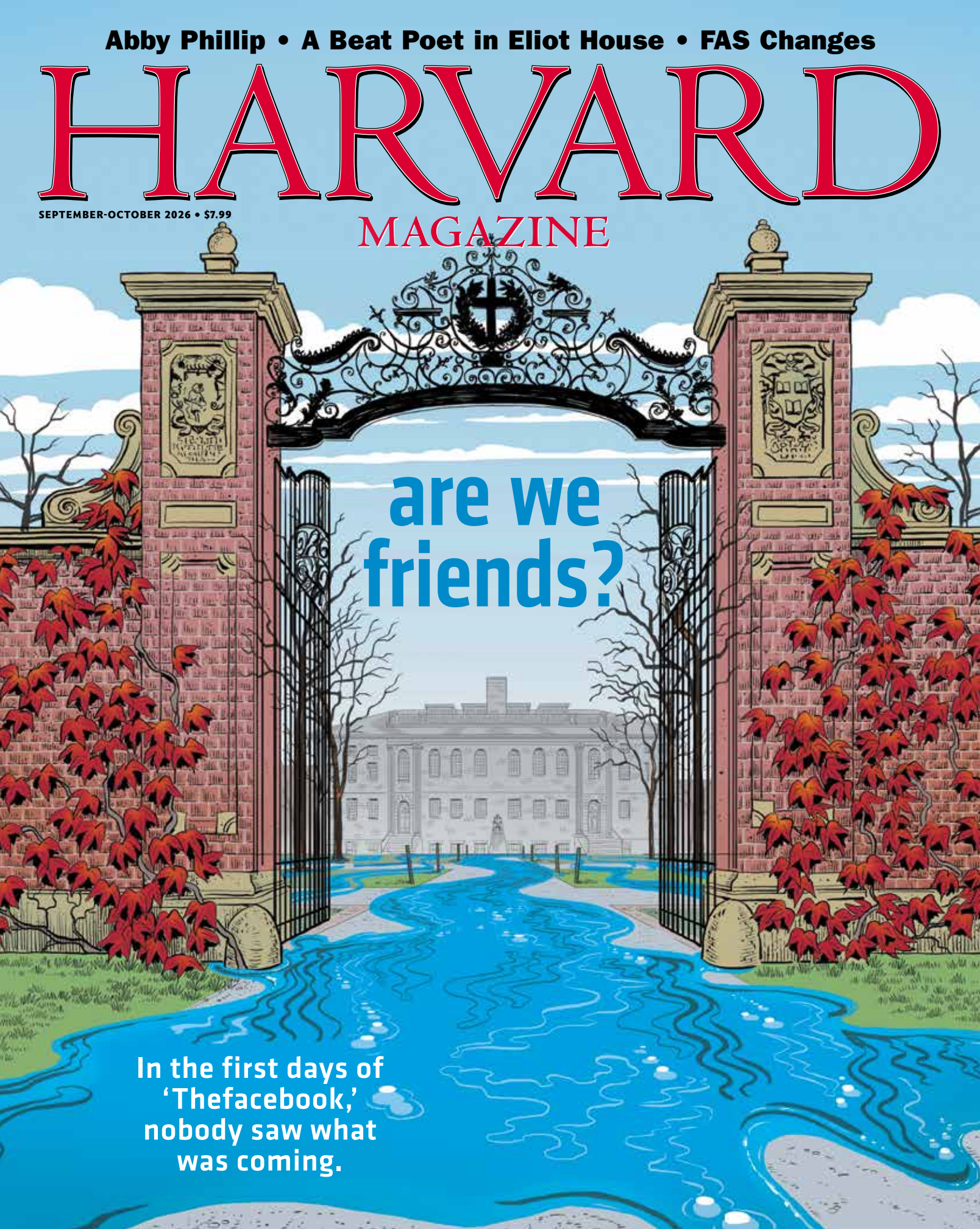


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MAGAZINE



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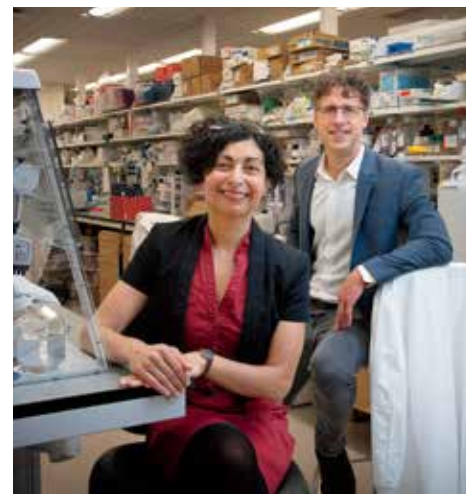
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FROM TOP: HARVARD ATHLETICS; JOHN S. DYKES; STU ROSNER

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Bunnies in love, Harvey Mansfield, Harvard architecture

PETUNIA

I WAS MOVED by “The Love Bunnies” (July-August 2026, page 23) especially because it treated Petunia’s story as something more than a sweet animal anecdote. The article made a thoughtful connection between companionship, grief, and health, but what stayed with me most was the quieter question of responsibility.

A domestic rabbit does not choose the shape of her own life. People choose her space, her food, her safety, her medical care, and even the conditions under which she might meet a new companion. Petunia’s need for another rabbit was real, but so was her dependence on patient human care. Petunia could not be rushed into a new bond. She had to be watched closely, respected, and allowed to move at her own pace.

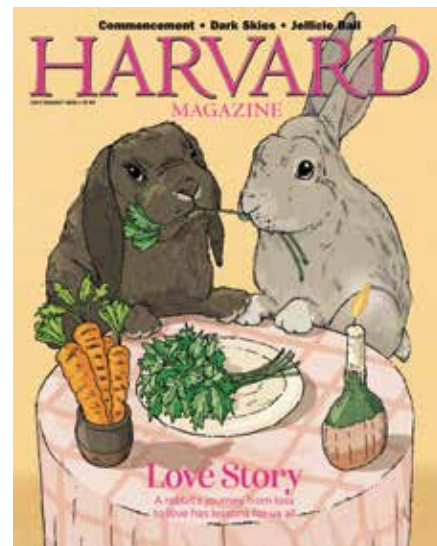
For me, the story was not only about loneliness, but about care. The animals

who live with us are not accessories to our emotional lives. They are lives entrusted to us, with needs that may look small from the outside, but are not small in moral weight.

JOSÉ LAÉRCIO DE ARAÚJO FILHO

IT WAS TOUCHING to see a love story about Petunia the rabbit. Readers were reminded that rabbits are not simple or interchangeable creatures, but individuals with rich emotional, social, and cognitive lives.

The issue highlights a striking disconnect. While one rabbit’s story inspires empathy, millions of rabbits suffer in industries that produce Angora wool, test cosmetics, and supply laboratories. The same issue of *Harvard Magazine* includes discussion of research on captive octopuses—extraordinary, complex animals capable of experiencing pain, fear, distress, and



joy. Their intelligence and solitary nature make confinement for experimentation especially troubling.

In my field, primate studies have been defended as essential to HIV vaccine development, yet despite hundreds of vaccines that appeared safe and effective in chimpanzees and monkeys, none translated to humans. Most drugs that pass animal tests fail in human trials. Meanwhile, human-based approaches—organ-on-a-chip technology, cell culture, computational and AI methods—are delivering. If readers can recognize themselves in one rabbit’s story, perhaps they can also ask what we owe the millions of equally sentient animals whose lives remain unseen.

LYNN E. TAYLOR '88



VIDEO: PETUNIA'S STORY

After losing her rabbit companion, a grieving bunny named Petunia went speed dating—and found love again.

In this clip, you'll see footage of the rabbits and hear more about the July-August cover story from senior editor Lydialyle Gibson.



harvardmag.com/petunia-video

A QUOTE AT THE END of your sweet feature, “The Love Bunnies,” got me thinking about the layers of (mis)understanding about widowhood that I’ve observed in contemporary American culture, especially since *The Widows’ Handbook* poetry anthology was published in 2014. My own experiences lead me to agree with Stephanie Cacioppo: “It’s not time that heals grief, but other people.” Family, friends, neighbors, support groups, counselors, even sympathetic strangers encountered by chance, can contribute the sustenance we need. Petunia is fortunate to have found another rabbit with whom she can live, among people who care how she feels as a rabbit instead of reducing her to a collection of lab data or applying sentimental anthropomorphism.

What Cacioppo’s quote leaves out is what time actually does to pain. Time

makes our pain less acute, searing, and shocking. For many years, memories merely turned a knife in the wound. They were gaping holes in the fabric of my life. Only now, 21-plus years later, can I recall what my late lamented brought to my life without weeping. Most widows don't "move on"—we go forward as best we can, one shaky step at a time.

JACQUELINE LAPIDUS, M.T.S. '92

DARK SKIES

As CO-CHAIRS of the American Astronomical Society's Committee on Astronomy and Public Policy, we were pleased to read Matt Crossman's article on efforts to preserve our planet's dark skies ("Head Toward the Darkness," July-August 2026, p. 36). The aggregate effects of light pollution are impacting all but the most remote professional observatories, including those in which Harvard is a partner. However, we would also like to highlight a growing threat to dark skies not mentioned in the article: reflected sunlight from an expanding number of large satellite "constellations" in low Earth orbit. Every transient streak of reflected sunlight recorded in an astronomical image makes it harder to identify legitimate signals (e.g., from hazardous inbound asteroids). In some cases, the reflected light is the satellites' purpose.

A telling example is [clean energy] start-up Reflect Orbital's plan to launch 50,000 orbiting mirrors to reflect sunlight onto the nighttime side of Earth. Reflect Orbital's application to launch its first satellite, which the FCC deemed "beyond the scope of the Commission's authority to regulate," exemplifies the current inability of any U.S. government authority to consider the terrestrial impacts of satellite constellations.

ANDREW BAKER '94
and RICHARD GREEN '71

IF WE ARE GOING to reduce light pollution, we must reduce fear of the dark. One could say that this is a life-changing process. When I was 10—I'm now 92—I was afraid of ghosts, so I ventured out in the dark of night to confront them. This exhilarating experience rid me of fear for a lifetime. I have climbed the Matterhorn, flown 52 different types of aircraft, and

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The Shape of History

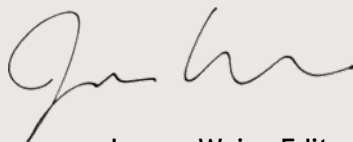
Considering the networks that change us

There are moments when you know you're part of history. Our cover story about the origins of Facebook captures the mood on Harvard's campus 22 years ago, when a seductive new technology changed the student experience almost overnight—before it spilled out of the gates and into the wider world (page 28). It's a juicy inside story that goes beyond the Hollywood version to show why "Thefacebook" was a magnetic force for a student body that was already ripe for change: primed for new technology, desperate for expanded social outlets. Of course, the story of Facebook is also a cautionary tale. Students and faculty understood that they were on the precipice of something big, but they didn't foresee exactly what this new technology would do, or how it would change them, until it had already happened.

There's no need to overstate the parallels with today, as society grapples with another powerful technology and imagines how it might shape the world in which we live two decades from now. For the most part, University leaders are bullish about AI's potential, and some stories in this issue highlight the role it's already playing in research: assisting in promising therapies that could help prolong lives (page 27), guiding humans to give more effective feedback (page 25). But so much is still unknown about how AI will affect the way we communicate, work, think, and learn—and that future will be determined, in part, by decisions we make today. We can choose to take control of the technology, or we can let history happen to us.

History has come knocking at Harvard in other ways this summer, by way of the federal government's unprecedented assault on higher education (page 13). Financial constraints, driven partly by government actions, have precipitated a massive reorganization within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, including the College. The results include consolidated offices and roles, painful job cuts, the elimination of some College administrative departments, and the reappearance of others (page 10). That story will continue to unfold as students return to campus for a new academic year.

Their imminent return is always a thrill—because being in the presence of others brings so many possibilities. Another story in this issue recounts the tale of beat poet Gregory Corso, who squatted in Eliot House for a year in the 1950s, charming professors and students alike as he found his literary voice (page 36). The beauty of a university—especially this one—is that human connections have consequences, for individual lives and for the broader culture. The networks that matter most are the ones we create in real life.



—Joanna Weiss, Editor

operated on thousands of people. I can still begin to fear, but I can always control it. Please confront your fear. You will find it is not nearly as fearful as it at first seems.

GEORGE C. DENNISTON, M.P.H. '61

HARVEY MANSFIELD

I DON'T KNOW what possessed Professor Harvey Mansfield ("Harvard According to Harvey," July-August 2026, page 12) to claim that feminism "generally denies sex differences." In rebuttal, I will cite someone who perhaps knew a bit more about feminism than Professor Mansfield. The late Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg had this to say in her 1996 majority Supreme Court opinion that declared unconstitutional the Virginia Military Institute's refusal to admit female cadets: "Inherent differences between men and women, we have come to appreciate, remain cause for celebration, but not for denigration of the members of either sex or for artificial constraints on an individual's opportunity."

LINDA GREENHOUSE '68

IT'S ALWAYS FUN to see a profile of a feisty, quotable old Harvardian like Harvey Mansfield. But he undercuts his championship of rationality and his crusade against "leftist" doctrine with his own doctrinaire edicts. No, Professor, feminists do not deny sexual differences. No, Professor, liberals are not dismayed by the idea of "human greatness." (Here we have the familiar sneering conceit that only Republicans can appreciate Shakespeare.)

Professor Mansfield has lived long enough to see the triumph, in Trump, of ultra conservatism—which gives us censorship of history, defunding of science, and boxing matches on the White House

SPEAK UP, PLEASE

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lawn. Is this what he wanted? Personally, I must admit, I miss liberalism.

GEORGE TIMSON '67

HUMAN EVOLUTION

OUR GENES are still learning new tricks (“Humans Haven’t Stopped Evolving,” July-August 2026, page 20). But genes alone are not driving our evolution. As professor of evolutionary biology Joseph Henrich wrote in *The Secret of Our Success*, cultural evolution has been the central force driving human genetic evolution for hundreds of thousands of years. One of our earliest cultural adaptations was learning to use fire, perhaps as long as a million years ago. In his book *Catching Fire*, Richard W. Wrangham, Moore professor of biological anthropology emeritus, cited the importance of cooked food in human development, especially the evolution of our brains.

Just as fire enabled the evolution of our archaic ancestors, so too is electricity enabling the evolution of modern humans. Since learning to control electricity, we can use intelligence which resides outside the brain. We can interact with one another remotely. We can live in space and see Earth rise from beyond the Moon. Electricity is displacing fire as the foundation of our existence. A new species of human is arising in the Electric Age.

STEVEN REED NELSON, LL.B. '65, M.P.A. '66

EMILEE HACKNEY

THANKS TO Nina Pasquini and Nell Porter Brown for their article about Emilee Hackney (“Writing Home,” July-August 2026, p. 50). So many of us have experienced leaving home and attending college with the expectation of people and experiences that will shape us and help us discover ourselves. Hackney’s memoir will certainly add to our furthering how we view ourselves and the diversity we bring to that attempt.

RICH LEWINE '69

THE PUMP

IN THE COLLEGE PUMP (“Assertive Architecture,” July-August 2026, p. 59), writing on famous architects who designed buildings at Harvard, Primus did not mention Walter Gropius, who led the design team for the Harvard Graduate Center that is

You Answered

IN THE JULY-AUGUST
ISSUE, WE ASKED:

*Share stories of unique
relationships between
the animals in your life.*

Turn to page 64 for a
sampling of responses—
and a question about
social media from this
issue’s cover story,
“When We Were Friends”
(page 28).

now used as a dormitory complex for the Law School. These buildings have withstood the test of time and are a prime example of Bauhaus architecture in the U.S.

DAVID HANDELMAN, J.D. '62

IN “ASSERTIVE ARCHITECTURE,” two apparently forgotten commissions could have been mentioned. One was Allston Burr Lecture Hall, designed by Jean Paul Carlhian and opened in 1952. It was awarded the Harleston Parker Medal in 1953 but was knocked down in 1982 in favor of Sir James Stirling’s Sackler Museum, with its monumental entrance of rather dystopian aspect.

The other was Hunt Hall, designed in 1895 by Richard Morris Hunt as the original Fogg Museum and later used by the Graduate School of Design. It had an exterior of Indiana limestone and a collection of plaster casts of the Parthenon frieze lining the lobby. In spite of strong voices raised in its defense, it succumbed to the ruthless determination of University authorities and was demolished in 1973. A cheap new dormitory was quickly shoehorned onto the site.

SAMUEL R. BLAIR, M. ARCH. '63

GRADE INFLATION

GRADE INFLATION is a problem that has

Submit your nominations for the inaugural *Harvard Magazine 36*, a list that celebrates alumni making a positive impact in communities large and small.

Learn more—and suggest a classmate, a colleague, a friend, or yourself—at harvardmagazine.com/36

HARVARD
MAGAZINE 36

infected American education across the board for a very long time (“The Last A’s You’ll Ever Need,” March–April 2026, page 24). My own experience with it dates back 20-plus years when I had the desire to “pay back” and teach at a private college following my retirement. I came under increasing pressure to “grade on the curve” and it soon became clear that for the price of admission, the majority of my students expected an A on the course

final. After one semester I had my own insight into the system of private education. As an adjunct, I had the luxury of independence that my mortgage-paying colleagues did not have, and I was free to walk away from it.

ROBIN PETTY, M.B.A. ’70

HAVE THINGS really gotten so bad that faculty and students must submit themselves to an arbitrary cap on the percent-

age of A grades? Can’t Harvard faculty design rigorous courses with clear learning objectives and assess student performance objectively?

As an engineering professor at a major research university, I am surprised and dismayed. For my nearly 40 years as a professor, average performance has been assigned a B in my undergraduate lecture classes, as it has matched achievement of basic learning objectives. An A-range grade has required demonstration of a learned ability to apply key concepts in important ways that were not covered in detail in lecture and homework. Importantly, my students have understood what must be learned to earn an A.

HAROLD G. MONBOUQUETTE ’79

ERRATA

IN THE PROFILE of Katie O’Dair (July–August 2026, p. 58), the text misstated the work George Washington did while at Wadsworth House; he convened the first Council of War and received guests including Abigail Adams and James Warren.



Robert P., Resident & Harvard Alumni
B.A. '61 & M.A. Architecture '65



Linda S., Resident & Harvard Alumni
M.A./Ph.D. Clinical Psychology '69

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At University Hall, the Restructuring Begins

Prompted by financial difficulties, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences lays off staff, streamlines operations.

by Lydialyle Gibson

THE REORGANIZATION that Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences hinted at through the last year finally came due this summer, and like all major changes, this one brought grand statements, deep skepticism, and some turmoil.

FAS leaders have long argued that the

changes, and a pared-down administrative model, are necessary to address a projected structural deficit of \$350 million. Within the FAS—and to many alumni—the reforms are significant: a new “federated model” for academic departments; a reorganization of the College administrative structure; and, perhaps most controver-

sially, the departure of the longtime head of the College's writing center and the demise of the Dudley Community. The moves also come with substantial layoffs: reportedly as much as 25 percent of the FAS staff.

The changes followed months of planning and discussions—and rising anxiety among faculty and staff. They began in late July, with a series of reforms to the College and the first of what FAS leaders said would be several waves of layoffs and other job modifications. The process sparked intense pushback, including from the Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers (HUCTW), which represents one-third of the roughly 2,300 FAS employees whose positions fall within the scope of the restructuring. “We’ve been saying all along that this plan is oversimplified in its thinking about how the work actually gets done,” HUCTW

organizer Carrie Barbash said in a late July interview. “I think it’s going to be really problematic.”

Some faculty members expressed similar misgivings. “The staff are the ones who actually make the place work,” said Loeb professor of sociology Mary Waters. “They do all of this hidden work that’s more complex than people realize. There are a lot of things that the staff in our departments do that don’t fit on a checklist.”

But FAS leaders have said that a task force convened last year by Edgerly family dean Hopi Hoekstra identified numerous administrative inefficiencies in the University’s largest division, which relies on Harvard’s endowment for more than half of its \$1.8 billion annual budget. According to a spokesperson, the FAS staff includes more than 1,500 unique job titles, with little consistency across departments or other units in job descriptions and responsibilities.

In a series of town hall meetings early this summer, Hoekstra and other leaders outlined the basics of a new “federated” structure intended to streamline the division’s complex internal systems. De-

tions—academics, housing, student life, and administration—into five umbrella offices under Danoff dean David Deming. Three of those offices already exist: the dean of students office, the administration and finance office, and the office of undergraduate education.

Two other offices are new, and this summer Deming hired administrators to oversee each. Lauren E. Brandt ’01, Ph.D. ’09, previously the College’s associate dean of students, took on the newly created role of secretary of the College, responsible for policies and procedures related to student discipline and academic integrity, Title IX, and antidiscrimination and anti-bullying.

And former dean of freshmen Thomas Dingman ’67, Ed.M. ’73, who retired when the position was discontinued in 2018, returned to serve as interim leader of a new and expanded freshmen dean’s office. That revived position will oversee orientation, academics, advising, housing, and student life programming. Deming said he expects to launch a nationwide search for a permanent dean of freshmen this fall.

FAS leaders argue that fundamental changes are needed because the division’s current financial situation is untenable.

partments, centers, and other units will be grouped together into three large clusters: arts and humanities, social science, and science. These clusters will be subdivided into “administrative groupings” according to subject area, operational needs, and proximity to each other on campus. Each grouping will share administrative operations and be staffed by a smaller number of more centralized employees.

“We have a once-in-a-generation opportunity to make deliberate and sustainable changes that will reduce complexity in our administrative work and improve the support we provide for our teaching and research,” Hoekstra wrote in an April letter to FAS faculty and staff.

The reorganization plan for the College, which is part of the FAS, parallels the broader push toward a streamlined structure, by consolidating central func-

More controversially, the College restructuring plan also includes a requirement that all College staff be on campus five days a week, reversing the hybrid work model that has become commonplace since the COVID-19 pandemic. “What we’re selling is an immersive residential experience,” Deming said during a July interview. In contrast to the more administration-heavy FAS, nearly all College staff are student-facing: “Our job,” he said, “is highly relational.”

HUCTW leaders have opposed the mandate, calling it “demoralizing,” and disputed Deming’s insistence that students require, or want, entirely in-person contact with College staff. Barbash said that students typically opt to meet with staff remotely, even when given the choice of meeting in person. Adding that 85 percent of all HUCTW members currently work

a hybrid schedule, she said the mandate is “just going to make people miserable.”

THE RESTRUCTURING effort got off to a tumultuous start, as two early steps prompted immediate backlash from faculty and alumni. In late July, the College laid off Jane Rosenzweig, the longtime director of the Harvard College Writing Center, which employs 25 to 30 tutors every semester to help undergraduates with a range of skills, from first-year writing exercises to senior theses and graduate school application essays. The Writing Center itself was “consolidated” with other offices, according to an FAS spokesperson. As of press time it was not clear if it would exist as a standalone entity, although FAS leaders said students would continue to have access to writing tutors and that all current tutors could continue in their roles.

Faculty members reacted with dismay. “It’s really difficult for me to wrap my head around why this top-notch, highly utilized student resource was eliminated,” said sociology professor Jocelyn Viterna. Bernbaum professor of literature Deidre Lynch called the decision “shocking and embarrassing.” A group of former tutors published an open letter—which quickly drew more than 100 signatures, plus 11 pages of comments from current and former tutors—condemning both the consolidation of the Writing Center and Rosenzweig’s dismissal as “reckless.”

Much of the outcry focused on Rosenzweig, the Writing Center’s director for 22 years, whom colleagues described as crucial to the program’s success. In a letter to dean of undergraduate education Amanda Claybaugh, Mary Lewis, the Goelet professor of French history and the history department’s director of undergraduate studies, wrote, “It was [Rosenzweig’s] leadership, expertise, and mentoring that made the Writing Center a valuable place to work and to learn.”

A similar outpouring greeted the University’s announcement in late July that it was shuttering the Dudley Community by the end of August. Originally founded in 1935, the community has long provided a social home for those living outside the House system, while also offering the aca-

demographic resources of a traditional House, including a resident dean and specialty tutors. Most Dudley affiliates live off campus, but some are residents of the Dudley Co-Op, located a few blocks from Harvard Yard and playfully nicknamed the “Center for High Energy Metaphysics.” A tight-knit community where students share a kitchen and housekeeping chores, cooking and cleaning for each other, the co-op will remain open this academic year for the 16 undergraduates who are assigned to live there; after that, the University plans to move all students into the House system.

Hours after the news broke, a WhatsApp group chat sprang up, with current and former co-op residents and Dudley Community members sharing stories and commiserations. Within two days, it had grown to include more than 350 alumni, with graduation years spanning decades. “I’m utterly devastated,” said former co-op resident Aaryan Rawal ’26, echoing the sentiments of numerous others. “They just took out a really important part of student life.”

Meanwhile, as layoffs began to mount—by early August, dozens of positions had reportedly been eliminated, and many others reconfigured—HUC-TW organizers said they were increasingly alarmed. “As far as we can tell,” Barbash said, “they’re merging departments and cutting positions, but they’ve taken no steps to actually reduce the workload. That’s one of the biggest things we’re worried about, that they’ll lay too many people off, and the staff who are left will be overwhelmed.”

FAS LEADERS argue that fundamental changes are needed because the division’s current financial situation is untenable. At a faculty meeting last fall, Hoekstra laid out a sobering picture of financial problems fueled in part by recent difficulties—a looming tax hike on the University’s endowment, which Harvard officials project will cost the FAS an extra \$98 million per year (estimates for the cost to the University as a whole range between \$200 and \$300 million), and uncertainty about the future of federal funding.

The bleak financial assessment feels like a reversal from the previous few years: un-



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President Par Excellence

Thanking Bill Kirby for his Harvard Magazine service

William C. Kirby, Ph.D. '81, who has served for nearly seven years as president of the *Harvard Magazine* Board of Directors, will step down in September. Bill has played a fundamental role in the magazine's ability to fulfill its mission: informing readers about the University's work and people, and connecting them to one another and the institution. The president must defend the magazine's editorial independence, hold the staff to the highest standards in the exercise of that independence, and help it sustain the resources it needs to operate.

It comes as no surprise that Bill has been an exemplary president. Like such distinguished predecessors as James O. Freedman '57, L '60, Daniel Steiner '54, LL.B. '58, Margaret H. Marshall, Ed.M. '69, L '76, Ed '77, LL.D. '21, and Henry Rosovsky, JF '57, Ph.D. '59, LL.D. '98 (Dartmouth's president, two Harvard general counsels, and a dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and University Professor), Bill has combined a deep understanding of Harvard in all its complexity with an unwavering commitment to the scholarship and learning it enables. He champions speech within and about the Harvard community. And he understands and values the continuing engagement of alumni worldwide with their alma mater.

As Faculty of Arts and Sciences dean in the early 2000s, Bill articulated and defended the faculty's interests. As Chang professor of China studies and Spangler professor of business administration, he embodies the bridges increasingly being built across Harvard schools and has encouraged this magazine's reporting on research and teaching at the interdisciplinary frontiers. As faculty chair of the Harvard Center Shanghai, he has prompted us to be attuned to the University's global reach and the growing cohort of international alumni.

An adept early adopter of online education, Bill has helped shape the magazine's digital investments. And as a leading scholar of higher education around the planet (his books include *Empires of Ideas: Creating the Modern University from Germany to America to China*), Bill has challenged his beloved Harvard, this magazine's reporters, and readers at large to think deeply about what has made this University great—and what maintaining such excellence requires.

We are indebted to Bill Kirby for imbuing *Harvard Magazine's* governance with his intellectual prowess, organizational savvy, and energetic belief in independent alumni journalism, all on readers' behalf. And as colleagues, we cherish and will always learn from the warmth and puckish humor with which he pursued our joint aims.

—The editors and staff of *Harvard Magazine*



COURTESY OF WILLIAM C. KIRBY

til 2025, when federal funding upheavals contributed to an \$8 million annual deficit, the division's annual financial statements had shown budget surpluses. But Safra professor of economics Jeremy Stein, a member of the working group who has closely analyzed the division's finances, said those statements gave a misleading impression of the FAS's financial health, because standard accounting practices don't fully capture the costs of sometimes centuries-old facilities. "We're spending \$400 million dollars a year just to keep the buildings from crumbling," Stein said in an interview.

Indeed, a 2021 report from a working group convened by then-FAS dean Claudine Gay raised concerns about deferred maintenance on the division's more than

250 aging buildings. On top of that, the FAS built or acquired an additional 1.2 million square feet of space in the early 2000s, expanding its physical footprint by 15 percent. Right now, Stein said, the division is \$1.4 billion in debt to the central University. Much of that money was borrowed to support facilities and equipment, including recent renovations and construction projects.

FAS leaders have said that in designing the overhaul, their priority was to protect teaching and research, and to put the division on a more sustainable footing in order to weather future financial or political headwinds.

More program cuts and layoffs are expected through mid-August, although the new organizational structure will not be fully up and running until weeks into the fall semester, in part because of state labor laws that require employees be given a 60-day notice before mass layoffs take effect. The layoffs and reallocation of responsibilities are scheduled to be complete by mid-October—by which point students and faculty may have a clearer view of how these changes will shape life on campus. ▽

News in Brief

Legal Maneuvering Continues

THE TRUMP administration's appeal of the order restoring Harvard's frozen federal grants and contracts continued this summer. Harvard's July 15 brief in the case described the administration's efforts as "an unprecedented, all-of-government campaign to punish Harvard for its perceived viewpoints and protected First Amendment activity"—us-

ing the pretext of antisemitism to justify the attack. A string of amicus briefs supporting Harvard had been filed with the court by late July. One, filed by Hillel International (which is not connected to Harvard Hillel), was withdrawn after public backlash from some Jewish groups and advocates. The organization said the amicus brief had not been reviewed internally.

Student Visa Rules to Change

THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Homeland Security has issued new nationwide rules limiting the length of visas issued to foreign students and visiting scholars from abroad. Prior rules stated that such visas would be valid for the "duration of study," while the new rules require an application for an "extension of study" after four years. Most Ph.D. degrees entail at least five to six years of study. The new rules, subject to congressional review, are slated to take effect in September. Presi-

Science Center Renamed Zimmer Hall

The Science Center will be renamed Zimmer Hall in honor of Alan Zimmer, who helped research and develop the use of advanced medical imaging technologies in the United States. He is the late father of hedge fund founder and investor Stuart Zimmer '91, who with his wife Jennifer donated \$100 million to the University in 2018 through the Zimmer Family Foundation. The gift will also be used to expand kosher dining options in Eliot House once renovations there are complete, as part of efforts to make Jewish students feel welcome across campus.

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YESTERDAY'S NEWS

Bok's Beetle

Former Harvard president's car proved to be a fortuitous gift.

by Nell Porter Brown

University President Derek Bok, who oversaw 20 transformative years at Harvard from 1971 to 1991 (and an additional one in 2006-2007), was also a promoter of modest living. In lieu of using the University limousine service, he drove a red 1969 Volkswagen Beetle to work each day and, after he first left the post, donated the Bug to Phillips Brooks House (PBH).

PBH auctioned off the car in 1992, using the proceeds to help fund its public service programs. The surprised new owners were Moshe and Carolyn Gershovich. She was a University staffer with a degree from the Harvard Graduate School of Education; he was earning his Harvard doctorate in Middle Eastern studies. The bid came about during "an all-nighter," recalls Carolyn, who now goes by the last name Moore. "We had a small baby, and a whole lot of coffee." Giddily hyped up, they saw an auction notice for the car, and she remembers rambling on about it: "If Derek Bok married Bo Derek, would their names be Derek Derek Bok or Bo Derek Derek?" That became "the joke from hell—so, we bid \$666 for the car, the devil's numbers, believing it was never going to happen," she says. "But then it did happen."

They picked up the zippy semi-automatic Bug, equipped with a sunroof. Come spring, she says, "we cranked that sucker open!" The car also got the young couple to and from Children's Hospital, where their baby underwent several surgeries. Thus "the car," she notes, "was more than just fun to own. It was a godsend." Moshe graduated in 1995, and the family later headed to Morocco for his university teaching job. They sold the Bug to another Harvard staffer, Moore reports, "to keep it in the family."

dent Alan M. Garber noted that the visa restrictions make it "less and less attractive for international students to come to the United States," which is already competing for top candidates with nations including China.

Government Probes Financial Aid to Chinese Students

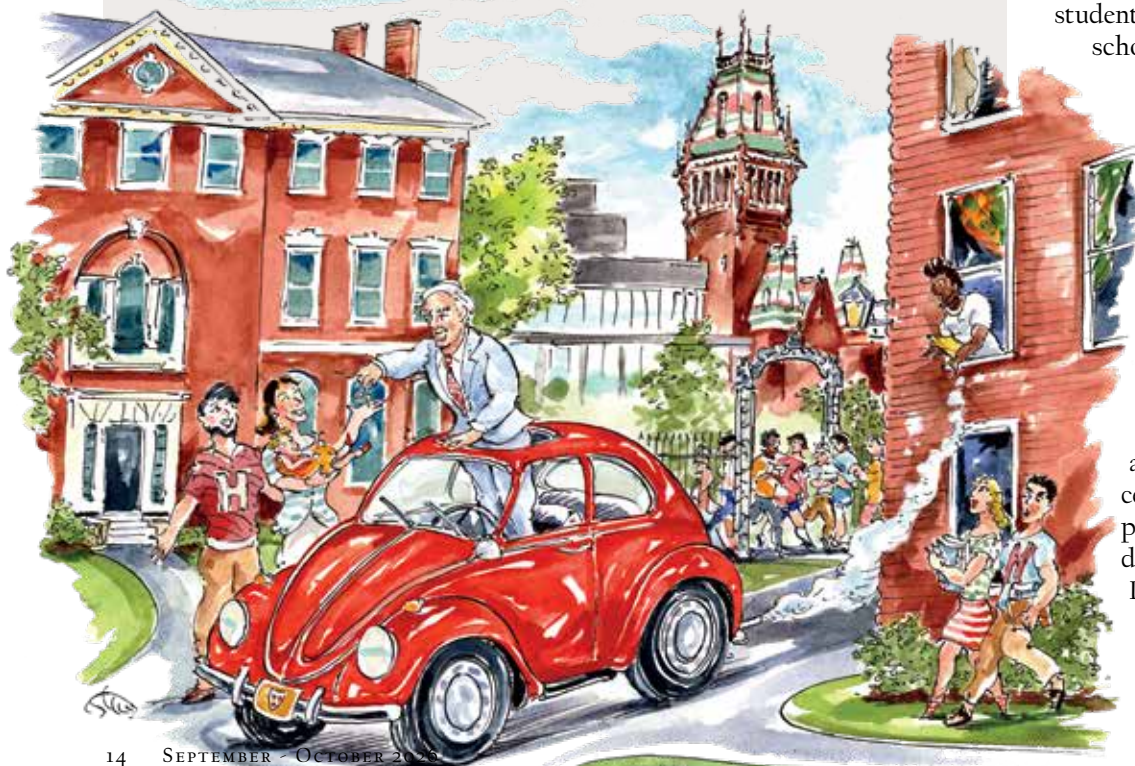
THE U.S. DEPARTMENT of Justice opened a new investigation into Harvard's financial aid awards to Chinese students, suggesting that funds directed to students based on their national origin would constitute a form of discrimination. The investigation, opened on July 20, came with a sweeping document request and ordered the University to comply by July 31. A University spokesperson responded that "Harvard follows the law for required reporting of donations and, consistent with our legal obligations under Title VI, does not unlawfully discriminate on the basis of race, ethnicity, or national origin in allocating financial aid. We are reviewing the Department of Justice's latest letter to Harvard and will engage with the government regarding these issues."

Rising Scholars Program Expands

HARVARD'S SUMMER program for pre-freshmen who are first-generation college students or from under-resourced high schools has doubled in size since its launch in 2023. This summer, the College welcomed 46 students to campus for a residential experience focused on bridging academic skill gaps and enhancing social supports through shared experiences.

Last Call in Cambridge

DRINKING CULTURE in Cambridge this summer proved to be a tale of two cities, as World Cup celebrations led to outdoor watch parties with approved public drinking, even as the Cambridge License Commission drafted new regulations that would have required a 30-minute wait between drink orders and a ban





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on alcohol sales within an hour of closing. Restaurant and bar owners called those measures a step too far, and by the end of June, they'd been withdrawn.

Comings and Goings

FORMER NBC News reporter and media executive Betsy Fischer Martin, known for bringing together people from across the political spectrum, is the new director of the Institute of Politics at the Har-

vard Kennedy School. Rob Rassey, who was an assistant coach of the men's hockey team at Harvard from 2013 to 2019, has been named head coach of the program. He arrives from the University of Michigan, where he was associate head coach. Henry Chu '90, NE '15, has been appointed curator of the Nieman Foundation, after serving as interim curator since July 2025. Chu spent most of his career at the *Los Angeles Times*, where he was part of two

teams that won Pulitzer Prizes for breaking news coverage. Conant professor of education Judith D. Singer, who as senior vice provost was responsible for recruiting and retaining outstanding scholars, stepped down from the role on June 30. Singer, who advocated for the promotion of women to leadership positions (given slow turnover in the ranks of the largely male tenured faculty), is succeeded by astrochemist Karin Öberg. ▢



LAUREL M. SHUGART/HARVARD MAGAZINE

From Ribbon-Cutting to Construction

On June 23, President Alan M. Garber, Boston mayor Michelle Wu '07, J.D. '12, Tishman Speyer CEO Rob Speyer '91, and state representative Michael Moran cut the ribbon that marked the official opening of the Enterprise Research Campus in Allston. The nine-acre development includes research facilities, residences, retail stores, restaurants, a hotel, and a conference center. A second phase of development on an adjacent parcel is currently being reviewed by the Boston Planning and Development Agency.

In Cambridge, construction continues on Pritzker Hall, a nine-story building that will become the new home to the Department of Economics when completed in December 2027. The project is funded with a lead \$100 million gift from Harvard Corporation senior fellow Penny S. Pritzker.



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Chasing More Wins

Harvard's cross-country and track-and-field teams aim for repeat success.

by Kate Kaufman

AT HIS HOME IN VIRGINIA, Charlie Ortman's bedroom is covered top to bottom in race bibs. Ortman won an All-American title for Harvard at the NCAA Track and Field Outdoor National Championships in June—and visited home afterwards with a bag full of the season's bibs to add to his wall decor.

Now a senior, Ortman was one of eight Harvard track-and-field athletes to punch tickets to the NCAA championships, capping off a particularly strong 2025-26 season, when the team broke 12 school records and brought home five All-American titles across the indoor and outdoor seasons. Harvard cross-country also had a strong showing, with the men's team and women's captain Molly Malague competing in the NCAA Cross Country National Championships.

Last year also marked the first time in Harvard history that the men's 4x100-meter relay team competed in the track national championships. And senior Tito

Charlie Ortman at the NCAA Track and Field Outdoor National Championships in June

Alofe became the first Harvard athlete to win a national title in the men's high jump at the NCAA Indoor Championships.

Jason Saretsky, the McCurdy director of both men's and women's teams in track and field and cross-country, is hoping to continue the success this year. The cross-country and track-and-field teams are preparing to welcome 26 incoming first-year athletes, a cohort that hails from 13 states and eight different countries. And only one of the eight track athletes who attended the NCAA outdoor championships was a graduating senior. All of last year's event coaches are also staying at Harvard.

Consistency has a "compounding effect" over time, Ortman says. "You continue to train, and at some point, it just kind of starts to click, as long as you're able to stay on your feet for long enough."

Alofe, the high jumper, is using the summer for rehabilitation. After battling a knee injury for over a year—and placing 12th in the NCAA outdoor competition after winning the indoor championships—he said he is taking the time

away from competitions to slowly build back strength. Looking to his senior season, Alofe said his goal is simple: "I kind of just want to win every meet."

For both the cross-country and track teams, Saretsky was happy to see many athletes competing at the national level last year. "It was just great to see them get that taste for it," he said. "With so many of them back, I'm hoping that's exactly what it was—a taste—and that they want more." ▢



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— by Carol J. Spack —

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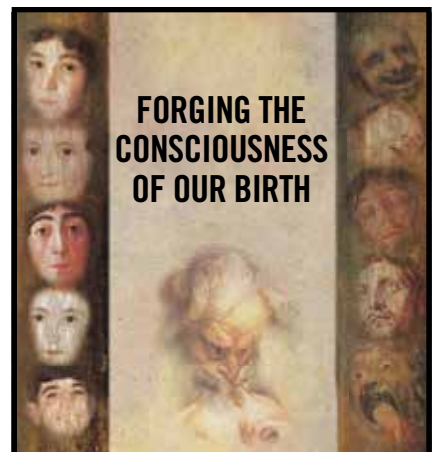
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Xaviah Bascon fends off a Stetson University defender in 2025.

lection in 2025. His field of concentration is psychology, and as he awaited the season's kickoff on September 19 at the University of New Hampshire, Bascon was putting what he has learned to good use in psyching himself and his teammates up.

"We definitely have the guys," he said in a Zoom conversation. "It starts up front in the offensive line, where we have seniors Spencer Doan and Thomas O'Brien coming back for their third season as starters." In 2025, both were All-Ivy first-team selections.

"The receiving room looks great. [Junior] Brady Blackburn"—the Crimson's leading receiver in

2025, with 38 catches, five touchdowns, and a superb 19.26 yards per reception—"will be even better this year. So will [sophomore] Ryan Tattersall, who showed off last year at the end."

Bascon could have added massive senior tight end Sean Gilmartin, an honorable mention All-Ivy and a go-to guy in the red zone. "And the running back room is super-deep. We have five, six guys who can all play," Bascon added. Expect a quantum leap, he said, from junior D.J. Gordon, Harvard's second-leading rusher last year and an honorable mention All-Ivy.

On the other side of the ball? "Our defense looks scary," said Bascon. "[Senior cornerback] Damien Henderson is probably the best defensive player in the Ivy League. And he has a complementary player at the other corner with [senior] Austin-Jake Guillory. You have three of the best linebackers in the league with [seniors] Jack Donahoe and Sean Line and [junior] Dorsey Benefield. And the D-line looks scary as well. I scrimmage against them, so I know what they're like."

Bascon modestly omitted himself. He is a self-described blue-collar kid out of

Captain's Courageous

Despite personnel losses, Crimson leader Xaviah Bascon is upbeat about the 2026 season.

by Dick Friedman

THE HARVARD FOOTBALL team enters the 2026 season with the most difficult question any eleven can face: how do they replace the best quarterback in their 152-season history? First-team All-Ivy signal caller Jaden Craig '26 has graduated and decamped for Texas Christian University to play a postgraduate year. His likely replacement, senior Dante Torres, threw a total of 14 passes during two seasons as Craig's backup. Seven other All-Ivy selections are gone, including five on the offensive line.

So, is there anywhere for the Crimson to go but down? For the past three seasons—the first under longtime coach Tim Murphy, the last two under Stephenson family coach Andrew Aurich—the Crim-

son have been Ivy League co-champions. In 2025, Harvard finished 9-1 and was at one time ranked as high as seventh in the Football Championship Subdivision. (The Crimson ultimately finished No. 20.) Taking advantage of new Ivy rules, the team even went to the FCS playoffs, though the luster of the Crimson's first postseason appearance since 1920 was dulled by a 52-7 shellacking by Villanova and a 45-28 drubbing by the Elis in The Game.

One player who does not see the cupboard as bare is Xaviah Bascon. The senior running back and kick returner is the 152nd captain in Harvard football history. Bascon—first name pronounced "ex-ah-VAY-ah"—was the Crimson's leading rusher and a second-team All-Ivy se-

nearby Swampscott High School. (He also spent a postgraduate year at Phillips Exeter.) Growing up, "I never visited Harvard," he said. "Going here was kind of far-fetched." At five-foot-nine and 200 pounds, Bascon is a sparkplug with shifty moves and startling acceleration; he has run a sizzling 4.39 in the 40-yard dash. These abilities have served him especially well when returning kickoffs, a category in which he enters 2026 fifth on the Harvard career list with a 24.5-yard average.

From scrimmage, Bascon displays surprising thump. He was Harvard's leading ground-gainer last year, with 626 yards and a stellar 5.0-yard average. In three seasons, he has run for the you-can't-make-it-up total of 1,234 yards. If Bascon amasses 655 in 2026, he will crack the Crimson career top 10 in rushing.

While not overlooking the rest of the schedule in a very balanced Ivy League, Bascon said this year's main focus is: Beat Yale. The 142nd Playing of The Game will take place on November 21, with Har-

Brady Blackburn eases across the goal line for Harvard's second touchdown against Dartmouth

vard the home team. But the contest will not be at Harvard Stadium. Instead, it will return to Fenway Park, hallowed home of the Boston Red Sox, where it was held in 2018. "As a Boston sports fan, I'm super excited," said Bascon. (This year the Elis have a new face on the sidelines, as former Lehigh coach Kevin Cahill has replaced Tony Reno, who stepped down for health reasons.)

Of course, Bascon wouldn't mind getting another shot at the postseason. The Crimson is bidding for its fourth straight Ivy League Championship—Penn is the only team to accomplish that feat, from 1982 to 1986—and the Ivy champion is guaranteed a berth in the FCS playoffs. "I



COURTESY OF HARVARD ATHLETICS

think people are going to hold last year's playoff result against us," he admitted. "I guess it's reasonable from their perspective, but I know personally, deep down, that wasn't us at all, and I know we have a lot more that we can really show to everyone."

Fine. But first: Beat Yale.



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Saving Sargent

Harvard Art Museums restores a rare glimpse of an American master.

by Schuyler Velasco

In 1937, John Singer Sargent's sister, Violet, donated a truckload of material from the late artist's estate to Harvard. The haul contained studio tools, such as easels and brushes, as well as original sketches and paintings—including *Still Life: Daffodils*, an oil study on canvas that arrived unframed, rolled up, and water-damaged.

It's common for museums to receive items in such condition. "A lot of things in vast collections are 'fragile but stable'—they're not going to spontaneously combust, but they cannot be shown to the public," explains Saffie Patel, a Shader fellow in paintings conservation who completed her two-year posting at Harvard Art Museums in June. "A tiny portion of Harvard's artworks are actually on the walls," she says.

Recently, Harvard Art Museums curators decided that

Daffodils should be among them. The painting, which shows flowers in a silver cup beside two wine glasses on a white tablecloth, went on display this spring for the first time in its history. It's a rare still life from Sargent, best known for his portraits and masterful brushwork; as a study, it offers a glimpse of his style freed from editing or revision.

"John Singer Sargent's *modus operandi* was creating artworks that felt like they'd been carried off in a single pass, but in real life took a lot of reworking," Patel says. "This was actually done in one go. You get this spontaneous look at the hand of the artist."

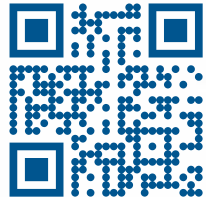
Getting the painting ready for the public took an ambitious restoration that spanned the fellowships of Patel and her predecessor, Lauren Cox. Cox took care of the



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initial salvage work, gluing tiny pieces of the chipping paint back to its canvas and carefully cleaning off dust and mold.

After that, Patel worked on getting *Daffodils* safely stretched, flattened, and framed after nearly a century of being rolled up. She used a method from her restoration training in the Netherlands, employing a vacuum seal, weaving inserts into the canvas, and alternating cycles of heat and pressure to ease out creases. She did color and texture matching on some of the more obvious spots of damage, a painstaking process requiring impossibly small brushes (“three or four hairs,” Patel says).

The freshened-up *Daffodils* will be on display for the foreseeable future. But in keeping with the ethics of conservation science, many elements of Cox and Patel’s work are reversible, in case more effective methods are developed one day.

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“The materials we use can all be removed without damaging the original,” Patel says, “and we can return it back to its crumbly, unstretched state if we really need to.” ▮

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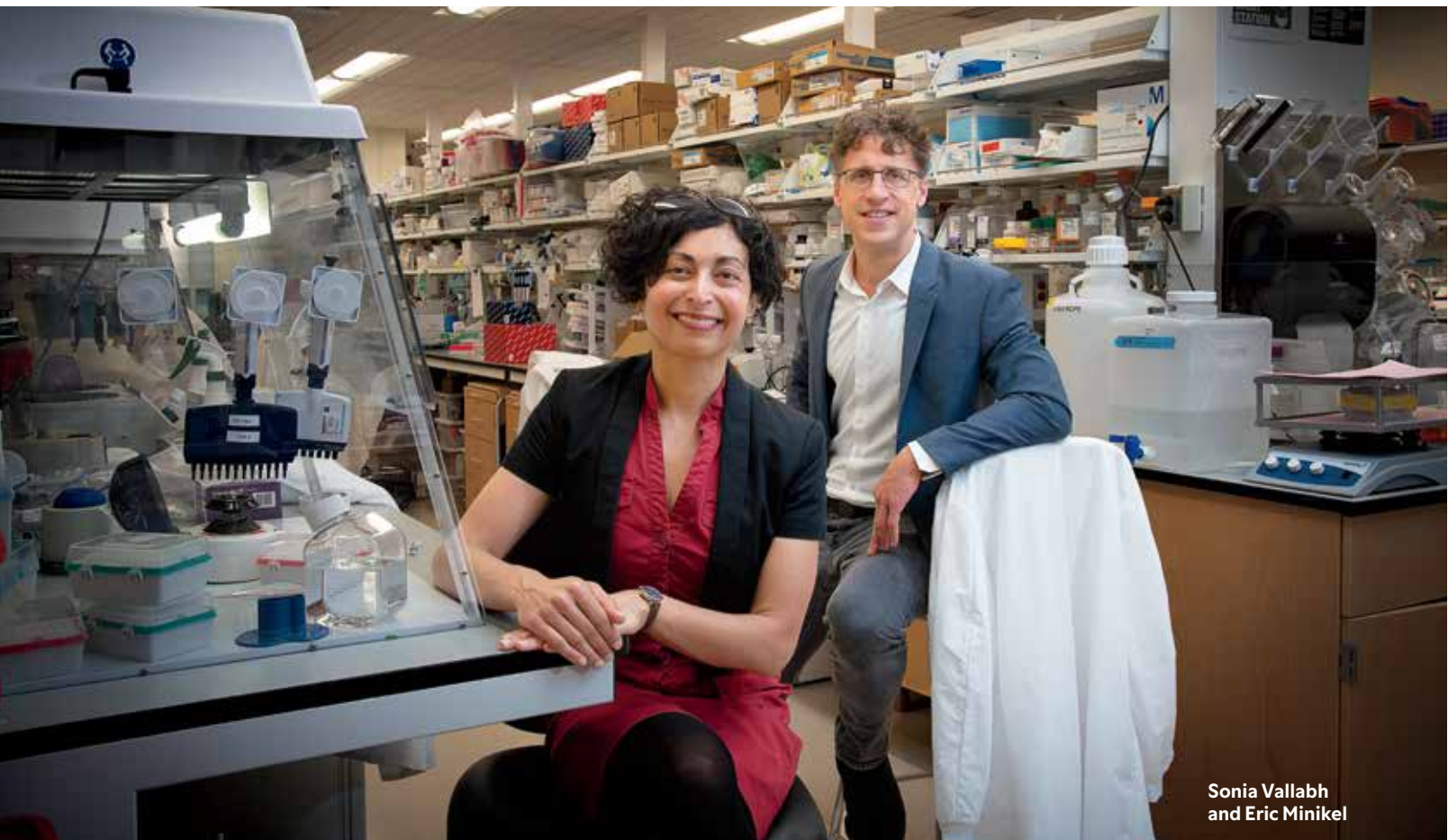


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Research & Ideas



Sonia Vallabh
and Eric Minikel

Two Lives Against a Terminal Disease

*A Harvard couple hopes to treat the prion
disorder that one of them carries.*

by Lydialyle Gibson

FOR MORE than a decade, Harvard biomedical researchers Sonia Vallabh, J.D. '11, Ph.D. '19, and Eric Minikel, Ph.D. '19, have been chasing a cure for prion diseases, a group of deadly neurodegenerative disorders for which the only current treatment is palliative care.

This spring, they reached a new milestone, enrolling patients in a clinical trial for a new kind of drug, aimed at silencing the gene that causes the disease.

For Vallabh and Minikel, a married couple, this scientific development is also a personal one—and a race against the clock. In

2012, Vallabh learned that she had inherited the genetic mutation for fatal familial insomnia, one of several illnesses that fall under the prion disease umbrella.

Just over a year earlier, Vallabh's mother had died from the disorder, falling suddenly ill at 51. Her first symptoms were blurry vision and weight loss, but soon she was having trouble remembering things and finishing her sentences. Severe and rapidly accelerating dementia was accompanied by increasingly serious physical decline: frequent falls, an inability to sit still, trouble sleeping. Vallabh told one interviewer that her mother seemed “stuck” between wakefulness and sleep. Within a few months she couldn't feed or bathe herself, and not long after that, she was placed on life support.

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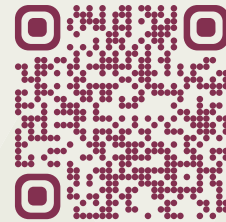
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The diagnosis of fatal familial insomnia came after her death. When Vallabh underwent genetic testing, she learned that she, too, was a carrier—a near-guarantee that she would one day develop the illness. She had recently earned a Harvard law degree and was working at a consulting firm, but within weeks of receiving the test results, she quit her job and returned to Harvard to study science full-time. The goal was to understand prion disease and find a cure in time to save her own life.

Minikel, a transportation analyst with an urban planning degree, soon joined her. After graduating from Harvard with doctorates in 2019, they opened their own laboratory at the Broad Institute, where they now co-direct the Prion Therapeutic Science program. By then, they'd already spent years in other labs researching possible therapies.

The new drug candidate, which has not been tested in humans before, is a type of molecule called a small interfering RNA (siRNA). Created from a molecular structure first developed by UMass Chan Medical School researcher Anastasia Khvorova, it works by cutting up the RNA in the body that encodes the prion protein, PrP. Prion disease develops when misfolded versions of this protein accumulate in the brain, forming plaques that destroy healthy tissue.

"The protein is the bad actor here," says Minikel, "but it's tough to target the protein once it's there, so we want to go upstream and target the RNA molecule that makes the protein."

Among the factors working in the researchers' favor: if they find a therapy for one form of prion disease, it would work for all of them, since the same gene variant underlies every single case. "We think of it as one disease with different subtypes," Vallabh says. "It's an interesting example of precision medicine operating to unify things instead of subdivide them." The most common prion disorder among humans is Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, which kills about 500 people per year in the United States. Its symptoms are similar to fatal familial insomnia: dementia, vision problems, difficulty swallowing or speaking, loss of motor control, an inability to sleep.

The more relevant distinction for re-

searchers is between people like Vallabh, who inherit prion disease, and the much larger population for whom it develops spontaneously, for no apparent reason. "Those patients won't know that they have prion disease until they're symptomatic," Vallabh says. (In extremely rare cases, the disorder is transmitted through exposure to contaminated tissue; one example is mad cow disease.) Prion disease is rare, affecting only about one person per million worldwide, but it's always fatal. Once symptoms begin, the disease progresses rapidly; most patients are dead within a year.

"So, one big challenge," she says, "is to get people diagnosed as early as possible," and to test for genetic mutations. Another is "to drive forward a trial and treatment paradigm in a preventive format, before people get sick."

Minikel says the therapies they are researching would help both types of patients. Lowering the number of prion proteins in the brain would prevent or delay the disease in those who haven't developed it yet and slow it down in those who have. "That's the beauty of going after the root protein," he says. In the newly launched clinical trial—funded by NeuroNEXT, a program within the National Institutes of Health—he and Vallabh are enrolling patients who are symptomatic.

"We've made a long-term commitment to advancing meaningful therapies for this disease," Vallabh says, "and this is a rapidly evolving technological landscape. Compared to 10 or 15 years ago, there are many different technologies we can imagine to point at this one protein."

The obligation for her and Minikel, she says, is to stay nimble to new information, to avoid getting hung up on any one potential therapy, and to keep going.

"Our constituency is patients like Sonia, and anything that moves the whole field forward, we want to do that," Minikel says. The couple has made much of their research data public for other scientists to use.

"We're building a runway," Vallabh says, "that allows drug technologies to be tested efficiently and demonstrates to the world that we can get clear answers. That's what makes it possible for lightning to strike." ▢

How a Chatbot Helped Reframe a Conversation

A Harvard Business School study shows some promises—and limits—of AI guidance.

by Saima Sidik

ABARISTA'S MANAGER yells at him, leaving him flustered and fearing he'll be fired. A colleague might reassure him by pointing out that the boss was probably just having a bad day. But today, an AI chatbot might suggest an even better choice of words to comfort him.

Since 2016, psychologist Amit Goldenberg, an assistant professor at Harvard Business School, has been studying how cognitive reappraisal—a reframing technique that changes the emotional impact of a negative experience—could help employees overcome difficult challenges in workplace settings. These reappraisals are one of many tools that human therapists use to help clients who are navigat-

ing work and social situations. Recently, Goldenberg decided to test whether a large language model could help generate such reappraisals and developed a narrow study to investigate the idea. As it turns out, ChatGPT-4 (the version retired in 2025) is very good at this.

Both the human participants in the study and ChatGPT were prompted with short texts describing negative social situations, such as, "My friend said she'd buy me dinner for my birthday, then forgot. I feel unwanted." Then they were asked to construct emotionally helpful cognitive reappraisals, such as, "She probably had a busy week. The offer alone shows that she cares about you."

Each human participant was then

asked to judge the effectiveness of the other reappraisals. ChatGPT's reappraisals were described as more effective, empathic, and novel than all but 20 percent of the reappraisals generated by humans.

Why are AI's reappraisals so compelling? Subsequent text analysis revealed that AI favors certain words while humans lean toward others. "Dedication," "love," "boundaries," and "opportunity" all showed up frequently in AI's reappraisals, whereas humans' top words included "trying," "new," "feel," and "maybe." When the researchers dug a bit deeper, they noticed a trend: AI's word choices sound more erudite than the average human's. For example, the algorithm liked to substitute "maybe" with "perhaps." Goldenberg's conjecture is that humans want support from people who will be reliable and judge people who use sophisticated language as more likely to be reliable.

However, in a subsequent experiment, when Goldenberg and his colleagues told participants which reappraisals were generated by AI, ChatGPT's advantage dropped. The researchers call this the "AI penalty," and it indicates to Goldenberg that "what people are really after is other humans—human understanding, human validation, human empathy."

Words chosen by humans to reframe negative experiences (left) often seem less sophisticated than those used by AI (right).



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This suggests that the best use of AI's skill at generating cognitive reappraisals could be as an aid in limited situations: for example, helping volunteers providing peer support services, such as answering grief and substance abuse hotlines. When discussions become too dark, Goldenberg says, peer support volunteers sometimes freeze up and end the conversation because they don't know what to say. AI, he suggests, could propose supportive language when these volunteers get overwhelmed.

But Goldenberg cautions against the idea that interactions between humans could be replaced, rather than supplemented, by interactions with machines. A 2024 study conducted by researchers at Stanford found that 24 percent of AI users in the United States turn to the technology with their mental health

When discussions become too dark, peer support volunteers sometimes freeze up and end a conversation because they don't know what to say. AI could help.

challenges—a startlingly large number, and a cause for concern given several documented instances when AI has encouraged a human interlocutor to commit suicide.

AI's appeal likely stems from its availability, Goldenberg says: "It's readily available and cheap and will always want to hear what you have to say." But the quality of support users receive from AI will always be inherently limited, he adds. Because as flashy as its language may be, there's no person behind that language. His own study's results, he says, indicate that what people are truly looking for is "what's standing behind that response, and whether that person is reliable and will be there for them. AI can't come and meet you and give you a hug." ▢

Discoveries

Short takes on cutting-edge research

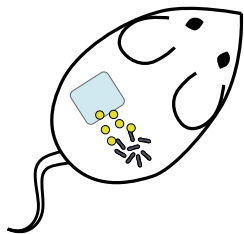
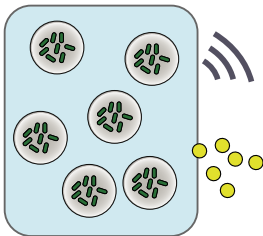
by Jonathan Shaw

AI Tool Predicts Cancer Therapy Outcomes

CANCER IMMUNOTHERAPY DRUGS can produce dramatic recoveries, but they only work for some patients. To identify who will benefit, associate professor of biomedical informatics Marinka Zitnik and colleagues have developed an artificial intelligence system that analyzes thousands of genes in a patient's tumor. Trained on data representing more than 10,000 tumors and 33 types of cancer from prior patients, the model outperformed the best prediction methods across multiple cancers and immunotherapy drugs, and made successful predictions in cancers and treatments it had not previously encountered. The AI model also identified the immune processes inside each tumor that may be helping or blocking treatment, giving researchers clues for overcoming resistance. The tool could someday help doctors match patients to the right immunotherapy, deploy more effective clinical trial enrollment, and identify new drug targets.

An AI model transforms complex tumor biology data into personalized response maps.

COURTESY OF MARINKA ZITNIK



COURTESY OF THE MOONEY LAB

Treating Disease with Captive Bacteria

BACTERIAL INFECTIONS can cause major problems in healthcare settings. Pinkas family professor of bioengineering David Mooney has found a way to attack those infections at their source with another type of bacteria, engineered to deliver therapeutic drugs. Mooney and his colleagues have developed Implantable Living Materials, or ILMs: helpful bacteria encapsulated in a tough, stiff hydrogel that could be surgically implanted in a patient.

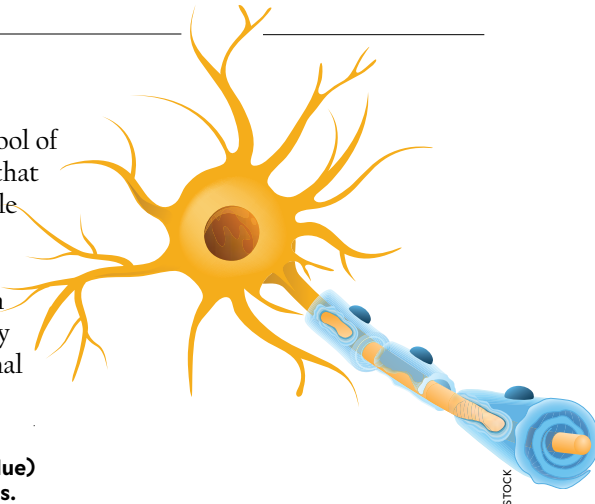
In their demonstration—a simulation of an infected stainless steel prosthetic joint in a mouse—researchers programmed the genetically engineered bacteria to detect *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, a major cause of hospital-acquired infections, and to respond by releasing antimicrobials. The ILM they implanted in the mouse contained the helpful bacteria for up to six months, resisted the physical stresses that break down other types of hydrogels, and significantly reduced the severity of infection. Microbial therapies using this technique have the potential to treat cancer, metabolic disease, and other illnesses that respond to localized drug delivery.

Bacteria engineered to produce therapeutic drugs are placed inside a hydrogel that confines the bacteria but is permeable to the drugs they produce. The system has been tested in a mouse model of prosthetic infection.

Understanding Why Mono Leads to MS

FIVE YEARS AGO, Kjetil Bjornevik and his colleagues at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health found that infection with Epstein-Barr Virus (EBV)—the virus that causes mononucleosis—greatly increased a patient's risk of developing multiple sclerosis (MS). Now Bjornevik, an assistant professor of epidemiology and nutrition, and Natalia Drosu, a research fellow in neurology at Harvard Medical School, have uncovered a clearer picture of how that process works. People with untreated MS generate unusually high numbers of an immune cell that uniquely responds to EBV virus particles. The study's authors speculate that this abnormal immune reaction to EBV infection may help drive MS. Although further investigation is needed, the work “provides a framework for developing EBV-targeted therapies, including vaccines and antivirals,” according to the researchers.

MS starts with damage to the myelin sheath (blue) protecting nerves.

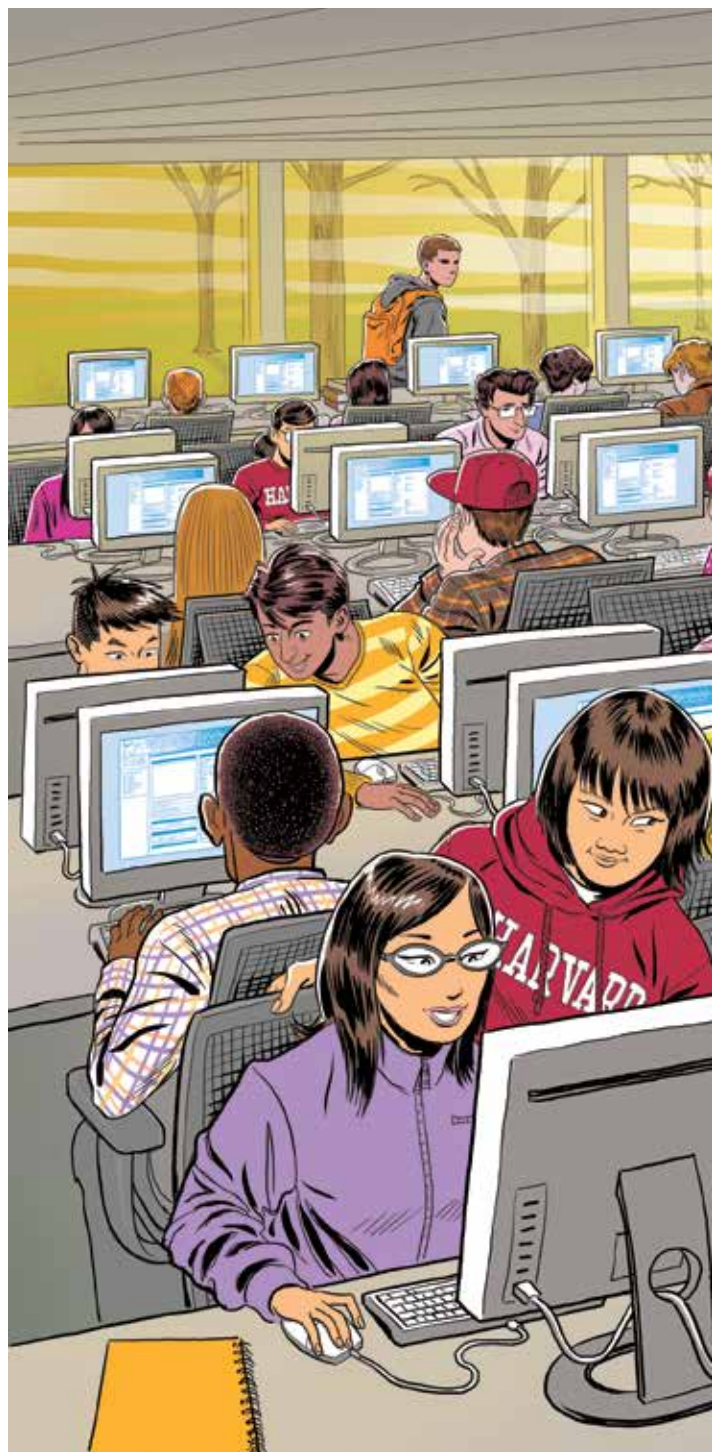


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When We Were Friends

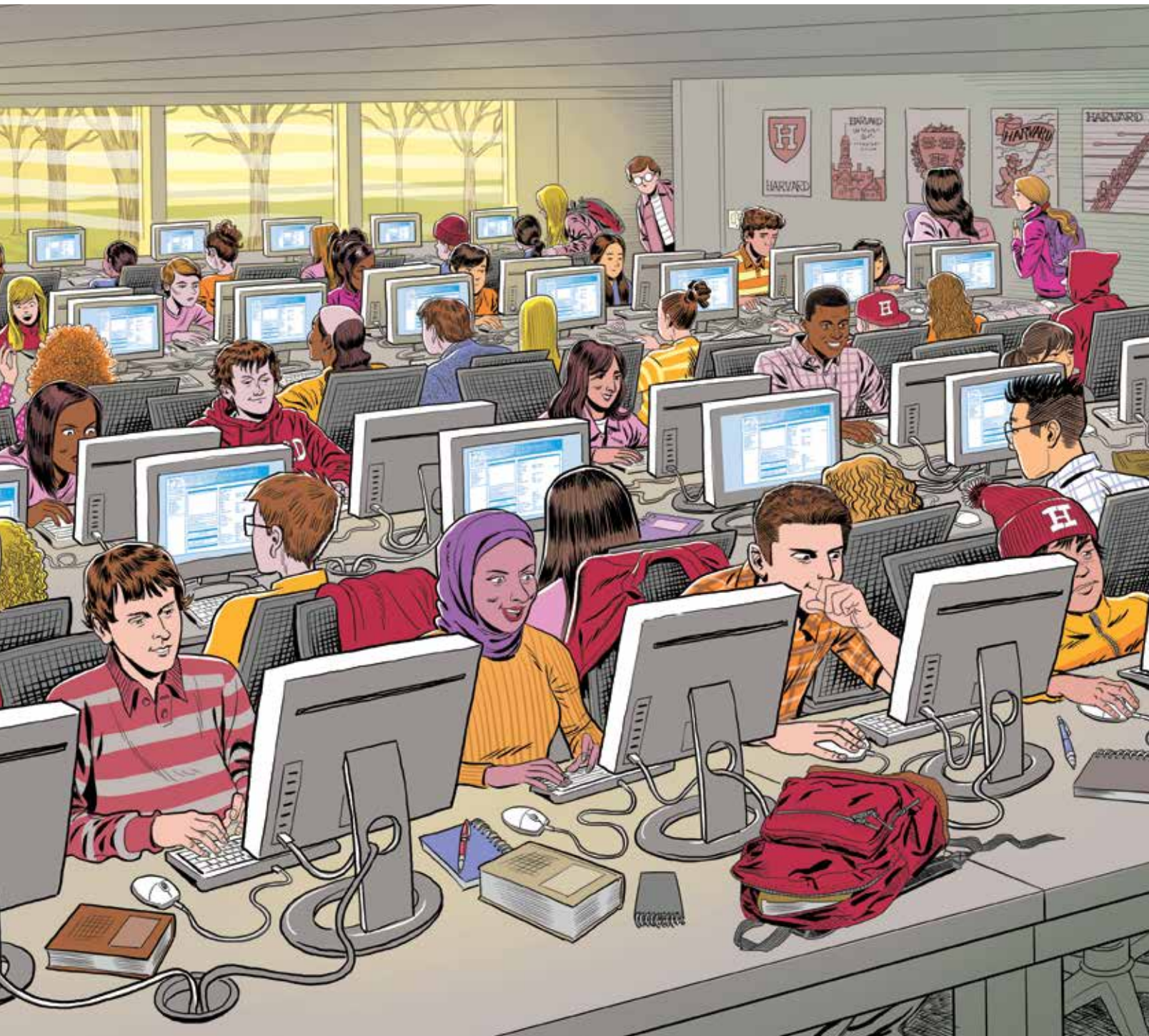
Before it took over society, 'Thefacebook' took over Harvard.

by Noam Cohen



KEVIN DAVIS remembers walking into Harvard's Science Center one winter morning and taking the stairs down to the computer lab, a large, windowless room in the basement where about 100 terminals were arranged in neat rows, separated by glass dividers, each with its own rolling office-style chair. The chairs were filled with undergraduates, and out of the corner of his eye, Davis noticed that nearly half

of their screens were casting the same blue and white flickering lights. He thought to himself, "That's weird, because all these students are usually doing their assignments, checking their email." When Davis reached the student help desk, which he managed as the University's supervisor of student and residential computing, he realized that the members of the tech support team were no different. Everyone was looking at the same website at the same time.



“I was like, ‘What on earth is going on?’” he recalls. “And they said, ‘Oh, Thefacebook launched.’”

As he’s telling this story, Davis knows how quaint it all sounds, how it ages him—and me, his interviewer, for that matter—as someone who remembers a time when we weren’t all entertaining ourselves by staring at a computer screen. When we’d go visit the computer instead of carrying one with us in our pockets. But that’s the point, of course. We are a radically different society

today, attached to the screens on our phones, which are, in turn, attached to the same handful of dominant platforms, where we buy our stuff, get our news and entertainment, and connect with our friends. And arguably this all traces back to the time of Davis’s astounding discovery in the Science Center basement, to February 4, 2004, the day Thefacebook.com, a platform designed in a matter of a week or so by a Kirkland House sophomore named Mark Zuckerberg, blew off the doors at Harvard.



The invention of Facebook has been sliced and diced, in books, in movies, in essays, in investigative journalism, in memoirs, in commencement addresses, and in podcasts. Many of the early stories tap into dark emotions—jealousy, betrayal, greed, misogyny, elitism, and vengeance—tied to singular, driven characters who saw Thefacebook as a way to make a mark in the world. Zuckerberg, of course, is famously the antihero of the celebrated 2010 film *The Social Network*, portrayed as a condescending, brilliant coder motivated by his desire for acceptance. Then, there are his nemeses, the Winklevosses, identical twin crew stars who believe Zuckerberg stole their idea, and his friend, Eduardo Severin, Facebook's first investor and business manager, who later took Zuckerberg to court over how large his stake in the company should be.

But two decades out, the story of Facebook, and Silicon Valley more generally, is no longer viewed as an unmitigated success, to put it mildly. (The sequel to *The Social Network*, to be released this October, is fittingly called *The Social Reckoning*.) Today, Meta, the company Facebook has become, is valued at more than a trillion dollars and wields an astounding influence on the tech sector and the global economy as a whole through its

nearly four billion users—spread across platforms like Instagram and WhatsApp, in addition to Facebook itself. The mode of communication it launched has helped erase borders, both political and social, distorted our notions of privacy and how we pass the time, and coarsened how we communicate. These days, society is wrestling with another potentially cataclysmic technology in the form of artificial intelligence and pondering how to control it before it gets out of hand. So perhaps there is something to be learned from the days when Facebook felt like just another social experiment on an elite college campus, like the distribution of LSD to undergraduates at Harvard in the early 1960s, or the Stanford study conducted in the 1970s that dressed students up as prison guards and inmates. In this case, it was a social experiment that managed to jump over the ivy-covered walls and escape containment.

Facebook arrived on the Harvard campus fully baked: It was, and would be, a social network led by an ambitious, even roguish, coder. It aspired to fantastic growth and complete ubiquity through a strategy of keeping its audience engaged, amused, and at times enraged by who and what they could find there. It discovered an ideal incubator in Harvard College, with its

Simon Rich '06 described those first days: “You look out the window like in a zombie movie and you’re like, ‘It’s spreading to everybody.’”

population of young people who were frustrated by how few real-world social opportunities they could find, as well as excited by the new, new thing—the internet.

The people who were present on Harvard’s campus in those early days can precisely recall the thrall they were under from this new way to self-identify, communicate, and connect; only in retrospect did most of them recognize the dangers that were lurking. A few sensitive souls were turned off immediately, of course, and feared for the future. One of them, the writer Simon Rich '06, who never joined Facebook even in the years since, described those first days on comedian Neal Brennan’s *Blocks* podcast: “You look out the window like in a zombie movie and you’re like, ‘It’s spreading to everybody.’”

TO START, it must be said that Facebook wasn’t a revolutionary new technology like the silicon chip or the internal combustion engine. There already were social networks that people used to promote themselves to the world and make connections—Friendster and MySpace being the major ones. Harvard itself had planned to publish a college-wide digital version of a student registry along the lines of *The Freshman Register*, the physical book handed out to all first-year students, who traditionally used it to scour each other’s high school photos for the purposes of icebreaking and dating potential. (“The facebook” was the informal name for that book on campus.) The official version would have already happened but for last-minute concerns about student privacy. Even the uber-confident Zuckerberg conceded the ordinariness of Thefacebook in an instant-message conversation with another student: “Apparently the winklevooss twins are spreading that i took the idea for thefacebook from them, as if there was an idea haha.”

What was striking, though, was how quickly this new form of communication spread: on the first day, 650 users logged on; two weeks later, it was 4,300, including a few alumni and even fewer faculty members. A month later, Thefacebook had spread to other, carefully chosen, colleges—Columbia, Stanford, and Yale—and had signed up 10,000 people. Harvard’s users alone had viewed individual profiles 1.5 million times in less than a month, at a time when profile viewing was still the main activity.

The social impact of Thefacebook was immense and immediate, too, visible throughout the Harvard ecosystem. A piece of art in the Spring 2004 issue of *The Advocate*, Harvard’s student literary magazine, shows two people

in hazmat suits with the ironic caption, “We Are Friends, Right?” In his Ivy Address that spring, Colin Jost '04, with September 11, 2001, fresh on the mind, described three challenges during his class’s years at Harvard: the war in Iraq, the threat of terrorism, “and that time when the Harvard server went down and we couldn’t check facebook.com for more than an hour.” And the op-eds in the *Crimson* arrived almost instantaneously. One, titled “Cy-

berfrauds,” warned that online networks threatened genuine connection: “After all, do we really want to live in a community where 17-to-23-year-olds feel more comfortable ‘poking’ friends of friends online, than approaching them in a dining hall and striking up a conversation? I certainly hope not.” In a piece for *Harvard Magazine* mocking Thefacebook as a place where friends are defined as “people who do not hate you,” the Undergraduate columnist Nathan Heller '06 described the feeling on campus: “Nineteenth-century essayist Thomas De Quincey might have been onto something perspicacious when he remarked of his opium usage, ‘I could not have done otherwise.’”

In other words, the platform was humming along as no platform had ever hummed: students were using it to make friends, to find people of similar tastes and interests, to organize their classes and their social lives. But in the back of students’ minds—if not in the front—were fundamental questions that seem strikingly prescient today: Are we being manipulated? By some website? Do we even have control of our actions anymore?





elty of this thing wears off, what does it have to offer?”

Only later, he said, did he recognize that his thinking was backwards. “This is not just going to be a kind of adjunct to certain real-world encounters or services that you need provided,” he said. “It’s going to create an attention economy of its own.”

In other words, Facebook, as well as the social networks that followed, became the answer to its own question—people would use it because other people were using it. The principal tasks for the young team were twofold: to add users quickly and to generate inexhaustible amounts of material for those users to pore over. Elissa Poorman ’06, now a doctor in Chicago, remembers a brief, brief moment at the start when “you would get to the bottom of it. You know what I mean? There was no more content to see.” That quickly changed. She adds, “They manipulated the dials and it wasn’t just your friends, and then it was your friends of friends, and then it was like anything that was popular was being shown to you. And then there was no end to the content.”

This was all by design, starting with the idea of organizing the new site around a user’s “social network”—that is, the totality of friends plus friends of friends. From this tweak, the number of pages to scroll through would grow exponentially. At the same time, Thefacebook introduced a series of automated features that would make each page more scrollable, such as where on campus you last logged in from, or what was written about you in the *Crimson*; there were statistics to review, too, such as how many friends you had or who most frequently looked at your profile. That last item, Poorman recalls, led to discoveries of secret crushes and awkward conversations.

“I think they got rid of that pretty quickly because people were really upset about it,” she says. “But there was just the idea that I wish I had thought about more deeply...these people have a lot of data on me, and they can do whatever they want

Aaron Chadbourne ’06, J.D. ’10, M.B.A. ’10, who was active in student politics, told me he resisted Thefacebook initially because of privacy concerns. “I think it was two weeks,” he said. “It could have been two days. I don’t remember. I just remember my attitude at the time was, ‘I would never join this. Who’s ever going to do this?’ And then everyone was on it. I was like, ‘Well, I can’t get left behind. I’ve got to be where people are. I’ve got to be interacting. I’ve got to be doing it.’ And then you get on the hamster wheel.” Chadbourne soon had that wheel spinning big time: 159 friends before the month was out.

Brock Read, a reporter at *The Chronicle of Higher Education* who was among the first national reporters to write about Thefacebook—soon to lose its “the” as it sought outside investors—remembers being intrigued by how fast it was spreading, but also doubting its long-term relevance. “I was less immediately clear on, OK, what concrete and existing problem is this solving?” he said, adding, “I talked with a few students about their usage of it and I asked them, ‘Well, what do you use this for? What do you do on this?’ They said pretty candidly, ‘Yeah, for the time being, I mostly just kill time on it. I’m mostly just procrastinating.’ And I think at the time I thought, well, that’s a sign that when the nov-

Facebook, as well as the social media networks that followed, became the answer to its own question—people would use it because other people were using it.

with it.” Early on, of course, “these people” largely meant Zuckerberg himself. “I think there was this false sense of security,” Poorman says, “because it was another Harvard student and you’re like, ‘Oh, he responds to feedback, he cares what his peers think about him.’ And then very quickly, this guy had no peers.”

If in those first months the entire project felt like it was “among friends,” that’s because it kind of was. When the Undergraduate Council was on the hook for a campus performance by the comedian Jim Breuer that wasn’t selling well, Thefacebook came to the rescue. The council was able to take advantage of the platform’s targeted advertising, speaking precisely to students in Boston who listed Breuer in their profile. Disaster was averted. After a campus tragedy, a Winthrop House student’s apparent suicide only weeks after the launch of Thefacebook, Zuckerberg personally took down his profile out of respect.

In those few weeks when Thefacebook lived at Harvard, and only Harvard, there was a culture of trust and accountability, as Poorman described. Significantly, each potential user had a Harvard-assigned email address that made possible what Zuckerberg has called “a culture of real identity,” as opposed to the anonymous or pseudonymous identities that had been common on social networks. On Thefacebook, there would be real connections between real people. And real connections meant real stakes that drove real obsessive online behavior.

“The thing that Facebook did very, very well was first limiting it to Harvard students,” says Michael Kearns, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania, who was already teaching a course on networked communities when Thefacebook launched. (Later, during Facebook’s expansion, Harvard’s global cachet undoubtedly helped in convincing college students to join a social network created on another campus.)

“Because it was such an insular environment, there’s a very good chance that people would choose to friend other people at Harvard that they actually knew and that the network, even though it was restricted to this very small insular world, might actually reflect offline reality in some sense,” Kearns says. And this was crucial, ultimately, because if people were relaxed enough to share online their real identities, real friendships, and real interests, there would be a fortune to be made by selling to advertisers what users had revealed about themselves.

Heller, in his 2004 essay for *Harvard Magazine*, explained how this dynamic played out: “I expose myself in order to see others exposed. Thefacebook legitimates this shady-sounding ar-

rangement because the site, to use Zuckerberg’s phrase, acts ‘as a mirror of the real-life social network.’ I can actually meet the people I’ve befriended on-line. Some of them might even live down the hall.” Of course, the exposure remained even as Facebook expanded and you were sharing information about yourself with relative strangers; later came parasocial relationships, where you think you are friends with people who are, in fact, strangers.

Zuckerberg proved to be an ideal candidate to accomplish the mission of quickly building a Harvard audience and then leveraging that audience to go global. He had been designing internet-based projects since he was a preteen setting up an instant-messaging system for his father’s dental office in Dobbs Ferry, N.Y., and that drive continued during his time at Harvard. Months before Thefacebook launched, Zuckerberg created a site, FaceMash, by hacking into the Houses’ computer systems to extract students’ photos so they could be paired against each other in “hot or not” fashion. This was just a prank, Zuckerberg would later say, “kind of funny, but also was a little bit in poor taste.” What it was, undeniably, was a smash, drawing 450 visitors in a few hours, with those visitors voting a total of 22,000 times before the administration shut down the site.

Interested in both computer science and psychology, Zuckerberg arguably learned more about people than website construction from the FaceMash episode. He learned what gets an



audience's attention online (people you know, images, status anxiety) and what motivates them to act (envy, gossip, feeling superior). "I saw the website and I was really upset by it," Poorman recalls. "I found Harvard to be a pretty sexist place and that was pretty upsetting. Then of course I was like, 'Am I on here? What was my rating?'"

The episode also offered valuable lessons for the next Zuckerberg project, which inevitably would follow:

- Keep your website far from Harvard's computer servers, which can be turned off by administrators with a flick of a switch.
- Don't steal what people will gladly give away, which, as it turns out, is basically everything: their photos, relationship status, political views, favorite books, medical histories...
- On the internet, it's best to "move fast and break things," which became Facebook's credo. Hacking into a secured site and taking away copies of the photos stored there may resemble burglary, but for some reason most people didn't see it that way, and certainly the Harvard administration didn't. Despite the FaceMash controversy, Zuckerberg would be free to start his next project as a Harvard student in good standing.
- And there's the eternal lesson: there's no such thing as bad publicity.

THE INTERNET AT THAT TIME was still a great leveler, assuming you had the advantages of a Harvard student. The initial web hosting fees were \$85 a month, and in Severin, born to a wealthy family, Zuckerberg had a friend who could pay the expenses for maintaining a complex, interconnected site even as it grew to tens of thousands of registered users. He had access to young, talented coders not just among classmates studying computer science but within his own rooming suite. And, ultimately, he had the self-confidence to keep growing. Speaking to a group of young start-up founders in 2012, Zuckerberg recounted his initial disbelief that Thefacebook would be able to connect the world. "I thought that over time someone would definitely go build this version of this for the world, but it wasn't going to be us, it was going to be, you know, Microsoft or, you know, someone who builds software for hundreds of millions of people," he said. "It's like, who were we? We're college students, right? We're not qualified in any way to build this. And now I think a lot of my takeaway from that was that we just kind of cared more than those other companies about making it exist."

There was one final bit of perfect timing for Thefacebook team: the social life at Harvard in 2004 was in decline. For a variety of reasons, the familiar ways undergraduates would meet in real life—at their Houses, at a bar, in shared public spaces—were no longer up to the challenge. In this way, Harvard was a good proxy for the rest of America, where social institutions were dwindling and people spent more and more time online,

a trend that accelerated with the arrival of the iPhone in 2007. Perhaps this explains why Facebook had similarly rapid growth once it expanded to the general population in 2006.

Harvard's House system had recently turned away from a collection of self-selecting, socially cohesive communities—the jock house, the artsy house, the geek house, the preppy house, the people of color house. To break down these divisions, the administration began assigning housing randomly, though you could still choose your roommates. What remained were a bunch of individuals with weak to nonexistent ties. The administration tried to build a sense of community on campus: there were rivalries between the Houses, but students from that time remember that it all felt forced; in the fall of 2004, the College actually created a position, "fun czar," hiring a recent graduate known for his campus parties. The new czar's suggestions for making the campus more social included ending random housing and limiting final clubs to seniors, though he told the *Crimson* those actions "were not really in [his] job description."

And Cambridge bars couldn't pick up the slack—in fact, the opposite was true. After an MIT freshman died from alcohol poisoning during a fraternity hazing event in 1998, the city suddenly began to strictly enforce the drinking age of 21. The only social institutions left standing were the final clubs, which were elitist by design and left the bulk of students on the outside looking in.

With nowhere else to turn, students leapt at the idea of an *eros ex machina*. Even a stripped-down site called Crimsonhookups, which launched within a week of Thefacebook, was gaining traction. The site prompted students to provide lists of emails of 10 students they'd want to hook up with and connected any pairs that listed each other; in a month, the site announced there had been more than 200 "hookup matches." A writer in *The Independent* explored campus-focused online dating in light of these new websites and had the least patience for Crimsonhookups

Harvard was a good proxy for the rest of America, where people spent more and more time online.

and its "time for just some good old fun" message: "Imagine how awkward it would be. 'Hi, so I want to hook up with you, and you want to hook up with me, so...let's hook up?' Relationships don't work like that! It takes away all the suspense and tension and drama of not knowing for sure." Facebook offered a more natural way of connecting, the article concluded.

Right around this time, there was a meeting between the University's president, Larry Summers, and a group of undergraduates in Kirkland House's junior common room, not far from room H33, where Thefacebook was conceived. Summers was there to talk about academics—specifically about allowing more electives—but the subject quickly turned to what the *Crimson* called "the grinding unhappiness of the student body."



There were no good on-campus places to socialize, they said; final clubs and other clubs had become social centers, which wasn't right or fair. When the students told Summers that they saw great potential in the arrival of Thefacebook and Crimson-hookups, they discovered that despite all the hype, not everyone on campus had been swept up in the frenzy. Thefacebook hype was news to him, Summers told the students. In an exchange captured by the *Crimson*, he then offered the paternal advice that while the internet can be used to "make positive connections," it "can encourage people's tendencies to isolate themselves and spend more time in front of a screen."

The students' answer was clear—spending more time in front of a screen was better than being alone.

Geraldine Grimm, who has long taught German at Harvard and other universities, has the distinction of being perhaps the first faculty member to join Thefacebook. She says she was asked personally by Zuckerberg, who had a friend in her class. She worried that it might seem weird, and she asked her students, who were enthusiastic. So she joined. Her number, as best she can recall, was 1,852. Her students immediately became her "friends," and she used Facebook as a forum for the class. She recalls that time vividly, right around Valentine's Day. "What

started happening as the weeks went by [was] people started creating groups, and they had the weirdest groups...The 'cinnamon flavored group,' people who love cinnamon. It was just very niche, very strange. And I think it did foster a sense of community initially, it really did."

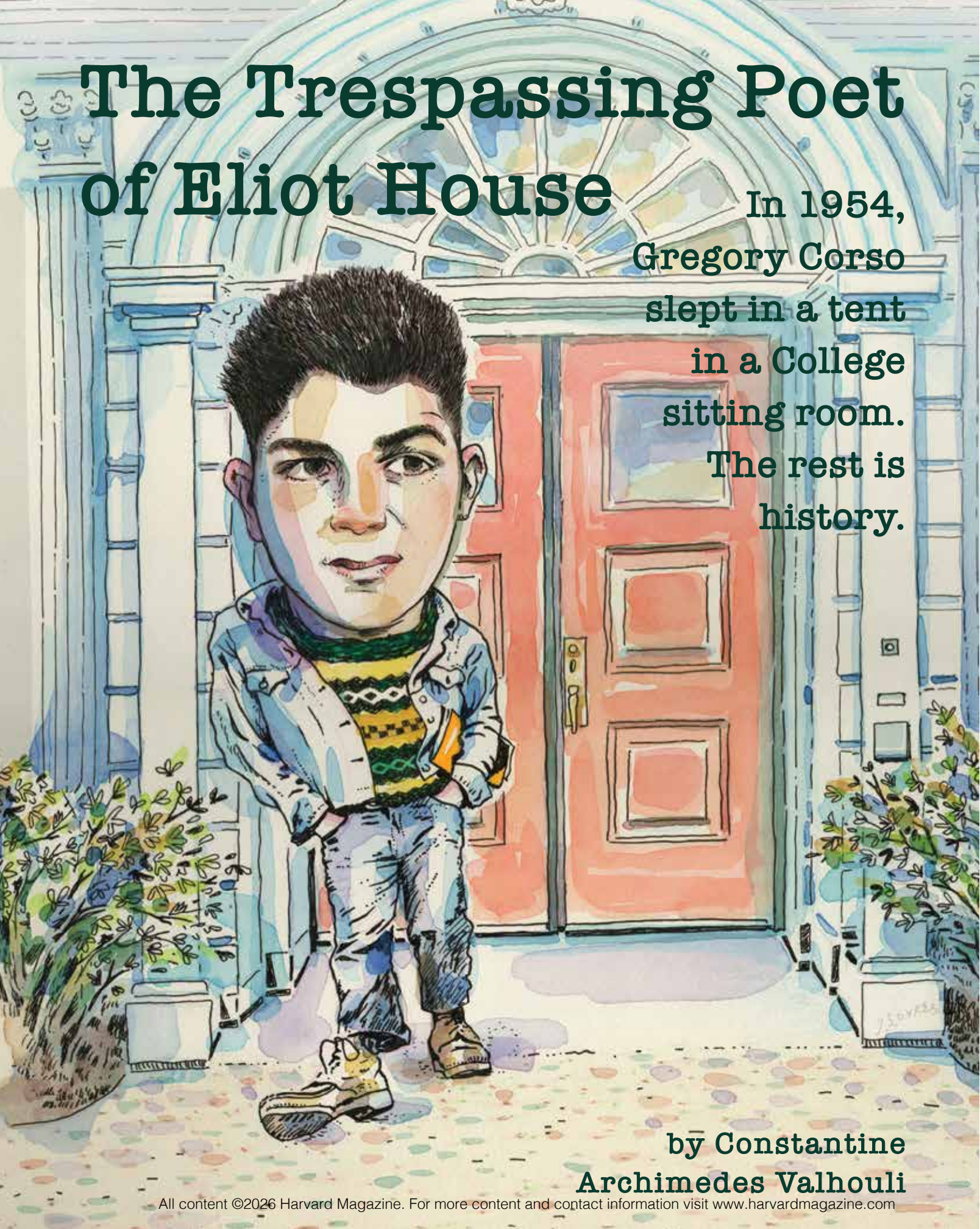
Today, Grimm teaches German at Boston College, as well as writing at the Harvard Extension School, and before our scheduled interview, she asked her class of 12 undergraduates if any of them were on Facebook. She was greeted with laughter. Not one of them had ever had an account. The typical response, she said, was, "Yeah, my mom is on," or my dad or my uncle." Then she asked how much time the students spent online on sites like YouTube, TikTok, and Instagram. The average, she said, was five hours a day, some as much as 12.

"A lot of the guys were just watching tons and tons of sports videos on YouTube," she said. "It's like the legacy is that Facebook learned how to keep people on the computer—and that's something that all of them do." ▢

Noam Cohen '89 is a technology journalist and the author of *The Know-It-Alls: The Rise of Silicon Valley as a Political Powerhouse and Social Wrecking Ball* (2017).

The Trespassing Poet of Eliot House

In 1954,
Gregory Corso
slept in a tent
in a College
sitting room.
The rest is
history.



by Constantine
Archimedes Valhouli

ONE OF THE MORE FAMOUS RESIDENTS of Eliot House was also perhaps its least likely. After all, Gregory Corso wasn't a Harvard professor, a tutor, or even a matriculating student. But for one momentous academic year, he slept in a tent in the sitting room of an undergraduate suite, beginning to write the poetry that would later make him a legend.

Today, we know Corso as the youngest of the Beat poets, whose work was destined for the curriculum at Harvard and beyond. His wry poetic voice explored classical references and Romantic themes through a distinctly modern and countercultural lens. Or it could be said that his poetry tried to understand modern life by putting it in classical and mythological terms.

But when he arrived in Cambridge in 1954, Corso had not yet published a word. He was recently out of prison, worked near campus as a janitor, and secured his long-term Harvard residence with an improbable writing assignment.

How Corso came to Cambridge, let alone Eliot House, is as implausible and serendipitous as anything else in his life. His time there continues to be one of the defining—if largely untold—stories of both Eliot House and its legendary master, John H. Finley Jr.

It is a testament to the expansiveness of Harvard that it made space for someone who wasn't admitted past the gates, but rather bypassed them. That the House master who largely defined Harvard in the public imagination of those years could recognize the unchanneled talent of someone entirely without conventional credentials. And that Harvard's institutions conferred their imprimatur on this consummate outsider who was embraced by some of the innermost circles.

Indeed, who could have imagined that one of America's most unconventional voices would find such a welcome at a centuries-old institution, or that such an unlikely visitor could have such a lasting influence?

WHEN CORSO first showed up in the halls of Eliot House, he was filled with energy and ambition, but nothing yet to show for it. The 24-year-old had been orphaned (erroneously, as it turned out, but that's another story), chose to be homeless rather than endure abuse in foster care, and had served three years in Dannemora prison in upstate New York for theft. (Stories vary over what he stole. He would sometimes claim he had stolen banned books to start a bookstore. Other times, it was a suit for a date.)

Dannemora proved vital to his education. While incarcerated, he devoured the prison library. He read Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats, and Edgar Allen Poe, as well as the full works of

historians Will and Ariel Durant. "Don't just serve time," he would later advise friends and other writers. "Make time serve you." Prison inspired that advice, but Corso applied it to any situation that could be enriching rather than just endured.

After his incarceration, Corso briefly lived in New York City with Allen Ginsberg, who was then a largely unknown writer. One evening at the Cedar Tavern—the Greenwich Village haunt of the Abstract Expressionists—he met a woman who would change his life.

Violet "Bunny" Lang was an editor of the *Chicago Review* and a founding member of the Poets' Theatre, an experimental troupe. (Many of the other founders of that group were recent graduates of Eliot House, including future U.S. poet laureate Donald Hall '51, Frank O'Hara '50, and Edward Gorey '50.)

A distant relative of the Archbishop of Canterbury, the 31-year-old Bunny danced burlesque at Boston's Howard Athenaeum and often held editorial or theater meetings in the bathroom of her apartment, while she was in a bubble bath with a glass of champagne. In her 1984 book *The Poets' Theatre: A Memoir*

of the Fifties, troupe member Nora Sayre '54 wrote that Bunny was "a witty outlaw whose passions overflowed the confines of New England gentility." She was "intent on killing conventions [and] appeared to think that whatever was un-Bostonian was automatically enlightened."

Naturally, Bunny was charmed by Corso's mix of erudition and cheekiness—so much like her own. She invited him to Boston thinking he would be an incendiary, unwelcome, and provocative addition to the city. "She took him to starchy gatherings and urged him to be insolent," wrote Sayre.

However, Bunny misjudged her audience. Or at least the moment. Far from being scandalized, her circle in Boston, especially the

Poets' Theatre crowd, adored him. And so he chose to extend his stay in Cambridge. Bunny arranged a job for him as a janitor at the theater and asked her friends if anyone could host him.

She happened to know a handful of Harvard students through the Poets' Theatre and broader literary circles, as well as through O'Hara, with whom she lived in Greenwich Village. Which is how Corso came to live with Paul Grand '55, Bobby Sedgwick '55, and Peter Sourian '55 in Eliot House.

IT WAS ONLY SUPPOSED to be for a few days. A week or so. After all, there wasn't a spare bedroom in the Eliot House suite, so Corso simply set up a makeshift tent in the sitting room. "Not like a camping tent," says Corso's longtime friend, the translator and editor George Scrivani. "More like a child's make-believe tent, a blanket draped over a couch. Gregory didn't have a regu-

OPEN THE GATE

Gregory Corso

"Open the gate

I am the man from the moon...

Some say I've come too late;
others, too soon.

Late or soon, where to eat?
I am hungry, yet lack a purse."

"Eliot House," invited a tutor;
You can eat but mustn't curse."

Having eaten all there was to eat
Soup and beans and hot-dog meat,
I let out a big dirty word
And the teacher swooned as he heard.

SOURCE: i.e., THE CAMBRIDGE REVIEW, 1956 ISSUE

lar childhood, but he retained a childlike sense of wonder and play his whole life.”

Eliot House turned out to be the perfect location for Corso’s ambitions. For one, the house had been closely associated with poets ever since T.S. Eliot, A.B. 1909, A.M. ’11, lived there during his year as a Norton Fellow from 1932 to 1933. The roster continued to be equally distinguished, with faculty such as Pulitzer Prize winner and Legion of Honor recipient Archibald MacLeish, LL.B. 1919, and residents such as Hall, O’Hara, and future MacArthur Fellow John Ashbery ’49.

John H. Finley Jr. himself was described as “the embodiment of Harvard” in his *New York Times* obituary. A decade earlier, he had helped create *General Education in a Free Society*, the book that re-



Gregory Corso, 1953

shaped education at the University and across the United States. Finley believed that a humanistic, liberal education should be the foundation for every career. He believed in transmitting works of shared cultural heritage to the next generation. And he firmly believed that education did not only occur in the classroom—that students should learn as much from each other as from the faculty.

For Finley, Eliot House was a place to put those ideas into practice. He presided at a time when House leaders had a say in the selection of their students, and each House thus developed a distinct personality. He was known for his skillful mix of residents, and he often joked that while he was against cheap social engineering, “*deft* social engineering was another matter entirely.”

It’s difficult to imagine that Finley was unaware of this stow-away in Eliot House. But the sheer bravado of his arrival made

Corso a perfect complement to what was then regarded as the most privileged and exclusive of the Houses.

Corso, who then dressed conservatively and wore short-clipped hair, wasn’t an obvious interloper when he first arrived. In some ways, he slipped quietly into College life: by day, he wrote poems and plays or attended classes, including Finley’s Hum 2 and 3 lectures—one on the Greeks, the other on “The Epic and the Novel.” Mixed into the crowd, no one seemed to notice that he was not enrolled in any section.

But in other ways, Corso’s roommates understood that they had to keep his profile low. “Sometimes we brought him into the dining room of Eliot House, but usually we smuggled his food back to the room in bowls,” Sourian would later recall in Jean Stein and George Plimpton’s oral history of Edie Sedgwick, *Edie: American Girl*. “He was, well, a bit...difficult in the dining room. He would attack people—I don’t mean physically, of course—for being idiots.”

This is exactly what Bunny had hoped he would do. But Corso’s mix of brilliance and volatility almost led to the end of his fortunate living arrangement. Someone—likely stung by one of his outbursts—finally reported him as a trespasser. It was Corso’s good fortune that the professor who handled the situation was Archibald MacLeish, the Boylston professor of rhetoric and oratory. Their confrontation quickly became a heated discussion of poetry. Several versions of the story are told, but all agree that Corso told MacLeish, “*You’re not a real poet!*”

MacLeish—who by that point had won two Pulitzer Prizes, the National Book Award, and the Bollingen Prize—would have been utterly unfazed. He had been in Gertrude Stein’s bohemian circle in Paris. F. Scott Fitzgerald once took a swing at him, and to MacLeish’s credit, he responded with a blow that knocked Fitzgerald out cold. A triumph of poetry over prose, as it were.

Nor was MacLeish unsporting. Which may have influenced how the faculty chose to decide Corso’s fate—with an approach as unorthodox as Corso himself. Recollections vary as to the precise details, but either Finley or one of his section men offered Corso a challenge. He could remain at Eliot House for the rest of the semester if he wrote a play based on the Greek myths. He was offered two weeks in which to do so.

Corso did it overnight. And did it well.

His one-act play, *Sarpedon*, riffed on a minor character in the *Iliad*. “This brilliant yet little-known work clearly demonstrates the depth of his mastery of classical literature, no doubt picked up from auditing Harvard lectures as well as from the extensive reading he did in Dannemora,” wrote publisher Rick Schober in an introduction to the play, which was finally published by Tough Poets Press in 2016. (It was performed at least once in the 1970s, at Naropa University’s School of Disembodied Poetics in Colorado.) “Despite the ancient subject matter,” Schober wrote, “his verse is infused with street slang and Beat vernacular of the time in which it was written, and portends the irreverent humor that would become a hallmark of much of his later work.”

And *Sarpedon* enabled Corso to remain at Eliot House. MacLeish even enrolled him as a non-matriculating student.

CORSO ARGUABLY MADE MORE OF HIS TIME at Harvard than did most students. He successfully submitted poems to *The Ad-*

vocate and to a short-lived literary magazine with the unusual title i.e., *The Cambridge Review*. Both can claim credit for being the first to publish him, in the fall of 1954. His Eliot House friends undoubtedly had a hand in this, as Eliot resident Leo Raditsa '56 was editor and Sedgwick associate editor of the *Review*.

Corso's attendance at Finley's lectures was also clearly influential to his burgeoning body of work. Part of what made Finley so compelling as a lecturer was not just his theatricality, but his ability to make historic texts relevant by connecting them to the lived experiences of the students. Aspects of his style turn up in Corso's later work: the former in his energetic poetry readings, the latter in the mix of modernity with classical and literary references in his poems themselves.

Without having to worry about rent, Corso also partook of the rich social and cultural life of Cambridge. A girlfriend from that time, Cynthia "Cinder" Clark '58, inspired one of his very few love poems: *You and you shall be the swan, my swan-girl / Of no wind or water; my swan-girl*.

Meanwhile, the University, with its collection of treasures, gave Corso a sense of contact with his literary heroes. On one memorable occasion, his new friends brought him to Houghton Library, where he examined one of Percy Bysshe Shelley's notebooks. The experience inspired one of his much-anthologized poems, "I Held a Shelley Manuscript." And it seemed to seep into Corso's public presence, as well.

"Harvard was where he began to lean into his persona as 'an urchin Shelley,' that combination of Dickensian street waif and swashbuckling poet," says Scrivani.

"You know how Shelley drowned with a copy of Keats's poems in his pocket?" says Alice Sedgwick Wohl, a Radcliffe student who befriended Corso during his Harvard sojourn because he was living with her brother Bobby. "Every time we would go out sailing, Gregory would put a copy of Shelley in his own pocket, just in case."

While Corso took to Harvard, Harvard also, unexpectedly, took to him. Finley, for one, could not have asked for a better addition to Eliot House—the young poet was like the house's own Diogenes, in a borrowed coat and tie. Corso embodied Finley's belief that students learned as much from each other as from their professors: he brought to his new friends an outsider's perspective unlike any to be found on campus.

"All the clubbies with intellectual interests found him fascinating," Wohl recalls. "He was a bit of a rascal, a street kid, pixieish, puckish. He was seen as this exotic phenomenon. People loved him."

And Corso's literary style exposed the students of his day to language they wouldn't have typically found in the Harvard curriculum. "People were beginning to be less exclusive and open to other possibilities and voices," Wohl says. "The values with which we had been brought up no longer corresponded to the world as we found it. People and society were floundering a bit. Things that we had learned didn't seem to be as relevant."

If Corso had arrived a few years earlier, Harvard might not have been ready for him. A few years later, and he might not have made as much of a splash.

"The hipster language that he imported [by way of Black jazz musicians] was utterly new to Harvard Square," Sayre wrote in her memoir. As was Corso's twist on it, a mix of classical references and street slang. "His style and idiom became contagious for some restive undergraduates."

IT'S NO EXAGGERATION to say that Harvard launched Corso's literary career—beginning with his transition from janitor at the Poets' Theatre to playwright. Another one-act play, *In This Hung-Up Age*, was produced there alongside works by MacLeish and T.S. Eliot.

Soon after, Corso's friends from Eliot House and the Poets'

Theatre also raised funds to privately print his first book of poetry—similar to what Poe's West Point classmates had done for him 124 years earlier. Richard Brukenfeld '55 led the effort, and Nicolai Cikovsky '55, Ph.D. '65, designed the cover. *The Vestal Lady on Brattle and Other Poems* (1955) predated *Gasoline*, Corso's more famous work published by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books, by three years.

"*The Vestal Lady* shook those in the know," says Scrivani. "People like O'Hara recognized in Gregory a distinctive and important new voice."

But it was not universally lauded. The critic Reuel Denney dismissed the

book in *Poetry* magazine, noting, "Corso cannot balance the richness of the bebop group jargon from which his manner cleverly derives with the clarity he needs to make his work meaningful to a wider-than-clique audience."

The critic got it wrong, according to Carolyn Gaiser in "Gregory Corso: A Poet, the Beat Way." The Beat crowd's twist on bebop slang would soon become the national idiom.

Not long after the end of the academic year, Corso departed Cambridge to pursue the adventures that led to his extensive body of work: he published 13 books of poetry, two books of plays, and several collaborations before his death from cancer in 2001. Harvard became part of Corso's story, and in turn, he became part of its history. He did not return to Harvard until 1959, when he and Ginsberg headlined a Harvard Law School event. In the intervening years, the court case over whether Ginsberg's *Howl* was art or obscenity had raised the profile of the Beat poets from fringe countercultural writers to voices of a generation.

One can only assume Corso had more conventional accommodations on his return visit to Harvard. ▢

Constantine Archimedes Valhoulis co-wrote, with the late Nelson W. Aldrich Jr. '57, *The Master of Eliot House, a biography of John H. Finley Jr. '25, Ph.D. '33, L.H.D. '68*. This article draws from one of the book's chapters, which is being adapted into a screenplay. Valhoulis is an affiliate of the Signet Society.

"He was a bit of a rascal, a street kid...He was seen as this exotic phenomenon."

—Alice Sedgwick Wohl



The Referee

On CNN, Abby Phillip hosts the political conversations we're told to avoid.

by CRAIG LAMBERT

“FIVE MINUTES!” begins the countdown from the floor director in a CNN studio, high in a modern skyscraper in Manhattan’s Hudson Yards. It’s 9:55 P.M. on April 15, 2026. Ablaze with lights, the studio ceiling towers above; on the floor, television cameras fix on a raised glass table on a small round stage. A stagehand’s puppy romps a bit at a respectful distance as a hair stylist circulates behind the guests, judiciously administering aerosol hair spray.

At the studio table, her six guests arranged at her sides, Abby Phillip ’10 faces a camera and ignores a cardinal rule of hospitality by featuring topics that etiquette experts have banished from the dinner table: politics, religion, and sex.

On cable news, anchors like Phillip regularly march into a landscape brimming with ideological landmines to stimulate political clashes among their guests. But even for cable, CNN’s *NewsNight with Abby Phillip*, which airs weeknights at 10 P.M., stands apart—for its willingness to touch the hot buttons and even welcome them. Night after night, the show gathers opinionated savants from the left and right to sit around a single table for an hour, sifting through the day’s news and, predictably, disagreeing sharply about what it means. Sometimes, Phillip comes across less as a moderator than a referee at a shouting match.

But there’s a method to her work here, and a philosophy behind it. Off-camera, Phillip is as calm as she appears on the air, and also philosophical; she describes the nightly fracas as a mission,

made more urgent at a time when both the media and politics are changing drastically. *NewsNight*’s tagline, which Phillip recites in every installment, voices optimism: “Americans with different perspectives aren’t talking to each other, but here, they do.” Phillip is a rare journalist who tests out that concept nightly.

In some ways, a cable news show reflects an earlier time in media. In the past, echelons of professional gatekeepers—newspaper and magazine editors, radio and television producers, publishing industry professionals—filtered what the mass media offered the public. Now, almost anyone with a mobile phone can advertise their version of “what is happening” to the entire world.

“There is a bright side to this,” Phillip said in a relaxed, explorative conference-room conversation a few hours before the broadcast. She noted that, this winter, “protests in response to the ICE raids came about because regular people recorded events with their phones and posted what they saw. Otherwise, we’ll become heavily reliant on the government for information.”

Yet the facts themselves are often up for grabs, fueled by

groundless assertions and conspiracy theories that go viral on social media—the dilemma compounded by the dwindling of local media and, globally, the contraction of foreign bureaus and reporters based abroad. Add in the rise of artificial intelligence-driven deepfakes and the extremes of today’s political rhetoric—from the White House down. “The challenge becomes fact-checking,” Phillip says. “To navigate the political ecosystem, you must pay attention to what the president says and also know the underlying events. Our job as journalists is getting harder, and it is a big responsibility to have these platforms.”

A show like *NewsNight*, Phillip contends, can guide viewers through competing interpretations of events and model respectful debate. She notes that an admixture of opinion and factual reporting “has always been a feature of journalism, and it’s not

mands, “a whole civilization will die tonight, never to be brought back again.” Pope Leo XIV had also spoken out against the war, prompting public rebukes from Trump and U.S. Vice President J.D. Vance. Tonight, a clip of Vance advising the Pope to take care with his words prompts Navarro to bring up how Trump had cheered the deaths of Hollywood director Rob Reiner and former FBI director Robert Mueller. “J.D. Vance wants people to be careful with their words,” she says. “Maybe he should tell the guy he works for.”

Navarro adds that in the past, multilateral peace efforts took “years of cultivation of relationships, not 4 o’clock in the morning tweets. It’s irrational what he’s doing, and you know it,” she tells Jennings, who replies, “Well, it’s not irrational to stand up to Iran.”

Hogg then chimes in to ask, “Is that rational, Scott, to threaten

a genocide of 90 million people on Easter Sunday?” Jennings dismisses this:

“It didn’t happen.” That cues Phillip to step in: “Let me just reiterate to the audience. The president said in a message that an entire civilization may die tonight,” with Hogg adding, “on Easter Sunday.”

Straightening out Jennings on the president’s threat illustrates a recurring problem on *NewsNight* that is tricky to handle. “Many things that get said are very obviously untrue,” Phillip explains.

“I’m not a robot, so I’m not all-knowing, and so there are going to be things that I don’t or can’t fact-check

in the moment, because if I don’t know the answer, then it’s hard for me to intervene. But you also can’t let something incorrect stand, especially if it’s central to the ongoing debate—the conversation becomes a house of cards on a shaky foundation and will collapse. You need to have both humility and confidence in your knowledge, the discernment to either let things transpire, or to intervene and say, ‘You didn’t answer the question,’ or ask, ‘Is this also true?’ I need to decide what role to play in the moment. That challenge happens every single day on this job.”

Fiery debating among people with strong viewpoints often generates crosstalk as different guests erupt simultaneously, making the audio unintelligible to viewers. At such times, Phillip intervenes to “get everyone to calm down and rein them in—it takes a minute,” she says. “People need to be respectful of each other, and I can’t let things get disruptive. If somebody is intentionally ignoring me, I’m much less forgiving about that. They might not be invited back.”

An extreme case occurred in the early days of *NewsNight* when a Trump surrogate, Ryan Girdusky, implied that left-wing British-American commentator Mehdi Hasan was a terrorist. “We had to kick him off the air,” Phillip says of Girdusky. “He was asked to leave. Everyone was really taken aback, even the other conservative at the table.” Returning from a commercial break, Phillip explained to the audience why Girdusky was no longer present, and the clip went viral. “It was pretty dramatic and controversial,” she recalls. “And an important moment for *NewsNight*, be-

“You...can’t let something incorrect stand, especially if it’s central to the ongoing debate—the conversation becomes a house of cards on a shaky foundation and will collapse.” —Abby Phillip

always bad. Objective journalism was never a sturdy concept. When an opinion is clear and clearly disclosed, it can be OK. What’s helpful is to have more transparency around biases. Some are put off by that, but it isn’t where our problems start.”

ON THIS April night, Phillip’s guests are former Republican strategist Ana Navarro, a CNN senior political commentator and co-host of the ABC show *The View*; former U.S. Representative from Florida Val Demings, a Democrat; *National Review* columnist Caroline Downey; senior CNN political commentator Scott Jennings, a Kentuckian who served in the George W. Bush administration and advised former Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell; gun control activist David Hogg, a former vice chair of the Democratic National Committee; and Margaret Donovan, a former assistant U.S. attorney and U.S. Army lawyer.

They represent the show’s typical spectrum of political views, from progressive left to MAGA right. *NewsNight*’s guest list is continually refreshed as the show’s staff suggests new faces, although it includes many returners. Phillip approves all participants. Discussants are media-savvy people who speak smoothly and articulately before a microphone or camera. Stage fright is not allowed.

The evening’s first fracas centers on the Iran war, then in its 47th day. A week earlier, in a Truth Social post, U.S. President Donald Trump had warned that if Tehran didn’t cede to his de-

cause we had to set a standard for what was acceptable. We want a civilized debate, and we made the right decision. People still come up to me and say, ‘You handled that really well.’”

Phillip’s colleagues say her ability to manage a fast-moving situation—honed through years of breaking news reporting—is also a feature of her personality. “She has a calming presence that makes her easy to watch and understand, and she is like that in real life as well,” notes fellow CNN news anchor Dana Bash. “She also has a great sense of humor, which is critical these days in our business, not to mention our world.”

Phillip encourages humor on *NewsNight* to lighten a heated discussion. On that April night, during the dust-up over Pope Leo’s remarks, Navarro confessed to being a “flawed” Roman Catholic, observing, “When I go to church, it should burst into flames,” which prompted grins from the rest of the panel. At times, Phillip notes, it just takes the right guest. The academic and political activist Cornel West ’74 “is such an interesting character, so unconventional,” Phillip says. Like other leftists on the show, West always gets seated beside a conservative, and they typically leave the set as friends. “He’ll throw his arm over the shoulder of some fire-breathing right-winger and call him ‘brother,’” says Phillip.

West also gesticulates energetically, and once knocked over his *NewsNight* mug, sending water flying everywhere. “Since then, he has not been allowed to have water in front of him on the set,” Phillip says, with a smile.

Naturally, *NewsNight* also has its detractors. Posts on Reddit boards, for example, call out its “chaotic discussions,” “heated exchanges that overshadow substantive debate,” or even “trashy, flashy entertainment-style news.” One critic complained that Phillip booked “dumb podcasters...who only want to say provocative things” to promote their social media channels.

And the internet often picks apart the show’s most incendiary moments, such as Phillip’s 2025 run-in with podcaster and *Biggest Loser* trainer Jillian Michaels, who vociferously criticized Smithsonian Institution exhibits asserting that only one race (white) was responsible for slavery in the United States.

Phillip simply observes that the high-wire challenge of real-time moderation is part of the job. “If you don’t know that TV means a lot of uncertainty,” she says, “you are probably in the wrong business.”



IN A WAY, Phillip has been preparing to connect disparate groups since childhood. She was born in Alexandria, Virginia, to Trinidadian parents; her family moved back to Trinidad when she was a few months old, then returned to Maryland when she was in third grade. “It was a formative experience for me,” she recalls. “There was a lot of balancing different cultural experiences and adapting to them.” They settled about an hour from Washington, D.C., in Germantown, Maryland, “a very diverse place, full of people from different walks of life—immigrants, white people, Black people, a true melting pot. You had to find common ground.”

The fourth of six children (three older sisters, a younger brother, and a younger sister), Phillip grew up in a “big news family” where TV news and NPR were often on, and she followed pioneering minority women journalists like Gwen Ifill and Soledad O’Brien ’88. (Years later, when Phillip met Ifill at a dinner, the

broadcaster “gave me advice down to details like what shoes and jacket to wear on the Iowa campaign trail,” Phillip says. “We need more like her—there are too few journalists of color doing this kind of work.”)

Phillip describes her schoolgirl self as “very quiet. I kept to myself a lot...I had a lot of friends but didn’t get distracted by social life. And our parents were very strict!” Her father, Carlos Phillip, a teacher who became an educational psychologist, got a Harvard catalog in the mail and the siblings would flip through it, but the idea of applying to Harvard did not arise until her senior year at Bowie High School, another diverse venue with a nearly-even mix of Black and white students. “Not a lot of kids applying to Ivies,” she says. “It didn’t seem realistic.”

But a one-week summer program at Yale for high school students interested in current events made a difference. “Yale was where I learned to speak publicly, extemporaneously,” Phillip says. “It was incredibly eye-opening, being around these super-privileged kids. We didn’t really have those kinds of extracurricular activities at my high school.”

Nor did her family have abundant resources, but she made an early decision application to Harvard in the fall of her senior year. During Thanksgiving week, she was admitted—“a massive shock,” she recalls. Other colleges were less costly, but her parents were unequivocal: “You’re definitely going.”

Phillip began Harvard on a pre-med track but soon switched

Inside Politics show, and two years later she took over *NewsNight*. During her first week there, Hamas launched its October 7, 2023, terrorist attack against Israel.

The show has grown into one of CNN’s standouts: *NewsNight* is the company’s top show among advertisers’ coveted 25-54 age bracket and consistently ranks among the top 15 programs across all cable news in that demographic. In June, it was also CNN’s top performer in total viewers, drawing 697,000 viewers overall, according to *Adweek*.

Still, Fox News’s *Gutfeld!* drew about 2.6 million total viewers in the same 10 p.m. time slot. In network ratings, CNN consistently trails Fox and MS NOW, the successor to MSNBC. And all this unfolds amid an ongoing erosion of the television news audience. Fifty years ago, before the advent of cable, the broadcast networks’ nightly newscasts might reach 55 million viewers; today, it is closer to 20 million, despite about a 50 percent increase in U.S. population, says Thomas Patterson, Bradlee professor of government and the press at the Harvard Kennedy School.

“Every year, TV is hemorrhaging viewers, who are aging out on them,” Patterson continues. “Holding onto their audience could mean a gradual softening or lightening of newscasts, a kind of ‘news lite.’”

A splintering audience also encourages networks to get creative—and anchors to get busy. On Saturday mornings, Phillip also anchors *CNN Saturday Table for Five*, with a similar format but focusing on the prior week rather than daily headlines. This summer, she also hosted *Confessions & Obsessions*, a streaming afternoon talk show on CNN.com in which public figures described some of their personal passions.

Last fall, Flatiron Books published Phillip’s first book, *A Dream Deferred: Jesse Jackson and the Fight for Black Political Power*.

Phillip knew Jackson personally and interviewed confidants from his inner circle. Her biographical treatment also sketches the American political landscape, with a special focus on Jackson’s presidential campaigns in 1984 and 1988—when, she argues, he essentially built the modern Democratic coalition that recent candidates have mobilized.

In the rare moments when she isn’t working, Phillip enjoys family life in New York City with her husband, cybersecurity consultant Marcus Richardson, and their first child, a daughter born in 2021. They’re expecting another baby, a boy, in October.

In philosophical moments, she can also reflect on her work and how it might provide an oasis of connection and communication in a fractionated society. “It doesn’t mean we will all join hands and sing ‘Kumbaya’—democracy is not about everyone agreeing with each other at the end of the day,” she says. “But in our current climate, a show like *NewsNight* may be more important than ever. Opportunities to talk openly and frankly can break down the silos.”

✎

Craig A. Lambert ’69, Ph.D. ’78, is a former deputy editor of this magazine. He is the author of *Shadow Work: The Unpaid, Unseen Jobs That Fill Your Day*.

“Democracy is not about everyone agreeing with each other at the end of the day.” —Abby Phillip

to social studies and joined the *Crimson*. (She bonded strongly enough with the newspaper that, in 2023, she spoke at the *Crimson*’s 150th anniversary celebration at Boston’s JFK Library instead of attending the annual White House Correspondents’ Dinner.) She also managed the Lamont Café and Quincy House Grill, “frying mozzarella sticks late at night.” The summer after her junior year, Phillip interned at *Politico*, then a new digital magazine, and as a senior, changed her concentration to government.

After college, Phillip joined *Politico*’s staff covering lobbying, campaign finance, and the Obama White House. She moved to ABC News for a digital fellowship, joined the network’s Washington bureau in 2013, and a year later moved to *The Washington Post*, which Jeff Bezos had just acquired. The *Post* had evolved into a “fast-moving online presence,” she recalls. “We won by being faster and more nimble.”

In 2018, Phillip joined CNN as a White House correspondent covering the first Trump administration. The COVID-19 pandemic derailed campaign coverage in 2020, but in the studio, Phillip co-anchored CNN’s convention coverage along with network stalwarts Dana Bash, Wolf Blitzer, and Jake Tapper. In 2021, CNN appointed Phillip the anchor of the Sunday morning



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Arts & Culture



Two Scientists Collaborate—Onstage

Spare Parts, which played off-Broadway, is a dark-comic take on research.

by Stuart Miller

HARVARD Medical School senior lecturer David J. Glass is a doctor and scientist renowned for his work in muscle-nerve connections; he played a role in discovering a critical protein receptor called MuSK.

Matt Walker '16 studied neurobiology at Harvard, earned a Ph.D. in genetics last year at Columbia University, and is launching a genetics research company.

So it's not far-fetched that the two

would collaborate on a project. The surprise is that their partnership is not in the lab, but off-Broadway. This spring, Walker starred in *Spare Parts*, a dystopian play about science written by Glass, who has taught experimental design for biologists at Harvard for 20 years.

Spare Parts is a black comedy about a billionaire who wants to live longer and throws money at a group of scientists who are losing funding in the current

Matt Walker (second from the left) starred as a research assistant in David J. Glass's *Spare Parts* this spring at Theatre Row's Theatre Three in New York City.

political climate; he urges them to take regulatory shortcuts and find a way to extend his life. "Needless to say," says Glass, "things don't go according to plan."

"It definitely feels rare to have someone like David, who is a leader in his field, writing a play like this," says Walker, a Hasty Pudding veteran who fittingly plays a Columbia graduate student and research assistant in *Spare Parts*. The play earned good reviews during its New York run—including in the journal *Science*, whose editor described it as a "captivating and timely" cautionary tale that asks big questions about identity, consent, and the moral compromises many researchers face.

Glass is a relative newcomer to the off-Broadway scene, but his interest in theater stretches back decades. In the 1980s,

he took playwriting courses and wrote a few plays while working as a postdoctoral fellow after medical school—"I guess I wasn't busy enough," he quips—but after that, he gave up drama to focus on his biotech work and teaching. Then in 2020, the pandemic hit and Glass started seeing similarities between the COVID-19 and HIV crises. He wrote *Love + Science*, a drama about two gay medical students studying virology in the 1980s. The play premiered off-Broadway in 2023.

Walker played one of the lead roles in *Love + Science*, and Glass immediately thought of him when he was casting *Spare Parts*. For years, Walker has balanced simultaneous careers in theater and science. (Both, he says, "are about exploration, diving in to ask questions without knowing the answer.")

Growing up in Toronto, Walker attended Canada's National Science Fair in middle school and played Hamlet and Romeo in high school; when he was accepted to both Juilliard and Harvard, he

Glass also wrote the play as a warning about the dangers of federal funding cuts.

deferred the latter to try Juilliard's acting program for a year. While studying neurobiology at Harvard, he decided not to work in a lab, so he'd have time to act. "I really found my home and a sense of community in the Hasty Pudding," he says.

After graduation, he needed a job to remain in the United States, so he joined a lab at Columbia run by Nobel Prize winner Martin Chalfie '69, Ph.D. '77. "That's where I really fell in love with research and what it means to do experiments," Walker says. But he kept acting, landing a role in the off-Broadway production of the farce *The Play That Goes Wrong* in 2019.

Walker loves appearing in Glass's plays, which give him a chance "to communicate science to the theatergoing public," he says. "Science is often made to be confusing, but David distills things to simple language and concepts while making it dramatic."

Glass, who has helped coach the Harvard Debate Council, the College's 134-year-old policy debate team, says too many scientists lack that skill. In *Spare Parts*, he dramatizes his concern: one character, a professor, is terrible at communicating scientific principles, which affords his breezily articulate grad student the chance to usurp some of his power. "You have to make your work understandable," Glass says, "and you should be able to explain it to your mom."

In his own laboratory, Glass has been examining ways to slow or halt the muscle loss that comes with aging (he is also a vice president of a biotech company), but he thinks longevity research is often "overhyped." *Spare Parts* was inspired by a California clinic where people signed up for transfusions of younger people's blood; one billionaire was getting transfusions from his son. "I thought this was too much," Glass says.

Glass said he also wrote the play as a warning about the dangers of federal funding cuts, which he believes leave scientists beholden to the whims of billionaires who don't care about guardrails or proper procedures. "The play makes a strong argument for publicly funded research," he says. "We need the government involved so you have safety and regulatory guidelines."

He wrote the grad student role with Walker in mind, sending him drafts and bringing him in for readings. One of Walker's experiences as a scientist—an ordeal he endured trying to get a paper published—was incorporated into the play. Glass says he didn't need to do research to understand how desperate scientists feel today. "I'd spent the past year in a lab and seeing labs being shut down and people's fellowships up in the air because of funding cuts," he says. "It's infuriating to see this research being stalled or canceled, and we'll never fully know how damaging it is to have this period of uncertainty."

But despite his strong feelings, he says he was careful not to speechify in his script. "All those issues have to come up from the needs of the characters," he says. As a scientist himself, he didn't find the sentiments hard to channel. "The play is really rooted in what's actually happening in the real world." ▢

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A Novelist Driven by Coffeehouses and Constraints

Adam Ehrlich Sachs takes cues from history, science, and the Lampoon.

by Eric Olson

“THERE’S a long tradition,” explains the novelist Adam Ehrlich Sachs ’07, A.M. ’11, “of mathematics majors getting derailed by the *Lampoon*.” He cites the brainiacs behind *Futurama* as an example. But Sachs, an earth and planetary sciences concentrator thrust into the literary world after landing on *The Harvard Lampoon* his sophomore year, was likewise affected. “Writing was deeply repressed for me,” he says. “I had scientific forebears. I feel like I had to try basically everything else first.”

Sachs recalls an episode his senior year when he was sitting “with a very nice professor in a very ugly building at MIT,” writing a thesis on hurricane dynamics, while his friends from the *Lampoon* “prepared for Hollywood careers and got drunk in a mock Flemish castle [the *Lampoon* building on Bow Street].” Writing, Sachs decided, was the thing. He flirted briefly with screenplays and returned to Harvard for a master’s degree in the history of science. Three full-length works of fiction followed—also numerous short stories—and in February 2026, Sachs was named a recipient of the prestigious Windham-Campbell Prize for Fiction, which comes with an unrestricted grant of \$175,000.

The prize committee called Sachs’s writing “a bravura exploration of the history of knowledge in all of its absurdity, strangeness, and difficult beauty.” His most recent work, *Gretel and the Great*

War (2024), knits together 26 alphabetized characters (the Architect, the Ballet Master, the Choirmaster, and so on) who have historic parallels in early twentieth-century Vienna. In this interview, which has been edited for length and clarity, Sachs spoke about that novel, his writing philosophy, and the road to becoming a prize-winning author.

What made you return to Harvard for your master’s degree after you’d hit the end of the road with screenwriting?

I’ve always loved fiction. And I started to realize that I didn’t really have the philosophical or humanistic or historical context to deal with the books that I liked. I liked Beckett and Kafka, but I didn’t know what I was doing when I was reading them. I’d done some social science in college, but I never really had an English or history education. I got what I wanted when I went back. I had some brilliant professors and got to read a lot.

I actually did a master’s and another year toward the Ph.D., so I took general exams. That was terrifying. It forced me under pain of social death to read a ton. I’m grateful for it. But when it came time to give a dissertation topic, I realized I didn’t want to be a historian of science. I had to tell my poor parents I was quitting again. And since then, I’ve been writing fiction.



Adam Ehrlich Sachs

You begin *Gretel and the Great War* by displacing the narrator. We learn that a man in a sanatorium, now dead, wrote these stories and sent them to his daughter as bedtime tales. The point of view is apocryphal, or untrustworthy, a bit like the narrator in Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*. What appeals to you about this literary strategy?

For some reason, I feel a great deal of shame while writing; I’m always looking for oblique ways to distance myself from what I’m talking about, even though ultimately I just want to talk about whatever my obsessions are. No one actually believes the framing. Ultimately, I just want to play. And to do that I need to interpose all these levels between myself and the actual sentences, usually at the beginning of a book. I can’t start writing at all until I have those defense mechanisms in place.

A handful of these stories take place in historic coffeehouses around Vienna. What do you know about those shops? And which Cambridge-area coffeehouse is most reminiscent of that century-old European intellectual style? I was actually just in Cambridge, and I was looking for [Café] Pamplona, but it

was gone. In Vienna, at least in the first district, a lot of the coffeehouses are now museums. Café Central always has a long line of tourists.

One thing that attracted me to this milieu, that's attracted a lot of people to the coffeehouses, is the fact that all of these disparate fields were in communication in a way that is impossible now. Physicists were influencing writers and artists, who were in communication with philosophers. In that sense, I'm not sure there could be a Harvard Square coffeehouse like that [today]. As a cultural fact, we're all so siloed now. Scientists wouldn't be conversant with literature. And the artists would have no idea what the physicists were doing.

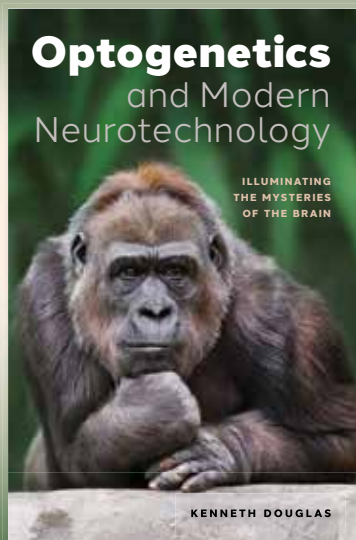
Midway through the book, I realized some of these unnamed characters must have historical parallels. I read an interview where you said that, in fact, all of them do. Why stick to that plan? [The characters] were all real Viennese people. This is kind of an Oulipian thing for myself, one of my constraints. [Oulipo references a French literary movement wherein writing rules are introduced to spur a story's creativity.] I had the alphabetical constraint obviously, but another was that each character had to have a historical reference.

Some of them were very famous. A, the architect, was Adolf Loos, who designed a building that faced the castle and, by the standards of the time, was considered obscenely plain. Parallels like that are clear. And then others, less so. Finding someone for each letter was like a puzzle-making aspect for me, and kind of generative.

How did the Windham-Campbell Prize come about? Do you apply for it? Tell me a bit about how and when you heard. You don't apply for it. You don't know you're under consideration. I knew of it because I wanted it, like everyone. [Laughs.] But I would never in a million years have guessed. It was truly an insane shock. I just got an email out of the blue. I really don't have many readers. And I don't get much email. I feel like I'm in a vacuum most of the time. But I *check* my email religiously. So to get that one was crazy. ♡

Optogenetics: Illuminating the Mysteries of the Brain

Kenneth Douglas



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Off the Shelf

French philosophers, Japanese tsunami repair, American democracy, and the “practice of wisdom”

by Gabriella Gage

Like Emily Eakin, who wrote the memoir *The Frenchmen*, I fondly remember doing too much thinking and dubious amounts of learning at Café Pamplona (1959-2020) as an undergraduate. (The would-be Café de Flore of Harvard Square has inspired many other Harvard-bred writers, such as Adam Ehrlich Sachs. Read more on page 44.) Was there inherent value in those gazpacho-fueled intellectual awakenings, even if they were a touch performative? Or, does insight only matter if we do something with it?

From characters whose decisions make us cringe to data that can liberate or control, and archival discoveries that reshape our understanding of history, this selection of books explores the tension between ideas and action, featuring several bold arguments along the way. Together, they illuminate the past, expose artifice in solutions to real-world problems, and, in some cases, find wisdom in the journey itself.

America Unfinished: 250 Years of Law and Governance, edited by Alexandra Natapoff and Guy-Uriel E. Charles (MIT, \$26.95 paperback)

Natapoff, the Kreindler professor of law and Charles, the Oglethorpe professor of law, bring together a collection of more than 60 essays, each 1,000 words, by Harvard Law School faculty. Diverse in their perspectives yet united in their commitment to legal reflection, the contributors examine topics

ranging from free speech and dissent, climate change, and the Supreme Court’s future to AI and “bicentennial melancholia.” The first faculty collection of its scope in the Law School’s 200-plus-year history, the volume serves as a reminder that the nation’s governing ethos and legal framework remain works in progress.

The Frenchmen: Or, My Life in Theory by Emily Eakin ’89 (Penguin, \$35)
Derrida, Althusser, Barthes, De-

leuze, Foucault, Guattari, Lacan, and de Man. *The Frenchmen* reveals the overlooked human backstories behind the motley crew of wounded, ambitious misfits who somehow gained an intellectual chokehold on generations of American students in the second half of the twentieth century. Eakin, an editor at *The New York Times Book Review*, delivers a charmingly indulgent narrative that is both a memoir of her “overdosing” on theory as a student and a jaunt into intellectual history.

We Live with the Sea: Ecologizing Safety in Post-Tsunami Japan by Andrew Littlejohn, Ph.D. ’17 (Duke, \$31.95 paperback)

Littlejohn, a cultural anthropologist at the University of Leiden in the Netherlands, challenges conventional assumptions about disaster recovery by examining communities affected by Japan’s 2011 earthquake and tsunami that claimed upwards of 22,000 lives. Rather than embracing immediate large-scale sea-

walls and reconstruction, some survivors advocated ecological alternatives like planting protective forests and using animal trails as escape routes. The result is a nuanced study of infrastructure, agency, and resilience.

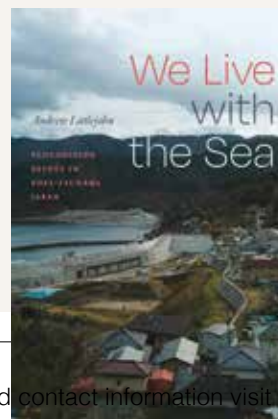
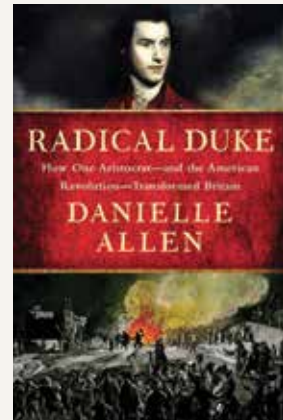
Radical Duke: How One Aristocrat—and the American Revolution—Transformed Britain by Danielle Allen (WW Norton, \$37.50)

What do Thomas Paine, a copy of the Declaration of Independence discovered in England in 2015, and a relatively obscure British aristocrat have in common? They are all key elements in *Radical Duke*, a history of Charles Lennox, 3rd Duke of Richmond, who, we learn, was a Paine collaborator and an unsung voice inciting the American Revolution from Britain. Combining archival discoveries with computer-assisted innovations to verify authorship of Paine’s first book, Allen, the Conant University Professor at Harvard, reminds us that the role of the historian in society remains ever-relevant.

America’s Wrong Turn: US Health Care in the Neoliberal Era by John E. McDonough (Johns Hopkins, \$49.95)

How did the U.S. healthcare system become a cautionary tale of the medical industrial complex? According to McDonough, professor of practice in health policy and management at the Harvard Chan School of Public Health, it was a wrong turn, or rather a series of

wrong turns, inextricably linked to the rise of neoliberalism in American politics. From soaring costs to abysmal population health indicators, the practical applications of policies focused on deregulation and privatiza-



tion, argues McDonough, have eroded patient care and weakened the health-care system.

The Practice of Wisdom: Five Quests by David Carrasco, Arthur Kleinman, Stephanie Paulsell, and Michael Puett (Belknap, \$22.95)

In this book based on their popular Harvard course, four professors explain why living is the greatest teacher of wisdom, in an exploration that blends spiritual, inspirational, and practical stories with personal stories of growth. Together, Carrasco (Rudenstine professor of the study of Latin America), Kleinman (Rabb professor emeritus of anthropology), Paulsell (Swartz professor emerita of the practice of Christian studies), and Puett (Klein professor of Chinese history and anthropology) offer a guidebook for uncertain times.

The Hard Path to Unity: Why We Must Reform the Left to Rescue Democracy by Barney Frank '61, J.D. '77 (Yale, \$28)

A house divided cannot stand. Here, that house is the political left, whose

infighting and reluctance to publicly critique its own ideological extremes, Frank argues, have isolated working and middle-class voters and allowed a populist surge in the process. Published just after the former long-time Massachu-

setts congressman's death in May, this concise manifesto offers an urgent, at times scathing, parting shot aimed at his own party, leaving us a portrait of Frank as an unapologetic political pragmatist.

Supremacy: How Rule by the Court Replaced Government by the People by Nikolas Bowie and Daphna Renan (WW Norton, \$31.99)

Several recent books have ques-

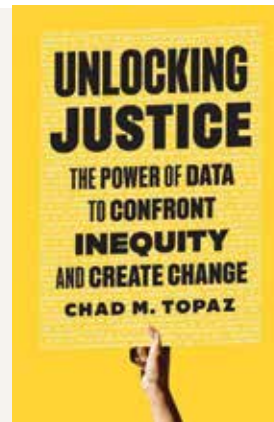
tioned whether the Constitution is able to adapt to modern challenges and safeguard democracy. *Supremacy* argues that the blame lies with a concerted overreach of power by the U.S. Supreme Court. Renan, the Munroe professor of law at Harvard Law School, and Bowie, the Brandeis professor of law, are former clerks to Justices Ruth Bader Ginsburg and Sonia Sotomayor. Here, they argue that judicial supremacy became the Court's dominant ideology, particularly in the wake of Reconstruction. They also challenge its constitutional foundations and reveal its entanglement with the history of white supremacy.

Exceptional Hatred: Antisemitism and the Fight over Free Speech in Modern America by James Loeffler '96 (Metropolitan Books, \$29.99)

Hate speech enjoys constitutional protection under the First Amendment unless it contains specific threats or incitement to violence. This is a truth that our legal system and collective social conscience continue to grapple with, and a subject of particular urgency given the recent and sometimes deadly rise in antisemitism. From the harrowing experiences of the first and only Jewish Miss America to the legal battles surrounding the Charlottesville Unite the Right rally in 2017, Loeffler, a professor of history and Jewish studies at the University of Virginia, explores how Americans consistently fail to fit antisemitism within the broader frameworks of racism and political extremism.

Unlocking Justice: The Power of Data to Confront Inequity and Create Change by Chad M. Topaz '96 (Princeton, \$27.95)

Data can overwhelm as easily as it elucidates. Through real-life case studies of police misconduct and cash bail disparities, *Unlocking Justice* pro-



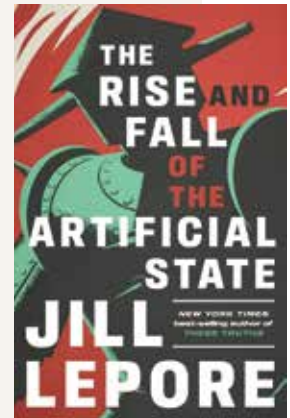
vides a narrative bridge between data-driven research and social justice efforts. Topaz, a professor at Williams College and a cofounder of the Massachusetts-based Institute for the Quantitative Study of Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity, pairs each example with an actionable path forward, including steps

readers can take to tackle systemic inequities.

The Rise and Fall of the Artificial State by Jill Lepore (Liveright, \$29.99)

The "artificial state," as described here, gives new, ominous meaning to the term "machine politics." In a 2024 *New Yorker* essay, Lepore, the Kemper professor of American history and pro-

fessor of law, defined the artificial state as the "digital-communications infrastructure"—text messages, attention-mining algorithms, AI programs—"used by political strategists and private corporations to organize and automate political discourse." Expanding on that concept in the book, Lepore leads us through a sweeping "archaeology," as she calls it, of ideas, inventions, and policies that help explain the modern-day artificial state. She also reminds us that the artifice can be dismantled with the right human engineering.



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People & Passions



Following Suits

A Broadway costume designer trains her eye on the history of men's fashion.

by Schuyler Velasco

DANIEL RADCLIFFE isn't a big fashion name, necessarily. But the actor once told Chloe Chapin, Ph.D. '23, a story that cracked open the way she thought about men's clothing.

Chapin, who spent years as a freelance costume designer in New York working on Broadway musicals, operas, fashion shows, and more, was on the production team for a revival of the play *Equus*, Radcliffe's 2008 Broadway debut.

"During the opening night party, he

was wearing this beautiful, really dark blue tuxedo," Chapin remembers. As they chatted, Radcliffe told Chapin about how, thanks to King Edward VIII of England, midnight blue tuxes became stand-ins for black tie in films and photographs in the early twentieth century.

"He was the first widely photographed royal, and he found that black suits didn't photograph well," Chapin says. "It's a trick that film designers now use. In a lot of the James Bond movies, he's wear-

Clockwise from left: Chloe Chapin at Harvard; Chapin in 2008 at a rehearsal with one of the horses in the Broadway revival of *Equus*, starring Daniel Radcliffe; Chapin in 2022 examining brown wool tailcoats in the Los Angeles County Museum of Art's collection

ing a midnight blue tuxedo. It reads black on camera."

"I thought that was such a fun, sexy story," she remembers. "So I started researching the history of tuxedos."

Chapin always loved the research aspect of her costuming work—so much so that, in 2016, she started her Ph.D. in American studies at Harvard, graduating in 2023 and honing a particular expertise in menswear. She now serves as the assistant director of course development at the Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, as well as a lecturer in the history department, where she has taught seminars on applying research

Harvard Alumni Leader Promotes Engagement

Despite crises, the alumni community is “really strong.”

by Nell Porter Brown

After graduation, David Battat '91 thought his connection to Harvard would fade away. Yet when he became a volunteer alumni interviewer that same year, so began his “lifelong conversation” with the University. As Harvard Alumni Association (HAA) president this year, he is helping other alumni to join that conversation in “different ways and at different points in their lives.”

It happens through Harvard clubs, reunions, and campus events, or by joining Shared Interest Groups (SIGs). In 2020, Battat—who became a volunteer firefighter at age 16 and was a first responder at Ground Zero on September 11, 2001—co-founded a SIG, the Harvard Alumni Disaster Preparedness and Response Team.

Engagement also comes from service. Battat's roles have included HAA elected director (2016-19) and chair

of the HAA's nominating committee (2022-23).

From Harvard, Battat went to Columbia Law School, clerked for then-U.S. District Court Judge Sonia Sotomayor, and worked as a criminal defense lawyer in New York City. Later, he became president and CEO of Atrion Corporation, a leading maker of medical devices that was acquired by the Nordson Corporation in 2024. These days, Battat splits his time between New York City and Tampa, Florida, while leading a start-up company that's developing a device for delivering oncology drugs.

Of working with Harvard leaders amid the tumult caused by the Trump administration's attacks on the University, Battat says that despite “one crisis after another,” the alumni community, increasingly diverse and

global, “is still really strong.” There might be differing views on the lawsuits or grade inflation policies, he adds, but as a group, alumni are “highly engaged.” In June, the fifth annual Alumni Day drew more than 9,000 graduates—a record number.

This historic political period represents “an incredibly consequential moment for all of higher education,” Battat says. “And I think everybody's seeing, from [those in the] Harvard alumni community to the public at large, just what an incredibly powerful voice the University has in shaping the direction of higher education for the next 10 to 20 years.”



David Battat

PHOTOGRAPH BY STU ROSNER

techniques to browsing artifacts and museum collections.

Her years behind the scenes of New York stages, doing everything from sourcing textiles to helping Melissa Etheridge pick out leather pants to wear in the musical *American Idiot*, have added a lived-in, tactile dimension to her work as a fashion historian.

“I loved that she could sit and tell me about sewing the shoulder onto some sixteenth-century costume, and understand what that meant in a broader sense,” says Chapin's thesis adviser Jennifer Roberts, Faust professor of the humanities and a professor of American and contemporary art. Chapin's expertise in both hemming trousers and writing footnotes about them—her ability to marry a theoretical understanding of fashion history with a practical one—makes the case for a field of study that hasn't typically been taken seriously by academics.

“When Chloe walked into my office, it was a thrill, because here was a student that I felt could do this difficult work of changing the way the academy thinks,” Roberts says.

CHAPIN's first book, *Suitable: The Sartorial Revolution and the Fashioning of Modern Men*, was published by Oxford University Press in June. *Suitable*, which grew out of her Harvard Ph.D. thesis, goes beyond tuxedos to explore how the dark suit and necktie became the standard work outfit for powerful men—so ubiquitous in its uniformity that it is, from a fashion perspective, all but invisible.

“The scope of the book is the American Revolution to the Civil War, this roughly 75-year period in which men's dress went from colorful and varied to plain and uniform,” Chapin says. “I call it the shift from peacocks to penguins.”

Suitable details how, unlike in women's fashion, conformity evolved among men to be the expectation—starting, in part, as a rebuke of the ostentatiousness of European court dress in pre-revolutionary America. This had a range of lasting effects. Fashion itself came to be perceived as a more frivolous domain, and uniformity among men became a means of excluding those who didn't look and dress a certain way from the upper echelons of authority.

Even now, any deviation from the black suit norm is liable to be taken as a faux pas, disrespectful, or worse. When U.S. President Barack Obama, J.D. '91, wore a tan suit to a press conference in 2014, it was a top news story for several days; pundit Lou Dobbs called it “shocking to a lot of people.”

“It's much more common for men to want to dress like every other man,” Chapin says. “Men always have stories of arriving to a dinner and being the only one in a

tie, rushing to the bathroom and stuffing it in their pocket. Men and women have a lot of feelings about their clothes. It just shows up in different ways.”

Across decades of outfitting men for the stage, Chapin got to see those feelings up close. Growing up in Santa Cruz, California, she did a variety of backstage crew jobs for area productions, including as a dresser for the local Shakespeare festival.

“I learned how to sew because I had to fix stuff when it broke,” she says. As an undergraduate at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle, she worked in the costume shop, becoming an ace at conquering stretch fabrics thanks to the school’s large dance program.

“It was the ’90s, so that ribbed ‘boingy’ fabric, whatever it’s called, and crushed velvet were very popular,” she says. “If you can sew that, you can do literally anything.”

After earning an MFA in costume design from the Yale School of Drama, Chapin moved to New York, taking gigs dressing actors, singers, and dancers, but also putting together budgets, shopping, and making sure a show’s clothing aesthetic was cohesive and accurate. She loved working on rock musicals, including *American Idiot* and *Passing Strange*. For the 2009 Broadway revival of *Hair*, she had to help source period-appropriate boots that wouldn’t fall apart during the musical’s punishing, stomping dance numbers.

In New England, she’s worked on local productions, too. Sara Brown, an associate professor and set designer at MIT who has collaborated with Chapin on campus shows, says Chapin understands the potency of clothes as storytelling devices and set pieces.

“She is the kind of designer who gets

excited about having input in terms of what the final product is going to be,” Brown says, recalling a jacket Chapin made from a floral print bedspread for a key moment in a student dance piece.

Throughout her costuming work, Chapin witnessed how clothes changed the way men carried and perceived themselves. “Onstage I’ve watched men puff out their chests, show off their calves, and gesture with their wrists in response to their clothing,” she writes in *Suitable*. “I’ve seen how wearing a dress, a servant’s uniform, or a crown can change how a man behaves around other men, even in a world of make-believe.”

In New York, Chapin taught courses at the Fashion Institute of Technology on fashion history and twentieth-century style and realized there was a frustrating dearth of books about men’s clothing. The

Highlighting *Harvard Magazine’s* Fellows

Harvard Magazine welcomed **Laurel Shugart ’27** to the editorial staff as the 2026 Summer Fellow. From Commencement week celebrations to the College dean’s launch of a podcast and the opening of the Enterprise Research Campus, she contributed news and feature stories as a full-time member of the staff.

Shugart, a human developmental and regenerative biology and computer science concentrator, is an associate managing editor at the *Crimson*, where she supervises 20 reporters and helps shape enterprise and breaking news. Her spring

2025 story about Harvard police chief Victor Clay is a deeply reported account of his abrupt departure.

This fall, **Annushka Agarwal ’27** and **Caroline Hennigan ’28** will join *Harvard Magazine* as the 2026–2027 Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate

Fellows. Starting with the November–December issue, they will alternate as authors of the Undergraduate column and contribute articles about aspects of Harvard life.

Agarwal, a history and mathematics concentrator from Vancouver, Canada, is a member of the *Crimson’s* editorial board and a former intern for Canada’s *National Post* newspaper, where in 2025 she wrote a long-form account of the American draft dodgers who fled to Canada during the Vietnam War. This April, she worked with the University of Toronto’s Investigative Journalism Bureau and co-authored an article examining the causes of maternal and neonatal deaths during childbirth in Canada. She spent this summer as a reporting intern on the foreign affairs desk at *The Straits Times*, an



English-language newspaper in Singapore.

Hennigan, a social studies and government concentrator from Milton, Massachusetts, is a *Crimson* senior reporter and editor-at-large of the *Crimson’s* magazine, *Fifteen Minutes*. Last fall, she co-wrote the

story “Could Harvard Have a Hoover Institution?” about a behind-the-scenes push for a conservative think tank at Harvard. This summer, she was a research assistant at the Harvard Center for European Studies, focusing on the political theory of cultural restitution, which involves returning artifacts, artworks, and

human remains to their countries and communities of origin.

The fellowships are supported by Jonathan J. Ledecy ’79, M.B.A. ’83, and named in honor of his late mother. For updates on past Ledecy Fellows and links to their work, see harvardmagazine.com/ledecy.



 SNAPSHOT

seed of the idea that would grow, eventually, into *Suitable* came in 2012, when Chapin was researching costumes for a production of the Verdi opera *La Traviata*, which opens with the entire chorus on-stage in formal dresswear for a ball. Typically, *La Traviata* is set in the late nineteenth century, by which time men were wearing tails and white vests for formal occasions. But this production was set a few decades earlier, before black tie took over, and men's fashion was more varied.

"Suddenly the standard for men's formalwear became a complete mystery," she writes in the book. "No men were wearing black and white in 1800—but by 1850, all of them were. And they're wearing it still, 200 years later."

THOUGH she had a toe in research and teaching throughout her costuming career, Chapin's path into academia was far from the conventional one.

"She had very little official academic experience," Roberts says. "She hadn't been already trained in research and writing papers. But Chloe can look at a pair of pants and really understand all of the crises and decisions that had to go into putting a seam here instead of there."

For Chapin, her scholarly drive evolved from those practical concerns. "People always say, 'As a historian, how did you discover suits?'" she says. "And I'm always like, 'No, it was the other way around. I was a suits person who discovered history.'"

Roberts thinks Chapin could be uniquely positioned to get fashion taken more seriously within the research community. "You could go to the Fashion Institute of Technology and learn all about the history of fashion, but if you walk onto the Harvard campus, it's very hard to find anyone who's talking about that," Roberts says. "This is someone who could really make a difference in the way people think about this topic now."

For her next project, Chapin is considering taking on the history of clothing and fashion dating back to the Paleolithic era—interrogating, along the way, why something so fundamental to the human condition has been so overlooked in academic spaces. "It's older than religion, it's older than art, it's older than language," she says. ▢



A Gymnast in the Museum

Curator Stephanie Pierce followed her curiosity into research.

by Laurel Shugart

Stephanie E. Pierce doesn't like to call herself a "paleontologist," which might come as a surprise for the curator of vertebrate paleontology at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology (MCZ). She prefers to be known as a paleobiologist, a comparative anatomist, and, before any of that, a youth gymnastics champion.

"You get this picture of a paleontologist, when you say that word, as a guy in a cowboy hat in the middle of a dusty field," she says, "and that's the farthest from the truth—especially when it comes to me."

Pierce runs a lab, teaches, conducts fieldwork, and oversees the MCZ's collection of roughly 90,000 vertebrate specimens. While most paleontologists work as museum curators or academic researchers, Pierce says Harvard lets her live the "paleontologist's dream" of doing both.

Her introduction to the field, like her research today, was driven by curiosity. Growing up in Alberta, Canada, surrounded by dinosaur fossils, she was always fascinated by evolution.

And her research, especially studying how fish evolved to walk, made her appreciate how amazing gymnasts are. Pierce, a junior championship vaulter in Canada, said that a gymnast flipping through the air shares the same basic structure as the ancient fish, evolved and specialized over time.

"It's just unbelievable what a standard vertebrate body plan that's shaped over hundreds of millions of years has led to," she says.



A Modern Love Letter to the Old-School Office

Never mind “third places”; what happened to our “second” places?

by Kate Kaufman

THERE WAS exactly one night in elementary school when I was allowed to stay up past my bedtime. My dad’s consulting company had been remodeling its office building, and his team was finally ready to transition from a temporary space to its permanent workplace. This was 2016, well before the COVID-19 pandemic and the virtual work revolution, so a day spent

moving between spaces “meant a day of no productivity,” my dad reminded me recently when I asked him to retell the story.

The solution? Recruiting me and two of my older brothers (all of us younger than 14) to help out with an overnight move. With my parents, we taped down Ethernet wires, plugged in hundreds of monitors and keyboards, and screwed in cord

manager baskets underneath desks—all at 1 or 2 o’clock in the morning.

In the eyes of a fifth grader, it was the best night ever.

Dad taught me the power of the corporate building, for both its aesthetics and efficiency. Still, despite how much I adored the soda machine and the sleek, Silicon Valley feel of dry-erase-marker-friendly glass on every spare wall—and despite how much my childhood was orchestrated by family whiteboarding sessions—I still gravitated toward disorder and mild chaos in my personal work habits. My parents teased me for years, to no avail, about how much quicker I’d get my homework done if I sat at the kitchen counter with “noise-cancelling headphones and single-instrument music” instead of sprawled on the couch jamming to Hozier.

But who could blame me? In the age of laptops, “going into the office” is simply out of vogue. Few skills are more expected than the ability to work from anywhere. Especially since 2020, with hybrid or fully remote work now the standard model for many jobs, I’ve found it is often a boon to be able to sneak in a bit of schoolwork from lecture halls, waiting rooms, and car passenger seats.

Meanwhile, when the pandemic kept my dad home, he deliberately brought the spirit of the corporate workspace home with him. The corner of one bedroom in our house held a spotless standing desk with two 32-inch screens, a keyboard and mouse, external speakers, a small fan, and a webcam and ring light for virtual meetings—all practically identical to his office workspace. Even with the comforts of home, my dad said he “couldn’t get back fast enough” to the office once restrictions were lifted a few months later.

Remote work is a fraught topic these days, as many employers have begun reversing pandemic-era practices and calling people back to the office full-time. It’s also a source of contention at Harvard, where the Faculty of Arts and Sciences has included a five-day in-office mandate for College staff as an element of its administrative reorganization plan. The Harvard Union of Clerical and Technical Workers opposes the mandate, which it says is unnecessary and demoralizing.

Still, I’m not alone in yearning for an office to go to, at least some of the time. Overall, my generation might agree. Despite people my age often clamoring for comfier spaces and more flexible schedules, a recent Gallup poll found that members of Gen Z are the least likely to select fully remote as their preferred work location compared to older generations. That’s partly because going into the office isn’t as disruptive for them as it can be for millennials or Gen Xers, who are more likely to be juggling work and family life. But I hope it’s also evidence that we’re nostalgic for a separate place where we can learn organically, connect casually, and just get things done.

I recently gained some perspective on this from the shiny new offices of *The Harvard Crimson*. The newspaper building on

14 Plympton Street, which we refer to as “14P,” reopened in January after a semester-long renovation, and I have spent countless hours there since. I’ve pulled more 4 A.M. nights in 14P trying to keep up with editing responsibilities (and hiding from problem sets and essays due for my classes) than I care to admit.

14P holds a special place in my heart in part because it was my first exposure to the world of journalism. The picture of a newsroom I had in my head before joining the *Crimson* was informed mostly by movies like *Superman* and *All The President’s Men*: fluorescent-lit desks as far as the eye could see, reporters running in and out with notebooks under their arms, and the constant clacking of keyboards and ringing of telephones.

In the ’90s, at least, this aesthetic was fairly accurate to our student newspaper. One of my editors at *Harvard Magazine*, who was among the *Crimson*’s leaders at the time, recalled the building being chaotically loud at all hours of the day and night as writers used landlines in the

wall, so most phone calls and even conversations among writers happen out of earshot. Revising is sometimes a rather silent activity, with writers and editors collaborating on a Google Doc from their separate devices. No one sits on the floor to sort through piles of documents, like the reporters do in movies like *Spotlight* and *The Post*, because there are no physical papers to sift through.

It’s reflective of a much larger shift. Cultural critics perpetually mourn the death of “third places”—environments people frequent outside of their homes and workplaces (which sociologists designate as “first” and “second” places, respectively). But we’re eagerly slashing second places, too. Even though 14P is my closest equivalent to a second place in Cambridge, the job never really requires me to be there.

During the brainstorming phase of 14P’s redesign, Holland told me, the possibility was floated to sell the building entirely. What need did student journalists still have for a physical space? But

I love the nights when dozens of writers filter through the *Crimson*’s building, but days can go by with the newsroom close to empty.

newsroom to gather information and pester sources. Overhearing other reporters’ processes, she told me, was invaluable to her own growth.

Laurence Holland ’09, who reported for the *Crimson* as an undergraduate and became the architect who spearheaded 14P’s remodel, remembered that in the mid-2000s students still shared rows of desktop computers, and editors would swivel around in office chairs to give feedback on stories. “Your editor would roll over and basically push you off your keyboard, take over, and just redo your story, and that was such an incredible learning experience for me,” he recalled.

It would be overdramatic to say that the culture of 14P is totally different today. Still, things have changed. I love the nights when dozens of writers filter through the building, but days can go by with the newsroom close to empty. Little booths have been installed along one

the idea was never taken very seriously, he said, in part because alumni recognize the *Crimson* as not just a workspace but also an educational facility and a social club. (Holland said construction workers had to scrape layers of champagne from the ceiling tiles and demolish a wall of a forgotten basement closet that had harbored decades of students’ signatures.)

When designing 14P’s upgrade, Holland leaned into the *Crimson*’s triple purpose. Nearly half the newsroom is now couches instead of desks. The basement, once dominated by a massive, defunct press from the days when the newspaper printed six days a week in-house, has been cleared out to make room for a ping pong table, a TV nook, and a flexible workspace that converts to a party locale. (The current once-per-week printing has been outsourced since the pandemic.) Since we’ve moved back in, the walls of the newsroom have been further custom-

ized with cartoons and silly notes, and the occasional celebrity cardboard cut-out appears as part of a newsroom prank.

Yet something about the preternaturally tidy newsroom, and the way the building's scrappy history has literally been stripped from its walls, led a few of my peers to express discomfort about 14P's "sterile" and "corporate" feel.

I, on the other hand, could not have been more thrilled when I first saw the *Crimson's* new newsroom. It felt every bit as sleek and productivity-minded as my dad's office. I've particularly fallen in love with the wall-to-wall whiteboards installed in nearly every room. Reporters have become used to seeing them covered in story outlines and administrative task lists, usually in my handwriting.

These days, I find myself turning up at the office when my to-do list gets particularly dire. During exams this spring, I was slow to complete a final paper. Already exhausted from a week of bouncing between overcrowded libraries to study, and with only five of 25 pages completed

The fluorescent lighting and corporate aesthetic kept me alert far past the sunrise, all the way until the bibliography was done.

by 3 A.M., I dragged myself out of my comfortable dorm and up a few blocks to 14P.

The first thing that happened? I was scared out of my mind by a cardboard cut-out of Australian actor Jacob Elordi, placed just inside the door. Fortunately, the building was empty and no one heard me scream.

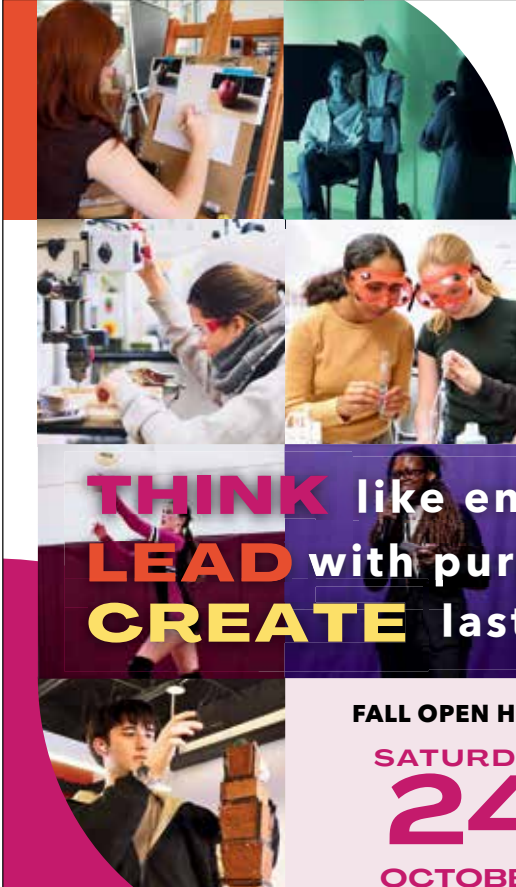
Then, the second thing happened: I sat down with noise-cancelling headphones playing single-instrument music and wrote an essay more efficiently than I ever have before. The fluorescent lighting and corporate aesthetic kept me alert far past the sunrise, all the way until the bibliography was done. And while I'm hesitant to tally a caffeine-fueled all-nighter as a point in favor of workspaces, the experience reminded me (as I've learned many times before) that I truly adore what I'm

capable of in the office.

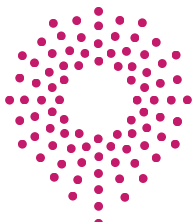
That feeling recently popped up in a surprising place: *The Devil Wears Prada 2*. The original *Devil Wears Prada*, released in 2006, largely villainized the office, depicting a toxic workspace at a magazine with an over-demanding boss played by Meryl Streep. But in the 2026 sequel, Streep's character is redeemed. By the end of the film, her open plan workspace is depicted as gloriously functional, a team of creators joyfully mapping page layouts together in a scene that could be a stock photo come to life.

And one of Streep's final lines, which made me tear up in the theater, is, "Boy, I love working. I really do."

I don't just love to work, it turns out. I love *work*—both the tasks themselves, and the places I go to do them. ▢



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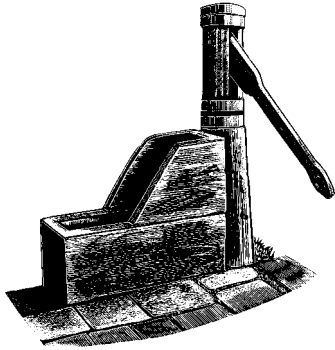
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Titans and Legacies



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

IN JUNE, the University community lost two titans, whose trajectories bridged traditional and modern Harvard—and whose service contributed immeasurably to this institution.

Walter M. Cabot '55, M.B.A. '59, was appointed the first leader of Harvard Management Company (HMC) when it was established in 1974. That began a new era of endowment investment, enabling the University to pay for the faculty, facilities, and financial aid that give the place its contemporary character and reputation.

The idea of an in-house investment firm was novel. So were the ways in which Cabot set about deploying \$1 billion in internal funds and \$400 million entrusted to five outside firms. Gone were plain-vanilla stocks and bonds. In their place, this magazine's former editor John Bethell recounts in his book *Harvard Observed*, were “stock lending, and...options trading, arbitrage, derivatives, and venture capital.”

Successors took advantage of HMC's stand-alone status to compete for investment talent, turning the place into an enormous hedge fund under Jack R. Meyer, M.B.A. '69, who took over in 1989. Today, under N.P. Narvekar (CEO since

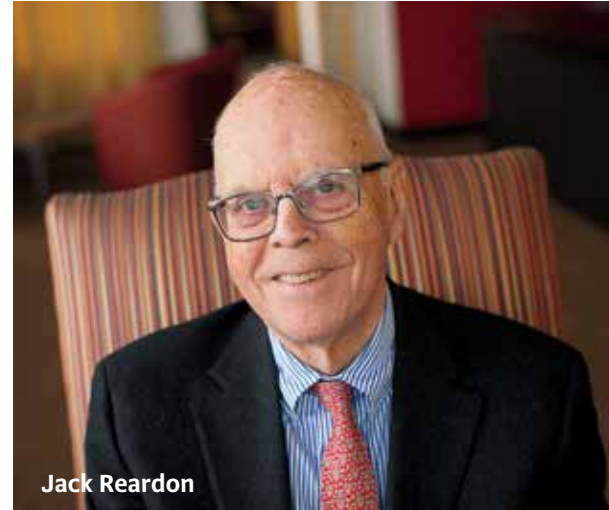
2016), it is a leaner team of professionals who vet and select external fund managers. It was Cabot's foundational work that led to today's \$56.9 billion endowment, the source of more than one-third of Harvard's operating revenues.

Cabot also served as Wellesley College's treasurer, Tufts Medical Center's board chair, a trustee and director of many nonprofits and businesses, and an active town citizen. A money man, to be sure, but a model in multiple other ways, too.



HARVARD'S fortress balance sheet is a means, not an end, and so one turns to the people who make the place—none larger, during the past 60 years, than John P. Reardon Jr. '60 (universally, Jack). Like Cabot a graduate of Milton Academy and the College, Reardon served over the years as associate dean of Harvard College admissions, director of athletics, associate vice president for university relations, executive director of the Harvard Alumni Association, senior adviser for alumni affairs and development, and acting secretary of the University's governing boards. (He also served on the *Harvard Magazine* board of directors.)

In those roles, Reardon met tens of thousands of people—and listened to each of them, and seemingly elicited trust and respect from all. Bridging personal differences, divergent ideologies, and every variety of enthusiasm for or complaint about matters Crimson, Reardon found ways to connect people to the University, and to enhance their support for it. As president emeritus Larry Bacow told the *Crimson*, “There were people who would not talk to Harvard, who wouldn't talk to me, who would talk to Jack.”



Jack Reardon

REARDON lived to see his 70th Milton graduation year, but not the equivalent College reunion. Someone fortunate enough to enjoy the latter landmark is Thomas Ehrlich '56, LL.B. '59. Informed by his remarkable career—Stanford Law dean, University of Pennsylvania provost, and Indiana University president, among other roles—Ehrlich had much to say in a reunion essay about changes to Harvard and Radcliffe since his undergraduate era. Highlights included the coequal inclusion of women into once exclusively male ranks, the rise of new pedagogies, and the effects of technology on teaching and research.

But at this fraught moment, Ehrlich's broadest reflections on education resonate most. Recalling his class's exposure to the curriculum guided by the 1945 report *General Education in a Free Society* (known as the “Red Book”), he observes, perhaps wistfully, that it aimed at preparing the student for “life as a responsible human being and citizen,” not just for personal satisfaction or professional attainment. (“Next to the King James version of the Bible,” Ehrlich notes of the Red Book, “it is the best committee-written substantial text...that I know.”)

“Like all institutions, and all heroes, Harvard had and still has flaws,” Ehrlich observes. “But it remains an extraordinary place of teaching and learning, of scholarship and public success.” Cabot and Reardon surely would have agreed.

—PRIMUS

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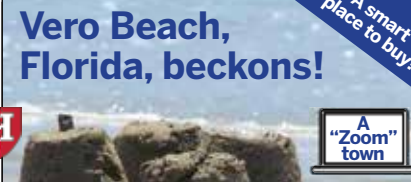
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PARIS (MARAIS). Luxury 1-bedroom apartment, sleeps 4. www.ParisWeekender.com / parisweekender@gmail.com.

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BluesMatch.com—The dating site where Ivy League and Oxbridge people find love.

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Our client, 63, is a warm, active, and accomplished real estate executive in Los Angeles who brings curiosity, kindness, and joy to every stage of life. A former CPA, world traveler, and lifelong learner, she enjoys pickleball, hiking, the theater, exploring new restaurants, and spending time with family and friends. Widowed with two thriving adult children, she's seeking an emotionally and financially secure gentleman (60-72), ideally Jewish, who shares her love of travel, culture, and an active lifestyle. She's looking for a genuine, long-term partnership built on honesty, laughter, and shared adventures. Respond confidentially to lisa@threedayrule.com.

Our client is a sophisticated, creative, and contemplative woman who thrives in the beauty and tranquility of Big Sur. She enjoys peaceful surroundings, the forest, the beach, and her private pool on 10 acres of wilderness. A lifelong learner and artist, she paints weekly, reads extensively, and loves visiting museums. Carolyn values deep, intimate conversations, humor, and a partner who is mentally and emotionally active, with a strong inner life of his own. She seeks a kind, thoughtful gentleman (75-90) who is healthy, spiritually open, and comfortable in serene, natural surroundings. Someone who can enjoy quiet moments as much as intellectual or cultural pursuits, share laughter, and bring depth and peace to a meaningful partnership. Respond confidentially to lindsey@threedayrule.com.

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Our extraordinary Asian private client is based in the Pacific Northwest, but her work and travels take her all over the country as well as internationally. This search includes both West and East coasts. Thoughtful, kind, and feminine, playful and in great shape, she earned a doctorate from Brandeis and a post-doctoral degree from MIT. Athletic, stylish, and fun, her background is both international and bicoastal. Our client balances her life with a healthy lifestyle, a thirst for culture and the arts, great travel, good friends, and close family. We are seeking a wonderful gentleman with excellent character and an equally interesting and rich life, (50-60s), to contact us confidentially for possible introduction in this curated search. sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com or phone private cell: 917-301-1689.

Our client, 37, is a thoughtful and accomplished entrepreneur in San Francisco who blends creativity with an analytical mind. Originally from Bulgaria, she has a background in engineering management and enjoys writing, travel, fitness, dancing, live comedy, and exploring new ideas. Warm, ambitious, and intellectually curious, she is seeking a confident, emotionally intelligent gentleman (35-47) who values personal growth, leads with integrity, and is excited to build a lasting partnership grounded in authenticity, mutual support, and shared goals. Respond confidentially to lacy@threedayrule.com.

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Attention gentlemen 45-60: Our charming, highly accomplished private client holds a top position as professor at a coveted Ivy university known for its excellence right here in the Northeast. Petite, brunette with deep dreamy brown eyes, she is athletic and fit, living her best healthy and active lifestyle. During the day she loves outdoor activities: swimming, biking, etc., and enjoys theater, concerts, and the arts all year round. She hopes to meet an equally fit, accomplished, eligible gentleman, intellectually curious, kind, and generous of heart and spirit. He should have an advanced and/or Ivy degree and a thriving career. Our client brings much to a new relationship: she has studied abroad, is Ivy educated, well-traveled, and is multi-lingual. But most of all, she is an exceptionally good person seeking her partner for love, friendship, and adventure! Her true match embraces similar values, ethics, and cares about his effect on others and the world. It is our honor to represent this refreshing and delightful beauty who can no doubt make a deserving gentleman a wonderful partner. This search is for men in New York and throughout the Northeast. Bio and photo in confidence: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com, 212-627-0121 (landline), 917-301-1689 (call or text).

Our client, 67, is a thoughtful and accomplished physician in Southern California whose life is rooted in purpose, curiosity, and meaningful connection. Originally from Taiwan, he enjoyed a distinguished career in internal medicine and cardiology and now works part-time by choice, allowing time for travel, gardening, staying active, and exploring new cultures. Warm, intelligent, and grounded, he is seeking a kind, emotionally mature woman (approximately 58-70) who shares his conservative values, enjoys an active and healthy lifestyle, and is ready to build a genuine, lasting partnership based on mutual respect and shared experiences. Respond confidentially to lacy@threedayrule.com.

DC-based stunner: Our slender, fit, attractive, Ivy-educated, and very private client, a "woman for all seasons," talented, charming, and accomplished, enjoys a man with a brilliant and purposeful career. Her match is a confident, 5'8" and above, fit, attractive gentleman, 68-78, accomplished, kind, good values, love of adventure and travel, family-oriented, and genuine. Contact: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com. Office: 212-627-0121. Personal cell: 917-301-1689.

Our very fit and accomplished widower is based in New York and is seeking a "second chapter partner" after one long successful marriage and a stellar career and remains engaged in meaningful work. His current passions include maintaining fitness (private trainer) and spending quality time with family. He is world-traveled and open to discovering new adventures near and far with a warm, vibrant, and charming woman (72-80) also based in the New York area. Email in confidence: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com, or phone 212-627-0121. www.therighttimeconsultants.com.

Our client, 52, is a vibrant and accomplished law firm partner in New York City who brings together ambition, warmth, and an incredible enthusiasm for life. Originally from Washington, DC, she has built a successful career while remaining deeply connected to family, friendships, and the experiences that make life meaningful. She enjoys fitness, travel, great restaurants, live music, history, culture, and exploring new places—especially Italy, a country close to her heart. A devoted mother of three, she is seeking a confident, accomplished, and emotionally mature gentleman (50–62) who is active, communicative, and ready to build a meaningful partnership filled with laughter, adventure, and shared experiences. Respond confidentially to lisa@threedayrule.com.

"Stunning and genuine," our private client, 5'5", is a foreign affairs professional with a stellar career. A former ambassador now based in Washington DC, she is multilingual and amazingly well traveled. Her many interests extend beyond the academic to music, fine arts, literature, and dance. Her match is a confident and successful, unpretentious gentleman, 60s to early 70s, who also shares some of her passions and interests including fascinating travel, international literature, and art. He seeks to find a lasting love/life partner! Northeast candidates preferred, but open. Bio and photo in confidence: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com or 212-627-0121.

Our client, 48, is a bright, engaging, and accomplished Social Media Safety professional based in San Francisco who brings warmth, humor, and curiosity to everything she does. A Marin County native who has lived in cities across the country, she enjoys the best of both worlds—exploring the arts, cheering on live sports, traveling, playing pickleball, practicing Pilates, and relaxing at home with a great book or film. She is seeking a confident, kind, and intellectually curious gentleman (45–58) who values integrity, adventure, and meaningful connection. Her ideal partner is someone with a great sense of humor, a big heart, and a genuine desire to build a lasting relationship filled with laughter and shared experiences. Respond confidentially to lacy@threedayrule.com.

Bay Area Gem: Brunette, slender, and extraordinary, our private client is based in Mill Valley and open to meeting smart, interesting men in the Bay Area as well as the East Coast. She presents beautifully at 5'5", fit with great energy, charm, and emotional intelligence. Currently a top-level consultant and angel investor, her educational pedigree includes Smith College, Stanford, the University of Chicago, and MIT. We are searching for gentlemen (65-78) who are equally accomplished, selective, and comfortable in any setting. Her current interests include sailing, skiing, languages, politics, and family time. Her ideal match values kindness, has a deep sense of humanity, and honesty. You both have great careers, launched and accomplished children, and a passion to live your best life with a partner you respect and adore! Bio & photo to: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com, 212-627-0121.

Our client, in her early 40s, is a successful Orange County professional who has built a fulfilling life centered around family, friendships, and personal growth. Warm, confident, and grounded, she enjoys staying active, traveling, exploring new restaurants, spending time near the coast, and making the most of all that Southern California has to offer. She is seeking an accomplished, kind, and emotionally mature gentleman (50–62) who is established in his career, values health and family, and is ready for a meaningful long-term partnership. Her ideal match is someone who is thoughtful, optimistic, and enjoys everything from weekend getaways to quiet nights at home. Respond confidentially to lisa@threedayrule.com.

Our client, 63, is a vibrant and engaging woman in New Jersey who brings warmth, curiosity, and a genuine enthusiasm for life. Deeply connected to both New Jersey and New York City, she enjoys exploring the arts, meaningful conversations, dining out, and the simple pleasures of time well spent with family and friends. With a fulfilling life, a strong sense of family, and three grown children, she is seeking an established, confident, and kind gentleman (60–72) who values loyalty, communication, romance, and building a meaningful partnership. Her ideal match is someone who is outgoing yet thoughtful, enjoys shared experiences, and is ready to embrace life's next chapter together. Respond confidentially to heather.ryan@threedayrule.com.



Our stellar client is a delightful physician with a heart of gold (Yale BS/Stanford MD). Born and raised in Cambridge MA, lives in DC. Travels easily and often, DC to Boston and to SF/Bay Area, to see family and friends. Deeply passionate about her grown kids, healthcare, and giving back. Very active, she enjoys the outdoors including golf, beaches (especially Cape Cod and the islands), the arts, photography, and investing. Brings warmth and energy and is quick with a smile and shared laughter. Her go-to guy is a healthy, vibrant gentleman, expert of some type, a father, 66-72 with excellent work-life balance, and is an optimist with a kind heart. Respond in confidence: sandy@therighttimeconsultants.com, text or phone private cell: 917-301-1689.

Our client, 38, is a bright, accomplished, and refreshingly genuine professional in Seattle who blends ambition, curiosity, and a playful spirit. A Cornell graduate with an MBA from Northwestern, she works in regional government and also runs a consulting business supporting startups. Outside of work, she loves the outdoors—from hiking and backpacking to skiing, sailing, and paddleboarding—and enjoys improv comedy, reading, cooking, and time with friends. She is seeking an intelligent, kind, and adventurous gentleman (38–48) who is emotionally mature, curious about the world, and ready to build a meaningful partnership with the goal of marriage and family. Respond confidentially to lisa@threedayrule.com.

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Our client, 38, is a warm, accomplished, and socially confident professional in Boston who brings a wonderful blend of ambition, humor, and family values to everything she does. Raised in a close-knit Italian family, she enjoys an active lifestyle filled with travel, golf, fitness, live music, great restaurants, and time with the people she loves. She is seeking a kind, confident, and emotionally mature gentleman (38–48) who has a stable career, values family, and is ready to build a meaningful partnership with the goal of marriage and children. Her ideal match is someone who is witty, grounded, and comfortable in a lively family environment. Respond confidentially to annam@threedayrule.com.

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Our client, 43, is an optimistic, adventurous, and accomplished physician assistant in the Boston area who brings warmth, curiosity, and a genuine zest for life. Raised in a close-knit family, she values meaningful relationships and enjoys staying active through hiking, tennis, fitness classes, travel, and trying new experiences. Whether exploring a new destination, learning a new skill, or spending time with loved ones, she approaches life with enthusiasm and an open heart. She is seeking a kind, intelligent, and emotionally mature gentleman (42–52) who is authentic, supportive, and ready to build a meaningful partnership with the goal of marriage and family. Respond confidentially to lisa@threedayrule.com.

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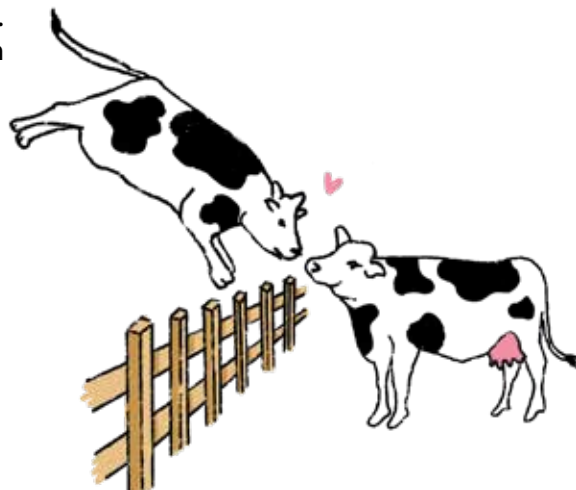


Our July-August story “The Love Bunnies” described a rabbit’s journey from loss to love—and the lessons it holds for humans. We asked readers to share love stories between the animals in their lives.

Here’s a sampling of the answers we received.

Find more online at [harvardmagazine.com/pets-love-stories](https://www.harvardmagazine.com/pets-love-stories)

“**L**AST FALL, a cow ran away from a nearby farm and entered our neighbor’s field. Owen, one of our steers, jumped over the fence and nuzzled her. After we lured him back inside, the two frequently visited across the fence. We were able to get in touch with the cow’s owner, [who] allowed us to keep her. We opened the gate, and Owen guided her into one of our pastures. Our staff named our new resident Bonnie. Since then, Owen and Bonnie have behaved like sweethearts who go everywhere together.” —BILL C.



“**A** quick decision to transport a stray kitten to a shelter became a whole debacle when I realized the shelter was not yet open and that I would have to bring him home to my two dogs with high prey drives. I was terrified, but figured it might be fine for a couple of hours. That couple of hours turned into six months. Our kitten, Calculus, got the opportunity to be raised by two dogs. He became best friends with my younger dog, Tintin. Despite my fear, Tintin became a gentle giant with Calculus. He knew just how soft to bite down when they played rough, and let himself get pretend-scared.” —RESHMA N.

“**I**HAD A BEAGLE named Betsy [when I was] growing up in a remote area of New Jersey. It was safe for her to roam and visit neighbors. When I moved to Manhattan after college, my mother asked me to check out a beagle that a couple couldn’t keep because he barked all day while they were at work. The beagle, named Val (for Prince Valiant), had won Best of Breed at the Westminster Kennel Club’s annual show. He was high-strung and tried to crawl into the driver’s seat [while we went] through the Lincoln Tunnel! Once at home, he ran through the house for hours. But he bonded immediately with Betsy, who was seven years older, and followed her wherever she went. They were very close and developed a routine for play that my mother called the ‘children’s hour.’” —JOHN S.

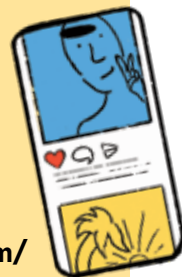


Next question

Our cover story, “**When We Were Friends**” (p.28), describes the early days of Facebook and its social impact at Harvard.

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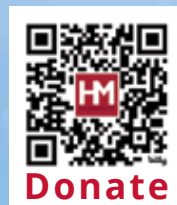
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