Project

Planet hunter Debra Fischer scans the skies for Earth-like orbiters in Alpha Centauri

Long Shot

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ON-LINE

Videos of many Radcliffe Institute events can be found at www.radcliffe.edu/events/video.aspx. You can also view back issues of the magazine on the Institute Web site.

www.radcliffe.edu

Photograph by Erica Martin
Celebrating 10 Years

ON OCTOBER 8 AND 9, 2009, alumnae/i and friends of the Radcliffe Institute filled the Gym for “Celebrate 10 Years! Crossing Boundaries at the Radcliffe Institute,” a symposium that provided a glimpse into the Institute’s Fellowship Program and exhibited the kinds of interdisciplinary connections the Institute’s programs make possible. (See page 3.) Panels ranging from “Gendered Choices in the Public and Private Spheres” and “Sickness and Health” to “From One Genre to Another” and “Fiction Writing” brought together professors of African American studies, history, anthropology, economics, English, creative writing, molecular and cell biology, and law with visual artists, filmmakers, journalists, human rights activists, authors, and social commentators. A panel titled “The Digital Revolution and Academic Life” evidenced the effects of this revolution on scholars in art history and music as well as scholarly publishing, and it revealed ways in which the Schlesinger Library is leading in the collection of “born digital” materials. Poster exhibits highlighted various Institute programs that support innovative research by Harvard faculty members and students and bring distinguished visitors to the University—programs whose success has led to the launch of more ambitious Academic Engagement Programs.

The final panel of the October symposium reunited five key players in the merger agreement between Harvard University and Radcliffe College: Neil Rudenstine PhD ’64, Harvey Fineberg ’67, MD ’71, MPP ’72, PhD ’80, Nancy-Beth Sheerr ’71, Susan S. Wallach ’68, JD ’71, and Mary Maples Dunn RI ’02 (on videotape). Each reflected on his or her dreams at its founding of what the Institute might be, assessed it now, and offered hopes for its next decade. Their unanimous declaration that the Institute had succeeded beyond their dreams was heartwarming. They applauded the Radcliffe Institute both as a refuge for scholars and as a full-fledged school within the University, actively connecting with faculty and students to advance Harvard’s intellectual agenda, and they emphasized the importance of its continued commitment to the study of women, gender, and society.

In the decade since the merger agreement that led to the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, the Institute has supported more than 450 fellows and produced seven science symposia, six gender conferences, 41 Dean’s Lectures, and 90 Exploratory and Advanced Seminars. The Schlesinger Library has supported the work of more than 36,000 scholars and acquired over 30,000 new print volumes and 1,500 manuscript collections. But numbers never tell the whole story. The Institute’s programs have engendered transformations in perspective, in scholarship and research, and in the lives of artists and academics. I invite you to sample some of these transformations, by watching the symposium videos on our Web site and by reading stories about current fellows and Institute programs in the pages of this issue of Radcliffe Magazine.

BARBARA J. GROSZ
Dean, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study
A NEW MAGAZINE FOR A NEW ERA
With this issue, the Radcliffe Quarterly becomes Radcliffe Magazine. Because we haven’t published the magazine on a quarterly basis for several years and we’re now making other changes as well, we thought this would be a good time to rebrand.

Not only does this issue feature a new design, by art director Ronn Campisi, but we have reduced the number of pages in the magazine. This change reflects our commitment to a sustainable environment as well as the economic constraints that have affected most print publications.

In the future, Class Notes will be posted on the Radcliffe Web site alongside news about Radcliffe alumnae/i of every era. We will post the notes as soon as we receive them, which will allow classmates to stay in closer touch with one another. Class Notes may also appear in Harvard Magazine and at alumni.harvard.edu, an on-line community for Harvard and Radcliffe alumnae/i.

GROSZ ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENTS
Barbara J. Grosz, dean of the Radcliffe Institute, announced the appointment, effective in mid-December, of mathematician Sophie Morel to the Radcliffe Alumnae Professorship. Watch for an article about Morel in the next issue of Radcliffe Magazine.

In late November, Dean Grosz named Rebecca Wassarman ’87, a longtime member of the Harvard community, to the position of director of Academic Engagement Programs (AEP). “I’m delighted that Becky has joined the Radcliffe Institute,” Grosz said. “She has already worked with faculty members and senior administrators at many Harvard schools and built a network of connections that will serve as a wonderful base for moving forward various AEP initiatives.”

Wassarman is working to provide new opportunities for Harvard faculty members, Radcliffe Institute fellows, and Harvard students to interact, share knowledge, and initiate scholarly and research endeavors. She earned an AB cum laude in history from Harvard and a JD from the University of Michigan Law School.

Judith Vichniac PhD ’81, who has been director of the Radcliffe Institute Fellowship Program since 2001, has become associate dean of the program. In addition to overseeing the internationally acclaimed program, she’s working with Wassarman to further the goals of AEP. “Dean Grosz is encouraging the Radcliffe faculty leaders to create new programming in the humanities and social sciences that includes activities to draw Radcliffe fellows and Harvard faculty closer together,” Vichniac said. “Becky and I are working together to facilitate this.”

For more information about AEP, visit www.radcliffe.edu/academic_engagement_programs.aspx.

SCHLESINGER CURATOR ON KING OF THE LOBBY
To find out about the beginnings of the modern Washington lobby, read the new book by Kathryn Allamong Jacob, the Johanna-Maria Fraenkel Curator of Manuscripts at the Schlesinger Library. King of the Lobby: The Life and Times of Sam Ward, Man-About-Washington in the Gilded Age, published in December by Johns Hopkins University Press, is about power, politics, and money during the Gilded Age, and how one suave New Yorker combined delicious food, fine wines, and good conversation to reign over the lobby for a decade. Historian Michael McGerr, of Indiana University, says, “The author’s great accomplishment here is to make Sam Ward come alive.”

A reviewer for the Wall Street Journal calls the biography “trim and surprising”—and about Jacob, writes, “She brilliantly shows how, in the hands of a master, lobbying can be lifted to the level of art.”

For more information and to order the book, visit www.kingofthelobby.com/bio.html.

RADCLIFFE EVENTS
For a full list of Institute events, visit www.radcliffe.edu/events/calendar.aspx.
With two days of panel discussions—featuring Radcliffe fellows and several of those who helped to found the Institute in 1999—and a gala dinner for early supporters of the Institute at which Harvard President Drew Gilpin Faust spoke, the Institute kicked off its 10th anniversary year on October 8 and 9. Symposium attendees heard a sampling of the rich offerings that fellows, students, faculty members, and Schlesinger Library researchers experience at the Radcliffe Institute.

On a panel titled “From One Genre to Another,” Jeanne Jordan BI ’93, RI ’03 and Beverly McIver RI ’03 told how they met when they arrived for fellowships at the Radcliffe Institute. Jordan, a documentary filmmaker who was editing a film she made with her husband, Steven Ascher, So Much So Fast, about a
family’s struggle against ALS—was immediately drawn to McIver’s autobiographical paintings. “Jeanne would come into my studio and quietly stare at my paintings,” said McIver. “And she would say, They remind me of film stills.” Little did they know that this would be the beginning of a five-year (and counting) collaboration. Jordan and her husband are now completing a film about McIver and her developmentally challenged sister, titled Raising Renee.

The panel “On Sickness and Health” included Christine Mummery RI ’08, a professor of developmental biology and head of the Department of Anatomy and Embryology at Leiden University Medical Center in the Netherlands. Mummery gave attendees a crash course in stem cells and their potential to create replacement tissues and organs. She described the recent breakthrough that allows scientists to transform adult cells into stem cells that can become any kind of tissue. In one slide, Mummery showed how her lab turns cells from skin into beating heart cells.

Nancy F. Cott AM ’02, director of Radcliffe’s Schlesinger Library, chaired the panel titled “The Digital Revolution and Academic Life,” which included Stuart Shieber ’81, RI ’07, the James O. Welch, Jr. and Virginia B. Welch Professor of Computer Science in Harvard’s School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. Shieber compared the current scholarly communications system to the recording industry and suggested ways in which dissemination could be improved. *

ON-LINE  For more information about the 10th anniversary symposium, visit www.radcliffe.edu/about/10th.aspx.

Celebratory events will occur through the Radcliffe Institute’s 10th anniversary year. For up-to-date information, visit www.radcliffe.edu or call 617-495-8600.

A CONVERT

Within days of the 10th anniversary symposium, Dean Barbara J. Grosz received a “fan letter” from Cecily Cannan Selby ’46, which read, in part:

“You may well know that I was one of those skeptical about the direction of the Institute. . . . We worried that the Institute was valued as a haven for Harvard faculty sabbaticals rather than for independent and global female scholars. Each of the fellows who spoke last week certainly eradicated this perception—thanks, I feel sure, to your and Drew’s leadership. In fellows’ reports, ‘cutting edge’ and ‘feminist’ was the norm!

“This loyal Cliffie now happily understands that the unique leadership and values of the Bunting Institute are being honored, enriched, and enhanced in ways that are meeting contemporary needs.”
Composer Tarik O’Regan RI ’05 answers a question during the panel “From One Genre to Another,” which explored the challenges and rewards of adapting work.

The two-day conference was videotaped. To watch one or all of the six panels, visit www.radcliffe.edu/events.

Christine Mummery RI ’08 is interested in using stem cell-derived cardiomyocytes and vascular cells as disease models for drug discovery and cardiac repair. At the symposium, she gave an overview of the topic.

Susan S. Wallach ’68, JD ’71, an overseer of Harvard University who helped found the institute, with Dean Barbara J. Grosz.

Suzanne Young Murray ’62 and her husband, Terrence Murray ’62, with Nancy E. Hill (center), the first appointee to the professorship the Murrays endowed.

Hauwa Ibrahim RI ’09, a human-rights lawyer, spoke about her experiences in her home country of Nigeria.

Shimon Attie RI ’07 is a visual artist whose work incorporates photography, site-specific and video installation, new media, and public art. He spoke during the panel “On Sickness and Health.”
Seeding New Ventures

RADCLIFFE’S ACADEMIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAMS involve Harvard faculty members, students, fellows, and the public.

by Pat Harrison

To meet the faculty associates of the Radcliffe Institute, you would have to travel from one end of Harvard’s campus to the other, from the bustling streets of the Longwood Medical Area to bucolic Observatory Hill, with stops at the Barker Center across from Harvard Yard, the shiny new Center for Government and International Studies on Cambridge Street, and the towering William James Hall on Kirkland Street. Then you would have to call Berlin, where a faculty associate is at an institute for advanced study, the Wissenschaftskolleg zu Berlin.
This geographic span shows the breadth of Radcliffe’s Academic Engagement Programs (AEP), the faculty-led initiative that Barbara J. Grosz, dean of the Radcliffe Institute and Higgins Professor of Natural Sciences at Harvard’s School of Engineering and Applied Sciences, is building. “We want to engage faculty from all disciplinary areas to explore new approaches to pressing questions,” says Grosz, who served as Radcliffe’s dean of science from 2001 until 2008. Grosz says her goal is to advance research and to promote cooperation among faculty members by providing them with resources and spaces that foster collaboration.

Since becoming dean of the Institute, Grosz has appointed six new faculty associates: Ewa Lajer-Burcharth AM ’00, Brigitte Madrian AM ’06, Leah Price ’91, RI ’07, Robert J. Sampson AM ’03, Dimitar D. Sasselov AM ’03, and Rosalind A. Segal ’79.

EWA LAJER-BURCHARTH, a Radcliffe faculty associate in the humanities and the William Dorr Boardman Professor of Fine Arts in the Department of History of Art and Architecture, has worked with a faculty committee drawn from across the University to design the Institute’s annual gender conference for April 15–16, 2010. At the conference, artists and scholars will explore the ways that gender affects how people experience physical and personal spaces and how space affects the way they think about gender.

LEAH PRICE is helping to convene academics, librarians, and students for a conference titled “Why Books?” on October 28–29, 2010.

LEAH PRICE, a Radcliffe faculty associate in the humanities and a Harvard College professor in the Department of English, and Ann Blair ’84, BI ’99, a former Radcliffe faculty associate in the humanities, a Harvard College professor in the Department of History, and the Henry Charles Lea Professor of History, will convene academics, librarians, and students at the Institute next fall for a conference called “Why Books?” on October 28–29.

Realizing a vision of Grosz and Diana Sorensen AM ’01, dean of the arts and humanities in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, and planned in consultation with faculty members from a range of fields, the conference will further conversations on the history and future of books.

One of the most ambitious AEP ventures is the City as Social Science Laboratory, part of the Radcliffe Institute’s new Policy Studies Initiative, designed by ROBERT J. SAMPSON and BRIGITTE MADRIAN, the Institute’s social science faculty associates. Madrian and Sampson are working with faculty from other schools at the University to link records in the Boston area—including medical reports, crime records, census data, and immigration information—with the goal of studying city problems such as substandard housing, failing schools, and crime.

“There’s a wealth of data in the Boston area that researchers and administrators in local institutions have compiled,” says Sampson, chairman of Harvard’s Department of Sociology and the Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences. He and Madrian, the Aetna Professor of Public Policy and Corporate Management at the Harvard Kennedy School, think Boston has been underutilized as a laboratory for social issues. By launching the City as Social Science Laboratory, Madrian and Sampson can bring local practitioners together with leading academic researchers and apply data to urban problems.

Madrian and Sampson have strong ties to other social scientists at Harvard. Among their collaborators is Nancy E. Hill, a professor at Harvard’s Graduate School of Education, who became the first appointee to the Radcliffe Institute’s Suzanne Young Murray Professorship in July.

To work with the AEP faculty to strengthen the Institute’s connections across the University and to expand AEP activities, Grosz has appointed Rebecca Wassarman as director of AEP. (See page 2.)

Discussing the AEP initiatives, Grosz describes the Institute as an “engine of intellectual innovation.” The Institute has always supported activities that engage Harvard faculty members, students, fellows, and the public, but organizing these activities under the one AEP umbrella is Grosz’s innovation. “The best way to draw people at the University together is to engage people from its different parts to address important problems,” she says. “That’s how the Radcliffe Institute is seeding new intellectual ventures.”

“This is a terrific program,” says Harvard President Drew Faust. “It places the Radcliffe Institute at the center of our efforts to foster collaboration among faculty members from across the University who bring a range of disciplinary perspectives to issues of pressing concern.”
Nearly 50 years after helping to found Fluxus, the international art movement, **Alison Knowles** continues to create Fluxus-inspired work.

More Than Found Objects

by Kristin Waller

According to the introduction given by Helen Molesworth, then curator of contemporary art at the Harvard Art Museum, Alison Knowles RI ’10 helped found “probably the most important art movement you haven’t heard of.” Knowles corrected that situation on October 19, when she delivered “Fluxus Around the Clock,” this year’s Julia S. Phelps Annual Lecture in Art and Humanities, held in the Radcliffe Gymnasium.

In the 1960s, Knowles noted, New York City’s Canal Street was like none other in history. Barrels filled with knickknacks lined the wide avenue, and an enterprising artist could gather materials for little money. The Fluxus cohort did just that. Knowles showed slides of a parade of pieces, including her own *Bean Rolls*, book objects made from cans, scrolls of text, and beans. (She

Knowles was introduced to Fluxus through the New York Mycological Society, led by John Cage.
admitted to a preoccupation with beans: “I study them, and I use them in my art, and I eat them, like everybody else.”)

But Fluxus dealt with more than found objects. It sought to blur the distinction between artist and audience. Event scores made performance art out of simple actions, like her 1962 Make a Salad. Her 1967 collaboration with Marcel Duchamp, the silk-screen print Coeurs Volants, proved that more traditional media were also game. Poetry, too, served as fodder for Fluxus: Knowles’s “The House of Dust,” perhaps the world’s first computerized poem, earned her a 1968 Guggenheim Fellowship.

After the history lesson, the lights dimmed, and five women joined Knowles onstage to perform event scores. In Newspaper Music, they pulled out rustling papers, reading aloud in several languages as Knowles conducted. When she signaled a decrescendo, the multilingual tumult turned into the low murmur of a coffee shop before dwindling to whispers. Then Jessica Higgins, an intermedia artist and Knowles’s daughter, stepped forward for Loose Pages. Higgins became a living sculpture for Knowles, who dressed her in leaves of flaxen paper. As Knowles added pages to her legs, Higgins curled around her mother’s body for support.

After the performance, an audience member asked Knowles if she found special meaning in performing with Higgins. Yes, Knowles replied, “I like the concept that I can’t find the right dress for her . . . because it’s got to be perfect for Jessica.” The questioner? Susan Phelps Napier, daughter of Julia S. Phelps, the art historian and teacher for whom this Radcliffe Institute lecture series was named.

Kristin Waller ’05 is the assistant Web editor at the Radcliffe Institute.
Parsing
The Book of Revelation

ELAINE PAGELS
delves into the history of the “strangest and most controversial book in the Bible.”

by Deborah Blagg


Thought to have been written in the first century by the Jewish prophet John during his exile on the Aegean island of Patmos, the book describes apocalyptic visions of suffering and redemption. “In the Book of Revelation,” Pagels said, “John draws on his own people’s religious propaganda—the prophetic writings of Jeremiah, Isaiah, and Ezekiel—to create a kind of anti-Roman propaganda.” Those previous authors portrayed the rulers of Babylon as multiheaded leviathans, serpents, or even a giant whore riding on a scarlet dragon. John uses the same primordial monsters to represent the Roman empire in epic battles that rage through heaven and earth—battles in which God and his angels ultimately prevail.

“It’s really a script by John Milton, screenplay by Steven Spielberg,” commented Pagels, showing a slide of a grotesque dragon being thrown out of heaven, one of scores of artistic renderings that have been inspired by the Book of Revelation.

THE BOOK OF REVELATION has influenced artists since it was first published. This work, The Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nations’ Millennium General Assembly (1950–1964), consists of 180 components and was created by James Hampton, representing his entire artistic output. Hampton—who referred to himself as St. James, Director for Special Projects for the State of Eternity—scavenged the materials for his masterpiece from his job as a night laborer and built it in a rented garage.

ELAINE PAGELS studied dance in Martha Graham’s studio before turning to comparative religion. Her December lecture marked her first visit to the Radcliffe Gym since she took dance classes there while a doctoral candidate at Harvard.
over the centuries. Respected for her ability to make ancient religious texts accessible to modern readers, Pagels commented on the cultural significance of images ranging from Hieronymus Bosch’s The Last Judgment to Albrecht Dürer’s The Vision of the Seven Candlesticks to twentieth-century American visionary artist James Hampton’s The Throne of the Third Heaven.

Pagels remarked on Revelation’s “astonishingly powerful influence on Western culture, even today, in the personal lives and political imagination of countless people.” Noting that her own interest in the book was awakened after the United States invaded Iraq in 2003, “when we saw many people actually interpreting world events from this very source,” she said that the book was also widely invoked during the Black Plague in Europe, the Protestant Reformation, the French Revolution, the American Civil War, and World War II. Among the reasons for its lasting appeal, Pagels suggested, is John’s clear delineation between good and evil and his invitation to the reader to make moral sense from conflict and suffering. “And of course,” she added, “he speaks powerfully not only about fear, but also about hope.”

Deborah Blagg is a freelance writer.
Once minister of health for Mexico, where he oversaw sweeping health reforms, Julio Frenk now promotes his women-and-health agenda as dean of the Harvard School of Public Health.

A Broader Vision of Women and Health

by Courtney Humphries

Global health policy has often viewed women’s health through a narrow lens, focusing on issues around childbirth and reproduction. But Julio Frenk AM ’08, dean of the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), says that the role of women in the global health agenda has been evolving—and must continue to do so. Frenk, who delivered the Schlesinger Library’s 20th annual Maurine and Robert Rothschild Lecture at the Radcliffe Institute on November 2, lays out a broader vision of “women and health” that makes room for the multiple health needs and roles of women throughout their lives.

Frenk puts the issue in the wider context of cataclysmic changes in global health over the past century. Average life expectancy has jumped, but there are still major gaps between countries. Patterns of disease have shifted, with noncommunicable diseases like diabetes, cancer, and heart disease rising in developed countries and, more recently, in the developing world. But even as the world’s disease patterns shift, the old problems don’t go away for its poorer regions. Half a million mothers still lose their lives in childbirth every year, which Frenk calls “the most unequally distributed health indicator in the world.”

Frenk proposes an approach to women and health that includes these long-standing public-health problems while embracing emerging women’s health concerns. He explains this new view as a framework of three concentric circles: The issue of maternal health and mortality is at the core; the next circle represents reproductive health; and the outer circle represents other health problems common among women, such as breast cancer and depression, while also addressing even broader issues—the role of women as informal providers of health care at home, women as health professionals in the workforce, and the issue of gender inequity in health care delivery.

As an example of how this vision would be put into action, Frenk describes a flagship initiative on women and health in Mexico. He came to HSPH as dean in 2008, after serving as minister of health in Mexico and overseeing sweeping health reforms there, including a system for providing universal health coverage to a population in which half of the citizens were uninsured. Through the women-and-health initiative, the country was able to dramatically reduce maternal mortality. It also addressed reproductive health and fertility, and launched a controversial effort to make the morning-after pill available to women—a policy, Frenk says, that was ultimately backed by a majority of women. The government also led programs to tackle important health problems for women, focusing on cancer and domestic abuse. Finally, it launched programs to study and address gender biases in health care.

Now, Frenk says, “it’s necessary to share globally what’s happened with the initiative.” The ability to share locally generated knowledge is, according to him, one of the benefits of today’s globalized society.

Courtney Humphries is a science and nature writer. She is the author of Superdove: How the Pigeon Took Manhattan . . . And the World (Smithsonian, 2008).
Triumph through Meditation

by Deborah Blagg

In 1993, Ma Thida RI ’10, a Burmese surgeon, fiction writer, and active supporter of government opposition party leader Aung San Suu Kyi, was sentenced to 20 years in prison for her peaceful efforts to promote democratic change in a country with a long history of political oppression and human rights violations. She was held in Yangon’s Insein Prison in virtual solitary confinement for five and a half years, despite developing life-threatening health problems, including tuberculosis.

International attention and pressure from Amnesty International and PEN resulted in Thida’s early release in 1999. Since leaving Burma (now Myanmar) for the first time in 2005, she has traveled widely to attend conferences and programs in medicine and literature. As a Radcliffe Institute fellow this year, she is working on a book about her experience with Vipassana meditation, a practice that enabled her to survive the harsh conditions of her imprisonment.

Delivering the Institute’s annual Rama S. Mehta Lecture in mid-November, Thida spoke movingly of her country’s ongoing plight and of the courage required of those who oppose political oppression. As a physician, she decried Myanmar’s appalling lack of attention to public health issues. With per-capita government spending on health care at less than 70 cents a year, she noted, “only a few wealthy citizens can afford medical care.” Among the rest of the population—including millions left homeless in 2008 in the wake of Cyclone Nargis and more than a million internally displaced political refugees—malaria, tuberculosis, and HIV/AIDS are rampant. The infant mortality rate is 74 per 1,000 births, Thida said, and for women of child-bearing age, pregnancy-related complications are the leading cause of death. “Yet, despite these dire circumstances,” she reported, “the government makes it difficult for young physicians to practice medicine by charging very high licensing fees.”

Describing her imprisonment, Thida said she was kept in a cell 23 hours a day and denied medical treatment; at one point, she weighed just 80 pounds. Her daily practice of Vipassana meditation, which focuses the mind on universal truths of impermanence, suffering, and egolessness, sustained her. “I never felt I was a victim,” recalled Thida, who meditated up to 20 hours a day. “My premise was that the only one who could hurt me was me. So I meditated to keep myself safe.” Her inner strength inspired other prisoners and at least one of her guards, who was moved to tell her, “Thida, you are free in your thoughts, which I am not.”

Thida meditated for up to 20 hours a day while imprisoned. One guard told her, “Thida, you are free in your thoughts, which I am not.”
THE MAXIMUM ACCESS PROJECT has made it possible for the Schlesinger Library to process collections in record numbers.

Uncovering The Past

In the world of special collections, unprocessed manuscript materials represent the unknown, full of possibility, each collection unique. Our basic bibliographic records and container lists, created at the time of accessioning, can only hint at the overall subject matter. The actual contents remain hidden from view, intellectually as well as physically, until subjected to thorough examination, analysis, reorganization, preservation, and rehousing, followed by the creation of descriptive online finding aids. This is the stuff of processing and cataloging, and while it is extremely labor-, space-, and time-intensive, its rewards are great.

Although a few collections arrive at the library in good condition and usable order, many arrive with hundreds of loose documents, undated letters in their original postmarked envelopes, labels falling off those folders.
that do exist, confidential letters mixed in among publications, large clips joining multiple documents of varying dates, fragile scrapbooks with brittle pages disintegrating, and unidentified photographs and audiovisual materials tucked in with other papers. The library, like most repositories, does not allow access to these collections because fragile materials may be irreparably damaged by handling, confidences prematurely revealed, and the only clues to an item's source—provided by this original physical proximity—lost.

The Maximum Access Project is designed to deal with those collections designated as “closed until processed,” setting priorities primarily on the basis of research demand. Beginning in November 2007, the library hired an additional seven manuscript processors, two book catalogers, and one audiovisual cataloger. Since that time, nearly fifty manuscript collections have been fully processed, duplicates and materials not of permanent research value have been removed (saving both storage costs and researchers’ time) from nearly 1,200 feet of papers, and the remaining 900 feet have been arranged and described.

The collections processed thus far include the papers of thirty-seven individuals and the records of thirteen organizations. Though most document the twentieth century and the beginnings of the twenty-first, a number include materials from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries—with two of those containing items from the 1600s. The collections with the greatest chronological span tend to be family papers covering several generations. Emerging from the folded and rolled packets have been not only correspondence between parents and children, but professional and business records of family members, wartime correspondence from different countries and periods, and descriptions of travel.

Papers include those of artists and musicians, journalists, activists, nurses, educators, and other professionals. Activities of American women living and working outside the United States, along with those of women and their families who emigrated to the United States, are also well documented in recently processed collections.

The archives of organizations are an excellent source for learning more about under-documented individuals and their communities. For example, the records of the feminist periodical Sojourner include many letters from prisoners; those of the South Boston Neighborhood House document the residents and neighborhood it served; letters to Ms. magazine discuss a wide variety of issues; and letters from preteen and teenage readers to Elizabeth Winship’s “Ask Beth” column seek advice on health, relationships, and sexuality.

We know that equally rich materials will be uncovered as the project moves forward, adding to the universe of documents upon which our understanding of the past is based.

* * * * * * *

Katherine Gray Kraft is senior archivist at the Schlesinger Library.

TO THE MAX

THE MAXIMUM ACCESS PROJECT has increasingly made materials available to researchers. Here is a sampling of previously unavailable treasures.

FLORYNCE (FLO) KENNEDY, a lawyer, civil rights activist, and feminist, leads a protest against South African apartheid. The photograph below, by Don Lynn, is from the Florynce Kennedy Papers.

JULIA CHILD, below, kneads dough in a photo from the Avis MacVicar De Voto Papers.

CAROLINE ACKERMAN, below—a pilot, journalist, and travel expert—poses in her flying gear in this uncredited photo, from the Caroline Ackerman Papers.

BOOK PROCESSING increased by nearly half, making available the books below, with pages by Corita Kent, and above right, by an 1898 Radcliffe alumna.

Katherine Gray Kraft is senior archivist at the Schlesinger Library.
Debra Fischer’s Quest for New Planets

After helping to identify about half of the 420 known planets outside our solar system, Radcliffe fellow Debra Fischer goes looking for more.

by Robert Naeye

Searching for planets around other stars is a high-stakes business. Every time astronomers find one of these so-called exoplanets, they add to humanity’s collective knowledge of what kinds of worlds exist out there. Better yet, each discovery brings us a wee bit closer to answering the ultimate question of whether we share the universe with other living beings. A lot of these discoveries have been made lately. Twenty years ago, astronomers didn’t know of a single planet outside our solar system. Today, the number stands at about 420, and the pace of discovery is about to accelerate.

Although exoplanet hunters may not care to discuss it, their quest is also a race
for the history books. Many milestone discoveries have generated headlines worldwide and will be celebrated in books and articles for decades or centuries to come.

The Most Prolific Planet-Hunting Team in History
Debra Fischer RI ’10 knows this all too well. She’s been in this business for 13 years, and her name will forever be associated with one of the most important milestones of all. In 1999, she did the computer data analysis that revealed that the star Upsilon Andromedae harbored not just one planet, as was previously known, but three. For the first time, astronomers knew for a fact that a star similar to our Sun was orbited by a family of planets. Suddenly, our solar system had cosmic company.

“Upsilon Andromedae was our first glimpse at another system of planets,” says Fischer, who recently moved from San Francisco State University to Yale and is currently the Edward, Frances, and Shirley B. Daniels Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute. “It was amazing to see three gas-giant planets packed inside the equivalent of Mars in our solar system. This prolific system showed us that planet formation was a robust process.”

For the first part of her career, Fischer was a key member of the most prolific planet-hunting team in history: the group founded by Geoff Marcy (now at the University of California at Berkeley) and Paul Butler (now at the Carnegie Institution in Washington, DC). This group has discovered about half of the 400 known exoplanets and is renowned in the astronomical community for its scientific integrity. In a field littered with false alarms, the Marcy/Butler/Fischer group has never had to retract a single claimed planet discovery. “There are many planet-hunting teams, but the Marcy and Butler team commands a unique respect from their colleagues,” says exoplanet researcher Marc Kuchner of NASA’s Goddard Space Flight Center. “The feeling is that they don’t just find candidate planets, they find planets.”

Project Long Shot
Although Fischer still works with Marcy, she’s now leading her own research project in a competition to achieve yet another milestone: finding one or more planets around the star system closest to the Sun, Alpha Centauri. “There’s a reason we call this Project Long Shot: It’s not going to be easy,”
“There’s a reason we call this Project Long Shot,” Fischer says. “Searching for planets around Alpha Centauri is the most speculative thing I have ever done.”

Fischer says, “Searching for planets around Alpha Centauri is the most speculative thing I have ever done.”

Our Milky Way Galaxy consists of some two hundred billion stars, most of them in multiple-star systems. Alpha Centauri contains two stars quite similar to the Sun (though one is a little bigger and brighter and the other a little smaller and dimmer). The stars orbit around each other every 80 years at a distance that averages about the same as Uranus’s distance from the Sun. The system also has a third member, a tiny, feeble star (a “red dwarf” in astronomical parlance) known as Proxima Centauri, which orbits the inner pair at such a wide distance that it takes at least 100,000 years to complete a single circuit. At a distance of 4.24 light-years (a light-year is the distance that light travels in one year, about 5.9 trillion miles), Proxima is the closest star to the Sun. Fischer and her colleagues are interested in the main pair, Alpha Centauri A and B, because of their similarity to the Sun. These stars are 4.37 light-years from Earth.

To bag her elusive quarry, Fischer is employing the tried-and-true “wobble” technique with which astronomers have discovered a large majority of the 420 known exoplanets. As planets go around a star, they tug gravitationally on it, just as the star tugs on them. If a planet has enough mass, it causes the star to wobble, the way an Olympic hammer thrower will appear to wobble as he whirls around just before releasing the hammer. This wobble shows up as subtle shifts in the star’s spectrum, which modern instruments can record. When the star is moving toward Earth, its light shifts slightly toward the blue end of the spectrum, and when it’s moving away, the light shifts toward the red—much as an ambulance siren will appear to shift toward a high-frequency pitch when approaching and toward the bass when receding. This is the well-known Doppler effect.

Alpha Centauri A and B are among the brightest stars in our night sky, owing to their relative proximity, but they appear in the skies over the Southern Hemisphere. Fischer and her colleagues are using a telescope in the Chilean Andes that was on the verge of being mothballed. Their detector

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**WOBBLING TOWARD DISCOVERY**

Using the Doppler effect to detect new planets

If a planet has enough mass, it causes the star to wobble; and that wobble shows up as shifts in the star’s spectrum. When the star is moving toward Earth, its light shifts slightly toward the blue end of the spectrum, and when it’s moving away, the light shifts toward the red—much as an ambulance siren will appear to shift toward a high-frequency pitch when approaching and toward the bass when receding. This is the well-known Doppler effect.

Diagram by Casey Reed
was built in the 1980s, but with $600,000 in federal stimulus funding from the National Science Foundation, they’re building a new instrument that will be ready around December 2010.

One reason the effort is considered a long shot is that many astronomers question whether planets could even form or survive around Alpha Centauri A or B. The two stars follow a highly elongated orbit, and the gravitational stirrings of either member could disrupt or even fling out planets around the other. But Fischer notes that several planets have already been found in similar double-star systems. “Never listen to theorists if you’re an observer,” she says, “because they would have told you that most of the planets we’ve found so far wouldn’t have been there.”

**Competing for Interstellar Destinations**

A European team is also hunting for Alpha Centauri planets, using a bigger telescope and a better detector. This group recently announced 32 new planets, several times scooping Fischer’s team. Over the years, the American group founded by Marcy and Butler has had somewhat testy relations with their European counterparts, as the two teams have outdone each other and aimed for glory. But Fischer points out a bright side to the competition: If either group finds Alpha Centauri planets, the other can provide independent confirmation.

There’s also the problem of the stars themselves. Just as on the Sun, giant bubbles of gas rise and fall in the upper layers of Alpha Centauri A and B, and their motion can mimic the subtle spectral shifts induced by orbiting planets. Fischer’s group will have to use sophisticated mathematical analysis to tease out the periodic signals caused by these orbiting planets, and that will require hundreds of thousands of measurements taken over four or five years. Project Long Shot began in January 2009 and has already taken more than 50,000 measurements. “I’m estimating 60 percent odds that everyone will be happy with the results,” says astrophysicist Greg Laughlin of the University of California at Santa Cruz.

If Fischer’s team, or its European competitors, finds planets around Alpha Centauri, they will be logical targets for humanity’s first true interstellar mission. Although five NASA spacecraft are currently on trajectories that will escape the solar system, they are moving very slowly relative to the speed of light and will have fallen silent tens of thousands of years before encountering any star. But with Alpha Centauri less than five light-years away, it’s conceivable that our descendants may decide to target this system, especially if it proves to have planets.

**Kepler Blows the Roof Off**

Dimitar D. Sasselov AM ’03, a Bulgarian-born astronomer who is now a leading exoplanet researcher at the Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics—and a faculty associate of the Institute’s Academic Engagement Programs—suggests that one day scientists may build miniature probes the size of cell phones and accelerate them toward Alpha Centauri. Using giant sails pushed by the solar wind and perhaps ultra-high-powered lasers, such craft might achieve 10 percent the speed of light, and thus reach their destination within the lifetime of the people who built them. “My son is now 15, and he’s planning to go to MIT to study robotic engineering, so maybe someday he can take over this project,” jokes Fischer.

By the time humanity is able to launch bona fide interstellar probes, the exoplanet count will be in the thousands. On March 6, 2009, NASA launched Kepler, a new space telescope devoted to finding exoplanets by watching them pass in front of their host stars. By monitoring 100,000 stars with an ultrasensitive telescope and detectors, Kepler is likely to add hundreds of planets in the next few years alone—including the first Earth-size planets in the habitable zones of their host stars—and thus will blow the roof off the field. But as Fischer notes, “Kepler never would have gotten off the ground without these earlier discoveries.”

Robert Naeye is editor in chief of *Sky & Telescope* magazine, published in Cambridge, Massachusetts.
American women circumvent the globe

Cornelia James Cannon, an 1899 graduate of Radcliffe College and a longtime Cambridge resident, set off with her sister on an automobile camping trip in the summer of 1917. “Our plan is to leave our homes, our eight young children, our social and domestic responsibilities, and sally forth to
see the world, as free lances and comrades of the road,” she wrote later. “A Ford, a tent, a camp stove, and the world is ours for the taking.”

Cannon’s account, “A Middle-Aged Adventure,” is wry and defiant. (“Our consciences were wrenched at the thought of our careless irresponsibility—for about a mile,” she observed.) It was never published, but is now available through a new digital project at Harvard, “Travel Writing, Spectacle, and World History.” (The exhibit, To Know the Whole World, is on view through February 26, 2010, in the Schlesinger Library’s first floor exhibit area during regular library hours.)

The project, accessible through HOLLIS to Harvard students and researchers, collects hundreds of travel accounts by women. The earliest is an 1818 letter describing a family wedding, the start of a nine-year sojourn to England. The latest is a 1972 account of a trip to China.

Along with manuscripts like Cannon’s, there are diaries, sketchbooks, photographs, letters, watercolors, and ephemera, including cruise ship menus and old passports.

The digital archive, which opened in November, was assembled from collections at the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America. The library’s extensive archives, begun in 1943, go well beyond travel writing. But a lot of such writing, evocative of women’s history, is contained in 3,200 collections of family papers, institutional archives, and manuscripts.

Cannon (1876–1969), a novelist who traveled the world well into her 80s, is represented in part by hand-colored sketches from her

1. Mary Anderson Boit’s travel diary of her European grand tour, 1896–1898, from the Cabot Family Papers.

2. A 1929 watercolor by Wilma Cannon, from the Cannon Family Papers, illustrates her mother Cornelia James Cannon’s typescript “Art Awheel in Italy.”

3. Sarah Shurtleff’s travel diary, 1898–1899, from the Nichols-Shurtleff Family Papers.
In an era when travel writing was considered a male domain, women were also creative observers of the world.

The ease of digital travel is helpful to researchers. “Once a scholar breaks through the initial avalanche, the quality and depth of the material is excellent,” Katherine Stebbings McCaffrey said of the digital archives. “I found things I never would have otherwise.”

She is a history and literature lecturer at Harvard who teaches “Americans Abroad,” a freshman seminar on travel writing. She plans to have her class visit the exhibit soon.

Digital collections allow scholars to share sources and insights more easily, said McCaffrey. For students, the on-line collections are not a replacement for visiting the archive, but they are an attractive bridge to it.

The travel-writing archive was digitized in collaboration with Adam Matthew Digital. The British-based company digitizes collections at libraries around the world, and then offers them for sale as teaching and research aids. The for-profit path is one model of getting the Schlesinger archives “into the digital arena,” said Dunn. The library is also exploring grants to fund this kind of work.

A for-profit model is acceptable for some collections, but not others, said Dunn. The suffrage collection, for instance, would be better digitized as an open-source archive, available “at no cost,” she said, “for the public good.”

Following that open-access model will be the Schlesinger’s collected papers of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (1860–1935), a writer, editor, commercial artist, and social reformer. She is best remembered for Herland, a 1915 utopian novel that imagines a peaceful isolated society of women, and for “The Yellow Wallpaper,” an 1892 short story regarded as an early feminist classic. Gilman’s papers will be digitized and available next year, in celebration of the 150th anniversary of her birth.

Corydon Ireland is a staff writer at the Harvard Gazette, in which this article previously appeared.
Could the violin bow—and classical music as we know it—be in peril?

MAKING THE BOW
A violin bow is a delicate tool made up of few parts. The gracefully curved stick, carved from one piece of wood, attaches to a horsehair ribbon; a tiny screw adjusts the tautness of the ribbon by moving a small piece of ebony called a frog. Bow makers craft these tools by hand. Performance-quality
bows, which allow professional musicians to play violins, violas, and cellos, are made of pernambuco heartwood. Unfortunately for bow makers, the pernambuco tree is endangered; as a result, so is their livelihood. Journalist Russ Rymer RI ’10, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Fellow and himself an amateur cellist, has been following their story since 2001. Now he is writing a book, “Out of Pernambuco: Music, Craft, and a Disappearing Tree.”

Rymer was working on another musical topic when he decided to pick up the cello. “I was 47 years old—I’m coming late to the cello,” he says. In the course of learning the instrument and talking to people, he heard about the troubling scarcity of pernambuco wood.

The Tree That Changed Music
At one time, the pernambuco tree—named pau-brasil by the colonizing Portuguese—grew abundantly in Brazil, especially in the once vast Mata Atlântica, or Atlantic Forest; in fact, the country may owe its name to the tree. Pernambuco wood yields a deep purple-red dye, which was in high demand in Europe. Consequently, a lot of imported pernambuco was in Paris in the late 18th century, says Rymer, when an enterprising bow maker named François Xavier Tourte decided to use it.

Tourte, a former watchmaker, had reconfigured the violin bow with a host of innovations—and his adoption of pernambuco revolutionized not only his craft, but music in general. “You wouldn’t think that there was this one tool so intrinsic to a form that we’re all familiar with: classical music,” says Rymer. “But the bow came along at a time when music was changing radically and became integral to that change.”

Current fellow Emily I. Dolan RI ’10, a musicologist who is working on a book about the history of orchestration and how the consolidation of the modern orchestra changed musical thought and practice, says that the pernambuco Tourte bow played an important role in both the standardization of the orchestra and the “evening out,” or smoothing out, of individual instruments. “The Tourte bow allows the player to produce an even tone from frog to tip,” she says, “just as the mechanization of the woodwinds—something that really took off in the 19th century—helped equalize each pitch, so that all notes could be played at the same volume.”

This, in turn, helped shape the orchestra.

Rymer explains that earlier bows allowed a completely different articulation—a softness at the beginning and end of each note—whereas the new music demanded a strong attack. Pernambuco’s physical characteristics, its heaviness, springiness, and sound transmittal properties, allowed both long legato passages and what Rymer calls “Paganini pyrotechnics.” Of several musical innovations that allowed later classical music, Tourte’s bow is considered the most important. “Composers listened to what the bow was capable of and wrote music for it,” Rymer says. “Romantic era music and later, if it involves string instruments, is written for this bow.” The tool remains virtually unchanged even now: Tourte’s charts are as much a part of the modern bow maker’s workshop as his tool kit.

Environmental Crisis
Exploitation of the pernambuco tree dates back centuries, to the days when it was highly sought after by Europeans for its dyewood. That exploitation continued as the supply of pernambuco wood dwindled. Dolan says, “It is hard not to see poignant parallels between the challenges faced today by the pernambuco tree, artisan bow makers, and classical music more generally. They may all be under threat of extinction.”

The real threat to the pernambuco tree is

The Last Craftsmen
For many years, scientists have been fascinated with pernambuco wood’s special properties and exactly what makes the wood sound so good. Every aspect of a pernambuco bow has been tested, its inner properties analyzed by high-tech meters designed to test airplane aluminum for flaws. And yet, the people who best understand the wood may be not materials scientists or acoustics engineers but the bow makers who take years to learn their craft.

One bow maker whom Rymer met while researching his book had a curious method of determining whether a piece of wood would produce a good bow. “He picked up a shaving from the floor, ran it through his fingers, and then tasted it,” Rymer recalls.

Bow making is a lifetime apprenticeship. “The variability of the pernambuco wood means that the artisan’s task when making a bow can’t just be format and formula,” says Rymer. “They’re taking what Tourte gave them but accommodating the mystery of the wood.” He maintains that these bow makers, along with other instrument makers, are the last people creating an essential durable good (that is, not a luxury or ornamental item) from beginning to end by hand, individually, in a way that’s been passed down from master to apprentice. They are among the last craftsmen.

Indeed, their centuries-old tradition may be coming to an end as the supply of pernambuco wood dwindles. Dolan says, “It is hard not to see poignant parallels between the challenges faced today by the pernambuco tree, artisan bow makers, and classical music more generally. They may all be under threat of extinction.”

A PAU-BRASIL TREE, or pernambuco, in the CEPLAC Pau-brasil Reserve near Porto Seguro, Bahia, an arboretum for the study of indigenous species.
deforestation; old-growth trees have been felled at alarming rates.
ENDANGERED CRAFTS?

WHILE RUSS RYMER warns of the possible extinction of the craft of violin bow making, Heather Paxson RI ’10, the Mary I. Bunting Fellow at Radcliffe, believes that artisanship itself is alive and thriving. Paxson, an anthropologist studying American artisanal cheesemaking, says, “While many artisan traditions have attenuated, new ones are emerging. Artisanship is not, I believe, endangered. It is significant today not only for the quality of the craft objects it produces, but also because it offers a mentally and physically engaging vocation—meaningful work—for practitioners.”

Of raw wood for a single 70-gram bow.” An entire tree could be cut down without yielding any bow-quality wood. Thanks to a more scientific approach to bow making, that old formula no longer applies, but wood waste is inevitable: Only the heartwood is suitable for a performance-quality bow.

Yet the real threat to the pernambuco tree is not bow making but deforestation. As entire sections of forest have been razed—usually to make way for eucalyptus and other cash crops—old-growth pernambuco trees have been felled at alarming rates. “I’ve heard stories of them pulling these enormous—house-sized—tractors out into the forest,” says Rymer. “They’d position them a kilometer apart, connect them with chains, and then just drive.” The old Mata Atlântica has given way to roads and plantations.

Pernambuco likes to grow in the forest among other trees; one has to hunt for it. “Their really dense wood comes from their struggling for light in the forest, twisting and turning and trying to get their few pitiful leaves up high above the canopy, so that they can get some sunshine,” Rymer says. For this reason, planting pernambuco in a field doesn’t seem to yield the same quality of wood, just a pleasant round tree.

Once the hallmark of the eastern coast of Brazil, pernambuco is now so scarce that its wood must earn certification from the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species before it can be sold.

Lasting Repercussions and New Hope

And this is where the bow makers’ problems may just be beginning. These artisans, once afraid to publicize the pernambuco crisis for fear of being blamed for it, have made great strides in helping to secure the trees’ future by calling for a moratorium on the acquisition of new wood. They believe that pulling together the existing stock will give them enough wood to last 30 years—which they hope will be sufficient to bring the tree back from the brink.

Bow makers are quickly becoming not only the end users of the wood, but also its stewards. In addition to raising awareness of the problem, these artisans donate one dollar from each new bow purchase for pernambuco restoration, and they have been traveling to Brazil to spearhead important scientific research, tree planting, and forest conservation efforts. An international bow makers’ organization has partnered with an agricultural cooperative in the cacao-growing region of Bahia, Brazil. Cacao thrives in the shade; the subsistence farmers who grow it receive money for using pernambuco trees as overstory rather than cutting them down to sell. “Classical music’s future may rest on chocolate bars,” jokes Rymer.

All these efforts look promising at the moment, but their success can’t be known until the newly planted trees have reached maturity, in 30 years. In the meantime, the bow makers wait.

Telling the Story

While the future of violin bow makers hangs in the balance, Rymer focuses on bringing their plight to a larger audience. At the moment, many musicians who depend on the bow for their art aren’t aware of the problem. The far-reaching book Rymer is writing traces the history of pernambuco from its discovery in the New World to its clash with the global economy that now threatens it. Research for the book has taken him to the receding forests of Brazil, to American motels where wood dealers have stashed contraband wood under their beds, to musical workshops around the globe, and finally to the Radcliffe Institute, where he now works on his manuscript.

Rymer feels extraordinarily lucky to be at the Institute, where so many fellows’ interests coincide with his. He has connected with Dolan on instrumentation, with Heather Paxson RI ’10 on issues of artisanship, and with others on such matters as the prayerful aspects of old methods of work and the history of industrialization. “There are so many angles of view here from people of stunningly diverse backgrounds that after my talk they were just feeding these things into my thinking about this project,” he says. Then he quips, “I’m so grateful to Radcliffe for engineering this program so beautifully around my needs.”
PRESERVING A TREE AND A CRAFT

HELPING TO ENSURE THAT bows may continue to be made in the French tradition, as above, the International Pernambuco Conservation Initiative partners with Brazil’s agricultural research institute CEPLAC to survey trees for seed sources and with the Biofabrica nursery complex to nurture seedlings.

users of the wood, but also its stewards.
The Mind-Spirit Problem

Sometimes a novelist of steady, sterling output will gain a reputation as “a writer’s writer.” Her distinctive style and powers of invention sustain a level of excellence that other novelists admire, talk about, and learn from. Rebecca Newberger Goldstein has achieved this status with her six previous works of fiction, not to mention her innovative biographies of Spinoza and Kurt Godel.

But Goldstein might better be termed “a thinker’s writer,” a category she could be said to have invented all on her own. Her first book, _The Mind-Body Problem_ (1985), with its brainy philosopher-heroine married young to a seemingly benign math genius, has long been the thinking woman’s favorite novel, appealing to generations of smart young women uncertain about how to put their lives together after grad school. Readers could forget their worries and enjoy Goldstein’s riffs on higher math and logic until—happy surprise!—they found she was discoursing just as enjoyably (and edifyingly) on sex, love, and marriage.

Successive novels ventured into other realms of science and different historical eras. The brooding _Dark Sister_ (1991) imagined a day in the life of William James, on which the mind-scientist visits an eccentric woman astronomer whose sister fears she is going mad; Goldstein made all this entirely, deliciously, believable. _Properties of Light_ (2000) introduced readers to a family of physicists in 1970s Princeton, cultlike in their devotion to the one true way of understanding the universe.

In Goldstein’s novels, the border between understanding and belief, hard knowledge and supple intuition, is always in question. And so it comes as no surprise to open _36 Arguments for the Existence of God_ and meet a lovable psychologist-hero who is intent on disproving every one of those arguments. Goldstein’s latest novel might have been titled “The Mind-Spirit Problem,” because her vibrant cast of characters struggle to reconcile the bitter truths their minds insist on with an equally persistent desire in their hearts to do good and to infuse the world with meaning.

If there is a poetry of philosophy, Goldstein has written it in her chapter titles: “The Argument from the Improbable Self”; “The Argument from Dappled Things”; “The Argument from the Irrepressible Past.” And then, as novelist, she weaves a satisfying plot through these chapters, tracing a week in the life of Professor Cass Seltzer, whose success with a book, _The Varieties of Religious Illusion_, has lifted him into the academic A-League, wreaking havoc in his personal life. Part puzzle, part poem, part psychological profile, part philosophical praxis—this book is all Goldstein, and her devoted readers (writers and thinkers) will be grateful once again.

Perfect Life: A Novel
by Jessica Shattuck ’94
_Norton; $24.95._
_315 pp._

With her second novel, _Perfect Life_, Jessica Shattuck has assured herself a place alongside Rona Jaffe and Alice Adams as one of the great chroniclers of Cliffie life after graduation. Shattuck’s Cliffies are, of course, Harvard women—three friends who shared a suite their senior year. She adds a Harvard man about whom the plot revolves. Neil Banks—college boyfriend of Jenny, best pal to Elise and Laura—isn’t your average Harvard man, though. A brilliant student, he has drifted off to the West Coast to become a reviewer of video games, living so far below the radar that when Jenny, now a married, go-getting businesswoman in her thirties, decides to look him up, she camps out in a chauffeured car waiting to surprise him when he emerges from his “cave of a room,” knowing he’d never return her calls or e-mails. Desperate to add “Mom” to her résumé, and with her husband recently diagnosed as sterile, Jenny wants Neil’s “genius” genes for her baby.

The plot that unfolds—or unravels—after the birth of Jenny’s brokered baby draws all four friends together in a comedy of modern-day manners that, while lacking the high drama of a Jaffe novel or the chilling acuity of Adams’s fiction, surpasses both as social satire.

Two Rooms: Poems
by Constance Merritt RI ’02
_Louisiana State University Press; $17.95._
_66 pp._

Constance Merritt’s new collection of lyric verse is launched by epigraphs from Wallace Stevens and Jack Kerouac, poet of mind, poet of experience. Thus in Merritt’s title poem, the “two rooms” are the room of the mind and the room of the body. The first has its “narrow board-hard bed,”
which “offers no reprieve / From the body’s weight”; in the second, a woman dreams, “Hair tousled, breasts unbound.”

These polarities of mind/body and witness/actor have produced a volume of energetic variety, marked by clarity of expression. The spirits of Stevens and Kerouac hover over poems like “Poor in All Else,” where the poet writes, “I hear far-off life’s choir but cannot join”;
she is too busy counting thoughts “as misers count their coin” to experience pleasure or pain. Yet in “Moving-House Blues,” Stevens’s cerebral Key West meditations merge with Kerouac’s coffeehouse rants to produce a distinctively lucid chant, all Merritt:

And the songs she sang—of sea and sky,
Of birds, of trees, and sun—were,
None of them, her own, but riffs
The place had played . . .

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**How Professors Think: Inside the Curious World of Academic Judgment**

by Michele Lamont RI ’07

*Harvard University Press; $27.95, 314 pp.*

How we can only speculate about the reaction of Radcliffe’s review panelists when they received Michele Lamont’s proposal for a sociological study of grant-giving review panels.

Fortunately her project was funded, and the result is a probing look at the system of peer evaluation that keeps the academic gravy train rolling.

Lamont aims at nothing less than solving the “riddle” of success as it is sought by professors at American colleges and universities. Noting that excellence “is the holy grail of academic life,” Lamont asks: Do the peer review panelists who award fellowships, intended to both reward and foster high-caliber work, “believe excellence has an objective reality? If so, where is it located?” More pragmatically, she observes that peer review work, from search committees to tenure review panels, consumes an enormous number of faculty hours. Understanding the process and finding ways to improve it has far-reaching implications. Lamont’s conclusions, after studying five different national funding competitions over a two-year period, are surprising and not always encouraging.

Lamont is not afraid to state the truth: academia is a “culture of evaluation.” This is more true now than ever as the federal government extends its mantra of accountability to colleges and universities. We look forward to *How Professors Think* books two, three, and more as guides.

**Lit: A Memoir**

by Mary Karr ’91


Midway through her memoir of alcoholic motherhood, Mary Karr quotes a letter of advice she received from Tobias Wolff while she was desperately attempting to convert a bad first novel into *The Liar’s Club*: “Tell your stories, and your story will be revealed . . . Don’t be afraid of appearing angry, small-minded, obtuse, mean, immoral, amoral, calculating, or anything else. Take no care for your dignity.” This philosophy produced Wolff’s starkly honest *This Boy’s Life* and, according to Karr, her own first best-seller.

Wolff is right: readers can’t get enough of the unvarnished truth when it reaches them in the form of well-told stories. But in Karr’s case, the precept “Take no care for your dignity” has as much to do with her success as good storytelling. Why does a chapter opener like this one—“After fourteen hours sacked out in the bin, I wake to find my mouth glued together”—impel us to read on? Simply because we want to know, Where can she go from here? How much farther down?

And how, impossibly, did she climb back up? Karr’s manic-contrite voice promises recovery, redemption, maybe even forgiveness from the son she nearly forgot in her drinking. *Lit* shines a bright light on every step of Karr’s dark passage.
Elaine Auyoung
Elaine Auyoung AM ’06, PhD ’10, RIGF ’10 is a doctoral candidate in the Department of English at Harvard University. The dissertation she’s completing as a graduate fellow at the Radcliffe Institute, “The Economy of Literary Representation,” draws attention to the concise means by which fictional persons, places, and worlds can be constructed. Auyoung recently joined a writing group that includes 2009–2010 Radcliffe Institute fellows Ravit Reichman and Roy Kreitner SJD ’01. “The writing group will be a source of really valuable feedback for our works-in-progress,” she says. “Perhaps its most important function for me, though, will be to help impose writing deadlines, which make such a big difference in how I use my time.”

Confessions of a Literary Theorist

How would you describe your work to the person sitting next to you at a dinner party? I’m interested in our readiness to believe in fictional persons and places that remain, in many ways, unknowable.

How did you find your course of study? Alex Woloch taught me how to read, John L’Heureux taught me how to write, and I don’t like arithmetic.

Which aspect of your work do you most enjoy? Occasionally transforming an amorphous thought into a clear, interesting, sometimes even beautiful sentence.

Who are your heroes? Jhumpa Lahiri, Elaine Scarry, Michelle Obama.

Which trait do you most admire in yourself? My willingness to participate in interviews.

What would your colleagues be surprised to learn about you? One of my dream jobs would be to produce radio stories for This American Life.

Describe yourself in six words or fewer. Curious.

What is your most treasured possession? A 50 mm f/1.4 camera lens.

What inspires you? Transcendent aesthetic experiences, unseen acts of kindness, an impossibly blue sky.

Name a pet peeve. When recyclables get thrown into the trash.

If your life became a motion picture, who would portray you? Jane Lynch.

What is your greatest triumph so far? Teaching Ulysses.

Which talent would you most like to have? To sing beautifully.

What is your motto? There’s always more than meets the eye.

Where do you see yourself in five years? Somewhere I can’t imagine.

What do you think you’ll take away from your year at the Radcliffe Institute? How lucky I’ve been to be surrounded by such gifted scholars, scientists, and artists, each of whom is working on something fascinating, inspiring, and unexpected.
A small garden in Radcliffe Yard, used as a staging area and parking lot through three Radcliffe Institute building renovations, is now home to an installation called **Stock-Pile**. Twelve conical piles of stone, aggregate, sand, and soil—two planted with ferns—are arranged on a north-south grid. Over time, the piles, which are subject to the elements, will gently degrade. They already show evidence of the weather, passing dogs, and adventurous children.

Eager to give the area a stronger “sense of place” in this 10th anniversary year, Dean Barbara J. Grosz approached Mohsen Mostafavi, dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design, for ideas. Mostafavi recommended that Grosz consult Chris Reed, the principal and founder of Stoss Landscape Urbanism, a Boston-based strategic design and planning practice. Reed, who is also a design critic at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and an adjunct associate professor at the University of Pennsylvania School of Design, conceived **Stock-Pile**.

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**Stoss Landscape Urbanism**

An architectural rendering that hints at the variety of materials and textures on display in **Stock-Pile**.
GLORIA STEINEM will receive the Radcliffe Institute Medal on Radcliffe Day, May 28, 2010, at the Annual Luncheon.

A writer, lecturer, editor, and feminist activist, Steinem is one of the most influential reformers of the second wave of American feminism.

For more information about Radcliffe Day 2010, call 617-496-0516 or visit www.radcliffe.edu/alumnae/rad_day.aspx.