MEGHAN O’ROURKE and her team of undergrads investigate

The Mysteries of Chronic Illness

Is the sharing economy here to stay?

The switch-flipping epigenome

Overturning assumptions about altruism
Violence seems inescapable, but does it have to be? During “Confronting Violence,” a program that includes considerations of gender, we’ll explore how activism and cultural change can affect public policy and reduce violence.

The conference will begin on the evening of April 9 with an arts event featuring hip-hop music, and April 10 will bring a day of presentations and discussions.

For more information, visit www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/event/2015-confronting-violence-conference.
An Agile, Ambitious Institute

ONE OF THE wonderful things about being Harvard’s institute for advanced study is that we are uniquely positioned to shape and support University priorities. Since the fall, for example, we have been collaborating with the Harvard University Native American Program to highlight the artistic and intellectual contributions of indigenous peoples. We have held two events in this multiyear initiative—

a poetry reading by Native American poet and retired professor Gerald Vizenor and a lecture by Yale historian Ned Blackhawk about the 150th anniversary of the Sand Creek Massacre (see page 4).

We’re currently marking another anniversary—the Civil War’s 150th—through an exhibition at the Schlesinger Library titled What They Wrote, What They Saved: The Personal Civil War. The exhibition—which features letters, photographs, and drawings exchanged between the front lines and the home fronts—opened this fall with an event at which Drew Gilpin Faust, the president of Harvard and a distinguished Civil War historian, spoke (see page 2).

An important way we both honor the Radcliffe College legacy and contribute to the intellectual growth of today’s Harvard College students is through our Radcliffe Research Partners program, which pairs undergraduates with Radcliffe fellows. Students are applying in record numbers to work with leading scholars and artists in our Fellowship Program. Many collaborations involve one fellow and one student, but often fellows take on additional research partners. For example, the four students on our cover are working with Meghan O’Rourke, this year’s Helen Putnam Fellow, helping research her book on chronic disease (see page 20).

Just as students seek new ideas, so too does the extended Radcliffe community. This fall we held two Radcliffe on the Road events for alumnae/i and friends. In New York City, historian Annette Gordon-Reed RI ’12, ’14, the Carol K. Pforzheimer Professor at Radcliffe, discussed the racial significance of Thomas Jefferson’s Monticello. In Philadelphia, Princeton physicist Paul Steinhardt RI ’13, who had been the Lillian Gollay Knafel Fellow, described the global detective work he undertook in his quest for quasi-crystals (see pages 30 and 31). The full rooms, eager questions, and lively conversations were a testament to the speakers and their audiences.

The Radcliffe Campaign is further evidence of the vibrancy of our community. We launched this ambitious fundraising effort in October 2013, and I’m pleased to report that we have now reached more than 60 percent of our $70 million goal. My heartfelt thanks go to everyone—from alumnae/i, fellows, and students to so many other friends—who are answering our call to “invest in ideas.”

LIZABETH COHEN
Dean, Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study

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Cover photograph
DANA SMITH

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What They Wrote, What They Saved

The Schlesinger Library marks the 150th anniversary of the Civil War with an exhibition of diaries, letters, photographs, prints, and more.

by Pat Harrison

HARVARD UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT Drew Gilpin Faust was the perfect person to provide historical context for the Schlesinger Library’s new exhibition, titled What They Wrote, What They Saved: The Personal Civil War. Faust has spent her scholarly career conducting research on the American Civil War and writing award-winning books on the subject, including This Republic of Suffering: Death and the American Civil War (Random House, 2008) and Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slave-holding South in the American Civil War (University of North Carolina Press, 1996). She spoke to a crowd of 200 in the Knafel Center in Radcliffe Yard in mid-October, when the exhibition opened.

In an intimate storytelling voice that held her listeners spellbound, Faust said that the very title of the exhibition—the notion of a personal Civil War—is testimony to our changed understanding of it. In the past, historians focused on generals and statesmen and broad national trends when they studied the war, but today they ask different questions.

After the 1974 publication of John Keegan’s book The Face of Battle: A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo, and the Somme, Faust said, historians began to ask about the experience of the common soldier. What did he eat? When did he sleep? What made him fight?

About the same time that military history shifted, she said, The Schlesinger Library marks the 150th anniversary of the Civil War with an exhibition of diaries, letters, photographs, prints, and more. Historians began using what was then called “the new social history” to study the lives of women and enslaved people on the home front. For several reasons, the Civil War provides a particularly rich understanding of how these two streams converged. Not only was it a literate war—the majority of Americans could read and write—but people were moved to record their thoughts. They knew that they were living in momentous times and that whatever they wrote and kept would most likely be valued.

The Civil War was also an uncensored war, because those in charge hadn’t figured out how to monitor the flow of letters between the home front and the battlefield. The war kept people apart, so they wrote down their thoughts in letters. “We don’t know what people said at the dinner table,” Faust remarked, “but we know what they wrote to each other.”

The Civil War was a literate war, Faust said, and people were moved to record their thoughts. They knew they were living in momentous times. Below, An 1865 letter from a union soldier to his future wife.

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“Warfare is of course about the power of guns,” **Drew Gilpin Faust** said in closing. “But I think we see in this exhibit that it’s also about the power of words. And those words are ours—still—to read, to understand, to learn from. I hope you enjoy this wonderful exhibit.”

Following Faust, Kathryn Allamong Jacob, the Johanna-Maria Fraenkel Curator of Manuscripts at the Schlesinger, described the wealth of material the library committee considered when selecting documents for the exhibition: diaries, hundreds of pages of letters, dozens of images (daguerreotypes, tintypes, cartes de visite, photos), prints, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies, histories of the war, and the very first fundraising cookbook—*The Poetical Cookbook*—published to secure money for soldiers’ relief.

The exhibition committee looked for hooks on which to hang a larger story, Jacob said, for items “that tell their own stories but also stand in for the stories of others.” Catherine Porter Noyes, for example, was one of a thousand teachers who traveled south from New England to teach newly freed slaves. Her diary is in the exhibition, representing the experience of other teachers.

Lizabeth Cohen, dean of the Radcliffe Institute and a scholar of American history, opened the event. “The objects and documents selected from our collections demonstrate vividly that the domestic concerns of home and family were not apart from war,” she said. “Rather, personal, often private, documents provide compelling evidence of how military and political events such as the Civil War affect individual lives and collective experience.”
Remembering THE SAND CREEK Massacre

by Pat Harrison

NOVEMBER 29, 2014, MARKED the 150th anniversary of one of the most violent episodes in American history—a massacre of Native Americans so horrific that it prompted two congressional investigations, forced the resignation of two leaders—Colonel John M. Chivington and the governor of Colorado Territory, John Evans—and launched years of battle with the Plains Indians following the Civil War.

The Sand Creek Massacre of 1864 was the topic of a November presentation by Ned Blackhawk at the Radcliffe Institute, held in partnership with the Harvard University Native American Program. Blackhawk, a Western Shoshone, is a professor of history, American studies, and ethnicity, race, and migration at Yale University, where he is also faculty coordinator of the Yale Group for the Study of Native America.

In his introduction of Blackhawk, Daniel Carpenter, the faculty director of the social sciences in Radcliffe’s Academic Ventures program and the Allie S. Freed Professor of Government in Harvard’s Faculty of Arts and Sciences, said, “A university is a conversation—a highly bureaucratized conversation, to be sure—but a vital dialogue nonetheless. And it is vital to the future of Harvard—and deeply consistent with Harvard’s Native past—that the voice of Native American and indigenous people be amplified and strengthened.”

On the morning of the Sand Creek Massacre, Chief Black Kettle—considered the leading peace chief of his day—was camped in an isolated area of southeastern Colorado Territory with about 700 Cheyenne and Arapaho Indians. The residents that morning were mainly women, children, and older men. The young men were off hunting buffalo, the primary source of food for the Cheyenne and Arapaho, and the Sand Creek area had none.

Colonel John M. Chivington, a bloodthirsty Methodist minister—“the mad preacher,” the writer Larry McMurtry has called him—approached Black Kettle’s camp, ignoring the flags that waved from the chief’s tepee. Black Kettle had hoisted a US flag that a former US commissioner of Indian affairs had given him; it flew above a white flag of peace that he had been told would alert soldiers that his camp was peaceful.

Another respected Cheyenne chief, White Antelope, had, like Black Kettle, trusted the US soldiers and persuaded his people to do so. When he saw the troops shooting at the Indians, he folded his arms across his chest and began singing the death song—Nothing lives long/Only the earth and the mountains. Nothing lives long/Only

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The horror of the Sand Creek Massacre has never abated—it persists today as a reminder of American violence against Native people.

In 2013, with the 150th anniversary approaching, Northwestern University decided to investigate John Evans's role in the massacre and appointed four senior scholars from within the university and four from outside—including Blackhawk—to a study committee.

In his talk at Radcliffe, Blackhawk described the committee's exploration of Evans's actions. A resident of Chicago for many years before President Lincoln appointed him governor of Colorado Territory, Evans helped to establish Northwestern, and Evanston, where the university is located, was named for him.

Although Evans didn’t give approval for the attack at Sand Creek and was out of the territory when it occurred, he never apologized for the atrocity or took responsibility for it. One of the congressional committees that investigated the massacre reported that Evans's appearance before it “was characterized by such prevarication and shuffling as has been shown by no witness” it had seen in its four years of investigation.

Miraculously, Black Kettle and his wife survived the attack at Sand Creek. She was severely wounded, but Black Kettle rescued her and the two escaped.

Still believing that peace was possible, Black Kettle led the Cheyenne and Arapaho to a reservation in present-day Oklahoma, along the Washita River. Almost four years to the day after Sand Creek—on November 27, 1868—Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer’s Seventh Cavalry attacked Black Kettle’s camp. This time the soldiers shot the peace chief and his wife in the back as they tried to flee on a horse. No reliable estimate of the number of Indians and soldiers who died that day exists, but Custer’s army is known to have destroyed almost 700 ponies and horses.

Eight years later, when 10,000 Cheyenne and Arapaho and Sioux were camped along the Little Bighorn in Montana Territory, the Native Americans took their revenge. They killed General Custer and the entire Seventh Cavalry, a shock to the nation that McMurry compares to 9/11. How could this have happened? He believes that Custer’s defeat marked the beginning of the end of Native culture. Fortunately, it also marked the beginning of the end of the Indian Wars.
by Colleen Walsh

DURING A RECENT VISIT to the Radcliffe Institute, the internationally acclaimed artist Kara Walker made a surprising admission for someone whose bold, provocative work has had such a broad impact.

She confided to a room full of Harvard students gathered for an informal discussion—a warm-up for her talk later that afternoon in a packed Knafel Center—that she considers herself a “reluctant activist.”

The artist and professor of art at Columbia University was in Cambridge to talk about her most recent creation, *A Subtlety, or the Marvelous Sugar Baby, an Homage to the unpaid and overworked Artisans who have refined our Sweet tastes from the cane fields to the Kitchens of the New World on the Occasion of the demolition of the Domino Sugar Refining Plant.*

The work, a massive sculptural synthesis of a sphinx and a “mammy,” was crafted from Styrofoam and sugar in what was once one of the world’s largest sugar manufacturers: the sprawling Domino refinery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. During its six-week run, the installation, commissioned by the public art group Creative Time, garnered rave reviews and challenged more than 130,000 visitors with complex themes of race, gender, power, sex, desire, and slavery. The creation was just the latest in a series of controversial projects undertaken by Walker in her relatively brief career.

Artistic blood runs in the Walker family. Her father, the accomplished painter Larry Walker, would cradle his young daughter in his lap while he worked in his garage studio in California in the early 1970s. Walker knew then, watching her father draw, that she wanted to be an artist too. She thought she would more or less follow his path. But while the elder Walker’s work is aesthetically bold, it is rarely explicitly political. Kara Walker would take a different direction.

She told the students that she gradually realized while in college in Atlanta—and later, while a master’s candidate at the Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)—that “there were issues in my life that I actually couldn’t ignore anymore, and that the
ignoring—the ignorance—was a piece of this problem.” She characterized her attitude toward racial issues as “willful blindness” and decided to explore her own stance and “embrace that, in a way.”

At RISD, Walker experimented with different media—drawing, typing, scribbling things down—all in search of “a nugget, a system, an image within a system that could get to narratives, slavery narratives, fictions, dirty jokes, things that happened, situations that I should have had better control over, foolishness and wisdom, all of that.”

Eventually she found a powerful artistic vehicle in silhouettes: large-scale paper cutout installations, vivid black images pasted on a stark white background. *Gone: An Historical Romance of a Civil War as It Occurred b’tween the Dusky Thighs of One Young Negress and Her Heart* premiered in 1994 at the Drawing Center in New York three months after she graduated from RISD. The 50-foot-long, 13-foot-high mural depicted startling scenes of the antebellum South, including graphic images of slavery and sexual subjugation. Inspired by minstrel shows, film, paintings, romance novels, and sentimental fictions, the silhouettes made her an overnight star.

Controversy followed her success. In 1997, the year Walker, at the age of 28, became one of the youngest recipients of a MacArthur Fellowship, the artist Betye Saar led a letter-writing campaign asserting that Walker’s art reinforced negative African American stereotypes. More recently a Walker drawing on display in the Newark Public Library in New Jersey was briefly covered after members of the staff complained about its jarring imagery.

The artist is the first to admit that her work walks a fine line. During her lunchtime chat with students, Walker addressed reactions to her productions, including the critique that she enabled those who snapped themselves posing suggestively with her sugar sphinx to reenact historical violence on African American women’s bodies, turning the sphinx back into a slave.

“That’s the problem with all the work that I have done, I think, so far: it does kind of sit on the line between enabling and exposing, and kind of does it with relish,” she said.

Walker said her initial reaction on being asked to create a public artwork in the cavernous defunct sugar factory was “probably not.” But the team at Creative Time persuaded her to look at the space. The building, with its molasses oozing “up from the floor, down from the ceiling, across the pillars,” hooked Walker while simultaneously throwing her into a creative tailspin.

She began to look closely at sugar—its production, its producers, its byproducts, and its difficult, complex history, along with the powerful feelings it inspires. Walker mentally juxtaposed unprocessed brown cane, refined white crystals, a craving for sweetness, and the making of sugar with enslaved Africans—excluded, oppressed, commodified, destroyed under slavery. She mused further about the equation of brown bodies with molasses and demeaning attitudes toward black women’s bodies.

Walker’s visit to Radcliffe was planned long before her sugar sphinx even began to take shape. Dean Lizabeth Cohen had seen Walker’s work in Minneapolis several years before and found it “stunning, provocative, and memorable.”

“When I became dean of Radcliffe and had the opportunity to invite people to come speak here,” said Cohen, “she was at the top of the list.”

“...”

**coleen walsh** is a staff writer for the Harvard Gazette.
Our annual science symposium, convened by Academic Ventures

Finding Our Way IN THE WORLD

by Deborah Blagg

WHAT DO SEA TURTLES, PULSARS, shantytowns, and a seahorse-shaped section of the brain have in common? As came to light during a fall 2014 Radcliffe science symposium that attracted an eclectic assembly of academics and practitioners, multidisciplinary research on these and other topics is beginning to spark insights into how humans and other creatures find their way in the world.

The topic of navigation grabbed international headlines last year when the physiologists Edvard I. Moser, May-Britt Moser, and John O’Keefe won the 2014 Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine for research they had conducted on the brain’s navigation system. In academia, however, the topic has never found a natural home. As Radcliffe’s Dean Lizbeth Cohen noted in her symposium introduction, “There are no departments of way-finding, professors of navigation, or courses on the revolutionary impact of the compass.”

Nevertheless, as scholars in fields such as anthropology, physics, astronomy, biology, architecture, oceanography, and psychology have discovered, in the words of John Huth—Harvard’s Donner Professor of Science, a faculty codirector of science in Radcliffe’s Academic Ventures program, and the symposium organizer—“navigation is a rubric under which a lot of science and empiricism can be taught.”

The author of The Lost Art of Finding Our Way (Belknap Press, 2013), Huth began studying navigation in earnest in 2003, after a kayaking experience in thick fog tested his knowledge of natural positioning cues.

The University College London neuroscientist Eleanor Maguire became interested in navigation through research on interrelated brain functions. “As it turns out,” she said during a session on neuroscience and cognitive psychology, “areas of the brain used in navigation are also involved in autobiographical memory, imagination, and planning functions. So research on navigation has important implications for understanding cognitive deficits due to issues such as Alzheimer’s or stroke.”

In a groundbreaking study, Maguire used magnetic resonance imaging to document brain changes in novice London taxi drivers as they gradually became master navigators of the city’s challenging tangle of throughways and back-alley shortcuts. One outcome of the research was to show that the drivers’ hippocampi (the seahorse-shaped part of the brain involved in both memory and navigation) grew in size to accommodate the increased navigational work, “countering previous
assumptions about the lack of plasticity in adult brains.”

Yasser Roudi, a colleague of the Nobel laureates Edvard and May-Britt Moser at the Kavli Institute for Systems Neuroscience, talked about the types of neural cells—head directional, place, grid, conjunctive, and border—that are associated with navigation in the mammalian brain. Although this discovery provides new insights into the brain’s ability to perform complex cognitive functions, Roudi emphasized, “there are just starting to be answers to many of the questions” in this evolving field.

Super-Navigators and Lost Causes
Shifting from a cellular perspective to a bird’s-eye view, Susanne Åkesson talked about research on the navigational skills of animals such as songbirds, albatrosses, turtles, and insects. A professor of animal ecology at the Center for Animal Movement Research at Lund University, in Sweden, Åkesson uses experiments, tracking, and telemetry to study migratory animals that find their way across sometimes tremendous distances, often relying on instincts that are innate rather than learned.

Research gathered from satellite tags placed on young albatrosses at their subantarctic breeding grounds, for instance, shows that fledglings invariably wait for prevailing winds to shift to the southwest before embarking on their first migratory flight—without the example of parents, who depart well before they can fly. “Somewhere in the program,” Åkesson said, “they know which environmental situations will benefit their northeast migration.”

Åkesson cited impressive navigational feats of many other animals, such as young loggerhead turtles—who embark on 8,000-mile migrations in the North Atlantic, returning to their breeding grounds seven to eight years later—and common swifts, birds that annually cover a distance equal to seven trips around the globe, staying airborne and on course even while asleep. Improved technology is helping to unlock clues to animals’ engagement with phenomena such as air and ocean currents that may explain their migratory abilities.

As the directionally challenged among us well know, humans often lack sophisticated internal navigational abilities. Robert J. Koester has made a career out of successfully predicting the behavior of

“Navigation is a rubric under which a lot of science and empiricism can be taught.”
off-course humans. A technical instructor at the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and the author of *Lost Person Behavior: A Search and Rescue Guide on Where to Look—for Land, Air, and Water* (dbS Productions, 2008), Koester is the driving force behind the International Search and Rescue Database (ISRID), which includes information from more than 50,000 search and rescue incidents. ISRID has yielded six spatial models for finding lost subjects in different scenarios, tools that can save valuable time in tense situations. Using these models, Koester explained, “we can, for example, say that in temperate environments, 50 percent of lost subjects with dementia will be found within 15 meters of a road or a trail.”

**Uncharted Territories**

The Kent State University cultural anthropologist Richard Feinberg is among a growing number of scholars and indigenous Pacific Islanders interested in making sense of way-finding techniques that predate databases, maps, compasses, sextants, and global positioning systems (GPS) by hundreds of years. Beginning in the 1970s, Feinberg said, long experimental trips guided by Pacific Island master navigators “proved it is possible to make voyages across the open sea, out of sight of land, without instruments, with a high degree of accuracy.” These excursions and other research described by Feinberg are providing valuable
information about the “navigation-al tool kit” Pacific Islanders have relied on for centuries, which includes dead reckoning, knowledge of wind and ocean currents, avian feeding and flight patterns, the ability to detect when waves have been deflected from land, celestial navigation, and handmade wind and star compasses.

Research suggests that the navigational tool kit of future intergalactic travelers will include familiarity with the properties of pulsars—small, super-dense remnants of exploded stars that emit radio waves across space at relatively constant intervals. The astrophysicist George Hobbs and his colleagues at CSIRO Astronomy and Space Science, in Australia, believe that just as today’s global positioning systems rely on coordinates transmitted from Earth-orbiting satellites, vehicles traveling in deep space—well out of range of Earth’s GPS tracking—will be able to find their way by triangulating signals from pulsars. Testing this theory on a simulated spacecraft journey from Earth to Mars, Hobbs has been able to determine the craft’s location within 10 kilometers. “For deep space navigation,” he asserted, “this technique will work.”

Bringing symposium participants back down to earth, the Boston Globe reporter Hiawatha Bray, the author of You Are Here (Basic Books, 2014), talked about a relatively straightforward navigation problem that is just beginning to be addressed. In the poor urban areas of many emerging nations, he noted, millions of people are “lost” because they don’t have a street address. “Without an address,” Bray asked, “how do you register to vote, receive mail, or establish a bank account?” How, in a city like Monrovia, Liberia, can health officials track the spread of Ebola?

Emerging nations are currently developing solutions to this problem with the help of high-tech companies that use Google Maps, specialized software, and neighborhood canvassers to assign street addresses to even the humblest residential structures. While “we get wowed” by the concept of interstellar navigation, Bray observed, “something as basic as being able to say ‘This is where you can find me’ can change a person’s life.”

Deborah Blagg is a freelance writer.
MELISSA HARRIS-PERRY: A Public Intellectual with Global Impact

LECTURE The social scientist and MSNBC host shared insights from her scholarly research—delivered with the “touch of speechifying” for which she’s known.

by Deborah Blagg

IN HER MOST RECENT BOOK, SISTER CITIZEN: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America (Yale University Press, 2011), Melissa Harris-Perry, a social scientist, the Presidential Endowed Professor of Politics and International Affairs, and the executive director of the Pro Humanitate Institute at Wake Forest University, examines what it means to be a black woman and an American citizen. “Specifically, I am interested in trying to think about black women’s interior lives as a site of citizenship,” she commented when the book was published. “What does it feel like to try to do the work of citizenship when you are in a body that is racialized and gendered in a way that produces shame, fear, and distress?”

The ability to draw and express such provocative, conversation-changing concepts from scholarly research has earned Harris-Perry a reputation as a public intellectual with global impact. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., the Alphonse Fletcher University Professor at Harvard, calls her “one of our most trenchant readers of modern black life.”

Harris-Perry’s worldview was further shaped at Wake Forest, where Maya Angelou was her undergraduate advisor; at Duke University, where she earned her PhD in political science; and at Union Theological Seminary, where she also studied. “I had the benefit of larger-than-life role models for a career in academia—visionary people who helped me see incredible possibilities for what being a teacher could be,” Harris-Perry said.

Following the success of her first two books, the woman Ebony magazine dubbed “the smartest nerd in the room” is now at work on a third volume, tentatively titled “Race Talk.” "It’s a scholarly engagement with perplexing realities of the last five years," she said. “What does it mean to elect the first black president and then have Ferguson? Why are our classrooms more racially segregated now than in 1975? What will that mean for how our children engage with one another in the future?”

Political and social concerns remain front and center even during care for low-income mothers. My dad, the first dean of African American affairs at the University of Virginia, was a survivor of the Jim Crow South. When he gave us birthday cards, he signed them ‘The struggle continues—Daddy.’ It sounds funny,” she said, “but he really did that.”

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private moments in Harris-Perry’s busy household, which includes her husband, James Perry, a civil rights lawyer; her community-activist mother; and two daughters, ages 13 years and 11 months. Harris-Perry has talked in the past about the poignancy of beginning to write *Sister Citizen* shortly after her older daughter, Parker, was born. “Now that she is a teenager, we have extremely frank discussions about controversies in the news and challenges she encounters in her daily life. Sometimes she’ll say, ‘I don’t want to talk about that stuff anymore,’ and I get that,” Harris-Perry said. “But I know she’s listening.”

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DEBORAH BLAGG is a freelance writer.

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In front of a Knafel Center crowd of nearly 400, Harris-Perry talked about her career and the nature of democracy.

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**Voting:**
Just the brushing your teeth of democracy. I’m pleased when you do it, but I’m not impressed.

**Sarah Palin:**
Most women believe they have to be two, three, or four times better than [a male candidate] to run for office. Sarah Palin didn’t.

**Democracy:**
To live in a democracy is to have the right to govern, not simply to be governed; to rule, not just to be ruled; to be heard, not silenced; and to lose without fearing that winners will take all.

**The Declaration of Independence:**
There was nothing less self-evident in 1776 than the human equality of all persons. . . . Martin Luther King later called it the check that . . . comes back with insufficient funds. But it’s better that the check is written, because it makes clear that a debt is owed.
Exploring the genome’s outer layer

by Corydon Ireland

For humans, conception involves a fateful collision of two cells, one egg from the mother and one sperm from the father. After five days, the two cells create a primordial package called a blastocyst. This wall-like structure, as wide as a hair, protects a moist ball of a few dozen cells. One day later, the blastocyst, ponderous with potential, attaches to the uterine wall.

This journey of primary cells in the uterine environment and the complex ecology of fetal development captivates Karin B. Michels, an associate professor of obstetrics, gynecology, and reproductive biology at Harvard Medical School. She also studies how environmental factors, from maternal smoking and folic acid supplementation and fortification to plastic bottles and soup can liners, affect human health, in utero and otherwise.

In June 2012, Michels directed a Radcliffe Exploratory Seminar on ways to analyze a new kind of data piling up in genetics labs all over the world. The result was a paper in the prestigious journal Nature Methods, published in December 2013 as “Recommendations for the Design and Analysis of Epigenome-Wide Association Studies.”

Don’t know much about biology or the epigenome? To explain, Michels goes back to the blastocyst. At first, fast-forming fetal cells are undifferentiated, she says. Then differences emerge. What biologists call the genome—the unchanging inherited genes in every cell—becomes the phenome: the differentiated cells that early on decide to become skin, hair, blood, or organ tissues.

How they decide to be different is what Michels and her team study. “Every tissue has different function—kidney, liver, brain, skin,” she says, “yet all have the same genetic information. So there is something between the genome and the phenome. That’s epigenetics.”

“Epi” means “over,” she points out. The epigenome is atop the DNA—“over” the double helix where genes reside. It tells each cell what its function is by chemically directing the cell to switch a gene on or off in order to create a certain tissue type. Michels calls the epigenome “a complex switching mechanism.”

If genes are an array of switches ready to be coded for functionality, the epigenome is the blueprint, covering each strand of DNA like a template. But that blueprint requires an epigenetic agent—a finger, as it were, that can flip the genes like switches, setting the codes for hair, blood, and other functional differentiations.

There are three of these switch-tripping “epigenetic processes,” says Michels. In the most thoroughly studied, DNA methylation, CH3 groups (composed of one carbon atom bonded to three hydrogen atoms) attach to a strand of DNA and guide protein formation by shutting off genes. Methyl groups are attractive to researchers because they remain stable in tissue samples stored for a long time in freezers. (Epidemiology labs everywhere have frozen samples, some going back decades.)

Epigenetics is an important key to turning genes off and on. But until a decade or so ago it was the province of only plant and animal studies. Today, human epigenetics is a hot field—growing exponentially, says Michels—because it holds preventive and therapeutic promise for the future.

The genome, in humans and others, is a relatively stable archive of genes that “essentially never changes,” she says. “But the epigenome is a dynamic signature.” It can change as the result of the environment, flexing and mutating—a “plasticity” that, Michels says, may be a buffer against environmental stressors. However, too many dynamic changes in the epigenome may make you more vulnerable to disease.

Scientists—in big teams, and with big money behind them—are pondering a future of prevention and therapies. But those efforts involve identifying sites in the epigenome that are associated with disease. That relates to the puzzle Michels and others are busy trying to solve, using—in large part—just partial scans of methylation sites along the epigenome. Which have functional relevance, they ask, and which are just statistical noise?

Telling the difference means being able to sort and analyze all the epigenomic data that have piled up. The Radcliffe
WINTER 2015
radcliffe magazine

“Every tissue has different function—kidney, liver, brain, skin—yet all have the same genetic information. So there is something between the genome and the phenome. That’s epigenetics.”
—Karin B. Michels

seminar was an attempt to set standards of epigenetic analysis and study design. “We were at the point where we had all these data and everybody took a different approach to tease out the important signals,” says Michels.

In 2012 there was no unified approach. Michels once sent data to three experts and got back three different interpretations of the important epigenetic sites. “I thought: This can’t be,” she says. “We need more standardization.”

Michels was just finishing a book on how to marry two disciplines—that of epigeneticists, who might study 5 or 10 people at a time, and that of epidemiologists (like herself), who study whole populations. (“I always joke about my epi-epi interests,” she says.) The marriage involves mixing the challenges of scale (large populations) with the challenges of depth: epigenomes that are far more complex and dynamic than genomes.

The 2012 seminar brought together some of the world’s leading experts in analyzing epigenomic data: statisticians, epidemiologists, biologists, and physicians at the top of their game, as well as sharp young researchers with something to add (another Radcliffe seminar marker). “They did all the organizing,” Michels says of Radcliffe. “I just had to write my wish list. How much better does it get?”

On her seminar wish list was the prominent Johns Hopkins University biostatistician Rafael A. Irizarry. At Harvard now, he credits the Radcliffe experience with changing the way he analyzed DNA methylation data, “which in turn influenced the way my collaborators at Hopkins analyzed data,” he says.

The two intensive days of discussion followed the Radcliffe seminar model: bring together many disciplines to puzzle over one problem. In this case, the problem was “epigenome-wide association studies” (EWAS)—broad investigations into how the epigenome is affected by the environment and other factors, and how this can result in disease. They are modeled on GWAS—similarly broad studies in the world of genomics.

In 2009 there were fewer than 20 EWAS; by 2012 there were more than 80; today there are hundreds. The seminar was “a step towards unifying methods to identify important sites along the epigenome,” Michels says.

To continue the momentum of the seminar, Michels set up a Google document so that the article could be written by the 14 participants simultaneously. She assigned each a writing task that matched his or her expertise. After six months, it was finished, and in another six, the *Nature Methods* study was revised and published. “Given how fast this field moves,” says Michels, “it was important to get our recommendations out.”

By early December, the paper had taken on a life of its own as a landmark that is changing the way EWAS are conducted. Michels was nearing the end of a round of fall conferences in London, Milan, and Stockholm, where the paper was widely circulated and praised. In London the Gates Foundation asked her to advise on epigenetic research. “I am glad we were able to provide recommendations that the epigenetic community is finding helpful,” she says.

All the attention was “more mileage from the Radcliffe seminar,” says Michels—without which “I never would have written this paper or met these fantastic people with whom I now collaborate.”

Corydon Ireland is a staff writer for the Harvard Gazette.
CHILD OF Good

New research challenges the view that empathy and cooperation are learned behaviors.
video is among the millions vying for our attention on YouTube and Facebook. An 18-month-old, gleefully and apparently of his own accord, toddles across a room to a bowl dropped by a clumsy adult, scoops the object up, extends a chubby arm to return it to its owner, and toddles off. It’s adorable. It is also a rigorously designed and carefully controlled experiment that supports a new but growing body of research indicating that very young children can be altruistic.

At the forefront of these compelling findings is Felix Warneken RI ’15, one of two Joy Foundation Fellows at the Radcliffe Institute this year and the John L. Loeb Associate Professor of the Social Sciences at Harvard. In addition to being able to maintain a neutral expression under circumstances that would have an amateur laughing or applauding, Warneken heads Harvard’s Social Cognitive Development Group in the University’s psychology department. A graduate of the University of Leipzig, he has been captivated by the evolutionary origins of human cooperation since his days at the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, where he designed experiments with children and their wordless evolutionary cousins, chimpanzees. The recipient of a string of awards, most recently the American Psychological Association’s Boyd McCandless Award and a National Science Foundation Career Award, Warneken is toppling the stubborn assumption that small children are self-centered in the extreme.

“I was interested in child development and children’s understanding of other people’s thoughts, feelings, and goals—how children go beyond the information given to think about the unobservable,” says Warneken, who toils at ground zero of the nature-nurture dilemma. “There’s this strongly held belief in the scientific literature that the true origin of altruistic inclinations is social norms—that Mother Nature has induced us to be selfish and teachers and parents are always hammering into our heads” that we should be empathetic and share, he says.

“Because of this focus on social norms as the driver of altruism, people often assume that young children, and especially chimpanzees, would never engage in these kinds of helping behaviors,” says Warneken. That was the prevailing wisdom at the Max Planck Institute when, as a young doctoral candidate, he suggested that helping behaviors might be based on innate abilities in very young children. What if he tested the notion in children under two? Would a toddler understand—and act—if someone needed help? Was it worth investigating? Some of the more senior scientists were skeptical that toddlers would be helpful at all. “What did I know?” Warneken remembers. “I was just a PhD student.”

That’s when Warneken dropped the ball. It was an accident: in an unrelated experiment, a ball fell out of his hands. It’s not overstating things to say that what happened next—a toddler picked up the ball and handed it over—sent evolutionary psychology hurtling in a fresh new direction.

When Warneken discusses his work probing a broad range of childhood helping behaviors, from cooperation to altruism to reactions to perceived unfairness toward others, he tells the story of the ball and the ensuing collision of science and serendipity. For him, and for his field, it led to studies that changed the way psychology looks at toddlers as young as a year old and their range of understanding. For Warneken, a native of the university town of Tübingen, Germany, who has been on the Harvard faculty since 2009, the ball incident led to a series of increasingly refined studies, and his initially unexpected findings have since been duplicated in cross-cultural studies (children in Canada, India, and Peru all displayed similar helping behavior) and borne out in comparative studies with chimpanzees at the Max Planck Institute and at research centers across the world.

Warneken is the first to admit that in studies with children a range of variables threaten to taint the results. Whereas laboratory mice, for example, are portable and compliant, human toddlers as research subjects pose a vast and daunting set of challenges. Kids are mercurial, restless, only sporadically attentive, and often desperate to please—qualities that can easily derail a controlled behavioral study. Their actions are affected by the presence of rela-

“Chimp parents don’t show them how to be responsible tives or teachers—and, of course, the demeanor of the researchers themselves. “They do cute things,” says Katherine McAuliffe PhD ’13, a research associate of Warneken’s who is now a postdoc in psychology at Yale. “But in the trials you can’t let on that you’re amused, approving, or disapproving. My strategy is to maintain a neutral, vaguely pleasant face.”

Warneken and his team are on perpetual high alert to the ways
in which results can be misleading. For example, in a study in which children, as quickly as 10 seconds later, handed Warneken a clothespin he had dropped as he hung clothes on a line, was it the child’s way of initiating a game (Do it again?)? Warneken altered the experiment, hurling the clothespin on the floor on purpose. The children didn’t respond.

And what are the limits to this helping behavior? Are toddlers capable of more-sophisticated forms of help? A video shows Warneken carrying a stack of magazines to a cabinet as an 18-month-old looks on. When, on a second trip, Warneken can’t open the closed cabinet doors and groans in obvious dismay (“We’ve all learned to be good actors,” he says), in nearly half the trials the child skitters to the cabinet and pulls the doors open. Do these children have similar cabinets at home? Warneken repeats the experiment using a box with a flap on the side and a small hole on the top. After the kids are shown how the unusual box works, he drops a spoon in the hole and fumbles to retrieve it. And yes, the children show the towering, clueless adult where the flap is.

More experiments follow, each upping the experimental ante. What if the child is given toys to busy himself with? It turns out that kids will leave their play to assist an adult who has dropped his pen. This looks a whole lot like altruism—helping another with no benefit to oneself—so Warneken went on to mix things up by offering toys as rewards when the children helped. “The result,” he says, “was that both the rewarded and not-rewarded groups helped at the same rate. In fact, the rewarding could even decrease the helping behavior; when I rewarded them over and over again, they were later less likely to help than children who’d received no award.”

When it came to doing similar studies in chimpanzees, Warneken was able to reproduce the results he’d seen in toddlers. “It’s important to add chimpanzees to the equation—chimp parents don’t show them how to be responsible and teach them social norms,” says Warneken, whose office wall is adorned with side-by-side portraits of a child and a chimp. “And all,” says Warneken. “It’s a really creative process, with students bouncing around ideas.” For the helping experiment, using the problem of a Post-it note stuck to an adult’s shoe proved too complicated and was scrapped. Warneken “is incredibly smart and enthusiastic about the work, but he’s also a very structured thinker and encourages structured thinking in others,” says McAuliffe. “I learned from him how to be a much better experimentalist.”

His Radcliffe fellowship is allowing Warneken to synthesize the evidence he’s amassed in 10 years of empirical work. “My goal,” he says, “is to write a larger theoretical paper on the origin of human cooperation.”

Stephanie Mitchell / Harvard Staff Photographer

SUSAN SELIGSON is a freelance writer and the senior editor of Bostonia, the alumni magazine of Boston University.
The Mysteries of Chronic Illness

MEGHAN O’ROURKE’S book on chronic illness will weave together her own experience with cultural criticism and medical journalism.

BY PAT HARRISON

PHOTOGRAPHS BY DANA SMITH
“I’ve now learned that patients aren’t alone in feeling that doctors are failing them. Behind the scenes, many doctors feel the same way.”
That was the first symptom Meghan O’Rourke RI ’15 experienced in 1997, when she was 21. As abruptly as the stinging began, it would end. Later she was attacked by hives. At one point, she was diagnosed with lupus, but it turned out she’d been misdiagnosed. These episodes plagued her for years and seemed to come out of nowhere.

After a bookish childhood in Brooklyn—where her parents, free spirits of the ’60s and ’70s, taught at a private school, St. Ann’s—O’Rourke attended Yale, where she collected a raft of awards for her poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. After college she worked at the New Yorker, first as an assistant to the editor Bill Buford, and then as a fiction and nonfiction editor, one of the youngest ever hired.

She moved to the online magazine Slate, where she created the culture and books section, and also worked part-time at the Paris Review, where she served a five-year stretch as poetry editor. In 2005 she earned an MFA in poetry at Warren Wilson College, and in 2007 she began teaching poetry, first at the New School, then at Princeton, where she continues to teach undergraduates, and then at New York University, where she’s now an associate professor in the graduate writing program.

Through all this—sickness and health, school and work—O’Rourke wrote and wrote and wrote. By 2012 she had published more than 100 articles and three books—two of poetry, Halflife (Norton, 2007) and Once (Norton, 2011) and one of nonfiction, The Long Goodbye: A Memoir (Riverhead, 2011).

The memoir is O’Rourke’s chronicle of what happened to her family after her 53-year-old mother was diagnosed in 2006 with stage IV colorectal cancer. O’Rourke’s parents had moved to Connecticut by then to work in a new private school. With O’Rourke and her two younger brothers off on their own, their parents were starting a new life, but now it was coming undone. O’Rourke’s mother underwent chemotherapy and her cancer was briefly in remission, but it returned and moved fast. She died at home on Christmas Day in 2008.

O’Rourke’s medical symptoms began to intensify in the year after her mother’s death. She suffered overwhelming fatigue, aching lymph nodes, fever, headaches, and rashes that doctors couldn’t explain. Eventually a specialist in women’s health diagnosed her with autoimmune thyroiditis, or Hashimoto’s. But replacement thyroid hormones didn’t bring relief. O’Rourke began looking online for information about Hashimoto’s and other autoimmune diseases.

In an essay published in the New Yorker, she describes her disabling symptoms, her quest for a diagnosis, and the alarming rise of autoimmune disease among women. “Today, researchers believe that they have discovered some 80 to 100 autoimmune disorders,” she writes, “including disorders as various as lupus, multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes, and rheumatoid arthritis.” And three-quarters of autoimmune patients are women. It’s
one of the most prevalent categories of disease, ahead of cancer. When O’Rourke finished the article, she felt she had just started exploring the subject.

She had intended to make her next book about young women and gymnastics, a subject she knows from experience, but now she changed course. She would braid her personal experience of chronic illness with an investigation of the ways the medical system is challenged in caring for people with these maladies. She signed a contract with Riverhead to deliver the manuscript in September 2016.

Fortunately, in the fall of 2013, O’Rourke received the diagnosis that eased her symptoms. A doctor tested her for Lyme disease and its co-infections and gave her several rounds of antibiotics and anti-malaria drugs, and she began to feel better. But her cure is not complete: she still suffers from three autoimmune disorders and her neurological damage seems to be worsening.

**Student Researchers**

At the Radcliffe Institute, where O’Rourke holds the Helen Putnam Fellowship, she has dived into research for her book, with help from four undergraduate research partners. “They’re incredibly smart and energetic,” she says. “One of them made a chart on simplified immunology for me, because I’m an English major. The book will be so much better for having their help.” The students each work four to six hours a week and meet with O’Rourke as a group—seminar style—to discuss their findings.

When she’s not meeting with students or conducting interviews with scientists and people with autoimmunity, O’Rourke is fully immersing herself in the Harvard experience: attending Helen Vendler’s poetry classes (“She’s wonderful—an intensely penetrating reader,” O’Rourke says of the Arthur Kingsley Porter University Professor) and as many lectures and talks as she can (such as a climate-change symposium at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute led by Amala Mahadevan RI ’15, who is a scientist there).

In an *Atlantic* essay published this past November—“Doctors Tell All—And It’s Bad,” on which she worked with the editor Ann Hulbert ’77—O’Rourke reviews a new crop of books by physicians in which they reveal their disillusionment with the health-care system. The books include *What Doctors Feel: How Emotions Affect the Practice of Medicine*, by Danielle Ofri (Beacon Press, 2013). “After reading these books in the aggregate, you realize how psychologically taxing it is to be a doctor,” O’Rourke says.

“I’ve now learned that patients aren’t alone in feeling that doctors are failing them,” she writes in the essay. “Behind the scenes, many doctors feel the same way.” She reports, for example, on Ofri’s belief that empathy gets in the way of what doctors must do to survive, even though empathy can be essential to healing. Ofri found that patients with severe diabetes whose doctors rate high on a standard empathy scale have 40 percent fewer complications.

O’Rourke stresses the importance of empathy and acknowledgment of physical symptoms for people with chronic disease. “If people are having vague but distressing symptoms,” she says, “they don’t need other people to say ‘Are you depressed?’ Maybe they are and maybe they’re not. But they also need care and answers. We know that our medical system is not great at detecting early signs of illness, so there very well may be something physiologically wrong.”

She hopes her new book will do for chronic illness what Andrew Solomon’s *The Noonday Demon: An Atlas of Depression* (Scribner, 2001) did for that ailment. “He told a story that created a bridge between those suffering from depression and those who aren’t,” O’Rourke says. “William Styron did that too in *Darkness Visible*, and that’s partly what I’m trying to do. I’m not a doctor, and I’m not a historian. Mine is a very personal book that will provide some history of medicine and some cultural criticism about the ways our contemporary medical system affects the treatment of poorly understood diseases.”
Radcliffe fellow JULIET SCHOR believes that a growing peer-to-peer economy is changing business as usual. But is it here to stay?

by Ivelisse Estrada

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MATT KALINOWSKI
CAPTIVATED BY CONSUMPTION

INITIALLY TRAINED AS an economist, Juliet Schor now focuses on issues of time use, consumption, and environmental sustainability. She began to develop an interest in consumer culture after writing The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure (Basic Books, 1992). For that book, she developed the model of work and spend, which correlates money earned during working hours with the amount the workers spend, in an ever-increasing pattern that results in a sort of feedback loop.

An audience question at a local reading—How do you get out of the cycle of work and spend?—led Schor to start studying what she calls the social dynamics of spending. This research yielded her book The Overspent American: Upscaling, Downshifting, and the New Consumer (Basic Books, 1998), in which she looks at how people’s perceived peer groups affect how much they spend and save.

As she learned more and more about consumer culture, she discovered that the real action in what’s called consumer studies was outside economics. She also began—as a result of work done on the relationship between working hours and carbon emissions—to develop an increasing interest in climate change and the ecological crisis.

In Plenitude: The New Economics of True Wealth (Penguin Press, 2010), Schor makes the argument for sustainable consumption, which is about the transformation of lifestyles to lower carbon footprints. She still spends a lot of time thinking about consumption and climate change, and also the ways in which social inequality plays out in the consumption sphere—and the book she is writing at Radcliffe will further advance these explorations.

“I’m captivated by consumption,” says Schor. “It’s a lens through which I can study inequality differently as well as an area of social practice that allows people to create new ways of living.”

HAVE YOU EVER BOOKED A ROOM through Airbnb? Joined in a campaign to fund an acquaintance’s artistic or business endeavor? Bought a farm share?

If so, you’ve dipped your toe in the sharing economy, a new and growing consumer culture that may be poised to sweep the mainstream.

Juliet B. Schor RI ’15, a professor of sociology at Boston College and a member of the MacArthur Foundation–supported Connected Learning Research Network, has been conducting research about the new institutions and consumer practices that make up the sharing economy. She and her team have been interviewing and observing participants in various sectors of the sharing economy—including a food swap, a maker space where people gather to share time and resources as they work on building projects, a time bank through which members trade services by the hour, and larger platforms, such as Airbnb and Lyft—and building case studies, eight in all.

So far, the researchers have completed nearly 200 interviews, but they hope to do many more, along with up to 500 hours of participant observation. Schor would like to then supplement the interviews and observations with quantitative data. The end result will be a thorough academic investigation into what she sees as “the emergence of a new kind of consumer and a new set of consumer patterns.” Her fellowship year (during which she is the 2014–2015 Matina S. Horner Visiting Professor) is allowing her to focus on writing this book.

Defining the Sharing Economy

“The sharing economy itself is a rather incoherent concept,” Schor says. “There’s so much diversity there.” She names the alternative food movement, including community-supported agriculture; exchanges outside the traditional currency-based market, such as time banks and clothing swaps; do-it-yourself activities, including maker spaces and homesteading; crowdfunding programs, such as Kickstarter and Indiegogo; online peer production, such as open-access education sites; and collaborative consumption, or the more literal sharing of physical resources that occurs when people share rides or couch surf.

Consumers Connect

All of these services, practices, and platforms offer a more direct exchange. “Many of these platforms and innovations hold out the possibility of social connection—even something as impersonal as being driven by someone from the ride share Lyft,” says Schor. She has coined the term “connected consumption” to describe them.

Many among the 18- to 34-year-olds she is studying express a desire to connect with others, even when exchanging cash for goods or services. “Person-to-person platforms feel more personal,” she says. “They don’t feel like arm’s-length market transactions.” For this reason, consumers may choose to book a room in someone’s home through Airbnb rather than through a worldwide hotel chain.

Of course, a craving for social connection is not the only factor driving the sharing economy. For varied
reasons—including idealistic downshifting, pessimism about the labor market, crippling debt, or entrepreneurial dreams—many of the young consumers in Schor’s study are looking for creative ways to earn a little something extra. “These are ways to make money as well as ways to get things cheaply,” she says. Using Airbnb, for example, consumers can not only find accommodations cheaper than a hotel, but also rent out unused rooms in their homes for supplementary income.

But this type of exchange seems risky to some. “At a Marriott, you don't have to worry about the concierge being an ax murderer,” Schor jokes. “But in someone's house on Airbnb—well, are they dangerous?” Technology helps alleviate this worry through online reviews. Taking safety or financial risks in peer-to-peer exchanges becomes more palatable thanks to crowd-sourced reputational and ratings information available through the platforms.

Driven by Technophilia
Technology has also been crucial in scaling up the sharing economy. Many of the exchanges Schor studies are made possible by lowered costs. “In what we call secondary markets, transactions and information are more costly than buying new,” she says. For example, a consumer may choose to buy goods from a department store because frequenting yard sales takes too long or is an unreliable way of securing specific goods.

“Now the consumer can go online and have many more options,” says Schor. And with the development of phone apps for sites such as eBay and Craigslist, consumers can even search for goods remotely. In fact, many of these sharing-economy services—including Airbnb and Lyft—are powered by phone apps. “The software capabilities of these platforms are quite amazing: you can summon a car with the touch of a button and pay using your phone.”

Sustainability Concerns
In addition to fulfilling a yearning for social connection, cost savings, and technologically driven convenience, the sharing economy has the potential to lighten ecological footprints. Increasingly, consumers are considering the moral implications of their choices—seeking out local or fairly traded goods—and this includes a concern for the environment. Says Schor, “The emergence of small-scale and local economies—which are still quite small but very exciting—is being catalyzed by people's desire to lead a different kind of lifestyle.” Car-sharing services such as RelayRides make a car-free lifestyle easier for casual drivers.

The Downside
Unfortunately, that same convenience has the potential to do harm by undermining public transportation. The loftier goals of the sharing economy could also be sabotaged by the exploitation of labor and the rise of sector monopolies that benefit only owner-investors. Despite the potential downsides, Schor believes that the story of connected consumption can be an optimistic one. “There is extraordinary potential in these technologies to create peer-to-peer economies that deliver great value to consumers, create good livelihood for providers, empower people, and potentially reduce eco-footprints,” she says. “Realizing that potential is going to depend on whether or not people who use the platforms are able to really have a voice and, in many cases, to formally organize as users.”

Is Sharing Here to Stay?
Consumer culture, Schor says with certainty, is always changing. But this latest shift is different. “I believe we are seeing a regime change in consumption—what we might think of as more-structural transformations in the way consumer culture is operating,” says Schor. This belief is a major theme in her book, which she hopes will contribute significantly to existing understandings of how consumption works, particularly in the field of sociology.

“The idea of sharing is a big departure from the way people have understood the capitalist economy,” she says, “but I think we’re in a period when we desperately need more real sharing.”
Simone Weil in New York

PERHAPS IT IS FITTING that Mary Gordon’s 11th volume of fiction is also among her most odd: a gathering of four short works of novella length. Two are experiments in historical fiction that animate European eminences—Simone Weil, Thomas Mann—on trips to America. Two traverse terrain more familiar to readers of Gordon’s novels: the treacherous interior landscape inhabited by contemporary women—one young and another in retirement—as they test the worthiness of crucial life choices. But Gordon has never bowed to convention, and if the two contemporary tales read as rehearsals for novels she may have decided to put aside, we are fortunate to have them even in compressed form. Any work of fiction by Gordon forces the reader to confront her own moments of decision, in ways both disconcerting and revelatory.

Gordon has placed the historical pieces at the center of the book. Thoroughly researched yet never burdened by detail, they draw readers ineluctably into a Word War II–era past. Like Gordon’s recent tour-de-force novel Pearl, “Simone Weil in New York” considers a woman dedicated to a cause to the exclusion of all else—even eating. The conceit here is that a former student of Weil’s from her years teaching in a French country school meets Weil on the streets of New York; the student is a young mother now, married to a Jewish professor off at war. Both here and in “Thomas Mann in Gary, Indiana,” youthful characters get a close look at heroic personalities, and the picture isn’t always pretty. Motherhood becomes a contrasting theme. The young mother’s commitment to raising her child as a Jew has its own heroism in the face of Weil’s vociferous rejection of her native religion. Stunned by Mann’s brusque manner, the student assigned to introduce the crusading anti-Nazi writer on a high-school stage thinks of his mother’s humbler form of humaneness, her “limitless understanding of how hard it was for people to live a life, that the right thing was always to sympathize.”

“The Liar’s Wife” and “Fine Arts” frame the collection, and while the first concerns a retired lab scientist and the last a graduate student in art history, both probe risky early love affairs. “The best possible course in the face of these things was to see clearly, to see what was there,” vows one of these characters, an attitude that fairly describes Gordon’s remarkable gift as a writer.
Nothing by Design
BY MARY JO SALTER ’76

Mary Jo Salter’s seventh collection of poetry is her most substantial and varied. The work of several years following the publication of A Phone Call to the Future (2009), which reprinted early poems and a clutch of newer lyrics, Nothing by Design includes a series depicting the end of the marriage that once anchored the family life Salter warmly described in previous works such as “Advent.” Then, the poet-mother constructing a gingerbread house with her daughter is “glad/ to be safe and have a story” as a shutter twists loose from their own house in a high wind and crashes to the ground. Now, in “Our Ping-Pong Table” and “The Gazebo” of Nothing by Design, the poet circles the house in her last days on the premises, considering the “hope-green wreck” of the scarcely used game table, the flimsy shelter of a summerhouse at poolside.

Nothing by Design contains works of whimsy as well—a half-dozen “Urban Haiku” and a set of rhyming riddles on musical instruments. Salter is masterly in depicting the end of the marriage that once anchored the family life Salter warmly described in previous works such as “Advent.” Then, the poet-mother constructing a gingerbread house with her daughter is “glad/ to be safe and have a story” as a shutter twists loose from their own house in a high wind and crashes to the ground. Now, in “Our Ping-Pong Table” and “The Gazebo” of Nothing by Design, the poet circles the house in her last days on the premises, considering the “hope-green wreck” of the scarcely used game table, the flimsy shelter of a summerhouse at poolside.

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Second Childhood
BY FANNY HOWE ’75

The prolific Fanny Howe is that rare contemporary poet whose work can be celebrated in O magazine and The Rumpus as well as rewarded with prizes from the Academy of American Poets and the Poetry Foundation. Second Childhood made the short list for the 2014 National Book Award, and it is no surprise, with poems as indelible and enduring as “Loneliness”:

It takes your hand and walks with you. It lies down with you. It sits beside you . . . It swims with you and swings around on stools. It boards the ferry and leans on the motel desk . . . If you figured out why you chose it, years later, would you ask it to go?

The Betrayers
BY DAVID BEZMOGZIS ’12
Little, Brown, 225 pp.

“A very strange coincidence befell us,” summarizes Baruch Kotler near the close of this tightly plotted novel about an aging hero’s comeuppance. Kotler, an Israeli politician revered as a near-martyr to Soviet repression in his formative years, has taken flight to Yalta with his young mistress after their affair has been exposed by his opponents. There, by chance, in this unforeseen moment of vulnerability, he meets his betrayer from long ago.

In a narrative both compact and eloquent, Bezmozgis gives us the transcript of an intimate 21st-century Yalta conference that brings the sleepy seaside city back to jittery, propulsive life. Recent events in Crimea lend the novel an aura of prescience, although little is said of the young idealist who made the short list for the 2014 National Book Award, and it is no surprise, with poems as indelible and enduring as “Loneliness”:

It takes your hand and walks with you. It lies down with you. It sits beside you . . . It swims with you and swings around on stools. It boards the ferry and leans on the motel desk . . . If you figured out why you chose it, years later, would you ask it to go?

The Marquis: Lafayette Reconsidered
BY LAURA AURICCHIO ’90
Knopf, 409 pp.

Who was this Frenchman—Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette—after whom as many American cities were named as Abraham Lincoln? Perhaps above all, as a wary Napoleon observed nearly two decades after the marquis’s soldiering in the New World altered the course of the American Revolution, he was a man with a “talent for making friends.” Lafayette was only 19 when he established his crucial bond with General George Washington, but it set the direction of his entire life.

A vivid raconteur and avid researcher, Laura Auricchio tells the story of Lafayette’s precocious military feats and political maneuvering on an international stage with passionate interest. Her story, of course, does not stop with the American colonists’ upset victory. Back in France is another revolution to be waged, and Lafayette’s involvement there is not so easily summarized; the young idealist was ultimately convicted of “plotting against liberty” and spent five years in prison. Lafayette’s was a tumultuous life, a gift to his biographer, who cites the marquis’s own apology for “giving in too much to my hopeful disposition.” Yet the hero well understood that “one would, indeed, never try anything extraordinary if one despairs of success.”
Understanding Monticello
New York City

THOMAS JEFFERSON’S MONTICELLO estate was originally designed as “a big bachelor pad,” the historian Annette Gordon-Reed JD ’84, RI ’12, RI ’14 told a crowd of several hundred alumnae/i and friends during a Radcliffe on the Road program in New York City.

In a talk titled “Rescuing the Past and Future at Jefferson’s Monticello,” Gordon-Reed said that the estate has the air of a serene country club, with unique architectural elements, daily house tours, and holiday programs for families. But it is also a historic plantation where hundreds of people were enslaved during Jefferson’s lifetime.

It is fitting that a site with such a conflicted history has become a metaphor for the complicated man who built it, and Gordon-Reed’s boundless interest in Jefferson includes the imposing structure he called home. The Carol K. Pforzheimer Professor at Radcliffe, as well as the Charles Warren Professor of American Legal History at Harvard Law School and a professor of history in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Gordon-Reed is a leading Jefferson scholar whose work on Monticello’s inhabitants—free and enslaved—has won her a Pulitzer Prize and a MacArthur Fellowship.

In her latest project, she tries to understand how an American icon, a Founding Father who penned the Declaration of Independence, could hold strong antislavery beliefs and yet also own slaves and publicly express his opinion that America could never be a multiracial society.

Gordon-Reed tries to be realistic about what has happened since Jefferson’s time.

“Bringing black people into citizenship has been a constant struggle,” she said. “We like to congratulate ourselves on living in a multiracial society, but it’s a multiracial society that still has a lot of conflict.”

DANIELLE GRIGGS
Hunting Quasicrystals
Philadelphia

Paul Steinhardt’s quest for naturally occurring quasicrystals sounds like the plot of a blockbuster, complete with incredible coincidences, exotic locales, secret diaries, extraterrestrials, a mysterious benefactor, and a cliffhanger ending.

Steinhardt, the 2012–2013 Lillian Gollay Knafel Fellow at the Radcliffe Institute, is a theoretical physicist who likes his freedom. “Physics gives me the flexibility to spend my time thinking about anything I want to think about,” he told the crowd at a Radcliffe on the Road program in Philadelphia this past fall. “I look for really good problems to solve and learn what I have to to solve them.”

In 1999 Steinhardt found a really good problem. Quasicrystals—unique molecular structures that, he theorized a decade earlier, were mathematically possible—had been produced in carefully controlled laboratory conditions. But Steinhardt wanted to know if this new matter could exist in nature.

He started by searching existing material collections around the world—but it eventually took him to the farthest reaches of Russia.

Steinhardt with a model of a perfect quasicrystal; he spent years trying to find a naturally occurring sample. The search began in existing material collections around the world—but it eventually took him to the farthest reaches of Russia.

collections around the world, without success. It wasn’t until 2008 that Steinhardt heard from Luca Bindi, a mineralogist at the University of Florence. Bindi wanted to help with the project because the University of Florence happened to have a sample of the mineral khatyrkite that featured perfect quasicrystal patterns.

Over the next four years, Steinhardt and his team sought to determine the sample’s origin. Its collector, Nicholas Koekoek, seemed to have disappeared in Amsterdam. “We were dead in the water,” Steinhardt said, “until another miracle happened.”

Bindi shared the story one evening over dinner with his sister and a friend visiting from Amsterdam, where Koekoek is a common surname. The friend offered to ask a neighbor with that name if she might know the collector. The neighbor turned out to be Nicholas Koekoek’s widow, and she gave Bindi her late husband’s secret diary entries about how he came by the khatyrkite sample. The diary led Steinhardt to the prospector who found the sample in 1979. In 2012 he led the group on a four-day journey across the tundra to the mountains of Chukotka, Russia. The trip, funded by an anonymous donor, produced nine more grains of quasicrystal. Tests have established that the sample material is, in fact, extraterrestrial, from the oldest type of meteor, known to be one of the first materials formed in the solar system. But the mystery continues.

In May 2014, Bindi received a package. “A present for you,” the note read. “I wanted to send it to you before but always forgot.” Signed only “Anton,” with no return address, the note was accompanied by another khatyrkite sample with perfect, naturally occurring quasicrystals.

Steinhardt now has a new challenge: to find Anton.

DANIELLE GRIGGS
Funding the Arts at Harvard University
Radcliffe Yard

A fall gathering celebrated the generosity of the Johnson-Kulukundis family for their $10 million investment in the arts at Harvard. The event featured President Drew Gilpin Faust, Dean Lizabeth Cohen, and Maryellie Kulukundis Johnson ’57.

Arts leaders across Harvard joined members of the Radcliffe community to toast Maryellie Kulukundis Johnson and her husband, Rupert H. Johnson Jr., for their generosity. Their gift will establish the Johnson-Kulukundis Family Gallery in Byerly Hall, shown above.

The gift also endows the Johnson-Kulukundis Family Faculty Director of the Arts at Radcliffe, currently held by Yukio Lippit ’92, a professor of the history of art and architecture, and other arts programs at Harvard.
Lepore Reveals Wonder Woman’s Harvard Roots

In a late-October lecture titled “How Wonder Woman Got into Harvard,” Jill Lepore BI ’00 revealed the Harvard connections she discovered in the process of researching her latest book, The Secret History of Wonder Woman (Knopf, 2014). While tracing the cultural history of Wonder Woman, Lepore—who is the David Woods Kemper ’41 Professor of American History at Harvard and a staff writer at the New Yorker—discovered that this most popular female comic-book superhero of all time has her feminist roots at Harvard and Radcliffe.


READ the Harvard Gazette’s coverage of the event at www.radcliffe.harvard.edu/news/in-news/sense-wonder.

Understanding and Improving Cities: Policy/Research Partnerships in the Digital Age

In December the Institute’s Boston Area Research Initiative teamed up with the City of Boston and the Rappaport Institute for Greater Boston to hold a conference about how city-university collaborations use data and research to improve urban life. Boston’s Mayor Martin J. Walsh closed out the day with remarks and a discussion.

On November 19, the prolific fantasy and science fiction writer Ursula K. Le Guin ’51 was honored by the National Book Foundation with its Medal for Distinguished Contribution to American Letters. This medal, whose recipients have enriched our literary heritage over a life of service or with a corpus of work, is conferred each fall in conjunction with the National Book Awards. A lengthy article in the Boston Globe on November 23, titled “Ursula Le Guin: The Outsider Who Opened the Door,” called the writer “one of the most original imaginations ever to grace American letters” and noted that she wrote about gender, anarchist movements, and climate change long before those subjects went mainstream. The article included praise from Margaret Atwood AM ’62 and Junot Díaz RI ’04.

The artist Jane Dickson ’75 was among 13 visual artists and architects elected to the National Academy in 2014, along with such art luminaries as Ed Ruscha, Joan Semmel, and Stanley Whitney. National Academicians are elected annually by their peers for their contributions to American art. In November Dickson participated in the symposium “Keith Haring: The Political Line” at the de Young in San Francisco, and her work is currently on view in the exhibition Side Show, up at Yale University’s 32 Edgewood Gallery through March 20.

Farai Chideya ’90 has been chosen for the inaugural class of the Amtrak Residency Program. Over the next year, 24 residents will work on writing projects of their choice in the unique workspace of a long-distance train.

Chideya—an award-winning author, journalist, and distinguished writer in residence at New York University’s journalism institute—is the author of four nonfiction books and a novel.

Audry Lynch ’55 was honored at the Hollywood Festival of Books this past summer for The Rebel Figure in American Literature and Film: The Interconnected Lives of John Steinbeck and James Dean (Edwin Mellen Press, 2009). Another of her books, Steinbeck Remembered (Fithian Press, 2000), earned an honorable mention in the biography category at the San Francisco Book Festival in May. Lynch, who is currently working on a book about Mark Twain in Bermuda, doesn’t write only biography: her children’s book Ruben’s Tales of the Amazon (Sisyphus Press, 2002) won an honorable mention in the Los Angeles Book Festival.

In her acceptance speech, LeGuin said that art has the power to incite resistance and change. Video is available at http://youtu.be/Et9Nf-rsALk.

The winter 2014 issue of the Paris Review ran a lengthy interview with the critic, essayist, and memoirist Vivian Gornick RI ’08, titled “The Art of Memoir No. 2.” The same issue also contained a poem by Brenda Shaughnessy RI ’01 and a nonfiction piece by Sarah Manguso ’96.

An ongoing Paris diary by Henri Cole RI ’15, “Street of the Iron Po(e)t,” has been appearing in the New Yorker. Cole also reflected on the terrorist attack on the Charlie Hebdo offices for the magazine.

Deborah Copaken ’88 published an essay about the unexpected challenges she—an Emmy Award winner and best-selling author—faced while searching for a job. “How I Got Rejected from a Job at The Container Store” has a happy ending: Copaken now writes regularly for Café, the new human-interest digital magazine in which the essay ran on November 13. One of her regular Café features mines her Instagram feeds for “truths both personal and universal.”

Harith Hasan Al-Qarawe Ri ’15, the Robert G. James Scholar at Risk Fellow, lent his expert voice to a CNN story about the rise of the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria. “A Delicate Balance in the Midst of Crisis” appeared on November 10.

In the article “Mexico: ‘We Are Not Sheep to Be Killed,’” Alma Guillermo-Prieto Ri ’07 reports on the fight for justice by the families of 43 students kidnapped in Mexico in late September. The story appeared in the New York Review of Books on November 5.

On November 3, the Chronicle of Higher Education published a special section featuring three academics who have been “forcibly displaced due to violence and political persecution.” Among these was the writer Gazemnd Kaplani Ri ’13, who became a political refugee for a second time when he was forced to leave Greece after having his life threatened by a neo-Nazi group. He is now on the faculty at Emerson College.

In “Romeo and Juliet Has No Balcony,” which appeared in the Atlantic on October 28, Lois Levene ’90 investigates how the famous balcony scene came about. (Balconies did not exist in England during Shakespeare’s time.) Levene unearthed this fact while researching the recently published Juliet’s Nurse: A Novel (Atria/Emily Bestler, 2014).

Zadie Smith Ri ’03 pondered the secret messages of a giant billboard across from her Manhattan apartment in “Find Your Beach.” The essay appeared in the October 23 issue of the New York Review of Books.


On October 19, the Buenos Aires Herald ran a profile of Kathryn Sikkink Am ’14, Ri ’15, titled “The Model Is Argentine, not South Africa.” Sikkink, who is the Carol K. Pforzheimer Professor at Radcliffe and the Ryan Family Professor of Human Rights Policy at Harvard Kennedy School, is studying the often-overlooked human rights policy advancements in Latin America from 1945 to 1990.

Paul J. Steinhardt Am ’75, Phd ’78, Ri ’13 was profiled in issue 017 of Nautilus magazine, the Big Bangs special issue. “Ingenious: Paul J. Steinhardt” includes a video.

In “How Ordinary Petitions Helped End Slavery and Make Women into Political Activists,” which ran in the Washington Post on September 22, Daniel Carpenter Ri ’08 outlined the historical importance of petitions in political activism. In addition to serving as faculty director of the social sciences in the Academic Ventures program at the Radcliffe Institute, he is the Allie S. Freed Professor of Government in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the director of the Center for American Political Studies at Harvard University.


Listening to Stone: The Art and Life of Isamu Noguchi (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015) is the latest from the acclaimed biographer Hayden Herrera ’62.
has previously published biographies of Frida Kahlo and Arshile Gorky and was a Pulitzer finalist for the latter.

LINDA FLAHERTY HALTMAYER ’87 has published her first poetry collection, Catch and Release (Finishing Line Press, 2015). “If darkness is a part of this poet’s vision, what is striking is the counterevolving eruption of joy and vibrancy,” said the poet Rod Kessler ’71. “What we catch and release in this collection is the flash of intensity that reminds us of what it is to be alive.”

NORA MCKEON ’82 has published Food Security Governance: Empowering Communities, Regulating Corporations (Routledge, 2015). McKeon will launch the book in late February at the International Studies Association Annual Convention in New Orleans and will then embark on a lecture tour.

I. GLENN COHEN JD ’03, RI ’13 has published Patients with Passports: Medical Tourism, Law, and Ethics (Oxford University Press, 2014). This book, on which Cohen worked during his fellowship year, is the first comprehensive legal and ethical analysis of medical tourism. A launch event, which included a panel discussion, took place on November 19 at Harvard Law School Library. Cohen is the faculty director of the Petrie-Flom Center for Health Law Policy, Biotechnology, and Bioethics at Harvard Law School.

BENNY SHILO RI ’12 has published Life’s Blueprint: The Science and Art of Embryo Creation (Yale University Press, 2014). In the book, on which he worked during his fellowship year, Shilo uses his own photography—some of it taken in and around Cambridge—to accessibly illustrate major advances in the science of embryonic development.

EDITH PEARLMAN ’57 has published Honeydew (Little, Brown, 2015), her fifth story collection. A glowing review in the New York Times concluded, “Honeydew should cement her reputation as one of the most essential short story visionaries of our time.”

FREDDERIKA RANDALL ’70, a translator of Italian, has published the first complete English version of Confessions of an Italian (Penguin Classics, 2015), a 19th-century classic by Ippolito Nievo. The New Statesman listed the British edition from last year among its best books of 2014.

Destiny’s Child: Memoirs of a Preacher’s Daughter (CreateSpace, 2014) is the fifth book by JEWELLE TAYLOR GIBBS ’55, HRPA ’59, RI ’85. Part family history and part memoir, the book chronicles 250 years of overcoming racial and social obstacles—even up to Gibbs’s becoming one of the first African American woman professors at the University of California, Berkeley. The transcript of a 2002 interview with Gibbs is held at the Regional Oral History Office of the Bancroft Library.

The book Foodways and Daily Life in Medieval Anatolia: A New Social History (University of Texas Press, 2014), by NICOLAS TRÉPANIER AM ’07, PHD ’08, RFC ’08, was recently published. The innovative study, on which Trépanier worked while he was a Radcliffe Institute Graduate Student Fellow, uses food-related activity—from farming to mealtimes, religious rituals, and commerce—to construct a social history of 14th-century Anatolia.

MARGARET ATWOOD AM ’62 has published Stone Mattress: Nine Tales (Graywolf Press, 2014), her fourth. In a Boston Globe review, Michael Andor Brodeur praised the collection, which pairs the poems with Harvey’s own artwork, as “by far her most adventurous, which is saying a lot considering the inventive energy and elegant weirdness that has charged her poems since her 2000 debut.”

The book ANDREA LOUISE CAMPBELL ’88, RI ’13 worked on during her Radcliffe fellowship, Trapped in America’s Safety Net: One Family’s Struggle (University of Chicago Press, 2014), is now available. It grew out of a February 2012 opinion piece she wrote for the New York Times, which Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg later cited in her concurring opinion in the Supreme Court’s decision on the Affordable Care Act. The book uses the story of Campbell’s brother and sister-in-law—she is a quadriplegic as the result of a catastrophic car accident, and they rely on Medicaid to get the care she needs—to show how means-tested programs really work on the ground in the United States.

Astronomy: A Self-Teaching Guide (Wiley, 2014), by DINAH L. MOCHÉ ’58, is now in its eighth edition. The beginner’s guide has been completely revised in light of the latest discoveries. Moché is a professor of physics and astronomy at the City University of New York.

China and Beyond in the Medieval Period: Cultural Crossings and Inter-Regional Connections (Cambria Press, 2014), cowritten by DOROTHY C. WONG PHD ’93, RI ’03 and Gustav Heldt, examines China’s contacts with neighboring Asian cultures, along with contacts among those cultures from the beginning of the Common Era to the 10th century. Wong is an associate professor of Chinese art, Buddhist art, and Silk Road studies at the University of Virginia.
ELLEN T. HARRIS BI ’96 has published an intimate biography, George Frideric Handel: A Life with Friends (W. W. Norton, 2014), of which Booklist says, “Handel’s life in Harris’s hands becomes a compelling plunge into the social history of his time.”

Writing Poetry (Amazon Digital Services, 2014) is a collection of poetry by AIDA K. PRESS ’48. Press was the director of public information at Radcliffe College and the editor of the Radcliffe Quarterly for many years, before her retirement in 1993.

Asunder (Mariner Books/Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013) is the latest novel from CHLOE ARIDJIS ’93. “Aridjis’s intelligent prose makes this slight story into something dramatic and affecting, completely coherent and oddly irresistible,” said Publishers Weekly in a starred review. “It is a brilliant book.” Aridjis was among the 2014 fellows of the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation.

Working with New York City’s Museum of Modern Art on the occasion of its upcoming One-Way Ticket: Jacob Lawrence’s Migration Series and Other Visions of the Great Movement North, ELIZABETH ALEXANDER RI ’08 commissioned 10 poets to write works inspired by Lawrence’s 1940–1941 epic series of paintings. The exhibition opens on April 3.

ELISE ADIBI RI ’14 exhibited 12 new works she created during her fellowship year at the Louis B. James Gallery in New York City. Substance, the first solo show by Adibi with her new gallery, was on view from December 11 to January 17.

Three sculptures by BETH GALSTON BI ’91 are included in the exhibition Branching Out: Trees as Art, which explores the often unexpected ways in which contemporary artists use trees as an inspiration and a medium. The exhibition is on view in the Art & Nature Center of the Peabody Essex Museum, in Salem, Massachusetts, through September 20.

JESSECA FERGUSON ’71 currently has two shows up. Writing with Light: Photography and Books by Jesseca Ferguson is at the Brooklyn Public Library through February 1, and The Poetics of Light: Pinhole Photography will be showing through March 29 in the Palace of the Governors at New Mexico History Museum, in Santa Fe.

This past fall, JANE FINE ’79 took part in a group show—PIEROGI XX: Twentieth Anniversary Exhibition—which included work by dozens of artists who were vital to the history of the Pierogi gallery in Williamsburg, Brooklyn. She also had the first large-scale exhibition of her work, Ladies and Gentlemen, Please Remain Calm, at the Clifford Art Gallery at Colgate University. The exhibition included 35 paintings, drawings, and sketchbooks.

CORRECTION: The credit that accompanied the photo of Bettye Lane on page 43 of our summer issue should have read ©Diana Mara Henry.

ON STAGE AND SCREEN

An interesting fellow collaboration took place this past fall when the filmmaker DAVID REDMON RI ’71 directed and produced a trailer for a new book by KRISTEN GHODSEE RI ’11. The Left Side of History: World War II and the Unfulfilled Promise of Communism in Eastern Europe (Duke University Press, 2015) is due out in late February. Ghodsee is currently a fellow at the Freiburg Institute for Advanced Study.

JILL LEPORE BI ’00 appeared on The Colbert Report on October 29 to promote her new book, The Secret History of Wonder Woman (Knopf, 2014). The following day, she delivered a lecture in the Knafl Center, “How Wonder Woman Got into Harvard” (see page 34). Lepore is the David Woods Kemper ’41 Professor of American History at Harvard and a staff writer at the New Yorker.

Readings of Upon the Fragile Shore, a play by CARIDAD SVICH RI ’03 that ex-
plores human rights and environmental issues, have been held across the country, including in Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, and New York City. This past fall, her play Jarman (all this maddening beauty)—an original solo performance work inspired by the avant-garde queer filmmaker Derek Jarman—hopped the pond for performances in Liverpool and London, and her premiere translation of Su Nombre Sera Su Sombra Para Siempre/Your Name Will Follow You Home, by Carlos Murillo, had its initial performances at Repertorio Español, in New York City.

The New York City production of the play CHIORI MIYAGAWA RI ’09 began writing at Radcliffe, now titled This Lingering Life, enjoyed a run in October. A New Yorker review said, “Miyagawa has taken the plot-lines of nine Noh plays and woven them together into a long chain . . . [her] play is clever, stylish, and often funny.” The play, which had its premiere in San Francisco last June, was named a finalist for a TBA Award from Theatre Bay Area in the Outstanding World Premiere Play category.

LINDA GORDON RI ’84, RI ’14 was one of the experts to appear in Dorothea Lange: Grab a Hunk of Lightning, produced by the PBS series American Masters. Gordon is the author of the biography Dorothea Lange: A Life without Limits (W. W. Norton, 2009).

Mission Blue, a new documentary by Fisher Stevens and Robert Nixon, follows the career and passions of the scientist and expert diver SYLVIA EARLE ’1 ’68. Earle, who has been studying the oceans for more than 50 years, was one of the early female researchers in a male-dominated field. The film, which also details many of the environmental threats to our oceans, is available for viewing on Netflix.

GRACE NOTES

The filmmaker ABIAGAIL CHILD ’68, RI ’05 had a bit of a homecoming on November 6. Her Suburban Trilogy (2011)—The Future Is Behind You, Cake and Steak, and Surf and Turf—was shown in Radcliffe Yard as part of the Movie Night at the Schlesinger Library series.

HARUMI FURUYA ’95, AM ’06, PHD ’06 and her sisters Sakiko Furuya and Mimi Furuya—all Juilliard graduates—started their own concert series, which traveled through Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York from October to December. The sisters live stream at least one concert per season; more information is available at www.FuruyaSisters.com/concerts.htm.

ALEX ROSS ’90, who is the music critic for the New Yorker, included the work of MAURICIO PAULY RI ’15 in a Halloween playlist he published on his blog, The Rest Is Noise. Pauly is a member of the áltaVoz collective of Latin American composers, whose work was performed by the JACK Quartet for their album áltaVoz Composers (New Focus, 2014). The Boston Globe positively reviewed that recording in “Boston-born áltaVoz Offers Disparate Sounds on New CD,” in the September 9 issue.

The pianist DONALD BERNAN RI ’11 released a new record, Martin Boykan: Music for Piano (1986–2007) (Bridge Records, 2014) in October. Earlier last year, Berman took to New York City’s only floating concert hall, Bargemusic, for a rare solo recital.

Here Be Sirens, the opera on which KATE SOPER RI’13 worked during her fellowship year, returned to Dixon Place, in New York City, for a limited run in September.

PUBLIC LIFE

On December 2, the astronomer MERCEDES LÓPEZ-MORALES RI ’15 spoke about exoplanet atmospheres as part of the Boston-area Science for the Public lecture series.

EVAN HOROWITZ RI ’11 is now a staff writer at the Boston Globe, where he covers data and government.

In January BEVERLY MCIVER RI ’03 joined the faculty of the Duke University Department of Art, Art History & Visual Studies, where she is the Es ephemashade Professor of the Practice of Visual Arts.

In October EVE M. TROUTT POWELL ’83, AM ’89, PHD ’95, RI ’06, who is the associate dean for graduate studies at the University of Pennsylvania, was appointed the Christopher H. Browne Distinguished Professor of History and Africana Studies.

JENNY HOFFMAN ’00, RI ’13 isn’t just an associate professor of physics at Harvard—she is also a champion ultra-runner. In September she was the first-place winner of the 2014 NorthCoast 24-Hour Endurance Run in Cleveland, Ohio, in which she clocked just over 127 miles.

HAVE YOU DONE SOMETHING EXTRAORDINARY?
A professor of computer science at the University of Padova, in Italy, Francesca Rossi RI ’15 specializes in artificial intelligence and multiagent systems. At the Radcliffe Institute, she is undertaking a project that lies at the intersection of computer science and social science. With “Preference Aggregation for Advanced Sentiment Analyses,” Rossi hopes to develop techniques for preference extraction, modeling, and aggregation for collective decision making.

Expressing a Preference—for Simple, Brilliant Ideas

Who are your heroes?
People who live their lives following their internal principles, no matter how different those principles are from the mainstream “guidelines.”

Which trait do you most admire in yourself?
Intellectual curiosity. I always desire to learn new things.

Tell us your favorite memory.
It relates to my childhood in Italy. My grandmother was living with me and my parents. Every Sunday morning she was cooking the ragù tomato sauce for the homemade pasta. The sauce was boiling for hours, starting early in the morning. By the time it was about noon, the smell was so good that I could not resist taking a piece of bread and using it like a spoon to taste the boiling sauce from the pan. The most wonderful taste ever—and a lovely time with my grandmother.

Describe yourself in six words or fewer.
A very fortunate woman and wife.

What is your most treasured possession?
My memories, helped by the pictures from my past.

What inspires you?
Talented people with a vision who are passionate about what they do, as well as ideas that are simple and brilliant at the same time.

Name a pet peeve.
Two very different ones: feeling cold and being slowed down by other people.

Were your life to become a motion picture, who would portray you?
I would love to be portrayed by Katharine Hepburn. Her characters were always beautiful, strong, independent, smart, and talented women. I wish I were like that.

Where in the world would you like to spend a month?
In a beautiful house in front of the ocean in a warm-weather country. I was born in a city overlooking the sea, and I miss being able to look at it. Seeing the far horizon where water and sky merge relaxes me and makes me think more clearly.

What is your fantasy career?
Being a painter. I paint for fun, but I often wonder if I would have been able to make it a career.

What is your greatest triumph so far?
Besides being a Radcliffe fellow, having been program chair of the International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence, the largest of its kind (almost 2,000 submitted papers, about 1,000 participants). In 2013 it was in China, a country with a culture very different from mine. The technical and social complexity of the job was overwhelming at times, but I was happy about the result.

How or where do groups express their collective preferences?
Individuals express their preferences in everything they do: writing text, choosing items, talking—even not doing something. Aggregating individual preferences into a collective model allows for conflict resolution and informed collective decision making.

Why is it important to understand how groups form preferences or to predict what these might be?
It helps build personalized services, fully tailored for specific individuals or communities—for example, personalized health-support systems, recommender systems that can anticipate what we would like, or even web engines that search for what we need to know without our asking.
IN THE NEARLY FIVE DECADES since he arrived at Harvard, Robert N. Shapiro ’72, JD ’78 has been president of the Harvard Alumni Association, president of the Harvard Law School Association, and a Harvard Overseer. His service spans the University. “Radcliffe is a microcosm of the University at its best,” he says. “It’s an example of how Harvard can be more unified. Radcliffe catalyzes ideas, and that is the stuff of a great research university.” A senior partner in the Private Client Group and Boston office of the global law firm Ropes & Gray, Shapiro is honoring his mother, who graduated from Radcliffe College in 1936, with a bequest to the Radcliffe Institute. For information about making a planned gift, contact John Christel, Radcliffe’s liaison at the University Planned Giving office, at (617) 384-8231 or john_christel@harvard.edu.
On Radcliffe Day, we will award the Radcliffe Medal to Ruth Bader Ginsburg, an associate justice of the Supreme Court of the United States. The day will feature remarks from the retired associate justice David H. Souter ’61, LLB ’66; a conversation with Justice Ginsburg; and a panel discussion, “A Decade of Decisions and Dissents: The Roberts Court, from 2005 to Today.”

RUTH BADER GINSBURG

May 29, 2015

The events will be webcast live. Learn more. Join us. www.radcliffe.harvard.edu