming director of organizing. (He returned to

Harvard to complete his A.B. in 1992, and is now lecturer in public policy and lecturer on social studies.)

**Pink Brain, Blue Brain**, by

Lise Eliot ’84 (Houghton Mifflin, \$24). The author—neuroscientist (Chicago Medical School), mother, and counselor—begins by observing, “Boys and girls are different,” and then guides readers to understand “how small differences grow into troublesome gaps—and what we can do about it” through play, schooling, and early life.

**Empire of Illusion: The End of Literacy and the Triumph of Spectacle**, by Chris Hedges, M.Div. ’83, NF ’99 (Perseus, \$24.95). Are we the new Rome? The former *New York Times* war correspondent (see “What I Read at War,” July-August 2000, page 58) describes a society deluded by distractions (professional wrestling, pornographic films) and unable to grasp its real, pressing problems.

**While We Were Sleeping: Success Stories in Injury and Violence Prevention**, by David Hemenway, professor of health policy (University of California, \$60; \$24.95 paper). Case studies in the use of public-health disciplines to reduce risks at work and play, home or away, stemming from threats ranging from broken glass to tsunamis, and the heroes who made the difference. (See “Death by the Barrel,” September-October 2004, page 52, for more on Hemenway’s work.)

**Addiction: A Disorder of Choice**, by Gene M. Heyman, lecturer on psychology



**From On the Loose in Boston: A Find-the-Animals Book**, by Sage Stossel

(Harvard, \$26.95). Analyzing the spectrum of choice and motivation, the author, a researcher at McLean Hospital, concludes that addiction is neither compulsion nor disease, but rather a “disorder of choice,” yielding “less than optimal outcomes.”

**Justice: What’s the Right Thing to Do?** by Michael Sandel, Bass professor of government (Farrar, Straus and Giroux \$25). You’ve taken the eponymous course, or perhaps seen it on video via Harvard Alumni Association club showings worldwide. Now, Sandel takes on the knotty issues of morality and markets in a book version of the course, cases and all, timed to accompany the PBS television series of the same name.

**On the Loose in Boston: A Find-the-Animals Book**, by Sage Stossel ’93 (Commonwealth Editions, \$14.95). The *Where’s Waldo?* generation, or their successors with intact eyesight, will enjoy the illustrator-writer’s (*Atlantic*, *Boston Globe*, these pages) colorful romp through the North End, Faneuil Hall, the Public Garden, Fenway Park, etc., searching for the out-and-about animals who have absented themselves from Franklin Park Zoo. Not suitable for Yankees fans.

"Film has always been globalized," he says. "The problem now is the tremendous growth of the multinational industry of Hollywood: the space for progressive film has gotten smaller, and the role for foreign-language films in the United States is shrinking." Peña believes that, compared with the innovative decades of the 1960s and 1970s, "Audiences today are much more conservative, much less willing to be challenged. That sense of going to the movies as an adventure is being lost. I remember how [the

1961 Alain Resnais film] *Last Year at Marienbad* challenged me, as a young man, to understand it. Today, younger audiences in general want to know what they're getting—that's why we have this spate of remakes of older films and television shows, and several versions of *Batman* and *Spiderman*."

Part of the mission of the NYFF is to counteract this trend toward dumbing down cinema. Peña likes making his job as an exhibit curator dovetail with a scholarly approach. A few years ago, for example,

he co-curated a series on German cinema from 1945 to 1960: "After the War, Before the Wall." This formerly overlooked era soon became the subject of several books. "Many people credit us with having made an intervention that changed how people think of that time before Fassbinder," Peña says. "There were some considerable talents, and some very popular cinema. I like my job, especially when I feel that I'm helping to write film history."

—CRAIG LAMBERT



**Claudine, photographed in Gisenyi, Rwanda, in April 2006, was forced into prostitution after losing her parents in the 1994 genocide. She has joined with some 200 other women in an association fighting AIDS.**

Kristof, a *New York Times* columnist, and WuDunn, a former *Times* foreign correspondent who now works independently on multimedia projects involving women's issues, make their first case effectively, drawing on their years of research (and it's clear they know the subject and its complexities very well). They tell how women are promised work, then sold into sexual slavery and imprisonment, while authorities turn a blind eye. They tell how these women are beaten, and raped, and drugged if they try to resist the men who have bought them; how many contract AIDS from forced sex work without protection, and die in their twenties; and how returning them to families and normal life is complicated by shame and addiction. They tell how in some cultures it's accepted practice for a man to rape the woman he wants to marry to force her to submit to him, and

how in others it's common for rape to be used as a weapon by criminals, or in family feuds—the perpetrators secure in the knowledge that shame will prevent the victim from reporting the attack to the authorities (and will often result in the victim's suicide). They describe how families and states fail to invest in education and healthcare for women, so that girls who could be an economic asset

# Women in a Woeful World

*Coming to terms with oppression*

by ROHINI PANDE

*If a woman earns more than her husband, it's difficult for him to discipline her.*

Sharifa Bibi, Pakistan

**H**alf the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide, by the Pulitzer Prize-winning husband-and-wife journalists Nicholas D. Kristof '82 and Sheryl WuDunn, M.B.A. '86, is more than just journalism. It's a tract that's unashamedly intended to outline a problem and convince its readers to take action to solve it.

The book—a series of essays and anecdotes that work together—forms an argument in two parts. The first part argues that the oppression of women in (mostly) developing countries is a devastating and under-recognized injustice that's the equivalent of slavery, and that demands a moral and political movement as focused and principled as the campaign against slavery to bring it to an end. The second discusses practical ways to create this movement and effect the change that's needed.

Nicholas D. Kristof '82 and Sheryl WuDunn, M.B.A. '86, *Half the Sky* (Knopf, \$27.95)



to their families and country instead end up controlled by and dependent on male relatives, undernourished and often dead at a young age from preventable diseases, or African women who suffer fistulas in childbirth (a painful, embarrassing condition, but curable by a simple operation) are abandoned to die on the edges of villages. They describe how some traditions that may be seen as oppressive, and are at least very dangerous to women's health, like genital cutting, can become so ingrained in a culture that women themselves support them.

The authors make their argument through a combination of statistics and some truly horrifying stories of individuals they've met who have been subjected to this kind of oppression—such as 14-year-old Mahabouba Muhammad, from Ethiopia. Mahabouba was abandoned by her parents, then sold into marriage by a neighbor. She found herself a virtual prisoner, raped by her “husband” and constantly beaten by his first wife. She became pregnant and ran away, but—as a pregnant and “married” woman—no relatives would help her and she was left to give birth alone. By the time help finally arrived, she had suffered obstructed labor (the baby died inside her) and internal injuries that left her doubly incontinent and unable to walk. Her relatives, fearing she was cursed, left her alone in a hut after removing the door, hoping hyenas would kill her. Only her indomitable will to live, and the fortuitous presence of a Western missionary in a nearby village, allowed her to survive.

THE SECOND PART of the authors' argument—practical ways to aid women—is sometimes on shakier ground. But this is mostly due to their honesty about the complexity of the problems faced by those who try to come from outside to fight the oppression of women in places where it's deeply ingrained: “This is our culture!” a Sudanese midwife declared angrily when we asked about cutting. “We all want it. Why is it America's business?”

They describe their own attempts to buy prostitutes out of slavery, and the social conditions that make restoring these women to a normal life so difficult. They tell of an attempt to help a woman dying in childbirth in an African hospital, and the institutional, social, and financial problems that foiled that effort. They discuss how their initial

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### New Green Homes for Sale

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support for legalization of prostitution was undercut by the more sordid reality they discovered behind the apparent success of just such a legal zone in India (in Kolkata), and examine how legalization of prostitution in the Netherlands compares as an anti-trafficking technique with the criminalization of sex-service purchases in Sweden. They point out how the campaign against female circumcision has been set back by the campaigners' use of terminology ("female genital mutilation") that turned the people they wanted to help against them. They point out over and over the inadequacies of the law—and of those who are supposed to enforce it—in the face of tradition and silence and public indifference.

This question of legality fits the anti-slavery analogy less well. Slavery was legal, and the abolitionists focused on arguing that it should become illegal. Once it was illegal, the trade stopped. Nowhere in the world are rape (outside of marriage), or enforced sexual slavery actually legal. The problem—and several of the stories the authors relate make this very clear—is the indifference or corruption of the authorities, and the silence of the victim, who would be subject to public humiliation were she to admit to her ordeal. Similarly, the denial of schooling or medical care often reflects families' ignorance of the earning potential of healthy, educated women.

Given their understandable suspicion of the effectiveness of corrupt and conservative authorities in fighting injustice, and their equally understandable discomfort with attempts by outsiders to impose change in places they don't fully understand, much of Kristof and WuDunn's proposed solution to the problem involves supporting individuals they call "social entrepreneurs."

They tell the story of Mukhtar Mai, in Pakistan, who was gang-raped and expected to commit suicide—but protested, instead. With the compensation she eventually received, she started her own school and social-welfare organizations and then started to speak out nationally and internationally against endemic violence against women in the country—often in a risky conflict with Pervez Musharraf's government, which didn't want its reputation sullied abroad. They write about Usha Narayane, who fought back against the gangsters who used rape to control her slum neighbourhood in India; Sunitha Krishnan, a literacy worker whose experi-

ence of rape at the hands of a group of men who objected to her organizing women in their village led her to found a group dedicated to opposing trafficking; and Edna Adan, who, against all odds, built a modern maternity hospital in Somaliland.

Kristof and WuDunn stress the importance of individuals speaking up and resisting—but it's here that their proposals (or, at least, their exhortations) seem questionable. Mukhtar Mai, Usha Narayane, and Sunitha Krishnan are clearly remarkable women, and deserve every support, but it is also true that they are very rare, brave, and driven individuals—and lucky, because their work clearly carries a very high risk. In a society where all the power

**The answer is to bring what's hidden into the light—and to make it matter.**

is elsewhere, resisting is very likely to end in defeat and quite possibly death. Even though the authors themselves, relatively affluent Westerners, clearly do not lead a safe life (there's a very casual reference to Kristof's involvement in a plane crash in the Congo), it still seems that it's no one's place to push others to take such risks. It's not enough to rely on a few brave individuals being prepared to fight for change.

The authors are more convincing when they make a case for improving education for women, and for other initiatives (often local and small-scale) that empower women financially. Women who are well-educated and who have an independent income naturally find a voice in the family and in democratic society. They gain the power to speak out and resist the injustice they see around them, or are suffering themselves.

As the authors note, this is also consonant with the growing evidence suggesting that empowering women as political leaders alters policy, often in ways that empower other women. In my research, I have found that voters, especially male, are willing to alter their beliefs about women's role in society when they see women leaders and, importantly, are then more likely to vote for women. I have also found that voter-information campaigns are effec-

tive in altering how slum dwellers in India vote—suggesting that the power of the ballot can potentially be harnessed to enable local action for women's rights.

Kristof and WuDunn conclude by exhorting readers to take action. In an earlier chapter, the authors mention that stories about individuals are much more effective in promoting action than statistics. They might have more confidence in the stories they tell. The exhortation feels unnecessary, and perhaps even patronizing. The case for change has already been made—and some of the actions they suggest to casual readers, such as signing up for e-mail updates from [www.womensnews.org](http://www.womensnews.org) and [www.worldpulse.com](http://www.worldpulse.com), or volunteering in the developing world, sometimes feel more like an attempt at moral improvement of Westerners than effective ways to bring about change elsewhere.

Over and over, the narratives make the same point: the problem here is the invisibility of the oppression, the silence and powerlessness of the humiliated and the uneducated, the indifference of the unknowing world. It becomes clear that the answer is to bring what is hidden into the light—whether it's oppression or neglect of individuals or groups, or the corruption of authorities—and to make it matter. That may be achieved by publicly supporting the brave individuals who speak out, and organize, and resist; or by working to give other women the economic status and education to be able to speak out without risk, to ensure for themselves that laws are enforced and women are treated with respect. It may also be achieved by using our positions as citizens of a rich and powerful country with relative freedom of speech to speak truths and make moral arguments that others don't have the influence to make or freedom to say. In this book, Kristof and WuDunn have done exactly that. ▢

*Rohini Pande is Kamal professor of public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School. Her research focuses on the economic analysis of the politics and consequences of different forms of redistribution, principally in developing countries. She has examined the role of microfinance in enhancing social capital among women in India, as well as the role of gender quotas in politics in changing voter perceptions. She is now examining the role of information in enabling slum dwellers to hold politicians accountable (see [www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/rohini-pande](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/about/faculty-staff-directory/rohini-pande)).*



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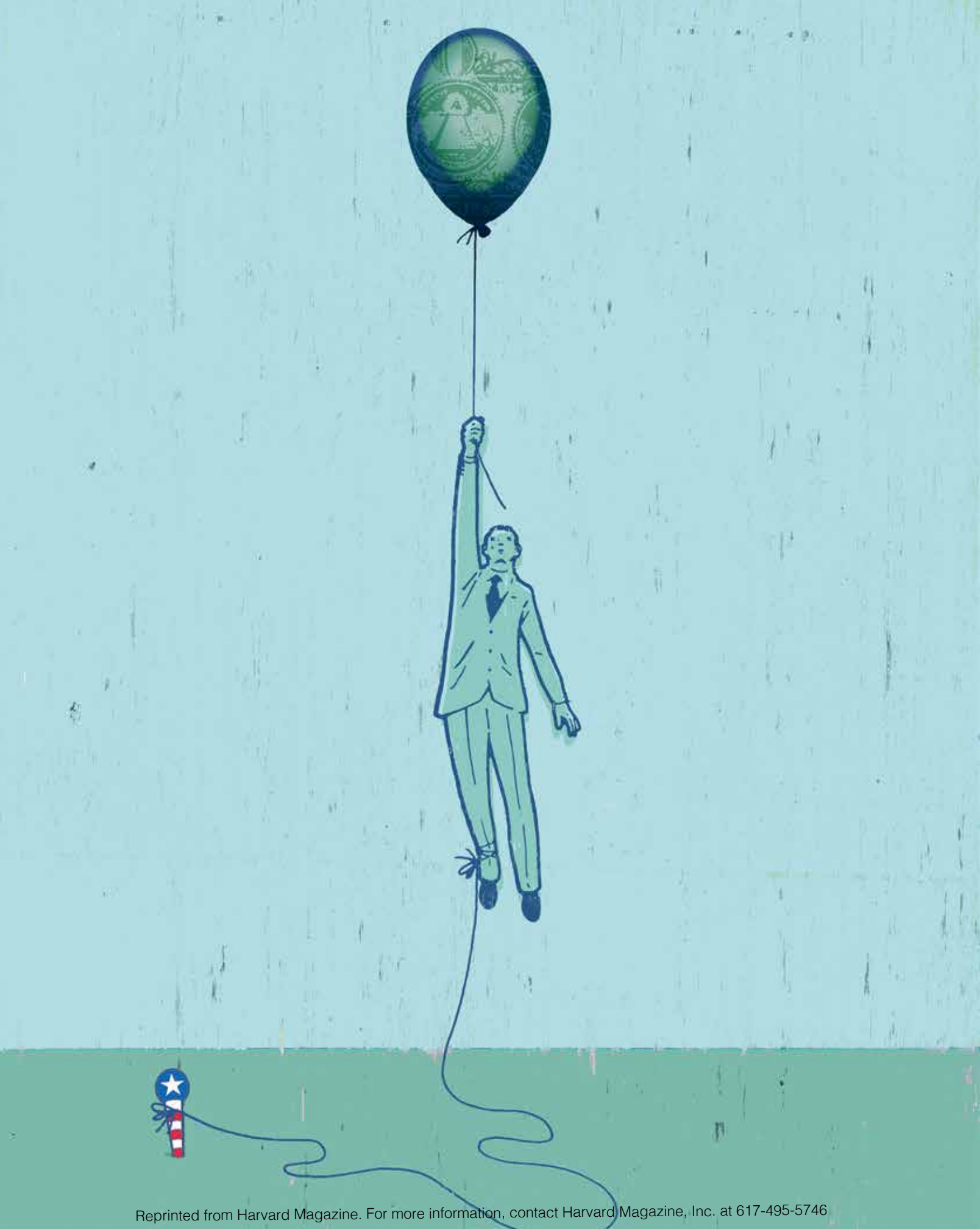
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# A N ★ O U N C E ★ O F PREVENTION

Financial regulation, moral hazard,  
and the end of “too big to fail”



by **David A. Moss**

THE MAGNITUDE of the current financial crisis reflects the failure of an economic and regulatory philosophy that proved increasingly influential in policy circles during the past three decades. This philosophy, guided more by theory than historical experience, held that private financial institutions not insured by the government could be largely trusted to manage their own risks—to regulate themselves. The crisis has suggested otherwise, particularly since several of the least regulated parts of the system (including non-bank mortgage originators and the major broker-dealer Bear Stearns) were among the first to run into trouble. Former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan acknowledged in October 2008, “Those of us who have looked to the self-interest of lending institutions to protect shareholders’ equity, myself included, are in a state of shocked disbelief.”

## ★ FROM CRISIS TO CALM

OF COURSE, financial panics and crises are nothing new. For most of the nation’s history, they represented a regular and often debilitating feature of American life. Until the Great Depression, major crises struck about every 15 to 20 years—in 1792, 1797, 1819, 1837, 1857, 1873, 1893, 1907, and 1929–33.

But then the crises stopped. In fact, the United States did not suffer another major banking crisis for just about 50 years—by far the longest such stretch in the nation’s history. Although there were many reasons for this, it is difficult to ignore the federal government’s active role in managing financial risk. This role began to take shape in 1933 with passage of the Glass-Steagall Act, which introduced federal deposit insurance, significantly expanded federal bank supervision, and required the separation of commercial from investment banking.

The simple truth is that New Deal financial regulation worked. In fact, it worked remarkably well. Banking crises essentially disappeared after 1933 (see chart, page 26), without *any* apparent

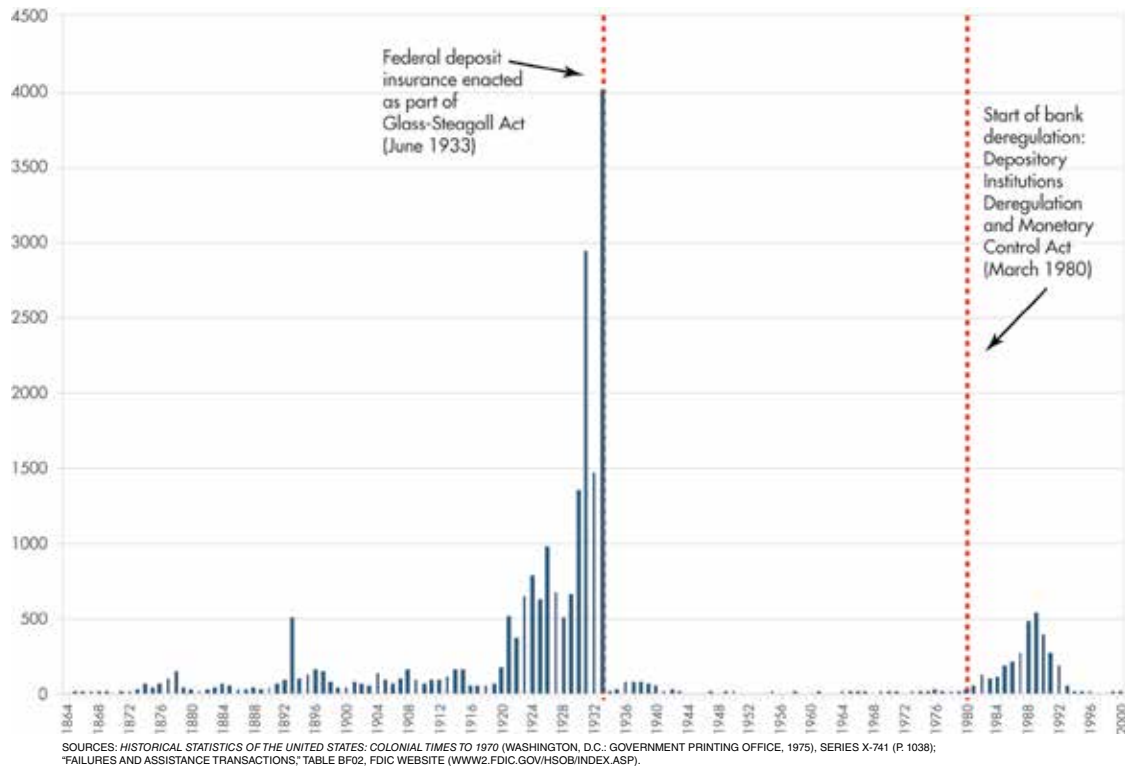
reduction in economic growth. Not only was the period of 1933–1980 one of unusually strong growth, but the growth was broad based, associated with stable or *falling* income inequality, rather than with the *rising* inequality that took hold after 1980.

Perhaps even more striking, America’s post-Glass-Steagall financial system soon became the envy of the world. Although critics had warned that the forced separation of commercial from investment banking could undermine the nation’s financial system, American financial institutions from Morgan Stanley to Goldman Sachs dominated global high finance for the remainder of the century.

Critics of Glass-Steagall had also warned that federal deposit insurance would encourage excessive risk-taking, what economists call “moral hazard.” According to this argument, because depositors would no longer have to worry about the soundness of their banks and might well be attracted by the higher interest rates offered by riskier institutions, funds would ultimately flow to weak banks—rather than strong—and losses could mount. Said one opponent in 1933, “A reputation for high character [in banking] would be cheapened and recklessness would be encouraged.”

Fortunately, the authors of Glass-Steagall (and the follow-on Banking Act of 1935) prepared for this threat, authorizing not only public deposit insurance but also meaningful bank regulation, designed to ensure the safety and soundness of insured banks. Regulation was necessary to deal with the moral hazard that critics warned about. The combination of insurance and regulation adopted as part of Glass-Steagall engendered a powerful dose of consumer protection, a remarkable reduction in systemic risk, and a notable increase in public confidence in the financial system. By all indications, this well designed risk-management policy strengthened the financial markets and helped prevent subsequent crises.

## CALM AMIDST THE STORM: BANK FAILURES (SUSPENSIONS), 1864-2000



In retrospect, it appears that the New Dealers hit on a successful strategy: stringent regulation (combined with mandatory public insurance) for commercial banks, the biggest systemic threat at the time, and a lighter regulatory touch for most of the rest of the financial system. This approach helped ensure financial stability and financial innovation—the best of both worlds—for half a century. In fact, significant bank failures (in the form of the savings and loan crisis) did not reappear until after the start of bank deregulation in the early 1980s, when oversight was relaxed and the essential link between insurance and regulation was temporarily severed.

### ★ A MISTAKE, NOT AN ACCIDENT

LIKE THE SAVINGS AND LOAN FIASCO of the 1980s, the current financial crisis is the product of a mistaken regulatory philosophy—only this time the consequences have proved far more severe. In too many cases, regulators chose not to use tools they already had, or they neglected to request new tools to meet the challenges of an evolving financial system. The failure to regulate the sprawling market for credit default swaps (CDS) in the late 1990s and the Securities and Exchange Commission's 2004 decision to allow voluntary regulation on the part of major investment firms are two particularly striking examples.

In both of these cases and many others, the prevailing view of financial regulation was that less was more, because private actors could be trusted to optimize financial decisionmaking on their own. For example, Alan Greenspan in 2002 explained his view on “the issue of regulation and disclosure in the over-the-counter derivatives market” this way: “By design, this market, presumed to involve dealings among sophisticated professionals, has been largely exempt from government regulation. In part, this exemption reflects the view that professionals do not require the investor protections commonly afforded to markets in which re-

tail investors participate. But regulation is not only unnecessary in these markets, it is potentially damaging, because regulation presupposes disclosure and forced disclosure of proprietary information can undercut innovations in financial markets just as it would in real-estate markets.” Sophisticated economic reasoning seemed to validate the point; and as the bubble inflated, the results spoke for themselves.

Ironically, it is possible that the success of New Deal financial regulation actually contributed to its own undoing. After nearly 50 years of relative financial calm, academics and policymakers alike may have begun to take that stability for granted. Given this mindset, financial regulation looked like an unnecessary burden. It was as if, after sharply reducing deadly epidemics through public-health measures, policymakers concluded that these measures weren't really necessary, since major epidemics were not much of a threat anymore.

But private financial markets and institutions have *always* had trouble managing risk—and especially systemic risk—on their own. The long series of financial crises that punctuated American history up through 1933 testifies to this fact, as does the current crisis, which exploded not coincidentally during a period of aggressive financial innovation and deregulation. Unfortunately, the timing of this most recent swing toward financial deregulation could not have been worse.

### ★ THE CURSE OF BIGNESS?

AT THE VERY TIME that policymakers were downplaying the importance of regulation—especially in the 1980s and 1990s—the financial system was changing in ways that greatly magnified their mistake. In particular, we began to see the emergence of a new systemic threat: the growth of massive financial institutions outside of commercial banking. For example, the assets of the nation's



security brokers and dealers increased from \$45 billion (1.6 percent of gross domestic product) in 1980 to \$262 billion (4.5 percent of GDP) in 1990 to more than \$3 trillion (22 percent of GDP) in 2007. All by itself, Bear Stearns saw its assets increase from about \$37 billion in 1990 to nearly \$400 billion at the start of 2007; and the behemoth Citigroup, after consolidating a broad range of financial services under one roof, grew its balance sheet from less than \$700 billion at the start of 1999 to more than \$2 trillion by 2007!

The rise of these massive institutions represented a profound change in our financial system and a powerful new source of systemic risk. Yet we didn't update our regulatory policies in response—a critical mistake.

Although there were obviously many causes of the current crisis (including irresponsible lending and borrowing in the mortgage markets, asset securitization carried to a dangerous extreme, a severely dysfunctional credit-rating system, and excessive leverage throughout the financial system), perhaps the biggest culprits of all were the supersized financial institutions. At root, this was a crisis of big institutions.

As asset prices rose, many of the huge financial conglomerates played a pivotal role in inflating the bubble. They used their pristine credit ratings (and their *illusion of permanence*) to access cheap funds on a tremendous scale, and they employed those funds in support of countless high-risk transactions and investments. Once the bubble began to deflate, it was many of these same huge (and hugely leveraged) firms that helped precipitate a vicious downward spiral as they all began desperately trying to sell troubled assets simultaneously. And when the bubble finally burst, federal officials concluded that they had to save these very same institutions from collapse, because the failure of any one of them could have triggered an avalanche of losses, potentially threatening the financial system as a whole.

### ★ **IMPLICIT GUARANTEES AS FAR AS THE EYE CAN SEE**

DURING THE COURSE of 2008 and early 2009, federal officials made absolutely clear that there was almost no limit to the resources they would devote to preventing or halting a systemic panic at a time of general financial distress. The Federal Reserve extended unprecedented support to investment banks, money-market funds, and the commercial-paper market; it also helped rescue Bear Stearns, AIG, and Citigroup. The Treasury guaranteed all money-market funds, injected capital into a broad range of financial institutions under the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP), supported the takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, and also supported the operations of the Federal Reserve. The Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC), meanwhile, increased deposit insurance coverage from \$100,000 to \$250,000 per account, guaranteed senior unsecured bank debt, and contributed to the rescue of Citigroup. In all, by the end of 2008, federal agencies had already disbursed more than \$2 trillion in responding to the crisis and had taken on potential commitments in excess of \$10 trillion, and those figures continued to increase in 2009.

As these extraordinary interventions prove, federal policymakers view many of the nation's largest financial institutions as too big—or, more precisely, too systemic—to fail. The only major non-bank financial institution that has been allowed to fail and enter Chapter 11 was Lehman Brothers, and the shock waves emanating from that event made it the exception that proved the rule.

The implicit federal guarantees that were once regarded as a special privilege of Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, and other government-sponsored enterprises have now, by all accounts, been extended, essentially, to every major (systemically significant) financial institution in the country.

All such guarantees have the potential to invite excessive risk-taking—as a result of moral hazard. Unfortunately, implicit guarantees are *particularly* dangerous because they are typically open-ended, not always tightly linked to careful risk monitoring (regulation), and almost impossible to eliminate once in place. The costly federal takeover of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac illustrates this point, as do the ever-rising costs of federal disaster relief—following floods and hurricanes, for instance—which represents another open-ended, and implicit, federal guarantee.

The extension of implicit guarantees to *all* systemically significant financial institutions takes moral hazard in the financial system to an entirely new level. Creditors of these institutions will monitor less aggressively, knowing that the federal government stands as a backstop, and they are likely to pay less attention to the riskiness of these institutions in chasing the highest yields. If we are not careful, the inevitable result will be more (and more excessive) risk-taking, greater losses, and further crises. If we are going to provide guarantees—and that decision has already been made—it is essential that we create effective mechanisms for monitoring and controlling the inevitable moral hazard.

### ★ **RETHINKING REGULATION: TARGETING SYSTEMIC RISK**

TODAY, FEDERAL OFFICIALS WAIT until *after* a financial institution is in trouble to decide if it poses a systemic threat to the broader economy. In 2008, Bear Stearns, Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, AIG, and Citigroup were all deemed too systemic to fail—and taxpayers were put on the hook for hundreds of billions and perhaps trillions of dollars to help keep them alive.

This is the wrong approach. Regulators should not have to wait until the very last minute, when they are under enormous time pressure and often in the dead of night, to make such momentous decisions. By that point, financial regulation has already failed. The underlying problem can no longer be prevented. All that can be done is to stabilize the institution with an extraordinary infusion of taxpayer dollars. Even then there is no guarantee that the infusion will be sufficient.

A much better approach would be to identify financial institutions with “systemic significance” *in advance*—that is, in normal times—and to regulate them accordingly. These are institutions that are so big or so deeply interconnected with other financial actors that their failure could trigger cascading losses and even contagion across the financial system. They are also the institutions that, as we have seen, helped drive the crisis on the way up (by inflating the bubble) and on the way down (by provoking a fire sale in the financial markets). The Obama administration now calls these institutions “Tier 1 Financial Holding Companies.” Providing proper oversight of such institutions would help to prevent a crisis from striking in the first place, and it would put public officials in a much better position to deal with the consequences in the unlikely event that a crisis did occur. It would also help to update the highly successful New Deal regulatory strategy by ensuring vigorous regulation of today's greatest sys-

temic threats. As the saying goes, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

## ★ REFORMING AMERICAN FINANCIAL REGULATION

CONGRESS AND THE PRESIDENT should direct a new regulatory agency to identify financial institutions whose failure would pose a systemic threat to the broader financial system. Such determinations would be made *continuously*, not simply in bad times, so that a complete list of financial institutions deemed to have “systemic significance” would always be publicly available.

The regulatory body designated to make these determinations (call it a Systemic Risk Review Board) would have broad powers to collect information, both from other regulatory agencies and directly from financial institutions themselves. All financial institutions—from banks to hedge funds—would be required to report to this body, irrespective of other regulatory coverage. Financial institutions would have the right to appeal a determination, but ultimately (if it was upheld or not challenged) the determination would be binding.

Once systemically significant institutions were clearly identified, it would then be necessary to provide appropriate oversight and, at the same time, to clarify (in advance) how such institutions would be regulated and governed at moments of distress.

**PRUDENTIAL REGULATION.** Precisely because of the potential threat they pose to the broader financial system, systemically significant institutions should face enhanced prudential regulation to limit excessive risk-taking and help ensure their safety. Such regulation might include relatively stringent capital and liquidity requirements, most likely on a counter-cyclical basis (to limit excessive lending in boom markets and the need for fire sales in down markets); a maximum leverage ratio (on the whole institution and potentially also on individual subsidiaries); well-defined limits on contingent liabilities and off-balance-sheet activity; and perhaps also caps on the proportion of short-term debt on the institution's balance sheet.

However implemented, an important advantage of the proposed system is that it would provide financial institutions with *a strong incentive to avoid becoming systemically significant*. This is exactly the opposite of the existing situation, where financial institutions have a strong incentive to become “too big to fail,” precisely in order to exploit a free implicit guarantee from the federal government. This unhealthy state of affairs can be corrected by being clear about the systemic nature of financial institutions and regulating them appropriately, rather than waiting until they are already in trouble to act.

**FEDERAL INSURANCE.** To the extent that systemically significant financial institutions will receive federal support in the event of a general financial crisis, such support should be formalized (and paid for) *in advance*. Historical experience suggests that government guarantees that are explicit, well defined, and closely monitored generate far less moral hazard than open-ended, implicit guarantees. It is important to convert what are now massive *implicit* guarantees into *explicit* ones that are clear, delimited, and well understood.

One option for doing this would be to create an explicit system of federal capital insurance for systemically significant financial



institutions. Under such a program, covered institutions would be required to pay regular and appropriate premiums for the coverage; the program would pay out “claims” only in the context of a systemic financial event (determined perhaps by a presidential declaration); and payouts would be limited to pre-specified amounts. For example, if a systemically significant financial institution with \$500 billion in assets were required to buy federal capital insurance equal to 10 percent of total assets, the potential payout by the federal capital insurance program in a systemic event would be \$50 billion. In return, the federal government would receive \$50 billion in non-voting preferred shares (which the affected institution would have the obligation to repurchase after the crisis had passed).

Such capital insurance would *not* create a new federal liability. Rather, it would make an existing *implicit* liability *explicit*. Because it is now understood that the federal government will support systemically significant financial institutions in the event of a crisis, it is only reasonable that these institutions pay premiums for this expected federal coverage in advance of any crisis and that the potential support be well defined and limited. In fact, such a program might well *reduce* the federal government's ultimate liability, because its obligation would be pre-specified and no longer open-ended.

There are other options as well, beyond federal capital insurance. One potentially attractive option—a convertible debt rule—would involve a regulatory requirement and trigger, but no government guarantee. The basic idea (patterned after a recent proposal by a group of distinguished financial economists) is that systemically significant institutions would be required to carry a sizable amount of special debt, which would automatically convert to equity capital in the event of a systemic crisis. In this way, systemic financial institutions could count on a significant—and potentially vital—reduction in leverage in times of general distress. With a portion of their debt turned into equity, these institutions ideally would not have to undertake emergency asset sales in disrupted markets or seek additional financial support from



the federal government to shore up their balance sheets. Whether such an approach would be sufficient on its own remains an open question, but at a minimum it might present a useful complement to a federal capital-insurance program.

**RECEIVERSHIP PROCESS FOR FAILING INSTITUTIONS.** Ultimately, under the system proposed here, *no* financial institution would be too big to fail. Systemically significant institutions might receive automatic capital infusions in times of general financial distress (as just described), but an individual institution would *not* be propped up or bailed out when it was on the verge of failure. Instead, it would be promptly taken over by a federal receiver and either restructured, sold, or liquidated—in much the same way that FDIC takes over (and, in many cases, promptly restructures and reopens) failing banks.

Although non-financial firms enter bankruptcy when they can no longer make good on their debts, the federal bankruptcy system was simply not designed for large, systemically significant financial institutions. As a result, regulators often feel the need to prop up such institutions when they falter to avoid a messy and potentially destructive bankruptcy process. But this cannot be tolerated any longer. Instead, we need a receivership process that works, so regulators don't have to be afraid to let a systemically significant financial institution fail. The FDIC has proved that this can be done for commercial banks, and it is now time to extend the FDIC-receivership model to all systemically significant institutions. No private entity should ever be too big to fail.

## ★ REGULATION FOR THE LONG TERM

IN DESIGNING THIS NEW SYSTEM, lawmakers need to remember that they are building a regulatory infrastructure for the long term. In general, major financial crises strike rather infrequently—perhaps once in 20 or even 50 years—making it exceedingly difficult for regulators to stay vigilant. And because a systemic regulator would be charged with regulating the most powerful financial institutions in the country, it would be highly vulnerable to falling under their influence—a phenomenon that social scientists call “regulatory capture.”

The best weapon against both complacency and capture is sunlight. This is one of the reasons why Congress should create a new agency, rather than house a systemic regulator in an existing one. Although the Federal Reserve might seem an attractive home, because it has a great deal of financial expertise already, the “Fed” was never designed to be particularly transparent. On the contrary, it has long been thought that an effective central bank requires a substantial degree of insulation from democratic impulses. A successful systemic regulator, by contrast, would need to be far more open and responsive to democratic scrutiny.

The need for sunlight is also the reason why a list of systemically significant institutions (which the regulator would compile) must be public, not private. Such a list would help to ensure not only *public engagement* in the process of systemic regulation, but also *public pressure* if the systemic regulator were to fall down on the job (or fall under the spell of the firms it was regulating). Imagine, for example, the outcry that would ensue if a major financial firm mysteriously disappeared from the list. It is precisely the fear of such unwelcome attention that would help keep regulators on the straight and narrow. Without the discipline of a public list, regu-

latory diligence would invariably weaken over time in the face of unrelenting pressure from the regulated firms.

Some critics contend that a public list of this sort would confer special status on the named firms, *increasing* moral hazard by strengthening the implicit guarantee these firms already enjoy. But it is a fantasy to believe that the government's implicit guarantee of all systemically significant institutions will magically disappear (or even diminish meaningfully) if we simply stop talking about it. After more than a year of massive federal rescues and bailouts of major financial firms, that guarantee is now rock solid.

As past experience has shown, implicit guarantees don't disappear on their own and can't be ignored or denied into oblivion. Nor is it credible to pretend that such institutions would receive no federal support at a moment of crisis. The right approach is to be explicit about which institutions represent a true systemic threat; regulate them effectively on the basis of strong prudential standards; promise a reasonable—but strictly limited—amount of support in times of crisis (through a capital-insurance program); and be clear in advance that they will face an FDIC-style receivership process (rather than ad hoc government bailouts) if they fail. This is the best way to limit moral hazard and, at the same time, avoid regulatory complacency and capture over the long term.

## ★ RESTORING CALM, AVOIDING CRISES

THE PRESENT FINANCIAL CRISIS should remind us that private financial institutions and markets cannot always be counted upon to manage risk optimally on their own. Almost everyone now recognizes that the government has a critical role to play—as the lender, insurer, and spender of last resort—in times of crisis. But effective public risk management is also needed in normal times to protect consumers and investors and to help prevent financial crises in the first place.

New Deal reforms helped produce nearly a half-century of relative financial calm, without quashing essential financial innovation. Today, the biggest threat to our financial system is posed not by volatile commercial banks (as in 1933), but rather by huge, systemically significant financial institutions (think AIG, Citigroup, Fannie Mae) that have the potential to trigger financial avalanches. And the threat posed by these institutions is only compounded by the unprecedented federal guarantees introduced in response to the current crisis and the pervasive moral hazard they spawn.

The best way to address this threat is by identifying, regulating, and potentially insuring systemically significant financial institutions continuously, *before* crisis strikes. This would mark a major but essential reform to ensure a healthy and productive financial system for the next half-century. ▢

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*David A. Moss is McLean professor of business administration. He is also the author of When All Else Fails: Government as the Ultimate Risk Manager, a broad historical analysis of public risk-management, including strategies for addressing the moral hazard associated with public guarantees and other market interventions. This essay is adapted and updated from “An Ounce of Prevention: The Power of Public Risk Management in Stabilizing the Financial System,” January 2009, a Harvard Business School working paper (available, with supporting footnotes, at [www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/09-087.pdf](http://www.hbs.edu/research/pdf/09-087.pdf)). That paper grew out of his work for the TARP Congressional Oversight Panel and a draft report on financial regulatory reform he prepared for the panel. It was also presented at the Tobin Project Conference on Government and Markets at White Oak.*

# T H E UNLIKELY WRITER



Atul Gawande, “slightly bewildered” surgeon and health-policy scholar—and a literary voice of medicine

by **ELIZABETH GUDRAIS** • photographs by **FRED FIELD**

ONE WEDNESDAY LAST APRIL, Atul Gawande was in his office at Brigham and Women's Hospital, trying to make some progress on a *New Yorker* article about disparities in healthcare spending. He kept getting paged when other physicians thought their patients might need surgery. By late afternoon, there had been a few false alarms: he visited patients and ruled against operating. Responding to a page about an elderly man who had had heart surgery the previous week and was now in severe abdominal pain, Gawande got on the phone with the surgical resident and pulled up an MRI on his computer screen. He navigated through digital slices of the patient's abdomen, squinting at the screen, then agreed to meet the resident at the patient's room. As he got up from his desk, his movements took on a sense of purpose. “I think this one's real,” he said.

Gawande had seen that part of the man's colon was ischemic—dead and gangrenous—and had ceased to move waste out of the body. He wasn't sure about the cause, but suspected a blood clot. One thing was clear: without immediate surgery, the colon would rupture.

After examining the patient, Gawande conferred with the resident in the corridor outside the man's room. He went through a familiar and well-practiced set of actions that he seemed to do without thinking: slipping his ring finger into his mouth to moisten it, working his wedding band off, unbuckling his watchband, threading it through the ring, and refastening it, all the while carrying on a conversation about stopping the patient's anti-clotting medication and getting a vascular surgeon to assist.

One moment, this patient's children had thought he was on the mend from cardiac surgery. The next, they were having to process the fact that he faced near-certain death if he didn't undergo another procedure with its own dangers. Suddenly, a life was in Gawande's hands. The *New Yorker* would have to wait.

THE MEDICAL WRITING for which Gawande is best known represents only a small fraction of his professional output. He is a surgeon, and a busy one at that, performing 250-plus operations a year. He is a professor at Harvard Medical School (HMS) and the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). He heads a World

Health Organization initiative on making surgery safer. And he is a husband and a father of three.

A few days after the emergency surgery on the man with the ischemic colon (who survived and recovered), Gawande was back in the OR, removing the enlarged and possibly cancerous thyroid lobe of a 42-year-old schoolteacher. This is the type of surgery he most commonly performs, cutting open patients' throats to remove thyroid and parathyroid growths. And after thousands of hours of practice, he works with an air of assurance.

Operating on the throat is not simple: it is densely packed with nerves, blood vessels, and a surprising amount of fat. It bears little resemblance to an anatomy chart, where body parts are neatly subdivided and set off from one another in contrasting colors. But Gawande knows what he is looking at when he peers into the patient's throat through the thick magnifying lenses of his OR glasses. He can gaze into a messy, bloody incision and see nebulous boundaries between various tissue types.

Huddled over the blue-draped schoolteacher, Gawande and a surgical resident performed a delicate dance, their movements synchronized. One snipped to remove suspicious tissue; the other, following just behind, sewed up. As they went, they cauterized small blood vessels and took care to avoid larger ones and the vocal-cord nerve.

With this patient, Gawande decided to transplant one parathyroid gland (essential for maintaining proper blood calcium levels) to ensure that it would have adequate blood supply after the woman recovered from the operation. He removed the amorphous parathyroid tissue himself and smeared it on a small plastic tray. Then he instructed the resident, for whom this innovative procedure was new, to gather up the parathyroid “like peanut butter” (indeed, it has a pastelike consistency and the surgical tool looks like a butter knife) and tuck it back into the patient's throat in a different spot.

Surgery demands decisiveness: waffling has no place in the operating room. Surgeons face judgment calls, large or small, every few seconds, and the pace does not allow for second opinions.

But Gawande, who is 43, says he is indecisive by nature—agonizing over the choice of a restaurant, for instance. As he remarked

**Gawande in his various environments (clockwise from top): in his office at the Harvard School of Public Health; seeing patient Ericka Webb (right) at a post-surgical follow-up, with medical student Devon Quasha '02, J.D. '06; and in the operating room (Gawande's hands are at right).**





during a 2004 commencement speech at Yale, “I chose surgery because I thought that perhaps this would make me more like the kind of person I wanted to be.”

He is far from the stereotype of the surgeon who thinks he is God, and this emerges in his writing. When he tackles thorny political issues, his arguments do not have polarizing overtones, and he does not use words to browbeat. When he takes a position, it often comes with an admission that the other side has merit.

There is nuance, and a good dose of neurotic self-doubt. In a chapter of his 2007 book *Better: A Surgeon's Notes on Performance*, he chronicles the soul-searching he went through in deciding what his policy would be about asking patients to undress (or not) and asking a female “chaperone” (a nurse or other health professional) to come into the room when he was examining female patients. He paints an endearingly awkward, fumbling picture of himself as a newly minted doctor, having decided to examine patients in their street clothes in most cases:

If a patient with gallstones wore a shirt she could untuck for the abdominal exam, this worked fine. But then I'd encounter a patient in tights and a dress, and the next thing I knew, I had her dress bunched up around her neck, her tights around her knees, and both of us wondering what the hell was going on.

In fact, it is his habit of acknowledging uncertainty that makes his writing so refreshing. “It's the kind of ambiguity that is uncomfortable, and that other writers want to zip out of the picture, that he gravitates toward,” says his *New Yorker* editor, Henry Finder. Often this willingness to face the unknown leads to striking cultural insights. Toward that chapter's conclusion, Gawande says he suspects that having a female “chaperone” in the room

helps more than it hurts. But we don't know; the study has never been done. And that itself is evidence of how much we've underestimated the importance and difficulty of human interactions in medicine.

IF GAWANDE IS AN UNLIKELY SURGEON, envisioning a career in medicine, more generally, was easy. He grew up in Athens, Ohio, the son of a urologist father and a pediatrician mother, and he has often said that following them into the field seemed so inevitable that he tried every way he could think of to avoid it. Careers he considered along the way included philosophy and politics; they did not include writing.

His first published writing for a popular audience, in 1996, came at the invitation of Jacob Weisberg, a friend from Gawande's time at Oxford as a Rhodes scholar. Despite Gawande's lack of writing experience, Weisberg, who helped found the online magazine *Slate* and later edited it, had a hunch that his friend would be good at explaining medicine to a lay audience. Besides, he was encouraged

## A CHECKLIST FOR LIFE

**Atul Gawande's research** centers around the idea he raised with the Brigham's chief of surgery back at his residency interview in 1995: envisioning surgery as a public-health issue, and improving its safety record. Viewing surgery as an exceptional experience is archaic, he is fond of saying, now that one person out of 25 undergoes a surgical procedure in a given year. In fact, there are more surgeries worldwide each year than births—yet surgery carries a risk of death 10 to 100 times higher than that of childbirth.

In the quest to make surgery safer in the developing world and everywhere, Gawande leads a research team of professors, graduate students, and postdoctoral fellows from Harvard Medical School (HMS), affiliated hospitals, and the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH). Funding sources include the World Health Organization (WHO), for whom Gawande leads an initiative on surgical safety. Like Gawande himself, the research team has a full plate—the agenda for a recent weekly meeting, which runs three hours, listed 31 different projects—but a principal focus is the medical checklist.

It's a simple concept that had been used when taking vital signs and in nursing. Donald M. Berwick, a professor at HMS and HSPH who is also president and

CEO of the Cambridge-based, nonprofit Institute for Healthcare Improvement, started promoting the checklist. Then Johns Hopkins Hospital critical-care specialist Peter Pronovost picked it up, developing a checklist for preventing central-line infections. (Used to provide patients with intravenous nutrition or medication, and to monitor vital signs or draw blood, a central venous catheter is threaded into the vena cava, the main blood vessel to the heart. Such lines commonly become infected, and because their route into the bloodstream is so direct, an infection is life-threatening.)

Pronovost's results with the checklist were more than encouraging. After he implemented the checklist at his hospital in 2001, just two central-line infections occurred in the next 15 months. Judging from previous infection rates, the checklist prevented 43 infections and eight deaths. Two years later, the state of Michigan decided to try Pronovost's checklist in intensive-care units statewide. In the first 18 months, they saved an estimated 1,500 lives and \$175 million.

Gawande and colleagues decided to develop a similar checklist for surgery and to test it at eight hospitals worldwide—one each in the United States, Canada, New Zealand, England, the

Philippines, India, Jordan, and Tanzania. Although the checklist includes mostly rudimentary tasks such as confirming a patient's identity, the procedure to be performed, and the site of the surgery (so as not to operate on the wrong knee or the wrong side of a patient's brain), none of the eight pilot hospitals was routinely performing every task on the list. One of the eight performed none of them at the pre-study evaluation. After a year using the checklist, the rate of complications from surgery at those hospitals had fallen by more than a third; surgical-site infections by half; and deaths of surgical patients by nearly half.

Seven countries and more than two dozen U.S. states now require use of the surgical checklist. Hospitals may also opt in independently, and in all, roughly 600 in the United States and an equivalent number outside have registered with the WHO as users of the checklist. Gawande's team is also developing checklists for perinatal care, emergency care, trauma care, burn care, and for managing a particularly troublesome type of bacterial infection. Team members are developing materials to help other groups develop their own checklists (a “checklist handbook”).

Far from boasting about these results



by what he knew of Gawande's personal qualities: "Atul goes at everything in an incredibly focused, driven way. The odds of him not making something work are a lot lower than they would be with anybody else."

Those earliest pieces *did* take work. Gawande's wife, Kathleen Hobson, a former comparative literature major who has worked in book publishing and in magazines, gave the inaugural *Slate* column a first edit before submission. She says it demanded a "slash and burn" approach: "It was horrible." This is related in a tone of wry affection—and astonishment at his progress since then. His first *New Yorker* piece, in 1998, took *nine months* from submission to publication, and went through 22 rewrites; today, they typically take just a couple.

Despite two books, a decade on staff at the *New Yorker*, and a MacArthur Fellowship that recognized his writing, Gawande still does not consider himself much of a writer. But Finder says that even those early *Slate* pieces revealed "a mind that gravitates toward interesting conundrums."

Let it be testament enough that his writing attracted the attention of Malcolm Gladwell, who first suggested that Finder read Gawande. And Finder notes that *New Yorker* senior editor Hendrik Hertzberg '65, IOP '85, compared Gawande's style to that of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. "He's just incredibly clear," Finder says. "The writing is never showy. It's not 'watch me write' ostentation. It's carefully carpentered, an almost surgical precision."

Phrased that way, Gawande's success as a writer makes perfect sense: he writes like a surgeon, including just the essential details, cutting away the fat to find what is relevant. There is one more similarity between medicine and journalism: they share a resemblance to detective work. An article begins with a question, as does a diagnosis. Through a strangely circuitous route, Gawande has arrived at a life in which diverse pursuits dovetail seamlessly.

MOST PEOPLE with professional interests as disparate as his—medicine, politics, philosophy—must choose one and relegate the others to hobbies or a Plan B. Gawande has managed to pull them together, but more through fumbling in the dark, he says, than by design.

After his 1987 graduation from Stanford with a degree in biology and political science, he went off to Oxford to study philosophy. "I hoped to become transformed, to become a thinker, perhaps a professor of philosophy," he told the Yale commencement audience.

But it took all my capacity just to answer the questions philosophers asked, let alone offer anything like original answers. I had no natural ability in this and, though I came back a bit better educated and better traveled, I was not fundamentally changed.

To hear him tell it, he gave up on philosophy. But its influence survives in his writing, both in whom he quotes (Montaigne, Descartes, Alasdair MacIntyre) and in how he frames issues.

His career incorporates even more directly the other path he considered, politics and policy. Gawande volunteered for the presidential campaigns of Gary Hart and Al Gore '69, LL.D. '94, in the 1980s. In the years after graduating, he was agnostic, back and forth between Boston and Washington, entering HMS but taking a leave of absence. He worked for U.S. Representative Jim Cooper, and later advised Bill Clinton's presidential campaign on health and social policy and, ultimately, worked on healthcare reform for

the Clinton administration. He says he chose politicians who "were smart and didn't sequester themselves in parts of the world where they were just in academia, where they weren't helping move the ball forward in practical ways."

He finally jumped into medicine with both feet in 1994, after the Clintons' attempt at healthcare reform foundered. (By this time, he was married to Hobson, whom he'd met in a Stanford dorm when she was a freshman and he was a sophomore.) Still, Gawande knew that his interest in policy would color his medical career, and said as much in his residency interviews. "I would explain how I thought surgery and public health and policy all went together," he recalls. "Half the money in hospitals goes to surgery, but we haven't thought about how to be wise about using those dollars, about the harm that can come from surgical care, and about the worldwide gaps that we have." The message didn't go over well in some places. "People would sort of nod their heads and say, yeah, yeah, whatever, and think I wasn't serious about being a surgeon."

With Michael Zinner, Moseley professor of surgery at HMS and the Brigham's chief of surgery then and now, it was different. "I walked in the door and he got it, and was immediately talking about, how do we do this? How do we put this together?"

Gawande was not the first HMS doctor to write for the *New Yorker*—Recanati professor of medicine Jerome Groopman, of Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center, is also a staff writer there (see "The Examined Life," May-June 2000, page 58). But having a doctor writing for the *New Yorker* from inside hospital walls was new at the Brigham, and when Gawande began doing so he was still a resident. His tendency to turn a critical eye toward his own profession made some colleagues squirm, and it is easy to see why. In a 1997 *Slate* column on the topic of work hours for residents, he wrote, "I know I have seriously harmed patients because of fatigue." One of his early *New Yorker* articles chronicles an incident at the Brigham in which a patient nearly died in his care. The woman had been ejected from her car in a high-speed rollover accident, and surely no one outside the hospital would have asked questions had she died. But Gawande explains, in gripping detail, how his attempt to intubate the patient, to provide her with a clear airway, went awry. And he admits that it was a miracle this woman lived—not only because she survived the crash, but because her physician had neglected crucial steps in a basic medical maneuver for reasons he himself did not understand: "hubris, inattention, wishful thinking, hesitation, or the uncertainty of the moment."

In the early days, Zinner looked over Gawande's articles before they were submitted—and he approved things others would not have. "I had senior faculty flying into my office demanding to know how I could let this go on," he says. "I suggested they go back and read the article." Though Gawande sometimes starts off with a dramatic, even sensationalistic, story to grab readers' attention, "he always has a brilliant and insightful message in the conclusion."

When Gawande began writing for the *New Yorker*, the Brigham's public affairs department wanted to see each piece before it was submitted. "No way was the *New Yorker* going to allow that," he says. "Zinner stepped in and said, 'I'll take responsibility.' Then he said, 'You don't have to show it to me.'"

The two men share a fervent belief that pulling back the veil on medicine will do more good than harm, even if it means pushing transparency's limits right up to the edge of lawsuit territory. "What is the alternative to understanding the complexity of the

world?" Gawande asks. "It's denying it. There's no way that's a successful strategy."

In 2003, after medical school, residency, internship, and a master's degree in health policy from HSPH—all told, 16 years after completing his undergraduate degree—Gawande officially began his career as a professional, as opposed to a student, surgeon. He wanted to be in a supportive environment for his "unusual mix" of surgery, public health, teaching, and writing. He had spent years calibrating this delicate balance at the Brigham, and he decided to stay.

THE SCHOOLTEACHER'S THYROIDECTOMY was the second of five operations for Gawande that day. The third was a 41-year-old woman with a parathyroid growth that was causing calcium to leach from her bones into her blood. Gawande would remove the growth, then send a blood sample to the lab to see if her parathyroid hormone levels had returned to normal. These near-instant results meant he could know if the surgery had succeeded before bringing the patient up from anesthesia.

During the 45-minute wait, he stepped out of the operating room, leaving the patient with the surgical resident, anesthesiologists, and nurses. From a tiny office just adjacent to the OR, he could still see in through a window. He scrolled through some e-mails on the computer, then picked up the phone and dialed. "Hi, it's Atul....Are you a basketball fan?" Headed to Palm Springs the following weekend for a medical conference, he was trying to give away tickets to an NBA playoff game in Boston. He was taking two of his children along and was excited about the trip, but "it's killing me" to miss the game, he admitted.

Gawande was on the phone with a journalist when the surgical nurse interrupted with the test results. Satisfied with the numbers she recited, he instructed her to give the surgical resident the OK to apply the final dressing to the patient's wound. Turning back to the phone, he dialed into the hospital's dictation system to give a report for the patient's medical record, talking so fast that the boundaries blurred between words. Then it was off to tell that patient's family how the procedure had gone, and then to the pre-operative holding area to talk to his next patient.

This kind of effortless toggling between tasks helps explain how Gawande can keep so many balls in the air. Certain other habits also contribute. He arrives precisely on time—not late, but not early either. He leaves swiftly when meetings end, as others linger to chat. There is nary an idle moment in his day. He saves his writing for the hours between 7 and 11 a.m. and 4 and 7 p.m. to capitalize on the body's circadian rhythms. And it helps that he isn't bothered by a lack of downtime.

Gawande's no-nonsense focus can sometimes make him come off as brusque or formidable. Many nurses and doctors inject color into the OR by wearing headgear decorated with stripes, polka dots, or a sports-team logo; Gawande opts for standard-issue plain blue. He eschews comfort footwear, such as clogs or sneakers, in favor of flat-bottomed leather loafers. But he humanizes himself in other ways. OR teams that work with him are treated to a soundtrack of alternative rock from his iPod (a recent playlist included Tom Petty, the Clash, Modest Mouse, Feist, Dido, and M.I.A.). With students and other mentees, he is supportive and patient. He has an easy smile, and he considers a genuine interest in others important, greeting people by name and recalling personal details,



regardless of their status in the hospital hierarchy.

He seems to guard his time so closely not for selfish reasons, but so that he can be generous with it when he wishes. During a meeting with his research team, a junior colleague was having trouble working out the design of a pilot project on reducing childbirth-related mortality. Gawande offered to make himself available to discuss the details: "late night, evenings, weekends, whatever we need to do." He does a surprising number of media interviews—several radio appearances after the March publication of his article on solitary confinement, and an entire hour on an NPR show after his article on disparities in U.S. health-care spending appeared in June. And he doesn't leave every room the moment his obligations end. After giving a talk to HMS students, he stuck around to answer questions for the long line of students who gathered, staying until the technical staff started packing up and turning out the lights.

ONE MONDAY AFTERNOON at 4 p.m., Gawande was finishing his ninth office visit of the day. Coming out of the exam room, he found a sandwich, potato chips, and bottled water waiting at the computer station where he would enter notes into the patient's medical record. This wasn't a mid-afternoon snack; his assistant had secured the provisions because meetings had taken up his whole morning and he'd skipped lunch. He took a few bites between bursts of typing, but then it was on to appointment number 10. By 5:30, when he saw his twelfth and final patient, the sandwich was still not fully eaten, and he had barely touched the water, or for that matter had anything to drink all afternoon.

This wasn't a particularly busy day; it was a typical Monday. Gawande does this day after day, week after week, and somehow he hasn't burned out. It is partly the legacy of residency, which teaches young doctors a catch-as-catch-can approach to sleep and food. But one also gets an impression of a man so engaged in, and stimulated by, his work that physical needs are an afterthought. He is in a constant state of flow.

Gawande is happiest, he says, when he has a lot going on. In 2001, when he was preparing his first book, *Complications: A Surgeon's Notes on an Imperfect Science*, for publication, he took two months off from other duties, but, he says, "I actually didn't get more done, and I started to go stir-crazy."

His week proceeds according to a carefully calibrated schedule.



Visit [harvardmag.com/extras](http://harvardmag.com/extras) to hear Elizabeth Gudrais talk about reporting this article.



Gawande at his weekly meeting with his research team, discussing initiatives to improve surgical safety



Mondays are for pre-operative or post-operative consultations with patients. Tuesdays are for meetings, of his research team and otherwise (and frequently, speaking engagements). He spends Thursdays in the OR; Fridays he works on his writing. Wednesdays are for the overflow, and some writing time if he's lucky.

In spite of all he does, he leaves the hospital most nights around 7 P.M. At the end of a 12-hour day, he is home in Newton in time to eat dinner with Hobson (who is now a full-time mom) and their son Walker, 14, and daughters Hattie, 12, and Hunter, 10.

AS ONE MIGHT GUESS from his writings, Gawande reads insatiably. "If he's not actively talking, he's reading," says Hobson. "He reads before he goes to bed. He reads right after dinner....It's like an addiction. His brain is voracious and always needs food."

Consequently, he is always ready with a killer quote from a source popular or obscure, from any walk of life: philosopher, politician, figure from literature or sports. (His 1997 *Slate* essay on his taste for niche medical journals as guilty pleasure is a deliciously funny read.)

Gawande grew up in a house with journals, not novels, lying around, and both he and Hobson say he was pretty much indifferent to literature until he began courting her. But once he decided to try writing, Hobson says he took a methodical approach: "He became a student of writing. How are they working this out? How is it progressing? ...He sees through to the bones, to the method."

Across his portfolio of pursuits, Gawande displays a willingness to be influenced by people he respects, and to recognize good ideas when he finds them. He says he would not have gotten a public-health degree had Zinner not suggested it. The policy concept perhaps most closely associated with his name, the surgical checklist, was not his to start with, as he readily admits (see page 32).

Perhaps this is why he is reluctant to describe his own writing style, saying instead that he "steals" from such writers as Hemingway and Tolstoy. But there is what Finder calls a "Gawandean" style: "He understands how the small, colorful details can bring an argument to life. He's always very attendant to rhythms and sonorities." In a *New Yorker* article on aging, he wrote:

The hardest substance in the human body is the white enamel of the teeth. With age, it wears away nonetheless, allowing the softer, darker layers underneath to show through. Meanwhile, the blood supply to the pulp and the roots of the teeth atrophies, and the flow of saliva dimin-

ishes; the gums tend to become inflamed and pull away from the teeth, exposing the base, making them unstable and elongating their appearance...

At least as important is Gawande's knack for choosing exactly the right case to write about—a reflection of the exhaustive reporting that goes into each piece, and the number of cases he researches and rejects. For an article on itching, he found a woman who had experienced itching so intense that she scratched through her own skull. In one on blushing, he tells the story of a young woman who was on track to achieve her long-held dream of becoming a television news anchor, but found herself crippled by chronic blushing (and then flew to Sweden to have a controversial new procedure that disconnected the blushing reflex by severing some nerves).

The blushing article also demonstrates how Gawande refuses to stick to the confines of medical writing. He zooms out from an individual case to a view that spans all of human history:

What is this peculiar phenomenon called blushing? A skin reaction? An emotion? A kind of vascular expression? Scientists have never been sure how to describe it. The blush is at once physiology and psychology. On the one hand, blushing is involuntary, uncontrollable, and external, like a rash. On the other hand, it requires thought and feeling at the highest order of cerebral function. "Man is the only animal that blushes," Mark Twain wrote. "Or needs to."

As Finder puts it, Gawande's pieces "open up like an umbrella."

Once a college sophomore with little interest in literature, Gawande now says he *thinks* in stories and feels a compulsion to write. In fact, he recommends that everyone do a bit of writing. "It makes no difference whether you write a paper for a medical journal, five paragraphs for a website, or a collection of poetry," he said during a 2005 HMS commencement speech:

...by putting your writing out to an audience, even a small one, you connect yourself to something larger than yourself....An audience is a community. The published word is a declaration of membership in that community, and also of concern to contribute something meaningful to it.

His writing serves to amplify the impact of his surgery and his policy work. After his January *New Yorker* article on learning from other countries' experiences in designing American healthcare reform, he was invited to testify before Congress. The *New York Times* reported that his June article on healthcare spending disparities had so intrigued President Obama that he discussed it with aides and cited it in a meeting with senators. And the checklist figured into the plot of a March episode of the popular television drama *ER*.

On the desk in his office at the Brigham is a framed copy of Sylvia Plath's poem "The Surgeon at 2 A.M." She describes a patient's in-nards as "tubers and fruits/Oozing their jammy substances." From the surgeon's perspective, she writes: "I worm and hack in a purple wilderness." Gawande notes that Plath, *not* a surgeon, nevertheless got things just right. "That," he says, "is the really amazing thing, and that's the difference between me and a real writer."

He likes the Plath poem because it casts the surgeon in an ambiguous light. "Most writing about people in medicine casts them as either heroes or villains," he says. "That poem captures the surgeon as a merely human, slightly bewildered, a little bit benighted person in a world that is ultimately beyond his control." ♥

Elizabeth Gudrais '01 is associate editor of this magazine.

# Adélaïde Labille-Guiard

Brief life of an enterprising artist: 1749-1803

by LAURA AURICCHIO

THE ELEGANT WOMAN in her low-cut satin dress and plumed straw hat sits, incongruously, behind a large canvas propped on a sturdy wooden easel. Fixing us with an intent gaze, she charges a paintbrush from the palette on her arm. Two younger women stand behind her: one seems engrossed in the painting-in-progress; the other looks directly at the viewer, a smile stirring on her lips. When Adélaïde Labille-Guiard exhibited this life-sized *Self-Portrait with Two Pupils* at the Salon sponsored by the Parisian Royal Academy of Painting and Sculpture in 1785, she was making a daring bid for patronage.

Labille-Guiard had always had to find her own way. Even in an era when the Academy permitted four female members, her path to the prestigious body was unusual. Many professional women painters came from families of artists or artisans, but Labille-Guiard was the daughter of a shopkeeper. Her father's fashionable boutique undoubtedly sharpened her keen eye for fabrics, but provided no entrée to arts institutions. For training and connections, she turned to neighbors, learning first to paint in the traditionally "feminine" media of miniatures and pastels. Later, she studied oil painting with the Academician François-André Vincent, whom she married in 1800. They were already rumored to be lovers when she separated from her first husband in 1779.

Unlike aspiring male artists, who could prove their mettle in the Academy's schools, Labille-Guiard and other women had little choice but to climb the ranks of the art world by participating in exhibitions that operated at the margins of official sanction. Labille-Guiard first exhibited publicly in 1774, and on May 31, 1783—the same day as her better-known contemporary, Élisabeth Vigée-Lebrun—she was finally admitted to the Academy. The two debuted at the Salon amid a flurry of controversy, and were greeted by a libelous pamphlet filled with sexual and ethical innuendo. Vincent, for instance, was said to have "touched up" Labille-Guiard—referring both to her paintings and her person. Another quip punned that she had 2,000 lovers, because *vingt cents* ("20 hundreds") sounds like "Vincent." Labille-Guiard initiated legal proceedings by appealing to a well-placed patron. "One must expect to have one's talent ripped apart," she wrote in a rare extant letter, but "who can plead on behalf of women's morals?" Within days the offending pamphlets vanished from the shelves.

When Labille-Guiard sent the *Self-Portrait with Two Students* to the next Salon, she was taking a calculated risk. Although the painting's display of her skills and her body transgressed norms of female virtue, its carefully chosen iconography underscored her modesty (a bust of her father is visible in the background, next to a sculpture of a vestal virgin). She won the gamble. The painting

attracted the attention and patronage of the king's aunts, leading in turn to lucrative commissions from his brother and sister.

But her timing could hardly have been worse. As revolutionary fervor intensified, her most influential supporters became her biggest liabilities. Never one to be easily discouraged, however, she seized whatever opportunities became available.

In 1789, the Academy began debating how to contribute to the regeneration of the nation. Labille-Guiard, the only woman to enter the fray, became a lightning rod for controversy. Of the three factions that emerged, two stood opposed on almost every point: the traditionalists, who hoped to maintain the Academy's royal title and rigid hierarchy, faced off against Jacques-Louis David and his coterie, who wanted to end hierarchical distinctions and royal interference. On one matter, though, the antagonists were in near agreement: female membership should be limited, at best. The traditionalists hoped to maintain the existing cap of four, but David's "Commune" banned women completely, declaring female modesty incompatible with the "long and hard study" of art. Only the third group, the reform-minded Central Academy, adopted Labille-Guiard's proposal that unlimited numbers of women be admitted. "Every honest woman who is a true artist is a man for the Academy," they insisted. In the end, the post-revolutionary successor to the Academy admitted no women.

Politically, Labille-Guiard cast her lot with another group of moderate reformers, with the same disastrous results. At the 1791 Salon, she exhibited portraits of 14 deputies to the National Convention, 13 of whom were members of the Feuillants—a party that advocated constitutional monarchy. But that was not to be. In 1793 and 1794, many of Labille-Guiard's sitters, including several Feuillants and the king's sister, not to mention Louis XVI himself, were carted to the guillotine. On August 11, 1793, an order from the Directory of the Department of Paris required Labille-Guiard to hand over an enormous group portrait, commissioned by the king's brother, to be burned in a public bonfire.

Labille-Guiard waited out the Reign of Terror in a countryside refuge shared with Vincent and her student Marie Gabrielle Capet (seen at far right), among others. She returned to a dramatically altered Paris in 1795, and painted a handful of exquisite portraits in her final years, before dying after a long illness. Perhaps the suffering had begun much earlier, when her paintings—and her ideals—were incinerated in the name of regeneration. ▀

Laura Auricchio '90, assistant professor of art history at Parsons The New School for Design, is author of the just-published *Adélaïde Labille-Guiard: Artist in the Age of Revolution, the first study in English of the artist*.





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Adélaïde Labille-Guyard, Self-Portrait with Two Pupils, Mlle. Marie Gabrielle Capet [at right] and Mlle. Marie Marguerite Carreaux de Rosemond (1785)  
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# { Exposed }

## The Erosion of Privacy in the Internet Era

IMAGINE IF you waved to someone and, without your knowledge, a high-resolution camera took a photograph of your hand, capturing your fingerprints. You might be upset. Or—if you were visiting Disneyland, where they already make an image of your fingerprint to save you from waiting in a long line—you might find the novelty of the technology, and the immediate benefits...gratifying. The ambivalence we sometimes feel about new technologies that reveal identifiable personal information balances threats to privacy against incremental advantages. Indisputably, the trends toward miniaturization and mass-market deployment of cameras, recording devices, low-power sensors, and medical monitors of all kinds—when combined with the ability to digitally collect, store, retrieve, classify, and sort very large amounts of information—offer many benefits, but also threaten civil liberties and expectations of personal privacy. George Orwell's vision in 1984 of a future in which the government has the power to record everything seems not so farfetched. "But even Orwell did not imagine that the sensors would be things that everybody would have," says McKay professor of computer science Harry Lewis. "He foresaw the government putting the cameras on the lampposts—which we have. He didn't foresee the 14-year-old girl snapping pictures on the T. Or the fact that flash drives that are given away as party favors could carry crucial data on everybody in the country."

### It's a Smaller World

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CHANGES the accessibility and presentation of information. Lewis gives talks on the subject of privacy to alumni groups in private homes, and often begins with an example that puts his hosts on the hot seat. He projects a Google Earth view of the house, then shows the website Zillow's assessment of how much it is worth, how many bedrooms and bathrooms and square feet it has. Then he goes to fundrace.huffingtonpost.com, an interface to the Federal Elections Commission's campaign-contributions database. "Such information has always been a matter of public record," says Lewis, "but it used to be that you had to go somewhere and give the exact name and address

and they would give you back the one piece of data. Now you can just mouse over your neighborhood and little windows pop up and show how much money all the neighbors have given." In the 02138 zip code, you can see "all the Harvard faculty members who gave more than \$1,000 to Barack Obama," for example. "This seems very invasive," says Lewis, "but in fact it is the opposite of an invasion of privacy: it is something that our elected representatives decided should be public."

Technology has forced people to rethink the public/private distinction. "Now it turns out that there is private, public, and *really, really* public," Lewis says. "We've effectively said that anyone in an Internet café in Nairobi should be able to see how much our house is worth." Lewis has been blogging about such issues on the website [www.bitsbook.com](http://www.bitsbook.com), a companion to *Blown to Bits: Your Life, Liberty, and Happiness after the Digital Explosion*, the 2008 book of which he is a coauthor. "We think because we have a word for privacy that it is something we can put our arms around," he says. "But it's not."

One of the best attempts to define the full range of privacy concerns at their intersection with new technologies, "A Taxonomy of Privacy," appeared in the *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* in 2006. Its author, Daniel Solove, now a professor at George Washington University Law School, identified 16 privacy harms modulated by new technologies, including: information collection by surveillance; aggregation of information; insecurity of information; and disclosure, exposure, distortion, and increased accessibility of information.

That privacy would be a concern of the legal profession is not surprising. What is surprising is that computer scientists have been in the vanguard of those seeking ways to protect privacy, partly because they are often the first to recognize privacy problems engendered by new technologies and partly because the solutions themselves are sometimes technological. At Harvard, the Center for Research on Computation and Society (CRCS) has become a focal point for such inquiry. CRCS, which brings computer scientists together with colleagues from other schools and

by Jonathan Shaw





**Latanya Sweeney**

academic disciplines, was founded to develop new ideas and technologies for addressing some of society's most vexing problems, and prides itself on a forward-looking, integrative approach. Privacy and security have been a particular focus during the past few years.

Database linking offers one such area of concern. If you tell Latanya Sweeney, A.L.B. '95, nothing about yourself except your birth date and five-digit zip code, she'll tell you your name. If you are under the age of 30 and tell her where you were born, she can correctly predict eight or nine digits of your nine-digit Social Security number. "The main reason privacy is a growing problem is that disk storage is so cheap," says the visiting professor of computer science, technology, and policy at CRCS. "People can collect data and never throw anything away. Policies on data sharing are not very good, and the result is that data tend to flow around and get linked to other data."

Sweeney became interested in privacy issues while earning her doctorate at MIT in the mid 1990s. Massachusetts had recently made "anonymized" medical information available. Such data are invaluable for research, for setting up early infectious-disease detection systems, and other public-health uses. "There was a belief at the time that if you removed explicit identifiers—name, address, and Social Security number—you could just give the data away," she recalls. That dogma was shattered when Sweeney produced a dramatic proof to the contrary.

The medical data that had been made available included minimal demographic information: zip code, birth date, and gender, in addition to the diagnosis. So Sweeney went to the Cambridge City Hall and for \$25 purchased a voter list on two diskettes:

54,000 names. By linking the demographic information in the voter database to the demographic information in the publicly available medical records, Sweeney found that in most cases she could narrow the demographic data down to a single person, and so restore the patient's name to the record. She tried this data-linking technique for then-governor William F. Weld '66, J.D.'70. Only six people in Cambridge shared his birthday. Just three of them were men. And he was the only one who lived in the right zip code. Sweeney had reidentified someone in a putatively anonymous database of private medical information. The system had worked, yet data had leaked. Newspaper coverage of her testimony to the state legislature about what she had discovered ultimately brought a visit from the State Police. "That was my introduction to policy," she says with a laugh. (She was recently named to the privacy and security seat of the Health Information Technology policy committee in the Obama administration.)

Later, she proved that her results were not unique to Cambridge. Fully 87 percent of the United States population is uniquely identified by date of birth, five-digit zip code, and gender, she says: "So if I know only those three things about you, I can identify you by name 87 percent of the time. Pretty cool." In fact, Sweeney's ability to identify *anyone* is close to 100 percent for most U.S. zip codes—but there are some interesting exceptions. On the west side of Chicago, in the most populated zip code in the United States, there are more than 100,000 residents. Surely that should provide some anonymity. "For younger people, that's true," she says, "but if you are older, you really stand out." Another zip code skews the opposite way: it is on the Stony Brook campus of the State University of New York and includes only dormitories.

"Here is a *tiny* population," she says, pulling up a graphic on her computer. "Only 5,000 people." But because they are all college students of about the same age, "they are so homogenous...that I still can't figure out who is who."

A potentially even more serious privacy crisis looms in the way Social Security numbers (SSNs) are assigned, Sweeney says. "We are entering a situation where a huge number of people could tell me just their date of birth and hometown, and I can predict their SSN. Why is this a problem? Because in order to apply for a credit card, the key things I need are your name, your date of birth, your address, and your SSN. Who is the population at risk? Young people on Facebook."

Facebook asks for your date of birth and hometown, two pieces of information that most young people include on their pages simply because they want their friends to wish them a happy birthday. The problem is that SSNs have never been issued randomly—the first three digits are a state code, the second two are assigned by region within state—and the process is described on a public website of the Social Security Administration. Starting in 1980, when the Internal Revenue Service began requiring that children have SSNs to be claimed as dependents on their parents' tax returns, the numbers started being assigned at birth. Thus, if you know a person's date and location of birth, it becomes increasingly simple to predict the SSN.

One way or another, says Sweeney, someone is going to exploit this privacy crisis, and it "is either going to become a disaster or we'll circumvent it." (Canada and New Zealand, she notes, may have similar problems.) "But there are many easy remedies," she adds. She has proposed random assignment of SSNs from a central repository. She has also devised solutions for setting up public-health surveillance systems that don't reveal personal information, but still work as early-warning systems for infectious-disease transmission or bioterror attacks.

Sweeney believes that technological approaches to privacy problems are often better than legislative solutions, because "you don't lose the benefits of the technology." One of her current projects, for example, aims to make sure that technologies like photographic fingerprint capture are implemented in such a way that personal privacy is maintained and individuals' rights aren't exposed to abuse.

Scientists have long been excited by the possibilities of using biometric information such as fingerprints, palmprints, or iris scans for positive identification: people could use them to open their cars or their homes. But just how private are fingerprints? With a grant from the National Institutes of Justice, Sweeney and her students have shown that inexpensive digital cameras are already good enough to capture fingertip friction-ridge information at a range of two to three feet, and image resolution and capture speed are improving all the time, even as the cost of the technology keeps dropping. As a result, because it is contactless and very cheap, photographic fingerprint capture could become "the dominant way that prints are captured in a lot of public spaces," Sweeney explains. That means fingerprint databases are everywhere, and "you don't have any control over the use of those prints, if somebody wanted to make a false print, or track you. It is like walking around with your Social Security number on your forehead, to an extent. It is a little different because it isn't linked to your credit report or your credit card"—but it

does not require a tremendous leap of imagination to picture a world where credit cards require fingerprint verification.

Sweeney began working with fingerprints because of concerns that, given the huge numbers of fingerprints in linked databases, there would be false positive matches to the FBI's crime database. "To the extent that fingerprint matching has been successful, it might be because only criminals are fingerprinted and criminals tend to repeat crimes," she says. But she was "ridiculed a lot by law enforcement for making those statements," until the Madrid train bombings in 2004. When a print at the scene was falsely matched by the FBI to a lawyer in California, it became clear that the science of fingerprint matching needed to be studied more deeply. (Palmprints ultimately may have a better chance at providing a unique match.) Furthermore, Sweeney points out, "What if someone advocated replacing Social Security numbers with fingerprints? If something goes horribly wrong with my number, I can get a new one. I can't really get new fingerprints."

## A Legal Privacy Patchwork

AS THE FACEBOOK/SSN interaction and the ability to capture fingerprints with digital photography illustrate, social changes mediated by technology alter the context in which privacy is protected. But privacy laws have not kept up. The last burst of widespread public concern about privacy came in the 1970s, when minicomputers and mainframes predominated. The government was the main customer, and fear that the government would know everything about its citizens led to the passage of the Privacy Act of 1974. That law set the standard on fair information practices for ensuing legislation in Europe and Canada—but in the United States, the law was limited to circumscribing what information the *government* could collect; it didn't apply to commercial enterprises like credit-card companies. No one imagined today's situation, when you can be tracked by your cell phone, your laptop, or another wireless device. As for ATM transactions and credit-card purchases, Sweeney says "pretty much everything is being recorded on some database somewhere."

The result is that even the 1974 law has been undermined, says CRCS postdoctoral fellow Allan Friedman, because it "does not address the government *buying* information from *private* actors. This is a massive loophole, because private actors are much better at gathering information anyway."

As new privacy concerns surfaced in American life, legislators responded with a finger-in-the-dike mentality, a "patchwork" response, Friedman continues. "The great example of this is that for almost 10 years, your video-rental records had stronger privacy protection than either your financial or your medical records." The video-rental records law—passed in 1988 after a newspaper revealed Supreme Court nominee Robert Bork's rentals—was so narrowly crafted that most people think it doesn't even apply to Netflix. "Bork didn't have much to hide," Friedman says, "but clearly enough people in Congress did." Medical records were protected under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act in 1996, but financial records weren't protected until the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act of 1999. (Student records are protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, passed in 1974, while the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act, passed in 1998, prohibits the online collection of personal information from children under the age of 13.) "Legally," Friedman concludes, "pri-





Tyler Moore, left, and Allan Friedman

## Online “Trust Crimes”

THERE IS a pitched battle going on in cyberspace that pits an organized criminal ecosystem of “phishers,” “money-mules,” and “cashiers” against a jumbled array of private “take-down” firms, official domain-name registrars, and Internet service providers. As Tyler Moore, a postdoctoral fellow at Harvard’s Center for Research on Computation and Society explains in an exclusive *Harvard Magazine* Web Extra, the bad guys take over personal computers not for their information, but for their processing power, using “botnets” to stage “fast-flux” attacks that conceal their identity even as they steal the keys to their victims’ bank accounts.



Visit [harvardmag.com/extras](http://harvardmag.com/extras) to read more about phishing.

vacancy in this country is a mishmash based on the common-law tradition. We don’t have a blanket regulation to grant us protection,” as Europe does.

## The End of Anonymity

FRIEDMAN CO-TOUGHT a new undergraduate course on the subject of privacy last year; it covered topics ranging from public policy and research ethics to wiretapping and database anonymity. “If there is a unified way to think about what digital systems have done to privacy,” he says, it is that they collapse contexts: social, spatial, temporal, and financial. “If I pay my credit-card bill late, I understand the idea that it will affect a future credit-card decision,” he explains. “But I don’t want to live in a society where I have to think, ‘Well, if I use my card in this establishment, that

will change my creditworthiness in the future’”—a reference to a recent *New York Times Magazine* story, “What Does Your Credit-Card Company Know about You?” It reported that a Canadian credit-card issuer had discovered that people who used their card in a particular pool hall in Montreal, for example, had a 47 percent chance of missing four payments during the subsequent 12 months, whereas people who bought birdseed or anti-scoff felt pads for the legs of their furniture almost never missed payments. These disaggregated bits of information turn out to be better predictors of creditworthiness than traditional measures, but their use raises concerns, Friedman points out: “We don’t know how our information is being used to make decisions about us.”

Take the case of someone with a venereal disease who doesn’t want the people in his social network to know. “If I go to the hospital and the nurse who sees me happens to live down the street,” says Friedman, “maybe I don’t want her peeking at my medical records.” That particular threat has always been there in charts, he notes, but problems like this scale up dramatically with online systems. Now the nurse could check the records of everyone on her street during a coffee break. He cites a related example: “Massachusetts has a single State Police records system and there have been tens of thousands of lookups for Tom Brady and other local sports stars.” Unlike celebrities, ordinary people have not had to worry about such invasions of privacy in the past, but now computers can be used to find needles in haystacks—virtually every time. There are nearly seven billion people on the planet: a big number for a human brain, but a small number for a computer to scan. “John Smith is fairly safe,” says Friedman, “unless you know something critical about John Smith, and then all of a sudden, it is easy to find him.”

Digital systems have virtually eliminated a simple privacy that many people take for granted in daily life: the idea that there can be anonymity in a crowd. Computer scientists often refer to a corollary of this idea: security through obscurity. "If you live in a house, you might leave your door unlocked," Friedman says. "The chances that someone is going to try your front door are fairly small. But I think you have to lock your door if you live in an apartment building. What digital systems do is allow someone to pry and test things very cheaply. And they can test a lot of doors."

He notes that computers running the first version of Windows XP will be discovered *and* hacked, on average, in less than four minutes, enabling the criminal to take control of the system without the owner's consent or knowledge (see online Extra at [www.harvardmagazine.com](http://www.harvardmagazine.com)). Botnets—networks of machines that have been taken over—find vulnerable systems through brute force, by testing every address on the Internet, a sobering measure of the scale of such attacks. (Another measure: the CEO of AT&T recently testified before Congress that Internet crime costs an estimated \$1 trillion annually. That is clearly an overestimate, says Friedman, but nobody knows how much Internet crime actually *does* cost, because there are no disclosure requirements for online losses, even in the banking industry.)

The durability of data represents another kind of contextual collapse. "Knowing whether something is harmful now versus whether it will be harmful in the future is tricky," Friedman notes. "A canonical example occurred in the 1930s, when intellectuals in some circles might have been expected to attend socialist gatherings. Twenty years later," during the McCarthy era, "this was a bad piece of information to have floating around." Friedman wonders what will happen when young bloggers with outspoken opinions today start running for political office. How will their earlier words be used against them? Will they be allowed to change their minds?

Because personal information is everywhere, inevitably it leaks. Friedman cites the research of former CRCS fellow Simson Garfinkel, now an associate of the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences and associate professor at the Naval Postgraduate School, who reported in 2003 that fully one-third of 1,000 used hard drives he had purchased on eBay and at swap meets still contained sensitive financial information. One that had been part of an ATM machine was loaded with thousands of credit-card numbers, as was another that a supermarket had used to transmit credit-card payments to its bank. Neither had been properly "wiped" of its data.

Data insecurity is not just accidental, however. Most Web-based data transmitted over wireless networks is sent "in the clear," unencrypted. Anyone using the same network can intercept and read it. (Google is the only major Web-based e-mail provider that offers encryption, but as of this writing, users must hunt for the option to turn it on.) Harry Lewis smiled at the naiveté of the question when asked what software the laptop used to write this article would need to intercept e-mails or other information at a Starbucks, for example. "Your computer is all set up to do it, and there are a million free 'packet sniffers' you can download to make it easy," he said. And the risk that somebody might detect this illegal surveillance? "Zero, unless somebody looks at your screen and sees what you are doing," because the packet sniffers passively record airborne data, giving out no signals of their presence.

Civil libertarians are more concerned that the government can easily access electronic communications because the data are centralized, passing through a relatively few servers owned by companies that can legally be forced to allow surveillance without public disclosure. Noting that the conversation tends to end whenever privacy is pitted against national-security interests, Friedman nevertheless asks, "Do we want to live in a society where the government can—regardless of whether they use the power or not—have access to all of our communications? So that they can, if they feel the need, drill down and find us?"

## Social Changes

PARALLELING CHANGES in the way digital systems compromise our security are the evolving social changes in attitudes toward privacy. How much do we really value it? As Lewis points out, "We'll give away data on our purchasing habits for a 10-cent discount on a bag of potato chips." But mostly, he says, "people don't really know what they want. They'll say one thing and then do something else."

Noting young people's willingness to post all kinds of personal information on social networking sites such as Facebook—including photographs that might compromise them later—some commentators have wondered if there has been a generational shift in attitudes towards privacy. In "Say Everything," a February 2007 *New York Magazine* article, author Emily Nussbaum noted:

Younger people...are the only ones for whom it seems to have sunk in that the idea of a truly private life is already an illusion. Every street in New York has a surveillance camera. Each time you swipe your debit card at Duane Reed or use your MetroCard, that transaction is tracked. Your employer owns your e-mails. The NSA owns your phone calls. Your life is being lived in public whether you choose to acknowledge it or not.... So it may be time to consider the possibility that young people who behave as if privacy doesn't exist are actually the sane people, not the insane ones.

Some bloggers, noting that our hunter-gatherer ancestors would have lived communally, have even suggested that privacy may be an anomalous notion, a relatively recent historical invention that might again disappear. "My response to that," says Lewis, "is that, yes, it happened during the same few years in history that are associated with the whole development of individual rights, the empowerment of individuals, and the rights of the individual against government authorities. That is a notion that is tied up, I think, with the notion of a right to privacy. So it is worrisome to me."

Nor is it the case that young people don't care about privacy, says danah boyd, a fellow at the Law School's Berkman Center for Internet and Society who studies how youth engage with social media. "Young people care deeply about privacy, but it is a question of control, not what information gets out there," she explains. "For a lot of teenagers, the home has never been a private place. They feel they have more control on a service like Facebook or MySpace than they do at home."

She calls this not a generational difference, but a life-stage difference. Adults, boyd says, understand context in terms of physical space. They may go out to a pub on Friday night with friends, but not with their boss. For young people, online contexts come just as naturally, and many, she has found, actually share their social network passwords with other friends as a token of trust





Harry Lewis

or intimacy (hence the analogy to a safe space like a pub).

Teens *do* realize that someone other than their friends may access this personal information. “They understand the collapse of social context, but may decide that status among their peers is more important,” she notes. “But do they understand that things like birth dates can be used by entities beyond their visibility? No. Most of them are barely aware that they have a Social Security number. But should they be the ones trying to figure this out, or do we really need to rethink our privacy structures around our identity information and our financial information?”

“My guess,” boyd continues, “is that the kinds of systems we have set up—which assume a certain kind of obscurity of basic data—won’t hold going into the future. We need to rethink how we do identity assessment for credit cards and bank accounts and all of that, and then to try to convince people not to give out their birth dates.”

Friedman agrees that financial information needs to be handled differently. Why, he asks, is a credit record always open for a new line of credit by default, enabling fraud to happen at any time? “Is it because the company that maintains the record gets a fee for each credit check?” (Security freezes on a person’s credit report are put in place only *ex post facto* in cases of identity theft at the request of the victim.) Friedman believes that the best way to fight widespread distribution and dissemination of personal information is with better transparency, because that affords individuals and policymakers a better understanding of the risks involved.

“You don’t necessarily want to massively restrict information-sharing, because a lot of it is voluntary and beneficial,” he explains. Privacy, in the simplest of terms, is about *context* of in-

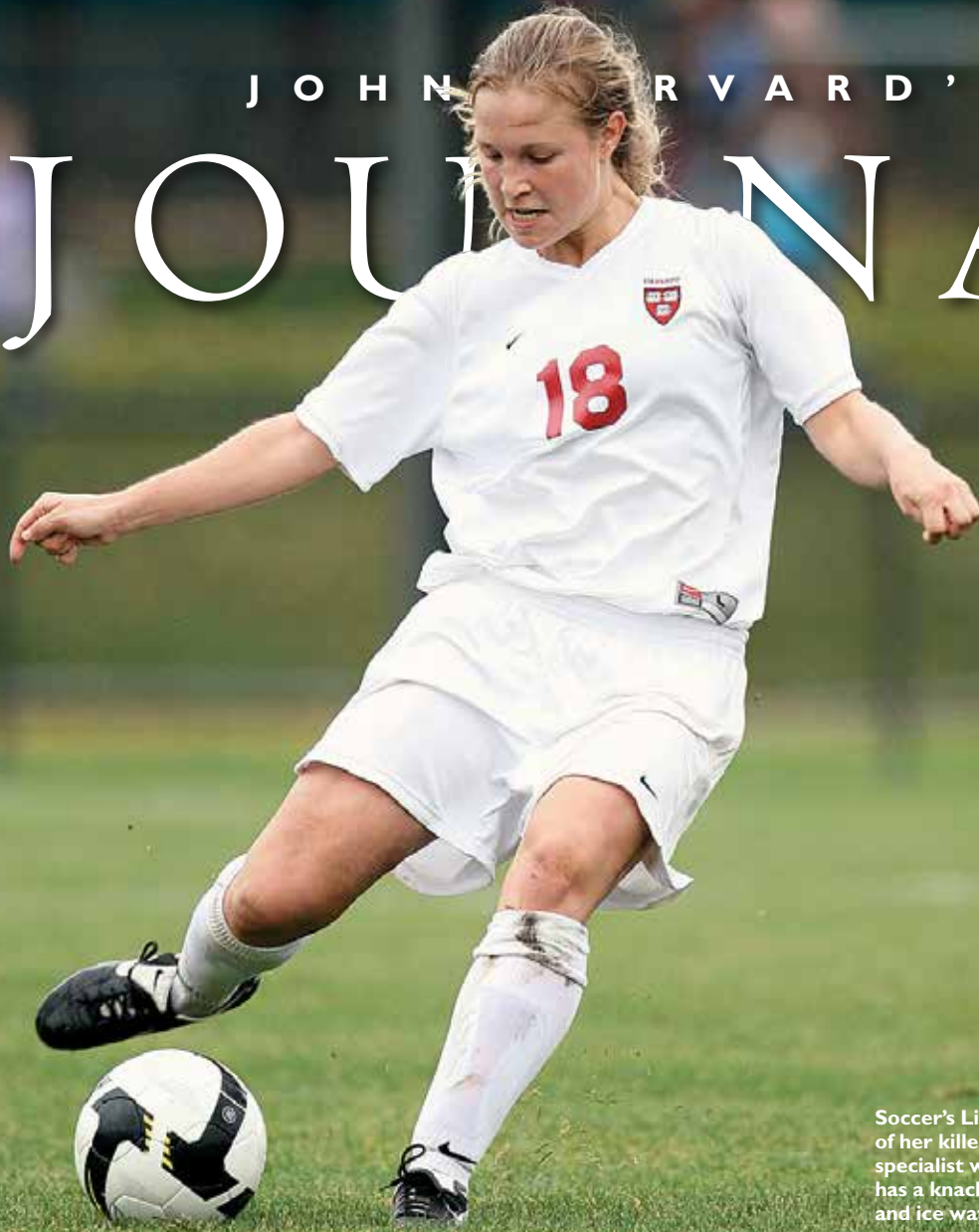
formation sharing, rather than *control* of information sharing: “It is about allowing me to determine what kind of environment I am in, allowing me to feel confident in expressing myself in that domain, without having it spill over into another. That encompasses everything from giving my credit-card number to a company—and expecting them to use it securely and for the intended purpose only—to Facebook and people learning not to put drunk pictures of themselves online.” Some of this will have to be done through user empowerment—giving users better tools—and some through regulation. “We do need to revisit the Privacy Act of 1974,” he says. “We do need to have more information about who has information about us and who is buying that information, even if we don’t have control.”

There is always the possibility that we will decide as a society not to support privacy. Harry Lewis believes that would be society’s loss. “I think ultimately what you lose is the development of individual identity,” he says. “The more we are constantly exposed from a very young age to peer and other social pressure for our slightly aberrant behaviors, the more we tend to force ourselves, or have our parents force us, into social conformity. So the loss of privacy is kind of a regressive force. Lots of social progress has been made because a few people tried things under circumstances where they could control who knew about them, and then those communities expanded, and those new things became generally accepted, often not without a fight. With the loss of privacy, there is some threat to that spirit of human progress through social experimentation.”



Jonathan Shaw ’89 is managing editor of this magazine.

# JOHN HARVARD'S JOURNAL



Soccer's Lizzy Nichols '10 uncorking one of her killer kicks. Though she's a defensive specialist who plays center back, Nichols has a knack for free kicks and penalty kicks, and ice water in her veins. See page 56.

## Finding a New Footing

ALTHOUGH SUMMER provided a break from a financial *annus horribilis*, Harvard continued to grapple with the fallout from the projected 30 percent decline in the value of its endowment assets—and the resulting need to “do business differently,” as President Drew Faust put it (see “Still Harvard,” opposite).

Beginning in late June, the University laid off personnel. Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) working groups set about devising the changes required to put the school on a new financial footing. And publications from *Barron's* to *Vanity Fair* focused attention on Harvard's and other schools' endowments, a reminder that

the institutions remain under heightened scrutiny—and that the investment losses and scenarios for recovery now being quantified remain critical to their future. (For background, see “‘Resizing,’ before ‘Reshaping,’” July-August, page 51, and the financial news archived at [www.harvard-magazine.com](http://www.harvard-magazine.com).)

THE WORKFORCE. Wages, salaries, and benefits account for 48 percent of Harvard's expenses. Nonunion salaries have been frozen and 531 staff members took an early-retirement incentive during the spring (see “Looming Layoffs,” July-August, page 56). But a June 23 community e-mail from Faust noted, “[W]e nevertheless have more we must do.” That introduced the layoff of 275

staff members, and a reduction in hours for 40 others—predominantly from the ranks of administrative, professional, clerical, and technical employees.

Some of the individual schools' decisions illuminated their differing financial circumstances. The Harvard School of Public Health was able to avoid layoffs. (It is the unit least reliant on endowment distributions, just 13 percent of revenues in fiscal year 2008, and most dependent on sponsored-research funding, 73 percent of revenues.) So was the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences.

Harvard Business School (HBS) derived only about 20 percent of its revenues from endowment distributions in fiscal year 2008—and has benefited from a capital



## “Still Harvard”

**“We are on it,”** President Drew Faust said of the University’s financial situation during a July conversation in her office at Massachusetts Hall. And she said, with equal emphasis, “Harvard is still Harvard.” Those twin messages neatly framed her first two years in office.

Of the budgetary pressures induced by the projected 30 percent decline in the value of endowment assets for the fiscal year ended June 30, she said, the University had been managing the situation actively since last fall. The forecast of investment losses had held steady, she noted. (Other institutions have had to revise estimates, progressively expecting larger losses and budget adjustments.)

In response, Harvard moved to enhance its liquidity [notably, as previously reported, by refinancing \$1 billion of debt and borrowing an additional \$1.5 billion last December, in part to restructure interest-rate swaps on which the University faced large losses], and, Faust said, to address its “workforce costs.” The latter measures have included freezing nonunion salaries, voluntary retirement incentives for staff, and—in June—layoffs. (Following 531 early retirements, 275 layoffs, and other departures, the population of nonfaculty staff in the schools—12,950 full-time equivalents as of last October—may have declined to around the 12,130 employees of October 2005. In June 2005, the endowment had been valued at \$25.9 billion, or somewhat above its estimated current level.)

As the schools pursue their separate fiscal challenges, Faust said, the central administration is examining broadly how Harvard could “do business differently,” maximizing cooperation and collaboration in pursuit of its academic mission. She cited a task force that is exploring how Harvard’s libraries (91 at last count) could enhance collecting and access to information while controlling operating costs. Similarly, she said, capital planning for construction projects will be consolidated by combining the Allston Development Group and the University planning staff, and coordinating those efforts with the Faculty of Arts and Sciences’ real-estate organization. (Harvard and FAS face huge projects such as the renovation of the Fogg Art Museum and the multiyear, billion-dollar-plus renovation of the undergraduate Houses.)

Faust said such necessary steps, although impelled by financial pressure, were consistent with her aim from the outset of her presidency to “get Harvard to work better”: harnessing its strengths to enhance teaching, learning, and research.



Drew Faust

In that vein, she cited examples of intellectual momentum: the College’s new general-education curriculum, finally launching this academic year; the revitalized global-health initiative, bringing together faculty members from the public-health and medical schools, of course, but also many other professors—and extending to freshmen seminars, undergraduate courses, and student research opportunities and foreign experiences; and a course last spring on consumer finance, jointly taught by Reid professor of law Howell Jackson and Coleman professor of financial management Peter Tufano. (Despite the obstacles of separate campuses and unaligned calendars, Jackson reported, 60 upper-level students got a multidisciplinary perspective on pressing regulatory and business issues.) The goal, Faust said, is to enable such interactions without the interfering “tariffs and tolls” that have hampered interfaculty collaborations.

Challenges remain, of course. For instance, FAS—about 60 percent reliant on the endowment for funding and already operating at a deficit—has much work yet to do to adjust to a leaner era, especially after recent large growth in its “faculty and footprint.” A faculty-retirement incentive and other measures may be in the offing.

But in the present circumstances, Faust recalled telling her deans last winter, “Yes, here we are in a world we never anticipated. But what we do *matters*” to the institution’s future. It will be the collective responsibility of Harvard’s leaders, she said, to see to the “harnessing of our extraordinary resources...in a more integrated way,” to address teaching and find solutions to daunting social problems, from global health to the vexing intersection of energy and the environment.

campaign, concluded in 2005, that raised more than \$600 million. But income from business executive-education programs and its large publishing operation is under pressure from the recession. HBS laid off 16 staff members, but its downsizing is much larger. Combining the 42 people who accepted early retirement with the layoffs and other attrition, the school trimmed its staff of 1,187 (excluding faculty members)

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## The Endowment Manager's Perspective

*Editor's note: Harvard Management Company (HMC) will report investment results for fiscal year 2009 in mid September (see [www.harvard-magazine.com](http://www.harvard-magazine.com) and the November-December issue for reports). Given widespread interest in the endowment, the magazine asked HMC president Jane Mendillo to comment now on recent developments. Her response follows.*

**During** the first four months of the fiscal year that began on July 1, 2008—when I joined HMC as CEO—virtually every market underwent sharp losses. Domestic and international equities, emerging markets and commodities—all decreased 25 percent to 45 percent within weeks.

These unprecedented losses, and the continuing extraordinary market conditions, affected Harvard's endowment—and those of every other major university. We expect that when our audited results are reported in September, we will come close to the 30 percent investment losses the University projected in December. Nonetheless, Harvard's endowment remains significantly larger than any other university's, and certainly better off than if we had pursued a more conservative investment strategy.

Indeed, Harvard has enjoyed a 14.6 percent annual average return on endowment investments during the 30-year period ended June 30, 2008, and a return of 13.8 percent annualized during the last 10 years. By comparison, the median fund (from a universe of 151 funds with assets of more than \$1 billion) had an average annual return of 6.1 percent during those 10 years.

Managing the Harvard portfolio through the unforeseen and unprecedented market turmoil of the last 12 months has obviously been challenging, but it has also provided us with an opportunity to begin to position HMC and the endowment in new ways.

First, we have critically reviewed our mix of investments and supporting activities, and have adjusted our investment strategies and our organization. This has allowed us to take advantage of the investment windows that we anticipated would emerge when the world economies eventually stabilized. We began immediately to gather the resources to do so.

Second, we moved quickly to “break down the walls” between some of the asset classes within which we traditionally operated. During my 15 years as a senior investment professional at HMC, and subsequently while I managed Wellesley's endowment, I had seen the power of adding lesser-known strategies, like investing in natural resources, to the mix.

While our long-term goal is to seek substantial growth while managing risk in order to allow the University to spend and maintain the purchasing power of the endowment over time, we have



Jane Mendillo

responded to short-term pressure and opportunities with intensity and action.

Building on HMC's unusual expertise in real-asset investments (timberland, agriculture, and real estate), we have hired an experienced new leader for our real estate team and explored adding new strategies in natural resources. We have added strength and depth to our exceptionally talented team managing fixed-income and equity-arbitrage assets within HMC. We have changed our traditional 5 percent negative allocation to

cash to a position that is cash positive. As a result, we are now poised to quickly pursue what will undoubtedly be attractive investment opportunities coming out of these difficult times, while also providing the resources necessary to meet the University's short-term needs.

HMC continues to pursue its unique hybrid model, employing a mix of internal and external investment-management teams that focus on specific investment arenas, providing depth and breadth to our market perspectives. Our externally managed assets—overseen by a staff of specialists in private equity, real estate, hedge funds, and more liquid public markets—provide us with an unparalleled breadth of expertise and exposure. Our internal team, responsible for investing approximately 30 percent of the assets, is constantly attuned and responsive to changing market conditions, and allows us to be unusually nimble. Internal management is also extremely cost-effective compared to employing outside managers for similar asset pools with similar results.

These best-in-class strategies, coupled with sound portfolio construction and rigorous risk management, will yield long-term results that enable Harvard to pursue its many goals.

Even during this past year, Harvard has performed remarkably well in certain areas: our international fixed-income team, for example, had an extraordinary year. We also earned significant positive returns through active management of our portfolio hedges. And importantly, we have taken action across the portfolio to reduce leverage and increase financial flexibility.

Realistically, it may take many years to regain all of the market value lost as a result of the global economic crisis, but we have ample cause for optimism. While navigating last year's storm, we have strengthened our investment team and positioned HMC and the Harvard endowment to benefit from the growth that will occur as the economy rebounds.



by 80 full-time equivalents, and reduced its contractors and temporary workers by another 50 equivalent positions: a 130-person decline.

Harvard Law School (HLS), which relied on endowment distributions for 37 percent of its fiscal year 2008 revenue (about 3 percentage points above the University average)—and itself celebrated a \$476-million capital campaign just last fall—laid off 12 staff members. Together with 25 early retirements, elimination of current vacancies, and ending of limited-term appointments, HLS expected its staff to decline by nearly 10 percent. Endowment distributions to the school are now forecast to decline as much as \$19 million from the level in the fiscal year that ended this past June 30—more than 10 percent of the current operating budget.

As expected, the cuts fell most heavily upon FAS, which had already absorbed 156 early retirements: 77 staff positions were eliminated, and 15 other workers had their hours reduced. Humanities professors particularly lamented job losses within the Harvard College Library: from an average of some 550 full- and part-time employees,

52 took early retirement, “more than 20” were laid off, and several others had their hours reduced.

**FAS RESTRUCTURING.** Dean Michael D. Smith announced in April that he would appoint working groups to address the “reshaping” required to align the faculty’s operations with its reduced resources.

After cutting costs by \$77 million, FAS still faces a budget gap of up to \$143 million in the 2010-2011 academic year. That is more than 20 percent of its expected expenses this year after excluding about \$425 million budgeted for undergraduate financial aid, debt service, and sponsored research. (FAS derived 52 percent of its revenues from endowment distributions in fiscal year 2008, and a higher proportion in the year just ended. It had expected that to grow by \$100 million this year; instead, it faces a \$50-million reduction—and a further, likely larger cut next year.)

The working groups have now been selected and charged with “embarking on a process to prioritize [FAS’s] academic and intellectual activities to guide further budget reductions and to reshape its programs

to be sustainable over the long term” (for the full membership rosters, see [www.fas.harvard.edu/home/planning/p/groups.html](http://www.fas.harvard.edu/home/planning/p/groups.html)). Separate groups are examining College student services, College academic life, arts and humanities, sciences, social sciences, and engineering and applied sciences. All six interact with the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, whose activities overlap all FAS teaching and research.

In a late-July conversation at University Hall, Smith emphasized the groups’ mandate to “understand what’s core in our different areas” so that “we don’t go backwards on any core functions” as FAS restructures. Although each area is “framed” by financial parameters, he stressed that the groups’ work is driven “intellectually, first and foremost.” They were expected to analyze data during the summer; advance recommendations for community discussion during the fall term; and work with Smith, other deans, and senior administrators through December to prepare plans for the fiscal

## Extension School Centennial

**When John Lowell Jr.** endowed a series of public lectures in his will in 1835, he stipulated that the Boston-based courses would cost no more than “the value of two bushels of wheat.” This provision is no longer strictly observed by the Harvard Extension School, but its official shield features two baskets filled with golden stalks.

In *“The Gates Unbarred”: A History of University Extension at Harvard, 1910-2009*, Michael Shinagel, dean of continuing education and University extension, emphasizes his school’s long-standing focus on accessibility—even changing his original title, *Harvard After Dark*, to better underscore this theme. He settled instead on *“The Gates Unbarred,”* a phrase borrowed from “Villanelle for an Anniversary,” a poem written by Nobel laureate and then Boylston professor of rhetoric Seamus Heaney for Harvard’s

sesquicentennial in 1986, because of the way it aptly captures the school’s tradition of open instruction.

Publication of the 247-page volume coincides with the centennial celebration of the Extension School, taking place during the 2009-10 academic year. Beginning with a short biography of John Lowell Jr. himself, *“The Gates Unbarred”* traces the evolution of the institution, highlighting key figures and detailing the implementation of new programs and degrees. Shinagel illuminates some particularly interesting chapters in the school’s history, including the development of television courses for navy submarine crews in the 1960s. He also reflects on unsuccessful ventures, mainly the Indian Computer Academy in Bangalore (Harvard withdrew from the project within two years due to financial management problems). More recently, the Extension School has done pioneering work in improving and expanding distance education, and Shinagel outlines the technological innovations that have attracted remote learners seeking online course offerings. His final chapters intersperse history with vignettes about notable Extension alumni.

As a whole, the volume serves as a valuable source of information about an institution dedicated to accessible education and lifelong learning—as its nearly 14,000 students, more than 600 courses, and 605 degrees conferred last Commencement day amply demonstrate.

—KRYSTEN A. KECES

**A. Lawrence Lowell,** president when the Extension School was founded



**Leonard Evenchik** discusses production of distance-education videos in 2008.

## H A R V A R D P O R T R A I T



## Federico Cortese

**"I don't believe classical music is dying,"** says Federico Cortese, the new conductor of the Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra, "but I do believe there is a risk of becoming too aloof from the rest of the world." Since 1999, as director of the Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras, he has relished that "refreshing, exciting, energetic, rewarding" work with young people, who nicknamed him "the Fed." Cortese has also conducted all over the world. As assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra under Seiji Ozawa from 1998 until 2002, he once, on short notice, directed Beethoven's Ninth for more than 100,000 people on Boston Common. Of Neapolitan extraction, Cortese grew up in Rome in a cultured family: his father is a professor of medieval history and law, his mother an antiques expert. At age five, Cortese joined a boys' choir, then learned recorder, flute, piano, and oboe, training at the Conservatorio di Santa Cecilia in Rome, where he also studied voice, composition, and conducting. From 17 to 23, he sang early music as a professional baritone and countertenor who could also sing tenor parts, a rarity. He later studied conducting at the Hochschule für Musik in Vienna, and also learned over the years from several great maestros: Herbert von Karajan, for example, granted him full access for two years to all Salzburg Festival rehearsals and performances. "Conducting," Cortese says, "is something you learn through osmosis." Important challenges, he feels, are connecting music with the larger intellectual environment and "getting the sounds you want from an orchestra," he says, smiling. "You know, it's not a computer."

year 2011 budget, to be drawn up then.

Smith described other initiatives under way across FAS to improve operations. These include partnering with the central administration on real-estate project planning and management; pursuing efficiencies in how the libraries work, within FAS and across Harvard; and strengthening information systems and technology—in part to realize savings already identified in the faculty's announced cost reductions. Given that most major building projects are in abeyance University-wide, Smith said, FAS's chief capital concern now was being "much more careful" to assure that before any faculty search proceeds, physical requirements (to fit up a scientist's laboratory, for instance) could be accommodated—preferably in existing space or with modest renovations. And he said analysis continued on the "complicated" issue of whether an effective faculty retirement-incentive program could be designed and financed.

Looking ahead, Smith noted that even as FAS focused principally on priority-setting, it continues to make progress on relatively inexpensive academic goals: creating courses for the new undergraduate General Education curriculum launching this term, for example, and assuring that junior faculty members have the support they need to pursue their research and develop professionally.

Balancing FAS's daunting fiscal constraints and its aspirations will likely be important themes of the dean's annual report, covering the past two years, and his forward-looking letter to the faculty, both expected in early autumn. In discussing the challenges with alumni, Smith said, he has taken heart from their reaction: "Nobody likes to see us struggling. They've been extremely supportive of what we're trying to accomplish."

**THE ENDOWMENT.** "The Big Squeeze," the cover story in the June 29 issue of *Barron's*, the financial weekly, detailed the extent to which the endowments of Harvard, Yale, Stanford, and Princeton are invested in relatively illiquid assets (private equity, hedge funds, real estate, commodities), and offered sobering estimates of their likely depreciation.

Reporter Andrew Bary then calculated the extent to which each institution has made commitments, through its invest-



ment partnerships, to advance funds in the future to the respective managing partners for those assets. He figured that Harvard has \$11 billion of future commitments to such partnerships (extending over the next decade; see “Leverage and Liquidity,” July-August, page 52), and an endowment now valued at \$25 billion. Bary reported that Yale has \$8.7 billion of future commitments, and Princeton \$6.1 billion—looming larger in relation to their current endowments’ values than is the case at Harvard. (Stanford’s future commitments were not disclosed.) His forecast: “The brutal market of the past year could mark the end of the alternative-investment boom,” as endowment managers “move back toward the traditional stocks and bonds that once were staples of their investment portfolios.”

The August *Vanity Fair*, released on July 1, covered some of these topics, more colorfully, in Nina Munk’s long article “Rich Harvard, Poor Harvard.” It chronicles what Munk termed “overbuilding,” “extravagance,” “flawed investment decisions,” and an atmosphere of “recriminations and backbiting” at a time when “Harvard is in trouble, and no one can decide who’s to blame, or what to do next.”

The guilty pleasure of reading such retrospectives aside, they prompt some observations about the endowment past and present, and key questions about its future—and the resulting constraints on the University.

First, Harvard Management Company’s (HMC) diversified portfolio, with its significant use of alternative assets, has long yielded high returns (see “The Endowment Manager’s Perspective,” page 46, for some of the data)—outpacing gains from conventional stock and bond investments, and weathering the shock losses of the past 12 months better than many other investments.

Earlier this decade, as the endowment grew rapidly and as alternative-investment options proliferated, HMC’s appetite appears to have increased. In part as HMC professionals left to set up their own firms, the share of endowment assets managed in-house declined from 70 percent to 30 percent. According to University finan-

## For the Joy of It

celebrated its bicentennial. It could claim to be the oldest orchestra in America: relative newcomers like the New York Philharmonic (1842), Boston Symphony Orchestra (1881), and Philadelphia Orchestra (1900) arrived decades later (see “Two Centuries of Sound,” May-June 2008, page 23). But in its early years, the Pierian Sodality, named for the mythical spring that gave Greek gods musical inspiration, was simply a loose collection of students who liked to play music together. One of their most pleasant pastimes was serenading young ladies. On the night of June 22, 1820, for example, they “...serenaded almost every pretty girl in Boston...and returned to Cambridge at day break on the 23rd.”

This detail appears in a graceful, profusely illustrated, and highly readable history of the HRO, *For the Joy of It*, recently published by the Pierian Foundation (copies are available from a foundation director, Christine Balko Slywotzky, at [cbslywotzky@yahoo.com](mailto:cbslywotzky@yahoo.com)).

Mixing history and anecdote, the 76-page volume narrates the evolution of that small cadre of musicians (whose number shrank in 1832 to only one, Henry Gassett of the class of 1834, a flutist—and soloist) into a full-scale orchestra that has played in Berlin and Moscow and toured Taiwan, Korea, and Japan, among other foreign travels. *For the Joy of It* traces the growth of the orchestra through its various phases and conductors, and provides a charming account of a long, adventurous voyage conducted on waves of sound.



In 1871, the Pierian Sodality, 16 strong, posed with their instruments.

area, and Japan, among other foreign travels. *For the Joy of It* traces the growth of the orchestra through its various phases and conductors, and provides a charming account of a long, adventurous voyage conducted on waves of sound.

cial statements, the endowment was valued at \$25.9 billion at the end of fiscal year 2005, and future commitments to investment partnerships during the ensuing decade totaled \$3.4 billion. Shortly thereafter, HMC president and CEO Jack Meyer and the large fixed-income team departed to form their own firm. The multibillion-dollar pool of assets they had managed was temporarily parked in cash instruments—and then, apparently, rapidly redeployed, consistent with the strategies put in place by Meyer’s successor, Mohamed El-Erian (who in turn returned to his private firm in late 2007). In the following fiscal years, the University reported these endowment values and future commitments, respectively:

2006: \$29.2 billion and \$7.2 billion

2007: \$34.9 billion and \$8.2 billion

2008: \$36.9 billion and \$11 billion

Thus, as the endowment value grew 42 percent from fiscal year-end 2005, future commitments to asset-management part-

ners more than tripled. The challenges are now twofold: funding those commitments when liquid resources are limited (in part because past investments are not generating significant cash distributions to Harvard and other limited partners); and determining whether new investments will now earn the returns anticipated when the commitments were made.

Whatever decisions were made then—and no Harvard leaders are dwelling publicly on the past—the endowment managers and the University, of necessity, are pursuing different courses today. HMC will report its results for fiscal year 2009 in mid September. The endowment overall should be more liquid, but the proportional weighting of certain illiquid assets could increase, depending in part on sales, purchases, and performance throughout the portfolio. (In addition to president and CEO Jane Mendillo’s comments on page 46, she hinted about changes in a May interview with the *Gazette*; see [www.news.harvard.edu](http://www.news.harvard.edu).)

harvard.edu/gazette/2009/05.28/mendillo.html). Over time, there may be measurable changes in the “policy portfolio,” HMC’s model for allocating investments among asset classes.

But it would be surprising to see HMC abandon the strategies that proved successful in the past. For one thing, as Mendillo told the *Gazette*, “I expect we’ll see some interesting opportunities across the board, for example in real assets—real estate and natural resources—where we are uniquely positioned, given our experienced and pioneering teams,” whose professional ranks have in fact been bolstered by recent hirings. For another, the prices of such assets have declined, as have borrowing costs, making the potential returns on new investments much more attractive than at this time last year. The huge California Public Employees’ Retirement System has indicated that it would increase its use of private-equity and hedge funds, commodities, real estate, and other assets, for just these reasons.

In the very near term, legacy investments in real estate, some commodities, and private equity may hold returns on the endowment below HMC’s long-term goal of 8.25 percent annual gains. And

therein is the continuing challenge to the University’s budgets.

Reducing endowment distributions by 8 percent this year and a similar amount next year necessarily means cutting spending much less, and much less rapidly, than the value of the investments themselves sank last fiscal year. Arithmetically, that pushes the rate of distribution up—to a forecast level above 6 percent this year. If endowment returns are lower than that, its value would decline further during the year in nominal terms (absent any gifts received), and even further accounting for inflation.

So far, Harvard officials have not detailed their long-term assumptions about endowment returns, distributions, and values. But Stanford offers a useful analogy. In a presentation to his academic council in late April, President John Hennessey forecast that if spending were not reduced, assuming 3 percent inflation (below historical experience) and 8 percent investment returns for the next five years and 10 percent after that, it would take more than 30 years for the Cardinal’s endowment to recover to its mid 2008 peak; substantial endowment gifts might cut the recovery period in half. Those trends underlay Stanford’s

decision to cut endowment spending (30 percent of revenues) more sharply than Harvard plans to do—10 percent this year and a further 15 percent next—in the hope of beginning to increase the payout again three or four years hence.

It is reasonable to assume that under similar economic and investment conditions, given Harvard’s finances—and the pressure to reduce the payout rate toward a more normal range of 5 percent or so—the beginning of any recovery in endowment distributions here lies at least that far in the future.

THE RECESSION may be abating, and the financial-market chaos that punctuated it diminishing in effect. But the University’s adjustments have only begun. Income from the endowment remains a critical source of revenue. HMC’s experts have to balance new assessments of risk and demands for liquidity against promising investment opportunities—all while watching an uncertain economic environment. And Harvard’s academic leaders face a protracted effort to reduce continuing costs, to find new sources of revenue for immediate needs, and, somehow, to invest in the most compelling

## Last Chapter

The display room of Harvard University Press (HUP)—a fixture in the Holyoke Center arcade since 1966—and before that, on Dunster Street since 1948—closed on June 17. The proximate cause was the decision by two of the three employees, manager Jeff S. Flemming ’73 and Marygail Parker, to accept the University’s early-retirement program; their third colleague, Barry Duncan, was among the Press staffers laid off. The staffing transition came at a time when book sales have declined (in common with retail sales generally)—putting pressure on the Press, which operated the display room more as a customer service and a publicity venue than as a money-making venture. (Longer term, of course, book sales have also increasingly migrated to electronic outlets; Amazon is HUP’s largest customer.)

The books themselves remain readily available, and HUP’s list can be browsed comprehensively at its website, [www.hup.harvard.edu](http://www.hup.harvard.edu). What is lost, however, is the overwhelming visual impression of the whole Loeb Classical Library in its green (Greek) and red (Latin) cases and dust jackets, and the nearby bright blue of the newcomer, the I Tatti Renaissance Library. It becomes more difficult to assemble, at a glance, the depth of the works published

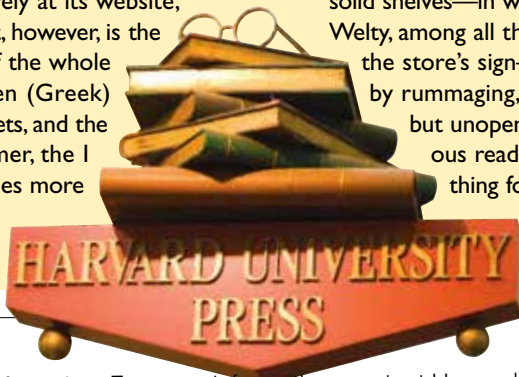


Parker, Flemming, and Duncan ran a sophisticated bookstore in the heart of the Square.

in Slavic studies, or in higher education, or music, or landscape architecture. This was a sturdy place—brick floors, concrete ceiling, solid shelves—in which to encounter Igor Stravinsky and Eudora Welty, among all the scholarly volumes. Above all, as showed by the store’s sign—a stack of books disordered by rummaging, rather than positioned neatly but unopened—it was a place about serious reading and publishing: a very good thing for a university-press bookstore embedded in the center of Harvard’s campus.



Visit [harvardmag.com/extras](http://harvardmag.com/extras) to see photos from HUP display room history.





opportunities to advance knowledge and learning. It is the most delicate of balancing acts where, as President Faust told her deans, “What we do *matters*.”

## The Incident on Ware Street

ON JULY 16, Fletcher University Professor Henry Louis Gates Jr. returned from Logan Airport to the Harvard-owned house he rents on Ware Street. The front door was stuck, so he and the driver who brought him home set about forcing it open. A passerby became concerned that something untoward might be happening; at her behest, another passerby dialed 911. Sergeant James Crowley, of the Cambridge police department, responded to the call.

From those unremarkable beginnings a remarkable nationwide furor arose. Crowley, assuming that he was investigating a breaking-and-entering, sought identification; the exchange between officer and professor somehow escalated; and Gates ended up being arrested for disorderly conduct and handcuffed.

After various negotiations, the charges were dropped on July 21, and a statement issued: “The City of Cambridge, the Cambridge Police Department, and Professor Gates acknowledge that the incident of July 16, 2009, was regrettable and unfortunate. This incident should not be viewed as one that demeans the character and reputation of Professor Gates or the character of the Cambridge Police Department. All parties agree that this is a just resolution to an unfortunate set of circumstances.”

That might have put an end to the matter but for three factors. First, Crowley’s report on the incident indicated that he was responding to a call identifying two “black males” as potential intruders, suggesting that race had figured into the summons to the police (but see below). Second, Gates continued to speak out after the official statement, criticizing Crowley and demanding an apology.

And third, at the end of a news conference on July 22 focused on healthcare reform, President Barack Obama, J.D. ’91,

## Yesterday’s News

From the pages of the *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* and *Harvard Magazine*

**1919** King Albert of Belgium, hero of World War I, receives an honorary degree and becomes the first reigning monarch to set foot in Harvard precincts.

**1929** Alumni initiative and money (\$60,000 for a three-year trial run) has created the independent Harvard Alumni Placement Service, open for business with the new academic year and ready to assist graduates “toward a satisfactory vocational adjustment.”

**1949** Professor Howard Aiken draws 800 mathematicians, engineers, physicists, social scientists, industrialists, and laymen to a Large-Scale Digital Calculating Machinery Symposium that coincides with the unveiling of Mark III. Although the 10-ton Bakelite and steel structure will be shipped to the navy after final tests, the gathering discusses how such machines could be used to work on problems in the social sciences, physiology, psychology, and other areas.

**1954** The Athletic Association, tired of spending \$75 for new wooden goalposts after every home game, installs a brand-new steel set at the stadium.

**1959** A “listening laboratory” of tape recordings opens at the Modern Language Center in newly renovated Boylston Hall.

**1969** On October 15, thousands of people around the country participate in Vietnam Moratorium Day, a symbolic “strike for peace” devised by Jerome Grossman ’38.

**1974** A proposal to extend the subway line farther north triggers discussion on overall planning for Harvard Square. Among the top questions: Should the Kennedy Library be built in Cambridge? And what are Harvard’s long-range plans, and how will they affect the city?

**1984** In two open letters to the Harvard community, President Derek Bok states that impaired freedom of speech hinders the University’s mission, while divestiture of stock holdings in firms doing business in apartheid South Africa threatens that mission—not through financial loss, but through the loss of freedom of action.

**1989** The Nieman Foundation welcomes the first Soviet journalist appointed in its 50-year history, Vladimir Voina, chief of the economics, politics, and ideology department of the Moscow-based magazine *USA*. The College registers Uerkesh Daolet (Wuer Kaixi), a leader of the recent Tiananmen Square student protests, as a visiting undergraduate.

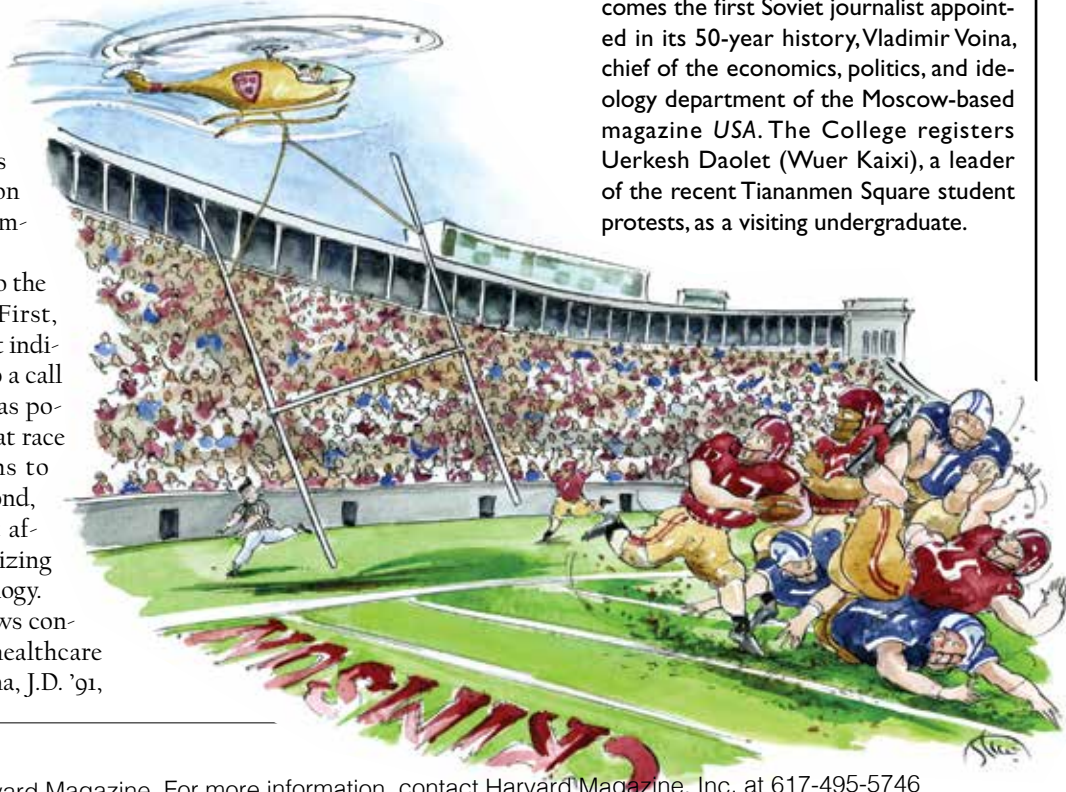


Illustration by Mark Steele

Reprinted from *Harvard Magazine*. For more information, contact Harvard Magazine, Inc. at 617-495-5746

# The Kirkland House Shooting

basement of Kirkland House J entry; he died the following day (see Brevia, July-August, page 58).

Jabrai J. Copney, age 20, of New York City, turned himself in to Cambridge police on May 21, and was charged with murder a day later. He was arraigned on July 22 on five charges. A second man, Blayn Jiggets, age 19, was arrested in New York on June 9, and remained there in July, awaiting extradition proceedings; he was indicted on July 30 for murder. A third suspect, Jason Aquino, 23, of Manhattan, was arrested on July 30 and scheduled to be arraigned the next day.

The Middlesex district attorney indicated in statements and in the filing for Copney's arraignment that Cosby was involved in selling marijuana, and that Copney and Jiggets were on the scene (inside a locked, gated undergraduate residence) because they intended to rob him.

However the case ultimately unfolds, Harvard is involved beyond its role as the venue for the shooting. The *Crimson* reported text messages linking Copney to drug sales on cam-

**On May 18**, Justin Cosby, a 21-year-old Cambridge resident, was shot in the

pus; the prosecutor linked the suspects to two undergraduates, Brittany Smith '09, of Lowell House, a friend of Copney, and to Chanequa Campbell '09, of Kirkland House, Smith's friend. Both were reportedly denied permission to graduate, and ordered off campus.

University and College officials have declined any detailed comment on the matter—the normal practice when students are involved in any kind of disciplinary proceeding, and all the more so when a criminal investigation is underway. A May 22 e-mail to the community from College dean Evelyn M. Hammonds observed that “The Middlesex County District Attorney made clear...that drugs were at the center of the events that brought Justin Cosby together with his assailants,” without making any link to sales to students. She noted her intention to “work with student leaders and others to address the nature and risks of illicit drug use on campus” and “to underscore the importance of safety and security practices for the entire College community.”

As of early August, when this issue went to press, there had been no further official word. Legal proceedings aside, the College would seem to have an urgent need to reinforce the proper use of IDs and gated entries—and to teach in vivid terms about the possibly deadly consequences of casual use of illegal controlled substances.

responded to a question about the incident by saying that he did not know all the facts, but that the Cambridge police had acted “stupidly” in arresting Gates after he had demonstrated he was in his own home. The ensuing uproar led to retractions, clarifications, and ultimately a White House “beer summit” on July 30, at which Obama, Vice President Joe Biden, Crowley, and Gates talked things over. (America's humorists weighed in: Andy Borowitz '80 had Obama proclaiming “Drink a Beer with Someone Who Arrested You Day.” *The Onion* had Crowley accidentally arresting Gates again as he “observed an unidentified black male sitting near Mr. Obama...” in the Oval Office. Editorial cartoonist Mike Luckovich had Gates and Crowley shouting at each other across Obama's desk: “Tastes Great!!!” “Less Filling!!!”)

If the exchanges did little to advance any hoped-for national dialogue on race, they did bring out more facts. Crowley was identified by colleagues as an exemplary officer previously tasked with teaching other policemen how to *avoid* racial profiling in performing their duties—and a black officer at the scene of the arrest gave his full support to Crowley's handling of the incident.

Finally, a bystander who was peripherally involved, but who suffered collateral

damage from the uproar, was fully exonerated after the fact. The 911 call was placed by a *Harvard Magazine* employee who had been out walking at lunchtime (the magazine's office is also on Ware Street). The police report on the incident, which became public, inexplicably did not initially redact her name or other identifying information (the usual practice)—including her phone number. Because the police report seemed to indicate that she had described the suspects in the incident by their race, she was subjected to a barrage of threatening calls and e-mails and

relentless news-media attention at home and at work. In fact, the transcript of the 911 call, released on July 27, made clear that she had never invoked race and that she had even raised the possibility that the suspected intruders were simply having trouble with the house key.

Although many questions about the whole incident—as refracted through the media and national sensitivities (and biases) about race—remain unresolved, this one is put to rest: it began with a proper, Good Samaritan call to the police, motivated by a desire to avert a possible crime

## Systems Biological and Quantitative

GARY KING, Florence professor of government, and Marc W. Kirschner, Walter professor of systems biology, have been named University Professors, Harvard's most distinguished faculty position. King, founder and director of the Institute for Quantitative Social Science ([www.iq.harvard.edu](http://www.iq.harvard.edu)), and see “Putting the Science in Social Sciences,” September-October 2001, page 71), becomes the Weatherhead University Professor, succeeding the late Samuel P. Huntington. Kirschner, founding chair of Harvard Medical School's (HMS) depart-

ment of systems biology and previously of the department of cell biology, becomes Enders University Professor, succeeding Nobel laureate David Hubel, now emeritus. (For background on Kirschner's work, refer to “Seeing Biological Systems Whole,” March-April 2005, page 67, and the review of his recent book on the mechanisms of evolution, November-December 2005, page 22.)

University Professorships, created in 1935, are intended to recognize especially distinguished faculty members whose research crosses the conventional boundaries of departments and disciplines. There are now 22 such professorships.



## Medical and Math Milestones

The Camille and Henry Dreyfus Foundation has conferred its inaugural Dreyfus Prize in the Chemical Sciences on Flowers University Professor George M. Whitesides. The biennial prize, with a monetary award of \$250,000, recognizes outstanding research in chemistry—in this case, work in materials chemistry. Whitesides is a leader at Harvard in nano-scale research with implications for biology (as described in “Thinking Small,” January-February 2005, page 50). Separately, Petschek professor of mathematics Clifford H. Taubes was named co-

inner (with Simon H. Donaldson of Imperial College London) of the \$1-million Shaw Prize, for distinguished, significant advances in three- and four-dimensional geometry, drawing upon insights from theoretical physics and quantum theory. Taubes, a member of the National Academy of Sciences, earned his Ph.D. in physics at Harvard in 1980.

## FAS Financial Leader Leaves

Brett C. Sweet, M.B.A. '00, who joined the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) as dean for finance and administration last



**Brett C. Sweet**

September—just in time to help the faculty come to terms with the severe pressures and budget reductions caused by the declining endowment—departed in July to become vice chancellor and chief financial officer of Vanderbilt University. He had been at Baylor College of Medicine before coming to FAS. Dean Michael D. Smith said Sweet had been “instrumental” in helping to guide and shape the restructuring of FAS, and in major projects such as renovating biology laboratories to accommodate Harvard’s stem-cell researchers. While a search for a successor is under way, Cathy Gorodentsev, formerly the

# Brevia



**PARK PLANS PROCEED:** Although the University’s plans for completing its first science building in Allston remain uncertain, it is proceeding with community amenities promised to the neighborhood as part of the long-term ambition to develop academic facilities there. In July, Harvard planners unveiled preliminary designs for a new public park scheduled to be installed behind the local branch of the Boston Public Library, on North Harvard Street. Intended to provide reading spaces and other natural amenities, the park (rendering above, courtesy of design firm Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates Inc.) is scheduled to be constructed beginning next spring.

executive vice president’s chief of staff, will oversee FAS’s administrative functions; the finance and buildings units will report directly to Smith.

## Nota Bene

**RADCLIFFE FELLOWS.** The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study has announced its resident fellows for the 2009-2010 academic year. There will be 42 fellows (chosen from 853 applicants)—about 20 percent fewer than last year, reflecting budget constraints. Seven faculty members won fellowships: materials scientist Joanna Aizenberg, video artist Lucien Castaing-Taylor, historian of science Peter Galison, economists Jerry R. Green and Daniel A. Hojman, drama and literature scholar Elizabeth D. Lyman, and biogeochemist Ann Pearson. Two

scholars at risk will be identified following their safe arrival in the United States. See the full list at [www.radcliffe.edu](http://www.radcliffe.edu).

**PRESS, POLITICS, PUBLIC POLICY.** The Harvard Kennedy School’s Shorenstein

Center on the Press, Politics, and Public Policy ([www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol](http://www.hks.harvard.edu/presspol)) has announced its Rosenthal Writer-in-Residence Program, honoring the late A.M. Rosenthal, former executive editor of the *New York Times*. It provides an annual \$30,000, one-semester

residency for an established writer who is pursuing work on a book concerning the center’s fields of interest.

**BY THE NUMBERS.** Harvard School of Public Health has appointed Giovanni Parmigiani professor of biostatistics and chair of the department of biostatistics and computational biology at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. He applies statistical methods to assess biomedical data, particularly for predicting cancer risks. Francesca Dominici has been appointed professor of biostatistics; she analyzes the health effects of air pollution. The couple were previously at Johns Hopkins.

**EMERGENT ENGINEERS ET ALIA.** The Presidential Early Career Awards for Scientists and Engineers—the federal government’s highest honor for promising young researchers—has been conferred on



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Beren professor of economics Roland G. Fryer Jr.; Nonie Lesaux, who holds the Kargman chair in human development and urban education advancement; associate professor of electrical engineering Patrick J. Wolfe; and assistant professor of electrical engineering Robert J. Wood (of robotic fly fame: see “Tinker, Tailor, Robot, Fly,” January-February 2008, page 8).



Marc W. Kirschner



Gary King

King, who joined the Harvard faculty in 1987, has done so through quantitative studies probing fields from voting behavior and international conflict to the proper design of survey instruments (see the Harvard at Home video series at [http://](http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/vsr)

[athome.harvard.edu/programs/vsr](http://athome.harvard.edu/programs/vsr)).

Kirschner's work on cell division, embryo development, and the evolutionary origins of the nervous system has led him to draw on biology, computer science, physics, engineering, and other disciplines—

all encompassed in the nascent systems biology department and its associated Ph.D. program. He joined HMS from the University of California, San Francisco, in 1993. For information on his laboratory, see <http://kirschner.med.harvard.edu>.

## UNDERGRADUATE

# Why Harvard Needs to Get Harder

by CHRISTIAN FLOW '10

THERE ARE CERTAIN E-MAILS you never want to get from a professor. The one I received the day before winter break this past year was a good example. *Where was my outline for the term paper due Friday?* this professor wanted to know. It was Tuesday. *Could I meet her in her office the following morning?* She was “alarmed,” she said, at my lack of preparation, and looking for a way to “rescue the situation.” But she couldn't have been as alarmed as I was. So much for staying off the radar! This rescuing business hardly sounded joyous or merry or otherwise in keeping with the spirit of the season.

Wednesday morning, I reported as scheduled and was roundly scolded. *Disengaged, immature, irresponsible:* I was all of these things, or so I was

told as I sat in her basement office. Needless to say, I was taken aback. In three years at college, I had never been slapped around like this. This was the kind of thing that happened in high school when you didn't do your reading. Who knew that tenured professors had the time or the temperament for this species of intervention?

She kept going. Term papers were to be written during the term. I now had two days. What had I been doing, she wanted to know.

I mumbled something about the *Crimson*. In a move that had been building all semester, Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) dean Michael D. Smith had announced the previous week that he

expected a \$100-million deficit for the next fiscal year. Departments were being asked to cut 10 to 15 percent of their budgets. Professors' salaries were being frozen; faculty searches were being suspended or canceled in bulk. Harvard, it seemed, was on the brink of serious change. All of which meant that the good folks at the campus newspaper—including me—had been spending unhealthy amounts of time getting a sense of what was going

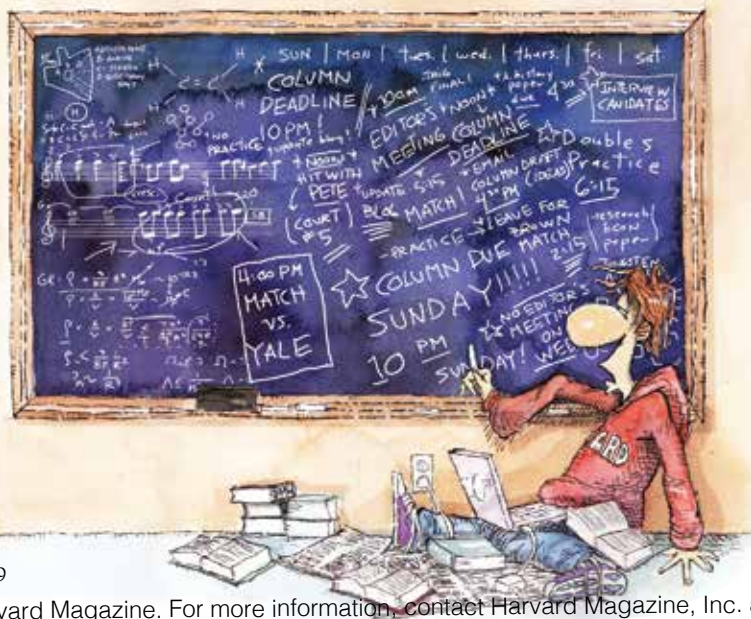


Illustration by Tom Mosser



on.

This was interesting work: things were happening fast, there were people to talk to, ramifications on the horizon. More important, there were a whole lot of people who wanted to know about this stuff in real time and there was a special satisfaction—a pride—in trying to meet that need. If you wanted to share in this pride, you made sacrifices—most of them academic—in support of the journalistic mission. Courting academic disaster was part of the culture, and after five semesters on the *Crimson*, I more or less knew the game. Harvard's grading scheme, for better or worse, would accommodate cram-sessions and last-ditch, all-night efforts. In the classroom, I had been doing what I needed to do to get by, but emperors and ancient ruins hadn't been my primary focus.

My professor was less than impressed with my tightrope act. Academics were not to be trifled with, she said. The paper would be due Friday, and it had better be done.

I was shocked. Truth be told, I took it all somewhat personally. Still smarting from the morning's lecture, I caught a short flight home with a manila folder full of readings in my hand. I had written quick term papers before, and I knew that two days—one to research, one to write—was just within the realm of possibility. I holed up the next morning in an empty library at one of the University of Maryland's satellite campuses.

When you're on a stiff deadline, you don't have time to be cute about your topic. I seized on the first thing that looked narrow enough to pursue: the legal strictures governing emergency senatorial decrees in ancient Rome. This is an extremely boring topic even by the somewhat stodgy standards of the classical field. But strangely, I was more focused than I've ever been.

What was driving me? I had something to prove—namely, that while I might be irresponsible, I wasn't incapable. In one day, I did as much auxiliary research as I've ever done for a paper. More than that, I did it intensely, with an adrenaline-fueled sense of purpose, as if something—some pride even—was really riding on it. I did this paper as if people would care to read it. I wrote it with much the same attitude, I suppose, as I would a *Crimson* article. And by that evening, I have to admit,

## Welcome, Fellows

**Harvard Magazine's** Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellows for the 2009-2010 academic year will be Spencer Lenfield '12 and Melanie Long '10, who were selected after an evaluation of writing submitted by more than two dozen applicants for the two positions. The Fellows, who join the editorial staff during the year, contribute to the magazine as "Undergraduate" columnists and initiate story ideas, write news and feature items, and edit copy. Lenfield, of Paw Paw, Michigan (near Kalamazoo), will live in Eliot House beginning this fall, and may concentrate in literature or history and literature. He plays piano in a classical trio, is on the editorial board of *Tuesday* magazine, and worked at Western Michigan University, near his home town, during the summer. Long, of Atlanta (and previously Cincinnati; Frankfurt, Germany; and Caracas) and Lowell House, is concentrating in English and pursuing a secondary field in film studies. A *Crimson* staff writer and volunteer tutor, she was in Cambridge this summer, serving as a resident tutor in the *Crimson* Summer Academy, Harvard's academic enrichment program for local high-school students. The Fellowship is supported by Jonathan J. Ledecy '79, M.B.A. '83, and named in honor of his mother.



Melanie Long and  
Spencer Lenfield

the stuff had become rather interesting. I had known there was some pleasure to be had in academic inquiry: this was at once a confirmation and a reminder. I'm not suggesting I was eating up *The Legal Procedure of Cicero's Time* like it was *Vanity Fair*, but I had managed to summon a desire to know where the Porcian Laws belonged in the Roman legal landscape that would have been nonexistent if I hadn't taken the assignment so personally. Which never would have happened if I had not been held accountable in such an oddly direct fashion. It crossed my mind afterwards that my professor might have done me something of a favor.

Now, MONTHS REMOVED from that episode, I'd like to suggest that this favor be extended. Harvard would be doing its students a favor by holding them more accountable academically—or at least finding a way to ensure that courses, across the board, match the demands and intensity of the extracurricular organizations where so much undergraduate time is currently spent. It's always struck me as odd that a place notorious for its hard-nosed exam-period threats to hold students "in-

communicado" in their hospital beds if they become ill during a test could allow students to take such liberties with its syllabi.

But that is the present reality. It's largely a matter of incentives. Collegiality, social currency, influence—all these things are to be found more easily in an extracurricular setting than in satisfying course requirements. And as far as day-to-day disincentives for underperformance are concerned, student organizations take the cake. Skip your reading for a section and risk an awkward moment with a teaching fellow. Skip out on your responsibilities for an extracurricular, and risk derision or excommunication by your peers: *You're lazy. You're not willing to sacrifice like everybody else. You're a flake. That's accountability. That is personal.* Those who say that it's up to students to make sure they are having a challenging academic experience miss the point: engaging meaningfully with course material shouldn't be an option; it should be demanded across the board. There must be keener reasons to treat assignments seriously; keener deterrents for not doing so. Otherwise extracurricular commitments will rule the day, and students' academic

experience will suffer.

That's not to say the system doesn't have its advantages. A daily newspaper is produced in the 40 to 50 hours a week that my peers and I are able to carve out of our course preparation; whole dramatic productions are written and produced on that kind of time; Ivy championships are won on it. I have cherished my time on the *Crimson* dearly.

But the rub to all this, as I glimpsed briefly last winter, is that many students run the risk of *never* achieving the level of sustained, focused engagement in their studies necessary to spark serious academic interest. It falls to the College to push back a bit, to find a policy tack that will allow the classroom to take back some of the territory currently overrun by student organizations. I'm not advocating stamping out the extracurricular pursuits that give the campus its flavor—just tweaking the equilibrium somewhat. Otherwise, Harvard will have to continue to accept the fact that some of the nation's finest students are barely tapping deep reservoirs of academic potential, and that the beginnings of scholarly curiosity are routinely sliding away like runoff on a badly designed road.

IF THERE WERE EVER A TIME for Harvard to recommit itself on this issue, it would be now, when things appear to be sliding in the wrong direction. FAS announced an initial round of budget cuts in May that promises (despite administrative protests to the contrary) to make classrooms more impersonal than they already are. Fewer TFs will be hired. In the College's most crowded concentration, economics, a seminar program that once offered small, focused classes to juniors has been suspended: a reminder that holding students accountable is expensive and large lectures with few sections and few exams are comparatively cheap. If we see more of the latter, as it appears we must, students will have even more leeway to treat their studies as a secondary pursuit.

Meanwhile, in the venerable classics department, where I am a concentrator, undergraduate requirements were significantly altered this year for the first time in decades (see "Humanities Rebooted," May-June, page 52). Notification came this spring that the general examinations—the comprehensive test long required

for graduation—were on their way out. On a symbolic level, at least, this was no small change. The thought of the "generals" alone had been enough to make your palms sweat: six hours of testing—translation in both Latin and Greek (selections chosen from a reading list of seemingly epic proportions), essay questions on literature and history. When I first heard of them as a freshman, they had reminded me of something out of an Oxbridge memoir, a vestige of a time when learning was a sink-or-swim endeavor. Here, I remember thinking, there would be nowhere to run, no room to cherry-pick esoterica and choose ease at the expense of the foundational—it would be demanded that I develop a coherent breadth of knowledge...or fail the generals trying.

Of more concern is the fact that classics is not alone in making this kind of curricular modification. Astronomy also fiddled with its requirements this year, and though it had no generals to cut, it echoed the classics department's desire to ensure that its

program of study be less oriented toward preparing students for graduate school.

Here's hoping that this is not part of a general pattern. The intentions behind such changes are well-meaning and well-conceived: concentrations will be more accessible to students who didn't have the luxury of focused high-school preparation in a particular field of study, for instance. But for many students, I think the bottom line is this: these concentrations are less demanding than they used to be. I felt an uneasy relief when I heard about the generals' demise. There was less strain in store for me certainly—more time for other pursuits. But also, probably, less benefit. When it comes to academics, this may not be a trade-off that Harvard—at a particularly vulnerable moment in its long and storied history—can afford.

*Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellow Christian Flow '10 found himself ideally situated to contemplate academics as an extracurricular this summer—"site"-seeing ancient ruins on week-*

## SPORTS

# Ice Water and Rockets

*Soccer's Lizzy Nichols has both sang-froid and a killer shot.*

LAST FALL, the Ivy League women's soccer championship was decided in the final seconds of the season's last game. Harvard, Princeton, and Columbia entered the closing weekend with identical 4-1-1 records. The Crimson needed to beat Columbia at Ohiri Field to at least share the title, but regulation play ended in a 1-1 tie, and neither team could score as two overtime periods unfolded, although Harvard was dominating offensively, outshooting Columbia, 9-2. Then, with a mere nine seconds left in the second overtime, Melanie Baskind '12 beat a few Columbia players and dribbled into the penalty box. She touched the ball forward past a defender—then, getting ready to shoot, was taken down for a foul. That meant a penalty kick, the only one Harvard had been awarded all season.

"I immediately ran to the ball and put it on the 12-yard mark," says Lizzy Nichols '10,

With unwavering focus, Nichols lines up for a free kick and puts some serious leg into the ball.





who does not believe in dithering at such moments. (Penalty kicks originate at the 12-yard mark, inside the penalty box, which stretches 18 yards from the goal line into the pitch.) The inevitable howls of protest from the Columbia fans subsided after a minute or two. The official cleared everyone from the penalty box and blew his whistle. Then Nichols charged the ball and drilled it into the upper left corner of the net, sealing Harvard's 2-1 victory and its first Ivy title since 1999.

The Crimson shared the championship with Princeton, who beat Penn that day to go 5-1-1, but as Harvard had already vanquished the Tigers, 2-1, they secured the league's automatic NCAA tournament bid. (There, Harvard lost to Northeastern, 3-2, in a shootout.)

In general, soccer players do not have solitary, unobstructed chances to kick the ball. That is what an opponent's infractions afford them: penalty kicks, corner kicks, or free kicks. Play stops and the referee clears everyone else away from the ball. The first question is, who will take the kick. "You don't want to be looking at each other saying, 'Do you want to take it?'" Nichols explains. "Sometimes the coach will decide, but the main thing is to have someone who is feeling confident in her shot. Confidence is so important. It's better for a team if somebody steps up and says, 'I've got this.'"

Of course, another factor is having a strong shot. On a free kick, Nichols's powerful right leg can rocket one into the goal from 30 yards out. "She's the best free kicker I've ever coached," says head women's soccer coach Ray Leone. "Her range

makes Lizzy a threat from anywhere."

Certain fouls outside the penalty box result in free kicks. (Corner kicks happen when opponents kick the ball past their own endline.) Free kicks can be shots on goal, but "you may want to serve the ball" to a teammate nearer in who takes the shot, Nichols explains. Typically, the opponents form a "wall" of players, no less than 10 yards from the ball, to protect their goal. The free kicker, says Nichols, might choose to "drive it straight, go low, or high, or bend the ball either way, toward the near or far post."

On a penalty kick, Nichols's ritual involves turning the ball so the manufacturer's logo faces her, providing a target to fix on. "I try to make things simple," she explains. "The only thing to focus on is the contact I make with the ball. You know how it feels to strike the ball, and you know where you want it to go. If you hit the ball right, it should go there—you've done it so many times in practice. Choose your spot, and don't change your mind in the middle of it, no matter where the goalkeeper stands. It's a completely mental game. Sometimes, just as the whistle blows, they jump a certain way to try to get you to go in one direction. That's why I never look at the keeper. Some people look at the keeper or at the spot they want it to go—or at the opposite side, to get them guessing. But if you hit it cleanly and hard, and wide enough toward one side of the goal, even if the keeper guesses right, they're not going to be able to save it."

Nichols's success stems from technical proficiency, built on lots of practice on such kicks, says assistant coach Katie



Lizzy Nichols

DAVID SILVERMAN/SPICS.NET

Shields '06. "And Lizzy has ice water in her veins," Shields adds. "She also has the ability to make the ball 'knuckle'—it dips and curves a bit in the air, exactly like a knuckleball pitch in baseball." (Leone notes, "Only a few can do that—it's kind of a Brazilian thing.")

As a former varsity goalkeeper, Shields knows the cat-and-mouse game between kicker and goalie. The goalie will "look for little cues the shooter may give you," she says. "A glance to one side, or body language in the first couple of steps to the ball. Lizzy doesn't give any cues. The best shooters are the ones who just step up and bury the ball."

The daughter of a printmaker father and architect mother, Nichols grew up in



DAVID SILVERMAN/SPICS.NET

Princeton, New Jersey. (There's a picture of her at age two with a soccer ball.) She developed her skills in club soccer and at The Lawrenceville School. A history and literature concentrator, she'll co-captain the team this fall with Gina Wideroff '11; a talented group of freshmen should bolster the Crimson's hopes of defending their Ivy League title.

When not taking free kicks, Nichols plays center back, a "quarterbacking position" where she is vocal in coordinating Harvard's defense. "The attack starts at the back," she says, "and defense starts with the forwards." As a defender, of course, Nichols doesn't accumulate flashy offensive statistics: she scored only two goals last year. But one stat counts more than all the rest. On penalty kicks: one attempt, one goal.

~CRAIG LAMBERT

## Fall Preview— and Blog

**The football team**, which last year shared the Ivy League title with Brown (both had 6-1 Ivy records; Harvard was 9-1 overall, Brown 7-3), sustained its only 2008 loss to Brown early in the season. To defend their title, the Crimson will need to replace standouts like quarterback Chris Pizzotti '08 ('09), the Ivy League's Player of the Year last fall. There are several candidates for that job, including junior quarterbacks Matt Simpson and Collier Winters. Expect significant yardage gains from running backs Cheng Ho '10 and Gino Gordon '11. The offensive

line graduated three all-Ivy players, but an able corps, led by offensive tackle James Williams '10, remains in place. Various football media chose Williams, along with cornerbacks Matthew Hanson '12 and Derrick Barker '10 and wide receiver Matt Luft '10, for preseason all-American teams. Hanson, who snaffled four opponents' passes last fall, was the 2008 Ivy League Rookie of the Year.

### Gridiron Blogging

"Cleat," *Harvard Magazine's* canny football correspondent, will blog about the fall season on the magazine's website, <http://harvardmagazine.com/football>. To receive e-mail notification of new posts, sign up at <http://harvardmag.com/highlights>.

## ALUMNI

# Scaling Up Charity

*Smile Train's Brian Mullaney*

**A** GAINST ALL ADVICE, Brian Mullaney '81 left a secure Madison Avenue career in 1990 to co-found his own ad agency, targeting the high tech industry. Schell/Mullaney opened with Mullaney and one employee working out of his apartment; the partners were so successful that they sold the firm in six years. Suddenly, Mullaney was free to do anything he dreamed of.

Ever the entrepreneur, he chose to focus on what had been a philanthropic pastime: correcting facial disfigurements in poor children. He became the co-founder of Smile Train, now the largest charity devoted to fixing cleft lip and palate injuries around the world.

In just a decade, the New York City-based organization has sponsored more than 500,000 surgeries throughout 76 countries, with a primary focus in China and India. In the last fiscal year alone, Smile Train raised more than \$100 million and sponsored about 110,000 operations—with only 42 employees. Says Mullaney, "We basically found a better mousetrap, then scaled the hell out of it."

**CLEFT INJURY**, the most common birth defect in the United States, affects one in every 594 newborns, or 6,800 infants per year, according to the Cleft Palate Foundation. Most of these babies receive surgery within three to six months. In developing countries, however, such deformities are

Brian Mullaney with a Haitian patient before her surgery this past February. Smile Train has provided roughly 160 surgeries in Haiti and recently launched "Cleft-free Haiti" to completely eradicate cleft there.





far more numerous, and typically go untreated: Smile Train estimates there are 160,000 new cases a year and a 4.6-million-case backlog.

Though rarely life-threatening, clefts can lead to social ostracism and psychological scarring, as well as severe practical problems: the afflicted children often do not attend school, get jobs, or marry. “A lot of these kids can’t talk, or talk well,” Mullaney reports. “They sound retarded and they are treated like freaks, like the Elephant Man.” Cultural prejudices also abound, some linking the children to evil spirits or Satan, making the condition harder for entire families to bear; in India, Mullaney says, there have even been reports of midwives being paid to smother such babies, especially girls, at birth.

The psychosocial impact of clefts is brought home in *Smile Pinki*, a 2008 film about the charity’s work in India that won an Oscar for best short documentary (a goal Mullaney had set out to achieve about three years earlier). “These surgeries transform these kids’ lives,” he says.

Smile Train excels similar charities in sheer numbers not only by applying strict “best business practices” to its work, but by supplanting the traditional medical mission with a more efficient, “less imperialistic” system that has so far trained about 56,000 local medical professionals to perform cleft surgeries. “In the colonial model, foreign doctors get off the plane and act like Jesus Christ—‘Give me your crippled and I’ll heal them,’” says Mullaney. “They push the local doctors to the sidelines, have their press conferences, and then pack up every last Q-tip and leave. This was not only very demoralizing to the local staff, it was wrenching because they would operate on 100 kids, but break the hearts of 300 others. It made me very unhappy. What company turns away most of its customers?”

FOSTERING ENTERPRISE while correcting a relatively finite, physical problem that has a huge emotional impact greatly appeals to Mullaney, who is both an empathic idealist and a ruthless pragmatist. “We know where the kids are, in every province of every country all over the world. We know what the cure is: it’s a simple, 45-minute procedure that costs donors as little as \$250,” he says. “It just seemed so unfair that all these kids were suffering unnecessarily.”

**Smile Train has been especially active in China. Mullaney met these four nurses from Jinzhong No. 1 People’s Hospital, one of its partner institutions, in 2005.**

With economic conditions improving in many places and more attention being paid to prevention of birth defects (Smile Train also has an educational component), he says that “at this rate, in five to 10 years, we’ll have the backlog well in hand, and have facilities in place to address the new cleft cases in all the developing countries combined.”

Mullaney first started caring about children with deformities long before his own kids were born. He was working on advertising accounts for Park Avenue cosmetic surgeons, he recalls: “I’d ride the subway to their offices and see all these kids, mostly immigrant and poor children, with giant port-wine stains or a hairy nevus across their face, kids with six fingers, or missing an ear, or a scar that was wide open, or horrible teeth, and I knew my surgeons could fix those,” he says.

In 1991, while running Schell/Mullaney, he founded a pilot program that offered free surgeries to city kids; ultimately, it grew to include the entire metropolitan school district. Surgeons did the work pro bono, while Mullaney raised funds to cover operating expenses. One day, he saw an article in *People* magazine about a Virginia-based charity with the same name as his: Operation Smile. He called them up, and by 1994 the two groups had merged to focus on cleft injuries internationally, using two-week medical missions.

The impact of these surgeries hit Mullaney on his first of many trips to China, when he was allowed to scrub into an operation on a nine-year-old whose name meant Beautiful Cloud. “When she woke up in the recovery room, they brought in a mirror and handed it to her—and I will never forget how her hands were trembling and she stared into the mirror and didn’t say a word, and nine years of tears ran down her face.” He felt he had “witnessed a miracle” and returned to New York “like a man on a mission and began raising millions of dollars for Operation Smile from



everyone and anyone I knew.” The exposure to charity work in the world’s poorest corners “fundamentally reset” his values, he says: “I get the bends like a deep-sea diver going between” his two worlds.

Mullaney was so effective that within two years he, Charles B. Wang (his former client at Computer Associates), and DeLois Greenwood (now number two at Smile Train) had boosted contributions to the New York Operation Smile chapter from \$60,000 to \$1.2 million. Yet with each new mission, Mullaney says he “learned more about how this medical model from 30 years ago was obsolete. The model of ‘teach a man to fish’ is just so much more empowering locally, so much cheaper and more efficient and productive.”

In 1997, he and Wang (who is as high profile in his philanthropies as in his sometimes controversial business practices) devised the idea of Smile Train. Mullaney says Wang, who immigrated to the United States as a boy, still identifies strongly with China and questioned why Operation Smile did not utilize Chinese surgeons.

Over time, Wang and Mullaney worked with then U.S. and Chinese presidents George H.W. Bush and Jiang Zemin to pave the way for training local surgeons and supporting hospitals in some of that country’s poorest regions. In 1998, they split from Operation Smile and established their own organization. Wang, as chairman of the board, put up the initial \$70 million: \$30 million of his own, \$40 million that he raised from friends. That money, Mullaney’s sweat equity, and their high-level connections put Smile Train on track.

“Most charities don’t see themselves as a business,” Mullaney says. They “can be terribly managed, pay people poorly, and yet never go out of business. They’re almost like churches; people say, ‘That’s OK,

because their hearts are in the right place.' At Smile Train, we pay people market-rate salaries and if they're really good, we give them a bonus, and if they're not, we fire them—we don't care where their heart is, it can go somewhere else."

Also parts of the Smile Train business model: donors are treated like shareholders; doctors are trained via groundbreaking virtual-surgery software that Smile Train helped develop at New York Medical Center; capital investments align with strategic goals (the charity spent \$1 million on a digital medical-records system, instead of handling manila folders with more than five million paper documents and photos); surgeons and medical charts/records are rated by outside reviewers to pinpoint problems; and Smile Train holds no direct fundraisers, which Mullaney says are "cost inefficient and wasteful."

"What we're doing differently," Mullaney explains, "is more like franchising the Smile Train operations: financing and working with more than 1,000 local hospitals so that they can do this work themselves."

Since the "divorce" from Operation Smile,

as Mullaney puts it, Smile Train's clout and programs have both grown, attracting Hollywood stars and prominent figures such as Colin Powell who provide testimonials and public-service announcements and often also donate to the cause. "One of the advantages I have over other charities is my marketing background," Mullaney allows. In college, the economics concentrator who liked art and graphics joined Harvard Student Agencies and produced marketing materials for various campus groups, including the logo still used by the Din and Tonics. But he's also "like a dog with a bone: to be successful in the charity world, you have to be incredibly thick-skinned and determined, or else you're going to burn out and walk around beating yourself over the head with a stick in frustration."

He believes in operating a small, focused, creative group of people who brainstorm and daydream to generate "big ideas." One such session spawned the notion of a feature film about clefts. So much of the health and medical news from "developing countries—malaria and AIDS—is bad news about diseases we still can't cure,

and here you have this little story about something really good that can happen so easily," Mullaney says. When no one in Hollywood bit, he settled for a documentary. He drew director Megan Mylan (*Lost Boys of Sudan*) into the cause, just as he had Wang—and they earned an Oscar.

With *Smile Pinki*'s win, he has refocused efforts on getting a feature film made, with a major star. And with help from surgeon and author Atul Gawande (see page 30), among others, he studies how to apply the Smile Train model to other conditions with surgical remedies: holes in the heart, club foot, burn wounds, and blindness. "All of these exist throughout the world, are as big as cleft, or bigger, and have interventions that are similarly quick, cheap, and 99.9 percent reliable," Mullaney explains. "We're meeting with charities who do this medical work to educate ourselves and think about how to partner with donors." After a second, he adds: "Once you help 1,000 kids, then you want to help 10,000 kids, then 100,000 kids. In a way, it's a great addiction to have."

—NELL PORTER BROWN

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## A Call for Public Service

"THREE THINGS make us happy," says Teresita Alvarez-Bjelland '76, M.B.A. '79, quoting a CNN report on the topic: "Sex, exercise—and public service." She plans to focus on public service this year as the new president of the Harvard Alumni Association (HAA). "It makes us feel good to take care of others," she explains, "and with the Obama administration's [call for community and national service] and the economic recession, it's time to give back something of ourselves." Service is also a unifying cause for alumni, she notes, because it "cuts across all schools and classes and it brings out the best in everyone and can unite us as a University."

The three HAA directors' meetings this year will highlight "Harvard's role in global public service," she says, and will include a session with keynote speaker Julio Frenk, dean of the Harvard School of Public Health (see "A Global Health View," March-April, page 48), as well as meetings and events with faculty members from the Graduate School of Education and the



Teresita Alvarez-Bjelland

FRED FIELD

Kennedy School. She also hopes to invite undergraduate and graduate students to share their experiences of overseas public-service-related travel and educational ventures supported by Harvard. "I want to share all the wonderful things that are happening through Harvard around the world."

As a Cuban native who has lived for more than 25 years in Norway (the land of her husband, Christian Bjelland, M.B.A.

'78), Alvarez-Bjelland knows something about cross-cultural community-building and leadership. "I am Hispanic...by birth and by temperament. I am European by marriage, and place of residence," she told the graduating seniors during her Class Day speech. "But I am very much American by loyalty and gratitude!"

With a professional background in advertising and marketing, the Oslo resident has also spent considerable time and

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energy volunteering for Norwegian and other nonprofit arts and culture organizations, including the Stavanger-based International Chamber Music Festival, the Norway-American Association, and the Stavanger 2008: European Culture City competition.

Her contributions to the University have spanned more than two decades, ranging from reunion and club activities and admissions interviews (which she began as a Kirkland House tutor in the late 1970s) to various roles on the HAA board, on which she has served since 1995. She received the Radcliffe Distinguished Service Award in 2001, and two years later the College admissions office Hiram Hunn Award for her extensive volunteer work.

"You get involved as a way to give back," Alvarez-Bjelland explains. "I was grateful from day one with the opportunities I had just being here; this place opened up a whole new world for me." Even moving to Cambridge was a giant culture shock. The atmosphere was nothing like the warm, tropical lifestyle she had always known with her family. (She says she has never adjusted to the Norwegian climate—and plans to be buried in Miami.) "People have asked me, 'Did you feel discriminated against?'" she says. "Never. Not once. People were always very nice to me; they went out of their way to be nice. I was the American Dream—this Cuban refugee who made it to Harvard."

In 1962, Alvarez-Bjelland moved with her family from Cuba to Miami. Talented at math, she soon learned English, rising to the top of her high-school class—the largest senior class in Florida history at the time—and was named valedictorian. Alvarez-Bjelland jokes that she concentrated in "people" at Harvard, "because I like to talk and I'm always talking and meeting new friends." (In fact, she chose psychology and social relations.) Elected her class's First Marshal in her senior year, she recalls giving part of her speech in Spanish to honor her father who was in the audience: "*Gracias, Papi, por todo lo que tu y Mami han hecho por mí.*" ("Thanks, Papi, for all you and Mami have done for me").

After graduating, she spent a year at the London School of Economics, then returned to Harvard for business school. Later she worked in marketing and advertising in Denmark for four years, but ultimately left a full-time job as managing

director of Bates Advertising in Norway to be home with her children, Tracey '08 and Cristian '10 Bjelland. She is currently a freelance consultant, but is glad to focus this year on the HAA and other University activities. "My kids associate Harvard with 'Mommy being happy,'" she says. "When I got the Hiram Hunn Award, I said, 'You must be giving me this because you want me to work another 24 years.' Well, I *am* still here."

## Aloian Scholars

KARL KMIECIK '10, of Cabot House and Augusta, Georgia, and Kirsten E. M. Slungaard '10 of Eliot House and Saint Paul, Minnesota, are this year's David Aloian Memorial Scholars, and will be honored at the fall dinner of the Harvard Alumni Association in October. The scholarships, established in 1988 to honor the late David Aloian '49, a former HAA executive director and master of Quincy House, and his wife, Mary "Mimi" Aloian, are awarded to two seniors who have made unique contributions to their Houses and to undergraduate life.

Kmiecik, a history and science concentrator, is "a friend to all" who organizes multiple formals, at least a dozen study breaks and stein clubs, and a lively Dutch Auction that raises money for student events. He was instrumental in Cabot's three-year drive to win the Green Cup (for greatest reduction in energy consumption), and serves on the House tutor interview committee. Kmiecik is also president of the Harvard ROTC Association, a volunteer for the Peer Health Exchange, and a member of his department's student-faculty committee.

Kirsten Slungaard, an English concentrator, has been a driving force behind numerous Eliot House initiatives. She spearheaded the renewal of its Grille, a popular late-night gathering spot; as its manager, she organizes study breaks and hires and trains employees, among other duties. A founding member of the Eliot Writing Circle, she is an aspiring professional writer, and a sound supporter of others' creative endeavors. And as a member of the Eliot Boat Club, she rises early most mornings to contribute to Eliot's dominance in intramural crew.

Her work for Harvard is a form of public service, she says; it's a way to promote the resonant results of research, scholarship, and the arts. "I am still receiving wonderful inspiration and pride in all the things Harvard is involved with, like stem-cell research—this was so important to do, especially during the Bush administration," she says. "We should all try to focus on something greater than ourselves. That's what gives us hope for the future." ~N.P.B

## Hiram Hunn Awards

SEVEN ALUMNI are to receive this year's Hiram S. Hunn Memorial Schools and Scholarships Awards, presented by the Harvard College Office of Admissions and Financial Aid. Hunn, a member of the College class of 1921, recruited and interviewed prospective students for more than 55 years in Iowa and Vermont; this year's winners, who are recognized for their work on schools and scholarships committees worldwide, have collectively performed more than 165 years of service. They will be honored at an October 23 ceremony.



**Robert R. Bowie Jr.**

Robert R. Bowie Jr. '73, of Towson, Maryland. Told when he began interviewing that it was "extremely unlikely" any of his candidates would be admitted, Bowie was surprised when his first one got in. From that moment, he "was hooked." Later, as area cochair, he expanded his geographic coverage and number of applicants. After 30 years, Bowie continues to see the Harvard admissions process as "fun, enlightening, and wise."

Sheila Carr-Stewart, AMP '92, of Edmonton, Alberta. For the past decade, Carr-Stewart has interviewed College applicants from the three Canadian "prairie provinces." And if often chided for "taking the best and brightest" not only for the "east" but for the "American east!" she perseveres in the "rewarding experience" of meeting these young people and their families. Not even "our blissful, negative 40-degree temperatures" can deter her.



**Sheila Carr-Stewart**





**John S. Higgins Jr.**

John S. Higgins Jr. '61, of Visalia, California. Higgins was introduced to schools committee work years ago by Harvard legend Fred Glimp '50. So began a more than 30-year sojourn that has found him chairing committee activities throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The work remains a chance to "give back" for the many opportunities afforded by his own Harvard education.

Barbara Long, Ph.D. '82, of Atlanta. After interviewing in Minnesota for nearly 15 years, where she saw no admits from her efforts but remained "undaunted," Long moved to Atlanta. There, she coau-



**Barbara Long**

thored a "send-off book" for Georgia freshmen making their way to Harvard and has flourished in an "all-purpose" support role that encompasses interviewing, recruiting, and preparing students for the College.

Lidija Ortloff '82, of Westwood, Massachusetts. Pressed into service early, Ortloff began interviewing applicants "a few months" after graduating. She has chaired one of the Boston suburb groups for nearly 20 years, although her involvement has extended down the eastern seaboard from Massachusetts to Virginia and back again.



**Lidija Ortloff**

Maria Patterson '70, of New York City. Having begun her schools committee career back when "it was all yellow pads, faxes, and snail mail," Patterson has been fully invested in the work of the Manhat-



**Maria Patterson**

Nicholas C. Taylor '59, of Midland, Texas. With 35 years of interviewing experience under his belt, Taylor has chaired committee efforts through more than 69,000 square miles of west Texas. Among his interviewees: a brother and sister from a tiny school who were also skilled in herding, roping, branding, and inoculating cattle.



**Nicholas C. Taylor**

## Cairo Conference

The specter of Charles Darwin hovered over the Harvard Arab Alumni Association's fourth annual Arab World Conference, held in Cairo on May 28, and with good reason. At the formal dinner, HAAA Achievement Award winner Zaid Al-Rifa'i '57, the former prime minister and current senate president of Jordan, touched upon the notion of adaptability in a changing world and quoted the famous scientist: "It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

The possibility of the Middle East's adapting to a changing world was the theme of this year's conference, titled "The Arab World: Shaping the Future." It focused on recent economic, educational, financial, and media trends under way in the region; four panels, chaired by Harvard-affiliated guests and alumni, provided a platform for discussion. Panelists touched upon steps that may be taken by private institutions and local governments to ensure a long-term regional recovery, such as increasing investment in tourism for countries such as Egypt, Lebanon, and Jordan, which rely heavily on that industry; the role of private versus public education and its ability to shape a local workforce; the financial strategies of businesses focusing primarily on high-end Middle East consumers; and the problem of censorship within regional media. Speakers included Jorge Domínguez, vice provost for international affairs at Harvard; Tarik Yousef '97, dean of the Dubai School of Government; Hashem Montasser '97, M.B.A. '03, a managing director of EFG-Hermes; and Lara Setrakian '04, the Dubai correspondent for ABC News. Egypt's minister of finance, Youssef Boutros-Ghali, delivered the opening address, in which he discussed strengthening the ties between the Arab world and institutions of higher education such as Harvard and his own alma mater, MIT.

Beyond its educational agenda, the conference, which attract-



ed more than a hundred attendees from some dozen countries, also highlighted the growing presence of alumni who are returning to their homelands. Traditionally, western-educated Arabs have stayed in the West, focusing their intellectual and

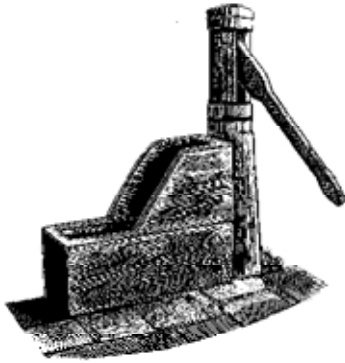
financial capital abroad. But the HAAA's yearly gatherings now indicate that more Arab alumni are reversing this "brain drain," fostering new trends of local development and investment.

Perhaps the best example is the Dubai School of Government, launched in 2006 as a joint initiative with the Harvard Kennedy School, with the aim of creating a world-class public-policy institute in the Arab world. Researchers such as May Al-Dabbagh '99, who has been with the school since its inception, represent the intellectual force behind progressive institutions that are attempting local transformations, offering increasing opportunities for a new generation—a timely trend in an area where half the population is younger than 25.

HAAA president Sameh El-Saharty, M.P.H. '91, speaking of the difficulty and necessity of creating such opportunities within the region, noted: "As we value the intellectual power that exists at Harvard, we would like to mobilize its academic and research resources in order to contribute to the development of our nation in whatever small increments we can. In this regard, we are realistically ambitious." Saharty, a physician who is now a senior health-policy specialist focused on the Middle East and North Africa at the World Bank in Washington, D.C., envisioned a brighter future. Addressing the opening session, he noted: "I am here reminded of the words of the great Arab poet and writer Gibran Khalil Gibran, who said, 'Progress lies not only in improving what is, but also in advancing toward what will be.'"

—EFFIE-MICHELLE METALLIDIS

# Holy Cow



"Your wooden arm you hold outstretched  
to shake with passers-by."

"Tradition holds," says Harvey Cox, "that the Hollis professor of divinity shall have the privilege of grazing his cow in Harvard Yard"—and as the most recent holder of said professorship, he intends to assert his pasturage right, before witnesses. At 4:30 P.M. on September 10, wearing his academic regalia, he will lead into the Yard, according to early press releases, either a Scottish Highland long-haired cow, with fetching bangs, or a Jersey, with soulful eyes. The Reverend Peter J. Gomes, Pusey minister in the Memorial

Church, will offer an invocation to assembled faculty members, students, friends, Cox, and cow. Then the company will process with spirited music to the campus of the Divinity School, tying together the venues in which Cox has taught since he joined the faculty in 1965. After brief tributes, including a Latin oration, the party will adjourn to the school's Rockefeller Hall for "generous" refreshments and an evening of music by Soft Touch, the 17-piece big band in which the Hollis professor plays lead tenor saxophone. Just incidentally, the occasion will mark the publication by HarperCollins of Cox's latest book, *The Future of Faith*.

A search in Harvard Archives uncovers no chapter and verse proving that grazing rights were ever formally attached to the Hollis professorship, established in 1740. Of course, the Harvard Corporation may have let in some Hollis cow in the distant past on the quiet, just as parking spots are bestowed today.

One may wonder wheth-

er a divine's bovine would have wanted to munch the Yard of yesteryear. Professor Samuel Eliot Morison wrote in *Three Centuries of Harvard* that President John Kirkland in 1810 "found the interior of the Yard an 'unkempt sheep-commons,' almost treeless, provided with no regular paths, and cluttered up with a brew-house, the college woodyard, and sundry privies....A neighboring nuisance was the college pig-pen, where the Corporation's own porkers fought with rats for the commons garbage; for years the hideous clamor of a pig-killing was wont to disturb recitations in University [Hall]."

The grazing right "is a tradition," says Cox, "and at Harvard we never use the words 'only' or 'merely' to modify 'tradition.'" It is "a delightful conceit," Gomes says, but quickly adds, "It *might* be true." In their multivolume *Harvard University History of Named Chairs*, William Bentinck-Smith and Elizabeth Stouffer call the far-more-often-cited alleged right of the Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory to keep a cow in the Yard "a pleasant legend which has come down through the years."

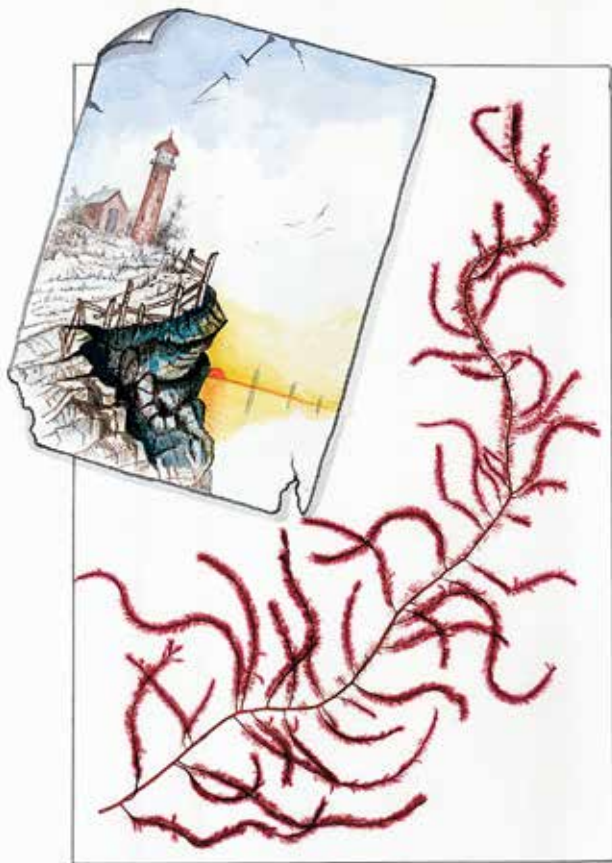
Such legends may be immortal. When poet Robert Fitzgerald became the Boylston professor in 1965, former students of his at another institution, reading in misinformed press accounts of his quaint prerogatives, sent him a cow. He had to arrange





# Art in the Wrack

*Seaweed and seaside scenes of Martha's Vineyard*



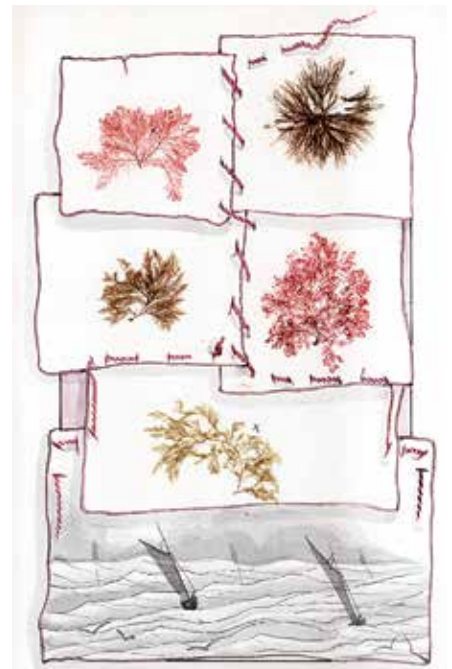
salty subjects. She was an artist, not a phycologist, and although she was able to identify many of her specimens—perhaps with help from one or another expert resident on the island—she evidently knew the names of none of the examples shown on this page. But she saw their beauty.

Mrs. Constance Neelon of Southern Pines, North Carolina, gave Robinson's scrapbook to Harvard's Farlow Herbarium in 2002. "We were thrilled to get it," says archives librarian Lisa DeCesare. "It chronicles local flora, and it is beautiful. We have other seaweed scrapbooks, including a small one bound in whale bone, but the illustrations on some of Robinson's plates make this a real winner." (For the scrapbook in its entirety, and more, go to [www.huh.harvard.edu/libraries/Robinson\\_exhibit/robinson.htm](http://www.huh.harvard.edu/libraries/Robinson_exhibit/robinson.htm).)

How did Mrs. Neelon get the scrapbook? Her family summered on the Vineyard, and around 1950 her husband found the scrapbook in the

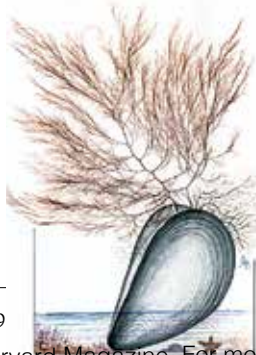
attic of an old farmhouse he bought and restored on Lambert's Cove in West Tisbury. The house had been in the Norton family.

How did the scrapbook come to be in that attic? Mary Robinson was born in Montreal, Canada, in 1826. Her maiden name is unknown. She married Samuel D. Robinson, born in Sligo, Ireland, and 10 years her junior. They later lived on the Vineyard—in Cottage City, now Oak Bluffs—at least most of the year, perhaps spending the coldest months in Providence, Rhode Island, where Samuel died in 1885. Mary is listed in an 1897 Cottage



City directory as proprietor of a boarding house on the corner of Tuckernuck Street and what is now Circuit Avenue. When she died in 1898, a sale of her personal effects and the boarding house failed to raise sufficient funds to cover claims against her estate. One of these was a bill for \$19.45 for medicine from James G. Norton. Perhaps Norton took the scrapbook in settlement of that debt.

~C.R.







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