Looking Where Others Don’t, Joanna Aizenberg Breaks Open Nanomaterials

Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Feminist, Socialist, Artist

“Why Books?” a Runaway Best Seller

Daphne Brooks Has One Foot in Academia, Another in Rock and Roll

Cultural Collisions
IN HER early 20s, before she became an internationally known feminist writer, Charlotte Perkins Gilman made money by drawing advertising cards for soap.
FROM THE DEAN

A Commitment to Intellectual Daring and Experimentation

AT THE RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE for Advanced Study, innovation is a hallmark: it characterizes the work of this year’s 47 new Radcliffe fellows, the new technologies and collections at the Schlesinger Library, and even the renaming of our Academic Engagement Programs—now called Academic Ventures, to better convey the spirit of inquiry guiding its workshops, seminars, and conferences.

As the dean, I am delighted by the way innovative people and programs thrive here—where a commitment to uniting excellence and risk gives rise to new ideas and initiatives.

As an experimental computer scientist, I am especially thrilled to see faculty members, fellows, and students take advantage of the Institute’s commitment to intellectual daring and experimentation.

At the Institute, academics of exceptional promise and demonstrated accomplishments who are passionate about the world of ideas come together with people who are passionate about the world itself.

This spring, we will convene scholars, economists, educators, and political leaders from around the globe—including Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and South America—to explore and develop new understandings of gender’s influence on health, education, politics, arts, and professions—including insights into matter we cannot see with the naked eye, what we can hear when we listen to the Queen of Soul, and the hard truths of software security.

We hope you will take advantage of the Institute’s offerings: read the magazine, attend events, follow coverage and content on-line, and celebrate the work undertaken here to extend the frontiers of knowledge for us all.

Barbara J. Grosz
Dean, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

“not only want a piece of the pie, we also want to choose the flavor and to know how to make it ourselves.” Gilman’s work will now be widely accessible to all who are interested in her call for the economic changes necessary to achieve gender equality.

In this issue, we reveal some of the work under way by this year’s fellows—women and men at the forefront of the sciences, humanities, social sciences, arts, and professions—including insights into matter we cannot see with the naked eye, what we can hear when we listen to the Queen of Soul, and the hard truths of software security.

We hope you will take advantage of the Institute’s offerings: read the magazine, attend events, follow coverage and content on-line, and celebrate the work undertaken here to extend the frontiers of knowledge for us all.

Barbara J. Grosz
Dean, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

Our passion for affecting society extends to honoring Ela Bhatt with the Radcliffe Institute Medal. As the founder of the Self-Employed Women’s Association, she has helped more than one million women in India start businesses, open bank accounts, and gain self-sufficiency.

Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose collection at the Schlesinger Library was just digitized, would have appreciated Ela Bhatt’s statement that women...
ANNETTE GORDON-REED WINS MACARTHUR FELLOWSHIP

Annette Gordon-Reed, who joined the Harvard community in July, when she was named the second Carol K. Pforzheimer Professor at Radcliffe, a professor at Harvard Law School, and a professor of history in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, was named a 2010 MacArthur Fellow in late September. MacArthur recipients are awarded $500,000 for “no strings attached” support over five years.

Gordon-Reed is a law professor and a scholar of American history who is best known for her research on the relationship between Thomas Jefferson and Sally Hemings. Her most recent book on the subject, the New York Times best seller The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family (W. W. Norton, 2008), won the 2009 Pulitzer Prize in history.

According to Gordon-Reed, the professorship at the Radcliffe Institute played an important role in her decision to come to Harvard. “My approach to scholarship has always been interdisciplinary,” she says. “So the Institute, with its emphasis on bringing together creative people from so many different fields, is the ideal environment for me. In addition, having time off to think and research will be invaluable to my development as a scholar and teacher.”

PRESIDENT OBAMA NAMES SUSAN LINDQUIST A NATIONAL MEDAL OF SCIENCE RECIPIENT

On October 14, molecular biologist Susan Lindquist PhD ’77, RI ’08 was named by President Barack Obama as one of 10 recipients of the 2010 National Medal of Science. The medal, the nation’s highest honor in the sciences, was awarded for “showing that changes in protein folding can have profound and unexpected influences in fields as wide-ranging as human disease, evolution, and nanotechnology, and for providing fundamental experimental support for the prion hypothesis.” Lindquist’s pioneering work has helped biologists to understand how protein misfolding leads to severe neurological disorders such as Parkinson’s, Huntington’s, and mad cow diseases.

As a Suzanne Young Murray Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute in 2007–2008, Lindquist researched protein chaperones—in particular, one called HSP90 (heat-shock protein 90), which plays a key role in the stress response—with members of the Broad Institute, a collaboration of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Harvard and its affiliated hospitals, and the Whitehead Institute for Biomedical Research.

A member of the Whitehead Institute, a biology professor at MIT, and an investigator at the Howard Hughes Medical Institute, Lindquist also won the Max Delbrück Medal in November and is a 2008 winner of the prestigious Otto Warburg Medal, awarded by the German Association of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology.

JAIMY GORDON WINS NATIONAL BOOK AWARD

Lord of Misrule (McPherson & Company, 2010), the fourth published book from Jaimy Gordon BI ’85, received the 2010 National Book Award for fiction on November 17. The novel, considered a surprise pick because it hails from a small independent press, illuminates the underbelly of the West Virginia horse-racing world. Kirkus Reviews praised its “exceptional writing and idiosyncratic characters,” while the awards committee deemed it a “vivid, memorable, and linguistically rich novel.”

The New York Times reported that “a stunned-looking” Gordon marveled, “I’m totally unprepared, and I’m totally surprised.”

Discover magazine included her on its 2002 list of the top 50 women scientists, and Scientific American placed her on its list of “SA50” top leaders in business, policy, and research for 2006.
In booksellers’ parlance, the Radcliffe Institute’s “Why Books?” conference, held in late October, was a runaway best seller. More than 500 attendees filled Radcliffe Gymnasium and spilled over to an adjacent viewing location to consider the status of books in the context of a continually evolving media environment. The two-day gathering drew scholars of literature, computer science, history, and sociology and illuminated perspectives on books ranging from the first codex (pages bound together within a cover) in late-antiquity Rome to today’s e-books, which may exist only in “the cloud” (shared space on the Internet).

A key aspect of the conference was what University of Pennsylvania professor Peter Stallybrass (who had the unenviable task of summation) called “its lack of expected oppositions.” There was little suggestion that books and e-books must be an either/or proposition. “Technologies don’t necessarily displace each other,” Stallybrass noted. “They interact with other technologies. I have a Kindle, but I also read books.”

The sense that we are in an era when...
new and old book technologies are simultaneously relevant—characterized by Harvard professor John Palfrey as a “hybrid moment” in book history—was apparent during the conference’s opening afternoon, which featured a series of workshops across Radcliffe Yard and Harvard. A sampling of workshop titles—“The Book as Art: The Future of Letters, Paper, and Ink”; “Three Authors and Their Books in Context: William James, Samuel Johnson, and Emily Dickinson”; “Preserving Web-based Digital Materials”—conveys a sense of the diversity of interests among book scholars. The sessions revealed the passion, knowledge, and commitment of those who work and study in this rich field.

Melville’s Marginalia
Welcoming participants on the second day, Harvard historian Ann Blair, who organized the symposium with Leah Price, senior advisor to the humanities program at Radcliffe, explained that the conference had been organized around the three main functions that books have long served: “Storage and Retrieval,” “Circulation and Transmission,” and “Reception and Use.”

In the opening discussion, “Future Formats of Texts: E-books and Old Books,” Harvard University Library director Robert Darnton said that “old books and e-books are allies.” He noted the thrill he’d experienced many years before upon discovering Herman Melville’s personal copy of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s essays—complete with Melville’s scribbled notes in the margins—in Harvard’s Houghton Library. Now a leading force in the Open Collections Program, a cooperative effort among Ivy League libraries to make rare books and images available to the public on-line, Darnton said that one of his “happiest hours” was spent ensuring that the scanned pages of Melville’s Emerson volume would appear in this electronic format.

Darnton’s codiscussant Stuart Shieber RI’07, a computer science professor and codirector of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard Law School, talked about the need, when attempting to divine the future of books, to discriminate between physical and abstract functionalities. Even assuming that physical glitches such as screen resolution will be ironed out in future generations of the Kindle, more-abstract preferences, such as the desire to “own” a book or give it to a friend, may still remain. Shieber’s “paradoxical conclusion” was that “in the future, e-book readers will be preferable to books, but books will still be preferable to e-books.”

Rushdie’s Hard Drives
Delving into the topic, “Storage and Retrieval,” University of Maryland professor Matthew G. Kirschenbaum used Emory University’s effort to collect the works of Salman Rushdie to

TWEETING THE CONFERENCE
For the first time ever, the Radcliffe Institute invited the conference audience and participants to take their reactions to Twitter, using the whybooks hashtag. And boy, did they. Computer keyboards clicked throughout the gym, and the glow of smartphones could be seen between seats. John Palfrey, faculty codirector of the Berkman Center for Internet & Society—who noted that presenter Matthew G. Kirschenbaum was tweeting from the podium—took questions via Twitter. People who couldn’t attend followed the proceedings through the feed. By noon, more than 500 tweets had been posted. Active for weeks after the event, the hashtag generated almost a thousand tweets from nearly 200 twitterers.
illustrate the vexing issues of cost and selectivity associated with new methods of storage. In a collection that includes four of Rushdie’s personal computers, Emory’s archivists confront challenges such as the volatility of storage devices, confidentiality concerns, and authenticating document authorship. “The Rushdie project, which has thus far processed only a fraction of his digital materials, has taken three years and considerable resources,” Kirschenbaum reported. “This is justified, of course, by Rushdie’s literary and historical significance, but what of other writers who do not command the same attention and resources?”

Gandhi’s First Edition
The session “Circulation and Transmission” highlighted the advantages of digital technology, especially for the presentation and preservation of texts not found in codex format. Isabel Hofmeyr, a professor at the University of the Witwatersrand in South Africa, noted that the first edition of Mohandas Gandhi’s famous Indian Home Rule, published by his own press in Durban in 1910, “is much more like a pamphlet.” She added, “As such, the first edition of one of the world’s most influential books is not listed in any library.”

Rutgers professor Meredith L. McGill observed that digital technology levels the playing field when it comes to this kind of “ephemeral” text. McGill’s example was the notable 19th-century African American poet Frances Watkins Harper, whose antislavery poetry appeared primarily in newspapers and pamphlets. “I’m particularly excited about the possibilities new media offer for the study of noncanonical authors,” McGill said. “Rather than wrestling ephemeral print into the straitjacket of the book form, we can use digital media to show how such writers . . . were recognized and promoted.”

A Splendidly Corrupt Pan
In one of the most memorable quotations of the conference, University of California at Berkeley professor Paul Duguid recalled a conversation with an engineer who said, “Books are there for people addicted to tree flakes encased in dead cows.” In “Reception and Use,” Duguid said it is not unusual for engineers to approach the digitization of text as an exercise in “removing the constraints and letting the resources do their powerful work.” In doing so, he argued, they ignore the reality that books’ “structural characteristics [such as volumes, chapters, editions] often are essential to their content, meaning, and significance.” He cited Google’s selection of a “splendidly corrupt edition” of Knut Hamsun’s Pan for its on-line collection as an example of what can go wrong if digitization is not approached with adequate care.

Rice University professor Elizabeth Long, the conference’s final presenter, shared the results of her research on the preferences expressed by e-book and codex readers. “On the whole,” she concluded, “book readers are curiously pragmatic about the issue of format. They are willing to swing either way, as long as they can just keep reading.”

Speculating on the new forms of writing that e-books may bring to light—and perhaps planting the seed for a future Radcliffe conference—Long observed, “It may well be that what matters most is not the future of the book but the future of reading.”

ON-LINE For in-depth coverage of the conference proceedings, visit www.radcliffe.edu/events/calendar_2010books.aspx. There you will find links to news stories, blog postings, video, and panel and site visit summaries.
Pressing Business


Located in the basement of Adams House, the Bow & Arrow Press is home to several vintage printing presses and a variety of type. After some historical context and a short tour of the press—which he calls “a functional museum”—Sifuentes led the visitors in a group project: creating a conference memento.

Photographs by Tony Rinaldo
FLAWS, SAID SIFUENTES, are to be expected and even embraced in letterpress printing: “If you want perfection, take it to Kinko’s.”

With warnings to participants to keep all fingers out of their mouths (they would be working with lead type), Sifuentes instructed the group to free-associate words and phrases arising from the question “What do books mean to me?” Each visitor had a chance to prepare type and to operate the machine—a Vandercook proof press—to produce the final document, which used an assortment of fonts and sizes and a novel ombré ink technique.
Sheena Iyengar is here to tell you that when it comes to choice, more is not better.

By Ivelisse Estrada

Iyengar, the S. T. Lee Professor of Business at Columbia Business School, is a leading researcher on choice. On October 21, in a lecture titled “The Art of Choosing”—the first in this year’s Dean’s Lecture Series at the Radcliffe Institute—Iyengar, describing her innovative experiments and sharing personal anecdotes, dispelled many assumptions about choice and how it relates to happiness.

In the United States, we may think of choice as not only our birthright, but also the means by which we exercise our freedom. It is also how we telegraph to others who we are. “We believe that if there are more choices available to us, there’s more opportunity to find what we want and then we’ll be happy,” Iyengar said.

“But do we know what we want?” The truth, according to Iyengar, is that sometimes we don’t even recognize our own choices.

“Ask yourself questions about ‘Who am I?’ ‘What do I want?’ and ‘What message am I sending?’ can turn what ought to be a simple decision into an ordeal,” said Iyengar. “With so much to think about, is it any wonder that we get confused?”

Today, we make more choices than ever before, choices unimaginable just a few years ago. So much choice, whether online or in the grocery store, can leave us dissatisfied or—worse—paralyzed. The “what ifs” muddy the waters.

So what is the answer? How can we keep the sheer number of choices from short-circuiting our decision-making process? Invoking George A. Miller’s classic 1956 psychology study “The Magical Number Seven, Plus or Minus Two,” Iyengar suggested that even in the most personal situations—say, choosing a mate—having fewer choices actually empowers us to make a stronger, more satisfying choice and to make it faster.

Iyengar advised us to examine all the choices available to us, prioritize them, and determine which of them are best left to others. “Inventors, artists, and musicians have long known the value of putting constraints on their choices,” she said. “They work within form and structure, and even when they break them, they do so only to create new boundaries.”

Iyengar suggested that we look to the creative disciplines for guidance on how to construct our futures through choice.

“Be more choosy about choosing,” she urged. We can choose not to choose without compromising our freedom or individuality. It may even be the best thing we do for ourselves.
A New App

Makes Boston Residents Part of the Solution

by Deborah Blagg

In a September talk cosponsored by the Radcliffe Institute, Boston Mayor Thomas M. Menino’s chief of staff described the dawn of a technology-enabled era in government-citizen interaction. Mitchell Weiss opened his presentation, titled “How Peer-Produced Government Can Help Fill Potholes, Save Cities, and Maybe Even Rescue Democracy,” by mentioning some of the ways institutions have used technology to engage thousands of ordinary citizens as data gatherers in logistically challenging research. Citing the work of the amateur astronomers who helped NASA chart craters on Mars and the California motorists who assisted civil engineers in pinpointing stretches of highway with a high frequency of road kill, Weiss quipped, “If we can get volunteers to use GPS technology to undertake that gruesome task, then surely we can mobilize people to solve our big city problems.”

In Boston, Weiss said, smartphone apps, crowdsourcing technology, and his boss’s willingness to experiment with strategies that invite citizen participation in government have created an opportunity for individuals to do more than just complain about neighborhood problems. One popular initiative, called Citizens Connect, enables people to report graffiti, trash problems, streetlight outages, and traffic-light malfunctions using a smartphone app that relays the information to appropriate work crews via a 24-hour city hall hotline. The reporter receives a text message when the problem has been fixed. Since its rollout a year ago, Weiss said, the app has been downloaded 8,000 times and used to communicate with the mayor’s office more than 40,000 times. Citizens Connect now accounts for 10 percent of all calls to the mayor’s office.

Similarly, a new program called BUMP (Boston Urban Mechanic Profiler) uses a motion-sensing app for smartphones to map potholes Boston drivers encounter on their daily commutes. “With this technology, we may be able to produce a live map of the condition of city streets at a fraction of the cost of hiring a company to do periodic surveys,” Weiss said.

Economic development is another priority that has received a boost from technology—in this case, through a nonprofit organization, Boston World Partnerships (BWP), created by the mayor. Designed to raise awareness of Boston’s profile as a global business center, BWP engages current and expatriate Bostonians in on-line social networking and live events to market the city by establishing connections among business, civic, and academic leaders across industries, disciplines, and countries.

In introducing Weiss’s lecture, Brigitte Madrian, senior advisor to Radcliffe’s social sciences program, pointed out that the Institute’s cosponsorship of the event—with the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston and the Taubman Center for State and Local Government—reflected Radcliffe’s focus on “encouraging academics to get more involved in policy making in Boston and in general.”

Weiss expressed his hope that future research by social scientists and philosophers will shine light on the best ways to motivate citizens to stay involved in public issues. “We are attracting a new generation of people into city government,” he noted, “and we have to figure out how to keep up the momentum.”

Deborah Blagg is a freelance writer.

ENGAGING WITH LOCAL POLICYMAKERS

Mitchell Weiss’s presentation was supported by the social sciences program of Radcliffe Ventures, led by Brigitte Madrian, senior advisor to the social sciences program at the Radcliffe Institute and Aetna Professor of Public Policy and Corporate Management at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, and Robert Sampson, also a senior advisor to the social sciences program at the Institute and Henry Ford II Professor of the Social Sciences in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The Institute’s participation reflects its ongoing commitment to issues pertaining to public policy, particularly in the local community, and aligns with the University’s commitment to using its resources to address public policy challenges.
In today’s overstimulated society, it’s hard to imagine a time when reading—which we regard as solitary—was treated as a social activity. But for middle- and upper-class women of America’s Gilded Age (from about 1865 to 1901), reading was social and central. In her book *Well-Read Lives: How Books Inspired a Generation of American Women* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010), Barbara Sicherman BI ’74 argues that these women read themselves into history.

During the Gilded Age, women of a certain class were mostly excluded from advanced education and work outside the home, so they turned to self-teaching. A domestic literary culture emerged, in which groups of women read to one another, recited and wrote poetry, put on parlor adaptations of dramatic works, played word games, and submitted original compositions to literary journals. They turned to one another for intellectual companionship and emotional support.

In a Schlesinger Library–sponsored lecture at the Radcliffe Institute on September 16, “Reading Their Way into History: How Books Inspired the Progressive Generation of Women,” Sicherman gave rich examples of the way the transformative possibilities of reading were heightened by its social nature during the Gilded Age. She has filled her book with inspiring stories, all showing how reading spurred a lifelong desire for learning and led extraordinary women to question the status quo and pursue a path toward social justice.
WOMEN OF BOOKS, WOMEN OF ACTION

The home-educated daughter of a Republican congressman from Philadelphia, FLORENCE KELLEY had read her way through her father’s extensive personal library by the time she was 17. She began the task on her 10th birthday. The earnest and diligent Kelley would go on to become a social and political reformer who campaigned tirelessly against child labor and for the eight-hour workday.

CHARLOTTE PERKINS GILMAN, best known for her wrenching short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” formed an essay club with other women from Providence society in the late 1870s and early 1880s. This group later engaged in serious literary experiments. Gilman’s first poem, which arose from these collaborations, appeared in the New England Journal of Education.

The yellow-fever death of IDA B. WELLS’S parents and a baby brother put an abrupt end to her formal education. At only 16 years old, Wells found herself responsible for the care of five younger siblings. She went to work as a teacher—an occupation in which she had no interest—and turned to books for solace. Later, she joined a Memphis lyceum mostly made up of fellow African American teachers. Some might argue that her activities with this mixed-media lyceum fed her desire for social justice. Later, as a journalist, she documented and campaigned against lynching and was active in the women’s suffrage movement.

NANCY F. COTT, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the Arthur and Elizabeth Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America and Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, noted in her introduction of Barbara Sicherman, “This book was very much researched at the Schlesinger Library, so we take pride in it.”

BARBARA SICHERMAN—the William R. Kennan, Jr., Professor of American Institutions and Values at Trinity College—has a longtime association with Radcliffe: She is a former coeditor of the groundbreaking biographical dictionary Notable American Women: The Modern Period (Harvard University Press, 1980) and was a Bunting fellow in 1973–1974.
Misconceiving Roe v. Wade

by Julia Collins

Long before Roe v. Wade reached the docket, Americans were divided over abortion, contrary to the common belief that the Supreme Court’s 1973 ruling triggered the conflict. That overlooked political reality was the focus of “Before (and After) Roe v. Wade,” the 2010–2011 Maurine and Robert Rothschild Lecture delivered on November 4 by Linda Greenhouse ’68, the Pulitzer Prize–winning columnist and Joseph Goldstein Lecturer in Law at Yale University, and Reva Siegel, Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Professor of Law at Yale.

In 2009, Greenhouse and Siegel began poring over case materials, the popular press, and other archival sources dating from the early 1960s to 1973, to re-create the context in which the Supreme Court’s landmark decision emerged. Their joint investigation culminated in Before Roe v. Wade: Voices that Shaped the Abortion Debate before the Supreme Court’s Ruling (Kaplan Publishing, 2010), an anthology that draws extensively on the Schlesinger Library collections.

Nancy F. Cott, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the Schlesinger Library and Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, introduced Siegel, the author of a major textbook on constitutional law, and called Greenhouse’s writings “some of the keenest and most illuminating commentary we have on the shifting directions of the American polity.” The coauthors took turns presenting key research findings, including the Republican Party’s pre-Roe experiment using the issue of abortion to persuade traditional Democrats to switch parties.

Siegel and Greenhouse reviewed how abortion’s social and cultural meaning has changed over time. The abortion reform movement was started by public health doctors and an elite academy of lawyers in the 1960s. In the early 1970s, feminists spoke out for a woman’s right to control her body, with Betty Friedan calling abortion a new civil right. Campaigns to decriminalize abortion spread. Alarmed Catholic Church leaders countermobilized against “abortion on demand.” In August 1972, a Gallup Poll revealed that 64 percent of respondents still favored abortion rights. But that November, Richard Nixon defeated George McGovern by a landslide, with the help of Republican strategists’ “triple-A argument”—that abortion, amnesty, and acid threatened the nation’s moral values.

Today’s pro-choice groups have adopted cautious Clinton-era language, said Greenhouse: “Abortion should be safe, legal, and rare.” The portrayal of abortion as trauma persists, even as studies show that electing this most-common surgical procedure—as some 30 percent of all women will—is in fact an empowering experience for some. Yet, said Greenhouse, “it’s not okay in this political climate for women to stand up and say that.”

What does the pre-Roe period say about the increasingly polarized post-Roe climate? Conflict is an expression of politics, Greenhouse and Siegel contend. Abortion has come to play a highly symbolic role in our national political life. “While the courts do matter, they are but one part of the story,” Siegel said. *

Julia Collins is an independent writer and the author of My Father’s War (Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002).

When asked to name any Supreme Court decision, Americans are eight times as likely to name Roe v. Wade as Brown v. Board of Education.

Linda Greenhouse

*
AROUND THE INSTITUTE

announcements

News from the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

ELA BHATT TO RECEIVE RADCLIFFE INSTITUTE MEDAL

ELA BHATT—who founded the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) in 1972—will be awarded the Radcliffe Institute Medal on Radcliffe Day, May 27, 2011. SEWA, conceived as a women’s trade union that bills itself as an organization and a movement, has grown into an NGO that offers micro-lending, health and life insurance, and child care—all overseen by more than a hundred women-run cooperatives. In January 2010, SEWA membership reached 1.2 million.

Bhatt’s long battle for social justice has recently brought her more recognition and visibility. On November 16, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton honored Bhatt at the Global Fairness Initiative Awards. “She has spent nearly every day of the past four decades helping move more than a million poor women in India to a position of dignity and independence, gaining access to opportunities they never dreamed possible,” said Clinton. “Like the chance to start a business or send their daughters and their sons to school, open their own bank accounts, or simply be treated with respect.”

In a feature article last year, the New York Times called Bhatt “a Gandhian pragmatist for the new India.” The Radcliffe Institute is proud to honor her this year, in which gender in the developing world is one of its dominant themes.

New Leadership in Institute Advancement

The Radcliffe Institute has appointed KAREN H. PUTNAM associate dean for advancement and ALISON FRANKLIN ’90 director of communications. Putnam has had a distinguished career in fundraising, beginning with service in the Harvard University Development Office, where her primary responsibility was the Fogg Art Museum. She went on to hold fundraising positions at Bryn Mawr College, the University of Pennsylvania, Yale University, and the Brooklyn Museum.

In 1993, Putnam became vice president for development, marketing, and public relations of the Central Park Conservancy and, in 1995, became its president and CEO. Most recently, she worked at the Bessemer Trust in New York City, advising clients about philanthropy and wealth management. Putnam holds an undergraduate degree from Wellesley College and a doctorate in American studies from Yale University.

Since graduating from Harvard-Radcliffe, Franklin has worked as a communications professional in government, politics, and the nonprofit sector. She began working in Massachusetts state government in 1993, and from 1996 to 2002, Franklin was communications director/press secretary for the Office of the Senate President. She also worked on gubernatorial and US senate campaigns. Beginning in 2003, she worked at City Year, the full-time national service program for young adults helping children and schools succeed. Before joining the Institute, she was City Year’s director of communications.

Carol K. Pforzheimer, Legendary Radcliffe Alumna

The Radcliffe Institute mourns the loss of CAROL K. PFORZHEIMER ’31, whose commitment to Radcliffe College and the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study is legendary. She died on July 25 at her home in Stuart, Florida, at the age of 100.

One of the grandes dames of Radcliffe, Pforzheimer held many volunteer positions, serving as a trustee and advising four Radcliffe College presidents before the Radcliffe Institute was founded. Her philanthropic leadership was integral to the founding and success of the Institute.

Pforzheimer’s generosity included establishing funds at the Schlesinger Library for student fellowships, for the directorship, and for developing the collections. In honor of her leadership, the library’s reading room now bears her name.

In addition, the Carol K. Pforzheimer Professorship has so far brought two renowned scholars to the Institute: ethicist Mahzarin R. Banaji RI ’08 and historian Annette Gordon-Reed, recently named a MacArthur Fellow. But Radcliffe has not been the only beneficiary of Pforzheimer generosity: the family’s philanthropy extends to other parts of Harvard University.
Sitting in a quiet classroom down the hall from her office in Byerly Hall, Daphne Brooks is ruminating on Aretha Franklin.

“I thought it would be really important to start off my research here working with an absolute icon who is associated with fundamental notions and presumptions about ‘authentic black womanhood,’” says Brooks, a 2010–2011 Radcliffe Institute fellow.

It’s no surprise that Brooks, a professor of English and African American studies at Princeton University, has got the Queen of Soul on her mind. In the past year, in a series of unrelated events, she’s been asked to think hard about Franklin’s legacy.

Just prior to her arrival at the Institute, she was tapped by Columbia Records to write liner notes for an upcoming boxed set of Franklin’s work. That request came on the heels of Brooks’s being invited to give a Franklin-centered sermon during an ecumenical service at Princeton. And in November, she gave a talk at the Institute about Franklin’s “sonic black feminism.”

Brooks concludes with a chuckle, “I’m having an Aretha Franklin moment I didn’t know I was supposed to have.”

It was all doubtless good preparation for what she is doing at the Institute—writing a book on just how much R-E-S-P-E-C-T black female musical performers
Musical Legacy
deserve for their role in shaping the cultural landscape. The book, *Subterranean Blues: Black Women and Sound Subcultures—from Minstrelsy through the New Millennium*, is forthcoming from Harvard University Press.

Franklin is just one of many performers the gregarious 42-year-old Palo Alto native examines in *Subterranean Blues*. Images of these fierce ladies—Franklin, Tina Turner, Nina Simone, Eartha Kitt, and others—adorn the walls of her office as a kind of chorus of silent witnesses and spiritual cheerleaders. “It’s really good to remember the bodies, the actual people, the flesh behind the recordings,” she says of the posters, drawings, and magazine covers.

The book, Brooks’s third, is a chronology of the intersection of African American women’s music with history: Aretha Franklin gave voice to the civil rights movement during the 1960s, for example, performing at rallies alongside Martin Luther King, Jr., and recasting such white American classics as “Over the Rainbow” in the recording studio. Whether or not Franklin was aware of it, Brooks sees it as a shift. And some of the cultural collisions Brooks analyzes are less heralded than others.

“What I’m trying to do with the book is look at those big moments that have been archived and canonized”—think black opera singer Marian Anderson’s groundbreaking 1939 performance at the Lincoln Memorial—“and place them alongside moments that are overlooked as being historical in some way.”

One of those, Brooks believes, is R&B singer Mary J. Blige’s searing performance with U2 of that band’s song “One” during a 2005 Hurricane Katrina benefit.

“The telethon marks this moment in which you have a black woman”—one oft called Franklin’s heir and the “queen of hip-hop soul”—“using a sonic performance in order to articulate this cultural, sociopolitical crisis for black women who, at that moment in time, have been spectacularly disenfranchised because of Hurricane Katrina,” says Brooks. “It was a reimagining of the song in this extraordinary way.”

**A CHORUS OF MUSICALLY MINDED FELLOWS**

An ensemble of Institute scholars is tackling musical issues this year. Here’s a rundown of their different approaches.

**DONALD BERMAN RI ’11**, a pianist who teaches at Tufts University, is digging deep in the archives at the Loeb Music Library to unearth unknown, unpublished, and underperformed scores composed between 1910 and 1960. His ultimate aim? To ignite the ears of his audience.

**YU-HUI CHANG RI ’11** is working on a number of commissions during her Radcliffe residency, including a piece for both Chinese and Western instruments. A Bunting Fellow at the Institute this year, she is affiliated with Brandeis University.
Brooks, who previously penned *Bodies in Dissent: Spectacular Performances of Race and Freedom, 1850–1910* (Duke University Press, 2006), is excited to be working on her new book in Cambridge. Not only does she feel she has vast resources at her disposal—including rare archival materials at the Schlesinger Library and elsewhere at Harvard—but also she gets a charge from working in an environment with such a diversity of scholars outside her field. “It’s an important challenge to me in being able to write a narrative that can reach a broad audience because it’s such an important topic,” she says.

Plus, she’s thrilled to be working with Harvard University Press, which has published works on popular music by some of her favorite writers, including veteran rock critics Greil Marcus and Robert Christgau. Brooks peppers a lengthy, joyously digressive conversation with many names—authors, colleagues, friends, mentors, and research assistants—who have inspired her along the way. She knows full well on whose shoulders she stands. Some of those shoulders belong to her family.

“The other key enormous figure in my musical life and my black feminist literary life is my sister,” says Brooks of Renel Brooks-Moon. Older by 10 years, Brooks-Moon is the announcer for the San Francisco Giants. Brooks says she is grateful to her for “coming home from college and bringing James Baldwin, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. My sister was this bridge figure for me. And the sounds coming from her bedroom!” She squeals with gleeful remembrance of the records she heard through the wall.

Brooks went off on her own journey of discovery from there, thanks also in part to parents she credits with “giving me a sense of entitlement to love all kinds of cultures.” She grew up an avid concertgoer in the 1980s; her public school administrator father and English teacher mother would patiently drive her to venues and wait in parking lots as she immersed herself in everything from the Go-Go’s to the Police and Run-DMC. “That’s an important foundational influence—they set up this world where I could hear Journey,” she says with a chuckle of the Bay Area arena rockers whose song “Lights” holds a special place in her heart.

Using a narrative voice she deems “very hybrid,” Brooks hopes readers of *Subterranean Blues* will see the connective tissues between Simone, Franklin, and contemporary artists like Blige and Beyoncé and current attitudes and assumptions about black women. It’s a voice pieced together from her studies at the University of California at Berkeley and the University of California at Los Angeles and the many Saturdays she spent as an adolescent loitering in the aisles of her local Tower Records, reading *Rolling Stone* and *Creem* magazines.

“It’s a little bit academic, a little bit rock journalist, which is what I wanted to be when I was growing up,” Brooks recalls. “The first black feminist rock critic with a column in *Rolling Stone* is all I wanted to be. I literally said that to one of my professors at Berkeley, and she said, ‘That’s the craziest thing I’ve ever heard—don’t you want benefits?’” She laughs. “I was 18, I didn’t know. She said you need to get a PhD and try to do both things. And that’s what happened.”

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Sarah Rodman is a music critic for the Boston Globe.

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**Brown University ethnomusicologist KIRI MILLER PHD ’05, RI ’11, a Bunting Fellow this year, explores how “virtual performances” change how we perceive creativity, embodiment, and musicality. She is currently completing *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance*, forthcoming from Oxford University Press.**

**PAUL DESENNE RI ’11, a Venezuelan composer and cellist, is creating a tragicomic chamber opera linking the parallel roots of Latin American music and coffee. Desenne—who is affiliated with FESNOJIV (commonly known as “El Sistema”), a government-funded organization aimed at promoting music education and practice—is the Rieman and Baketel Fellow for Music.**
Rather than make a “top 10” list, I thought I’d highlight some of my favorite artists—obscure figures and legends as well as emerging stars—whose musical innovations have revolutionized and revitalized the sound of popular music in the past century. Pop critics like to write about artists like Lady Gaga and Amy Winehouse as if they sprang out of nowhere, but this cluster of genius artists reminds us of the long and often unheralded history of black women’s genius musicianship in this country.

**MAMIE SMITH.** Vaudeville entertainer, blues pioneer, theatrical chameleon. With “Crazy Blues” (1920), she became the first African American to make a blues recording and tapped into her versatility as an actress to help popularize a dramatic and highly affective style of pop singing.

**SISTER ROSETTA THARPE.** Gospel singer and musician, guitar hero. Steel-guitar wonder and Church of God in Christ musical star Tharpe duckwalked before Chuck Berry did and made her instrument sing and swing on hits like “Strange Things Happen Everyday” (1944), forecasting the birth of rock and roll and influencing many greats.

**ABBEY LINCOLN.** Jazz vocalist, civil rights activist, avant-garde musician. Her brave and stunning vocals on “Triptych: Prayer/Protest/Peace” (1960), recorded with her former husband the drummer Max Roach, broke the sound barrier in experimental jazz by showcasing the power of the female voice as a tool of activism.

**NINA SIMONE.** Eclectic singer-songwriter, virtuosic pianist, freedom fighter. A classically trained musician who developed a fiercely dynamic and boldly politicized musical repertoire at the height of her career in the 1960s and 1970s, Simone wrote protest songs and covered everything from Norwegian folk songs to Brecht and Weill “anti-show tunes.” Her nine-minute epic “22nd Century” is just one example of her artistic fearlessness.

**BIG MAMA THORNTON.** Vocalist, drummer, blues and rock and roll pioneer. The artist who originally recorded “Hound Dog” (1952)—before Elvis Presley did—showed the world how to transform blues bravado into modern pop power and helped to innovate a brash new sound for the airwaves.
Lauryn Hill. Rapper, singer-songwriter, street theologian. Making one of the most auspicious solo debuts in pop music history, Hill reintroduced herself to a pop world that had known her primarily as a key member of the hip-hop group the Fugees. While her *Miseducation of Lauryn Hill* (1998) stands as a masterly symbol of post–civil rights cultural activism, it’s Hill’s return, after semiretirement, in the 2006 documentary *Dave Chappelle’s Block Party* that reveals the extent of her virtuosity as an artist capable of traversing dense affective terrain in her performances.

EARTHA KITT. Dancer, singer, actress, cabaret ingénue. Cosmopolitan entertainer Kitt spoke four languages and sang in seven as a result of having started out as a dancer on the global circuit with Katherine Dunham’s diasporic troupe and later working in the Parisian nightlife world of cabaret. Listening to her “I Want to Be Evil” (1962), one hears the sound of a sly vocalist wielding razor-sharp irony to critique traditional gender roles.

ARETHA FRANKLIN. Soul music architect, genius vocalist and song stylist, gospel pianist. The voice that transformed American popular music in the latter half of the 1960s was born in the church but nurtured on the jazz nightclub circuit and in Columbia Records recording studios. Her live cover of Simon and Garfunkel’s “Bridge Over Troubled Water” (1971) seamlessly weaves folk, gospel, and soul into one moving performance.

Aretha Franklin effortlessly blended folk, gospel, and soul to transform American popular music.

Betty Davis. Cultural iconoclast, fashion rebel, funk troubadour. The former wife of Miles Davis led her own subversively eccentric underground music revolution in the early 1970s, when she began recording albums that pioneered the raucous sounds of funk and grappled candidly with the politics of race, gender, and sexual freedom. With Davis’s trademark raspy howl, “They Say I’m Different” (1974) remains a black bohemian anthem.

GRACE JONES. Performance artist, queer icon, punk–new wave rebel. Visually and sonically androgynous, Jones mixed punk’s arch irreverence with new-wave high energy and Jamaican dance-hall rhythms to create liberating forms of musical bacchanalia for an adoring queer fan base that celebrated her gender performativity in the 1970s and 80s. On her autobiographical comeback hit “Williams’ Blood” (2008), she picks up the Betty Davis baton and pays tribute to her fabulous Otherness.


LABELLE. Girl-group veterans turned glam-rock trailblazers. The group that began in the 1960s as Patti LaBelle and the Bluebelles turned into butterflies all decked out in feathers and space boots when the 70s rolled around. Buoyed by Nona Hendryx’s black-feminist songwriting and Patti LaBelle’s storm-system lead vocals, the group helped to both shape and transcend the disco genre on the luminously erotic “You Turn Me On” (1974).
Biomimetics pioneer Joanna Aizenberg finds continual inspiration at the Radcliffe Institute.

BY MICHAEL PATRICK RUTTER

THIS IMAGE, “Save our earth. Let’s go green,” was the winning entry of the 2010 International Science and Engineering Visualization Challenge, sponsored by the journal Science and the National Science Foundation. Taken through an electron microscope, the photo shows self-assembling polymers, which the team hopes to use to create more-energy-efficient materials.
IRA FLATOW, host of National Public Radio’s Science Friday, went in for the killer question. Discussing Joanna Aizenberg’s work on nanobristles—tiny, hairlike pillars that can be coaxed into exquisite shapes—he quipped, “You have discovered something looking for a use.”

Aizenberg, a pioneer in the emerging field of biomimetics (using biological principles as a guide to developing new artificial materials and devices), returned the salvo. The interlaced bristles, which do in fact hold promise as an adhesive, a chemical mixing tool, and an elastic energy source, illustrate the successful “merger between physical sciences and biological sciences.” Aizenberg and her team are looking not only for applications, but for “new science that can describe biological phenomena or self-assembly phenomena.”

When even the most generous of science reporters seems to equate a discovery’s merit with its application, academic leaders take note—as has Harvard’s president. In her June speech at Trinity College, Dublin, Drew Faust cautioned that by focusing too much on science as an economic engine or a purveyor of products, “we encourage a devaluation of basic scientific research,” penalize risk, and box in ambition.

Aizenberg, who juggles two primary appointments, at the Radcliffe Institute and the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences (SEAS), escapes conventional expectations, “stealing” (her word) ingenious designs from bottom-dwelling sea creatures to enhance optics and even analyzing the ring under her coffee cup to fashion tools (see the sidebar on page 24).

As for showing value, she described her self-assembled bristles as “a unique structure reminiscent of modern dreadlocks or mythical Medusa” and invited comparisons to the Andy Francis Cutti sculpture The Kiss (two intertwined slabs carved from a granite staircase). She ended her chat with Flatow by suggesting that a fantastic use of the nanobristles was “just to hang them on the wall.”

In fact, several poster-size photos of the spiraled nanohairs hang in Aizenberg’s office in Pierce Hall. Another was a gift to the Kavli Foundation, which supports her research. A variant of the helical clusters, all hugging a green micro-polystyrene ball, won the 2010 International Science and Engineering Visualization Challenge, sponsored by the journal Science and the National Science Foundation.

Aizenberg credits Radcliffe for her rebel attitude. The Institute gave her a sturdy footing and the time, space, and community to thrive. In fact, without Radcliffe, she never would have ended up at Harvard.

Finding the Right Footing

The Russian-born Aizenberg was introduced to the Radcliffe Institute through the 2005 “Designing Biology” symposium, hosted by then dean of science Barbara J. Grosz. Aizenberg liked what she saw: trust in far-out thinking, a necessary condition for the work she was doing. At that time, bio-inspired engineering and design was, in the words of speaker Ellen Williams, just “breaking open.”

Having worked at Bell Labs, Aizenberg was used to intellectual freedom. According to SEAS Dean Cherry A. Murray, the famed interdisciplinary outpost “tolerated weirdness.” Aizenberg reported to Murray (then a vice president for research at Bell), and did some of her groundbreaking work on the brittlestar, an elegant, eyeless sea creature that uses its skeleton to see. Looking back, Murray remembers that Aizenberg was becoming the leader in deciphering natural design simply by following her passions.

Faust, then dean of Radcliffe, led a recruitment effort with help from Venkatesh “Venky” Narayanamurti, the dean of SEAS at that time, who was eager to build up both chemical and biological engineering. The tipping point in the courtship was not the new $200 mil-

BOUNDARY BUSTER

Simply listed, the number and range of Joanna Aizenberg’s positions at Harvard alone are enough to fuel a short story. In the spirit of IU (one University), Aizenberg has found a way to connect what she does with almost the entire campus.

- Susan S. and Kenneth L. Wallach Professor at the Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study
- Amy Smith Berylson Professor of Material Sciences at the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences
- Professor of Chemistry and Chemical Biology in the Department of Chemistry and Chemical Biology
- Core Member of the Wyss Institute for Biologically Inspired Engineering
- Faculty Associate at the Harvard University Center for the Environment
- Member of the Nanoscale Science and Engineering Center and the Materials Research Science and Engineering Center, both funded by the National Science Foundation
- Faculty Affiliate of the BASF Advanced Research Initiative at Harvard

Photos by Joanna Aizenberg
deciphering natural design by following her passions.
ARTFUL, PRACTICAL, AND PLAYFUL RESEARCH

Joanna Aizenberg may be the Ferris Bueller of research, because she clearly keeps in mind one of his most famed aphorisms: “Life moves pretty fast. If you don’t stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it.” And simply by looking where others do not, from the dark waters of the deep sea to the caffeinated residue of a coffee cup, she has made some astounding discoveries.

Bio-inspired architecture. Despite its fragile appearance, the deep sea sponge, called the Venus flower basket, is remarkably strong, thanks to its sophisticated latticed-natural-glass skeleton. Aizenberg says that modern architects use the same technique to build skyscrapers.

Novel optics. Once thought to be blind, the brittlestar uses its entire skeleton as a compound eye. A series of microlenses work together to generate amazing optical performance, besting any human-made technologies.

Self-assembly. Akin to tiny hairs, nanobristles can self-assemble into helical clusters when immersed in evaporating liquid. Although twisted structures are common in nature, from DNA to distant spiral galaxies, such control has been elusive in man-made mechanical systems.

“Smart” porous materials. With colleagues from Princeton, Aizenberg is part of a team hoping to create adaptive artificial materials that could strengthen or repair themselves by carrying fluids to where they are needed, as bone does.

Anti-ice technology. Inspired by the way water striders glide and how mosquitoes defog their eyes with tiny bristles that flick away the water, Aizenberg designed nanostructured materials that literally repel water droplets before they have a chance to freeze.

Clever coffee rings. Aizenberg and colleagues at Brown University developed a method of predicting the characteristics of the ring of moisture left behind by a coffee cup. Applications range from potentially saving wood tables to printing tools for manipulating small particles.

“Aizenberg’s experiences at Radcliffe provide that beneficent, that broad, that aims for the higher good,” he says. “I am a fan of being part of every possible discipline and profession.”

In celebrating the Institute’s 10th anniversary, Grosz called it a “refuge for scholars.” In a time of economic cuts to higher education and student strikes at London universities, her turn of phrase makes increasing sense. For Aizenberg, Radcliffe has become a modern version of the Metaphysical Club. That 19th-century Harvard-based network, led by such luminaries as legal scholar Oliver Wendell Holmes, Jr., and psychologist William James, helped to usher in modern American intellectualism with its no-holds-barred approach to research. In the words of Harvard scholar Louis Menand, the club’s lasting contribution was the concept that “ideas are social.” They are not handed down but, rather, emergent, just like those self-assembling systems Aizenberg works on. Instead of being trapped in amber to be admired from afar, they emerge through conversation and unusual collaborations.

Radcliffe is about as broad as it gets, and that’s amazing,” she says, explaining that, unfortunately, not many places in the world remain so open and free for exploration without specific expectations. “We are lucky to have it,” she says, meaning not just the Harvard community but the larger academic universe that benefits from Radcliffe’s existence.

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Aizenberg has made some astounding discoveries.
Charlotte Perkins Gilman is one of those writers whose reputations have changed over time, and she has sometimes dropped out of view entirely. Internationally known during her lifetime (1860–1935) as a feminist, a socialist, and the author of *Women and Economics* (1898)—an instant classic—she was less well recognized for her prodigious literary output.

*THE EVOLUTION of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*

**BY PAT HARRISON**

In September 2010, the *Nation* named Gilman one of the “Fifty Most Influential Progressives of the 20th Century.”
After her death, Gilman dropped out of the public consciousness for several decades. Then, when 1970s feminists discovered her, they tended to read her fiction more than her nonfiction. Her short story “The Yellow Wallpaper,” about a woman confined to her bedroom, hallucinating as she stares at the patterns on the wall, became especially popular, as did Herland (1915) and her other utopian novels.

Gilman is still known more for “The Yellow Wallpaper” than any other work, but contemporary scholars are taking another look at her, this time in a context that includes all her writing. That context is made possible by the Schlesinger Library, where Gilman’s papers reside and have recently been fully digitized. The Schlesinger is the world’s major repository for Gilman’s papers.

Judith A. Allen, a professor of gender studies and history at Indiana University, relied on the Schlesinger in writing The Feminism of Charlotte Perkins Gilman: Sexualities, Histories, Progressivism (University of Chicago, 2009), for which she was awarded a Schlesinger Library research grant in 1992–1993. Allen is much more interested in Gilman’s nonfiction than her fiction. She writes: “In 1898, Women and Economics made her known for the remainder of her feminist career as a sociologist, philosopher, ethicist, and social critic, producing some fiction on the side. By 1998, however, Gilman had become a feminist novelist and poet who produced some nonfiction.”

After divorcing her first husband—a scandalous act in those days—and having a passionate affair with a woman, Gilman found contentment in marriage to her first cousin. In her later years, she enjoyed playing with her grandchildren, Walter and Dorothy Chamberlin (below). Gilman believed in communal child rearing to free mothers from domestic drudgery.
Before marrying her first husband, Gilman insisted that he never expect her to cook or clean and never require her, “whatever the emergency, to DUST.”

Cynthia J. Davis is another scholar who has recently re-examined Gilman’s life and work. A professor of English at the University of South Carolina, Davis wrote *Charlotte Perkins Gilman: A Biography* (Stanford University Press, 2010) over a period of 10 years, aided by a Schlesinger Library research grant in 1999–2000. Gilman’s autobiography, *The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman*, was published posthumously, and many other biographies of her have appeared.

“The Yellow Wallpaper” also continues to inspire scholars. Smith College historian Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz AM ’65, PhD ’69, RI ’01 recently published *Wild Unrest: Charlotte Perkins Gilman and the Making of “The Yellow Wall-Paper”* (Oxford University Press, 2010). She relied on Gilman’s papers while conducting her research and used as a source the diaries of Gilman’s first husband, Charles Walter Stetson, which are also at the Schlesinger.

It’s easy to understand why Gilman remains such a fascinating figure. Not only do her arguments that women need economic independence remain relevant today, but Gilman defied convention again and again in her life. She grew up in an austere New England milieu, married the impecunious artist Charles Stetson, and had a daughter, Katharine. But she was a reluctant wife and mother. Davis writes that before marrying Stetson, Gilman insisted he swear that he’d never expect her to cook or clean and never require her, “whatever the emergency, to DUST!”

In 1888, Gilman and her daughter left Providence, Rhode Island, for Pasadena, California, where she began a career of writing and lecturing. At a time when divorce was still scandalous, she divorced Stetson, but she also facilitated his remarriage to her best friend, Grace Channing, with whom Gilman remained close. She then sent her nine-year-old daughter back east to be raised by the new couple. After a passionate affair with a woman, Adeline (“Delle”) Knapp, Gilman married her first cousin, Houghton Gilman.

Plagued by depression throughout her life, Gilman relied on a variety of stimulants, Davis writes, including the newfound cocaine, a vial of which lasted her 10 years. Gilman’s death in 1935 equaled her life in drama: Three years after she was diagnosed with breast cancer, she committed suicide, announcing that she “preferred chloroform to cancer.”

Gilman left behind a suicide note that was published verbatim in the newspapers. It read in part: “When all usefulness is over, when one is assured of unavoidable and imminent death, it is the simplest of human rights to choose a quick and easy death in place of a slow and horrible one.”

A long silence about Gilman ensued. Her papers were mildewing in storage, according to Davis, until Gilman’s daughter, Katharine Beecher Stetson Chamberlin, gave the bulk of them to the Schlesinger in 1971 and 1972.

The library’s decision to digitize Gilman’s papers was based on their wide use and the fact that a lot of her work came out in newspapers that are now crumbling, says Jenny Gotwals, the manuscript cataloger who processed the most recent acquisitions, which were given to the library by Gilman’s grandchildren. The digitization was made possible by a gift from Cynthia Green Colin ’54.

Gotwals thinks the most interesting aspect of Gilman’s collections is her playfulness. “She really had fun while she was doing all this serious work,” Gotwals says. “If you just read her published work, you don’t get the idea that she was a great artist, she drew caricatures, she played Victorian word games. And at the end of her life, when she wasn’t as well known, she had fun being retired—garden- ing and playing with her grandchildren.”

1. Gilman’s Credentials for the International Socialist and Trade Union Congress in London, 1896. 2. An invitation from the International Council of Women. 3. Photo of Gilman. 4. A drawing by Gilman, probably before 1884. 5. An advertising card for the Kendall Manufacturing Company’s Soapine French Laundry Soap; Gilman was a talented commercial artist. 6. A certificate from Gilman’s papers. The color image at the bottom of page 29 is Weariness and Disgust, a painting by Gilman, 1884. All images from the Gilman Papers at the Schlesinger Library.
Now On-Line

At an October event held at the Schlesinger to celebrate the 150th anniversary of Gilman’s birth and the digitization of her papers, Nancy F. Cott, the Carl and Lily Pforzheimer Foundation Director of the library and the Jonathan Trumbull Professor of American History at Harvard, said that Gilman’s papers at the Schlesinger have always been at the technological forefront: They were the first papers the library put on microfiche, and now they’re the first to be fully digitized.

Now on Exhibit

The Schlesinger Library’s current exhibit, From Woman to Human: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, is part of the celebration of her birth and the digitization of her papers. The exhibit includes her artwork, letters, and books and remains on view through February 23, 2011, Monday through Friday from 9:30 AM to 5 PM.
Pining for Flight

World and Town: A Novel
by Gish Jen ’77, Bl ’87, RI ’02
Knopf, 400 pp.

“One must start with fresh ink, if the results are to be fresh.” Hattie Kong’s father’s voice echoes in her mind as she sits in her Vermont kitchen attempting to master the art of Chinese brush painting. Gish Jen tackles plenty of eternal questions in her fourth and most ambitious novel, World and Town, but she always writes with fresh ink.

Hattie Kong’s father is no longer alive, nor is her husband of over 30 years or her best friend, Lee. Hattie is a 70-something retired science teacher living on her “lonesome own” in remote Riverlake, where she understands that her “chief job these days is to reconstitute herself.” Nursing her losses, Hattie is still “a compulsive supporter of gumption,” and when a Cambodian family moves into a trailer in the swampy ravine below her own retreat, she can’t help taking an interest. Fifteen-year-old Sophy (pronounced So-PEE, the girl is quick to say) Chhung, the eldest daughter, wins over Hattie immediately, perhaps because her trajectory runs almost directly counter to Hattie’s.

The daughter of an American missionary and a Chinese intellectual, Hattie was smuggled out of China as a teenager during the Cultural Revolution, an experience that felt like “being carried out to sea by a riptide” and left her “swimming for shore for fifty years.” Sophy, born in the United States to parents who met in a refugee camp in Thailand, has had too much of her controlling yet out-of-control family. “If you put a bird in a cage, it wants to fly out” is the proverb that speaks to Sophy’s plight, exacerbated by her family’s sudden move to the frozen north, where fleece is the “state fabric” and the mountains rise “all around them like walls.”

Both Hattie and Sophy are starting over, and if Hattie’s age gives her an advantage, they are both “black-hairs” in a village of old-timers—many of whom struggle to accept the new, whether a cell-phone tower or an immigrant family in crisis. Fundamentalist churches have sprung up, offering what Hattie sees as false comfort to the weary. When Sophy is lured to one of these and finds out that it is possible to be “reborn, like, right away! In this life!” the stage is set for a drama that ultimately involves the whole community. World and Town is a portrait of contemporary American life painted in bold strokes—“each stroke,” as Hattie’s father said, “a living idea.”
Few novelists can conjure as many distinct personalities as Glass manages without resorting to caricature or stereotype.

deepest sympathy: the sisters’ crotchety and sentimental father, the widower of the title; a promising Harvard student son and his dangerously idealistic roommate; a day care teacher and his divorce-lawyer partner, nicknamed “The Python”; and a Guatemalan illegal immigrant working as a “lawn soldier” in the bucolic Boston exurb that serves as primary setting for this vibrant cast.

Told in chapters that shift among the perspectives of these four men—men behaving badly and soon to suffer the consequences, we begin to sense—The Widower’s Tale encompasses many realms of experience despite its tight focus on one crucial year in the characters’ lives.

Few novelists can conjure as many distinct personalities as Glass manages without resorting to caricature or stereotype. In the end, the soulful crew she brings to life in these pages convinces us—as her hero, a retired Widener reference librarian, fondly imagines whenever he spots a student “deep in a volume of Fielding and Cheever”—that “the world, whatever its troubles, [is] still protected by the human heart.”

by Elizabeth Alexander RI ’08

Elizabeth Alexander’s Crave Radiance charts not only her own life as a poet, but also the lives of the many others she has taken as subjects, from the so-called “Venus Hottentot,” an African woman paraded nude as a freak of nature in European arcades and circus sideshows in the early 19th century, to Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, Muhammad Ali (“A Poem in Ten Rounds”), Igor Stravinsky, Frida Kahlo, Claude Monet, and even Mick Jagger.

Alexander’s lyrics can be rhythmically intricate and poignant, as in “Washington Etude,” a recollection of a childhood summer composed in short, slim stanzas that concludes:

regard the flare of blooming stars, the cicada’s maraca.

Yet it is the persona poems and historical elegies, always thoroughly researched but never tethered to facts, that make Alexander our modern-day Robert Browning, with more than a touch of Byron’s—or Obama’s—visionary zeal.

Death Is Not an Option: Stories
by Suzanne Rivecca’s debut collection, Death Is Not an Option, all speak to the reader with the “guileless free-wheeling candor” that she ascribes to one of her characters in “Yours Will Do Nicely,” a tale of college students seeking intimate connection in the era of hookups and easily accessed porn. Rivecca is a canny observer and an artful wordsmith who can note the “weary entitlement” with which a gaggle of rich teenaged girls drag rolling suitcases to their bunks at the “shantytown of rickety-ass cabins crammed on the edge of a gravel trail” where their Catholic high school senior class will hold its year-end retreat.

But it is her honesty that grabs and surpises as she offers up glimpses of interior lives almost “too sacred and complex to process,” if not for the “dark drumbeat of uneasy commiseration” Rivecca unfailingly supplies as narrator. Even her characters’ evasions prove revelatory. “I’m not sad,” says a 20-year-old woman to the stranger she’s trying to pick up at a bar. “This is just the way my face looks.”

The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America
by Mae Ngai RI ’04

A triumph of research and narrative art, Mae Ngai’s The Lucky Ones: One Family and the Extraordinary Invention of Chinese America accomplishes all that its ambitious subtitle claims—and more. In chronicling the lives of Jeu Dip (renamed Joseph Tape) and his wife, Mary, along with their fascinating daughters and son, from the couple’s arrival in California in the 1860s through the anxious decades of the Chinese Exclusion Act (1882–1943), Ngai has written a bold new chapter in American history.

The vivid opening scenes detail a surprising legal battle: Joseph and Mary fight their daughter Mamie’s exclusion from a San Francisco public school on the basis of her race. On her first day of school in September 1884, eight-year-old Mamie—dressed in a checked pinafore, hair braided and beribboned—had been turned away by the principal, herself an immigrant from Canada, born of Irish parents. Ngai’s documents include Mary Tape’s angry letter to the local paper: “Is it a disgrace to be Born a Chinese? Didn’t God make us All!!!?” The remarkable energy and commitment to civil rights that took Mamie to school that day and her parents to victory in the California supreme court propels the family through the next half-century. Richly illustrated with archival photographs, Ngai’s saga leaves her readers feeling they are the lucky ones.
John Tiffany

As associate director of the National Theatre of Scotland, John Tiffany RI ’11 commissions and develops new projects for staging in alternative venues—productions that have garnered him a slew of directing awards. Currently on a worldwide tour, Tiffany’s inventive and critically acclaimed production of Black Watch, based on interviews conducted by Gregory Burke with former soldiers who served in Iraq, incorporates movement and music to reveal what it’s like to be a member of the Scottish regiment in wartime. At the Institute, Tiffany is researching how a person’s voice communicates his or her personality to the world—a project he titles “I Speak Therefore I Am.” He hopes to develop it into a theater piece that explores how we use our voices every day.

Tiffany will deliver the Radcliffe Institute’s Julia S. Phelps Annual Lecture in Art and the Humanities on February 15 in the Radcliffe Gymnasium.

A Slightly Mad Yorkshire Man

Which aspect of your work do you most enjoy? When a piece of theater I’ve directed makes a meaningful, visceral, and shared connection with an audience. That’s when theater is at its most powerful and, for me, the greatest art form we have.

Who are your heroes? In work, I would say Tennessee Williams, Robert Lepage, and Pina Bausch. In life, I would say my mum and dad.

Which trait do you most admire in yourself? It’s a trait which I’ve only recently acquired: that of patience. As my productions become more ambitious, the number of collaborators increases, all of whom have expert skills that need time and space. It can be frustrating not being involved in every single creative decision, but it’s necessary and requires an enormous amount of patience.

Who is your muse? I have two—my artistic director, Vicky Featherstone, and my school friend and collaborator, the choreographer Steven Hoggett.

What would your colleagues be surprised to learn about you? That I get an unhealthy amount of pleasure from watching the TV show Glee.

Tell us your favorite memory. An important one just now is a brilliant day in summer 2010 spent riding roller coasters at Luna Park in Melbourne, where my partner lives.

Describe yourself in six words or fewer. I’m a slightly mad Yorkshire man (exactly six words!).

What inspires you? Bravery and generosity in the face of persecution and prejudice.

Name a pet peeve. People requesting withdrawal receipts at ATMs and then immediately throwing them in the trash without looking at them.

If your life became a motion picture, who would portray you? My pal Alan Cumming does a great impression of me and would definitely ensure that the true story was told, warts and all.

Where in the world would you like to spend a month? I’ve attempted and failed several times to organize a cycling trip through Vietnam, and it’s now become a bit of an obsession.

What is your most treasured possession? Music: my vinyl, CDs, and contents of my iPod.

What inspires you? Bravery and generosity in the face of persecution and prejudice.

Whose tunes do you enjoy? Depends what mood I’m in. It can range from Bach’s cantatas to Massive Attack. At the moment, I’m loving Janelle Monae’s album The ArchAndroid.

What is your fantasy career? Easy—pop star.

What is the most challenging aspect of being a Radcliffe fellow? To focus your energy on your research. I’m not used to being in an academic institution; there’s so much going on at Harvard, and so many fascinating people to get absorbed by. I don’t want to miss any of it.

What is your favorite part about having a life in the theater? The opportunity to travel the world and encounter different cultures and ways of telling our stories. 

Tiffany aims to connect with his audience on a visceral level.
LISA AND DICK CASHIN, both members of the Class of 1975, always enjoy learning about the work of Radcliffe Institute fellows, especially those who hold the fellowship they established in 2004 for their 30th reunion.

Cashin Fellow Susan Landau is a star in the world of cybersecurity, having been called upon to brief Congress about digital rights management and communications security. Buzz continues to build about her new book, *Surveillance or Security: The Risks Posed by New Wiretapping Technologies*, just out in February from MIT Press.

"Susan’s expertise in cybersecurity exposed us to a whole new language and a provocative set of distinctions about privacy versus observance," says Lisa Cashin.

"I work in a very multidisciplinary way, investigating how to protect Americans’ privacy while achieving appropriate surveillance," says Landau. "Being at the Radcliffe Institute on the Cashin Fellowship has allowed me to talk with people at Harvard Law School, Harvard Kennedy School, and the Harvard School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. The Institute is a very exciting place."
The Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study is bringing together leading scholars, practitioners, and policymakers to explore the complex role of gender in the developing world. Please join us as international experts discuss health, education, shifting populations, politics, technology, and the intersections among these topics to better understand how challenges facing the developing world can be addressed.

**CONFERENCE SPEAKERS INCLUDE**

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  Senior Economist in the Development Research Group  
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- **Esther Duflo**  
  Abdul Latif Jameel Professor of Poverty Alleviation and Development Economics  
  Massachusetts Institute of Technology

- **Humaira Shahid**  
  Journalist and Provincial Parliamentarian  
  Pakistan

- **Cecilia Maria Vélez White**  
  Former National Minister of Education  
  Colombia

**For registration information, please visit www.radcliffe.edu.**