

# Colloquy

ALUMNI QUARTERLY

The GRADUATE SCHOOL of ARTS AND SCIENCES | HARVARD UNIVERSITY | SPRING 2011

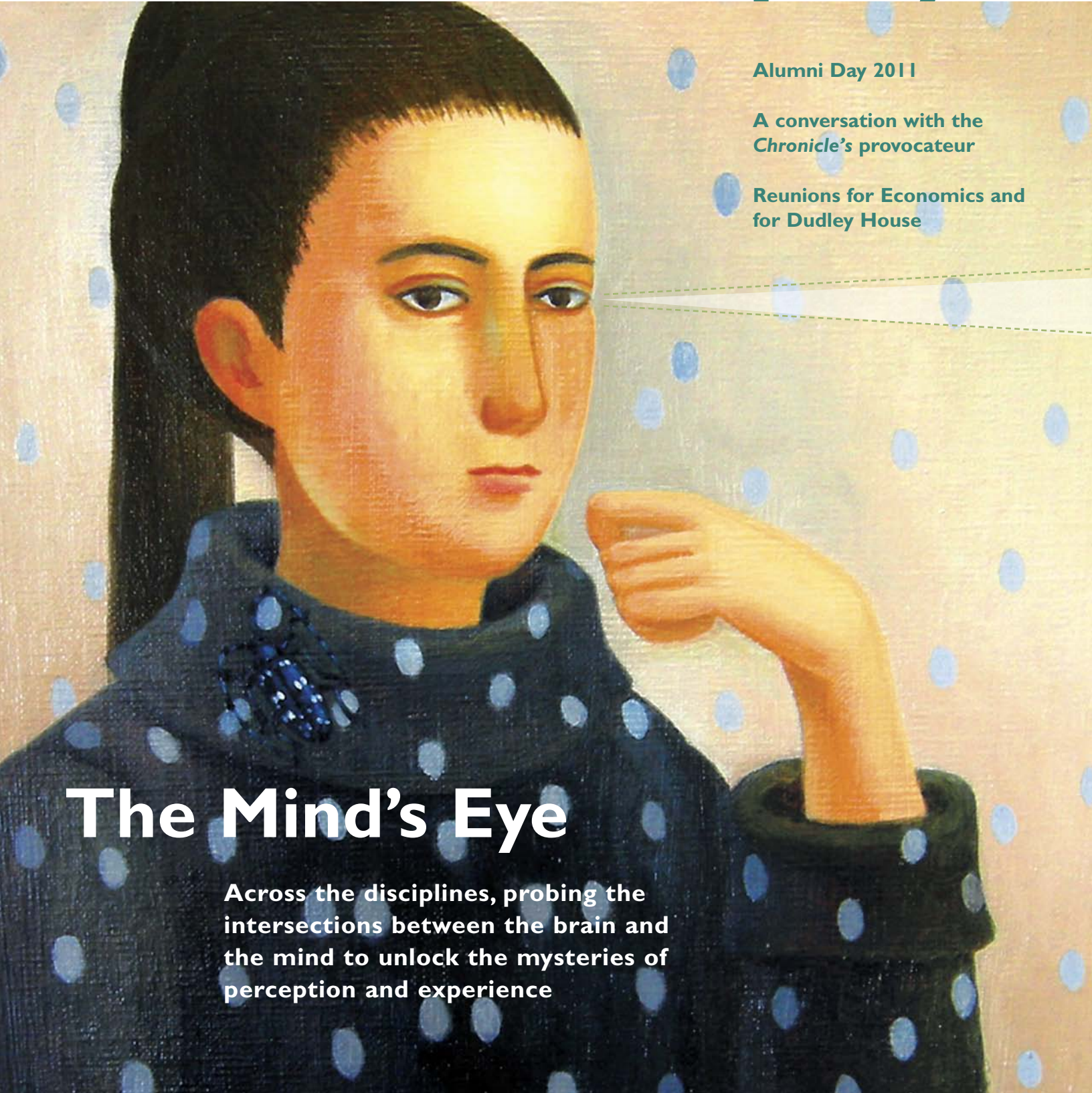
Alumni Day 2011

A conversation with the  
*Chronicle's* provocateur

Reunions for Economics and  
for Dudley House

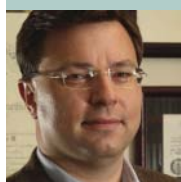
## The Mind's Eye

Across the disciplines, probing the intersections between the brain and the mind to unlock the mysteries of perception and experience

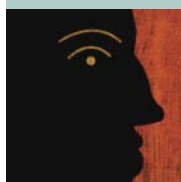




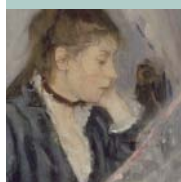
- 2 Alumni Day**  
With reunions of graduate economics programs and of Dudley fellows adding to the mix, our annual rite of spring was both interdisciplinary and intergenerational.



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Increasingly, humanists are turning to cognitive and neuroscientists — and vice versa — to gain new insights into perception and experience, making disciplinary barriers irrelevant.



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The GSAA is the alumni association of Harvard University's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Governed by its Council, the GSAA represents and advances the interests of alumni of the Graduate School by sponsoring alumni events and by publishing *Colloquy* four times each year.

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Access current and back issues of *Colloquy*, as well as a range of other alumni services and information, at [www.gsas.harvard.edu/alumni](http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/alumni).

**Letters to the Editor**

*Colloquy* does not print letters, but we welcome your thoughts and story ideas. Write to: *Colloquy*, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-3846; or e-mail [gsaa@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:gsaa@fas.harvard.edu).

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**The Brightest and the Best**

This fall, the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences will welcome what is probably the most remarkable class of students in its history. Our top applicants this year brought credentials that looked in many cases as if they had been pulled from a promotion dossier for an assistant professor. Many of these students are already becoming leaders in their fields.

We received 12,000 applications in all, affirming once again that students from all corners of the world continue to seek out the extraordinary opportunities that Harvard offers. The 615 or so new students (the number is still not final at press time) who will join us at Orientation on August 24 were chosen by our faculty, after close and careful consideration, as the very students those leaders most want to work with to advance scholarship in their fields.

Our faculty takes graduate admissions extremely seriously, as I discovered anew when I visited each of our programs this winter to review applications and discuss the progress of current students. And that's appropriate, since this faculty is a magnet for students, giving Harvard a clear advantage as it recruits new graduate students.

And yet we know that many of our best applicants also applied to, and were eagerly recruited by, our peer institutions in the Ivy League and beyond. Among that exceptionally talented and promising group of top applicants, admission is really just the beginning of the process. Successfully recruiting those candidates — as the playing field grows ever more competitive — is where the real work lies.

I spend a good deal of time thinking about what it will take to ensure that Harvard continues to attract the very best graduate students in the world. As fiscal challenges mount, I believe that those of us who steward higher education must make a new commitment to innovation as we articulate our priorities. We need to reallocate our existing resources to align with emerging realities and to serve the students who will one day take the reins, and we need to deploy our

new resources in creative and efficient ways.

Offering financial aid packages that strongly compete with those of our peers is, of course, the first and most essential step in attracting and retaining the best students. That's why funding for our graduate fellowships will continue to be a central priority.

But as I think about our needs over the next five years, I see other key priorities.

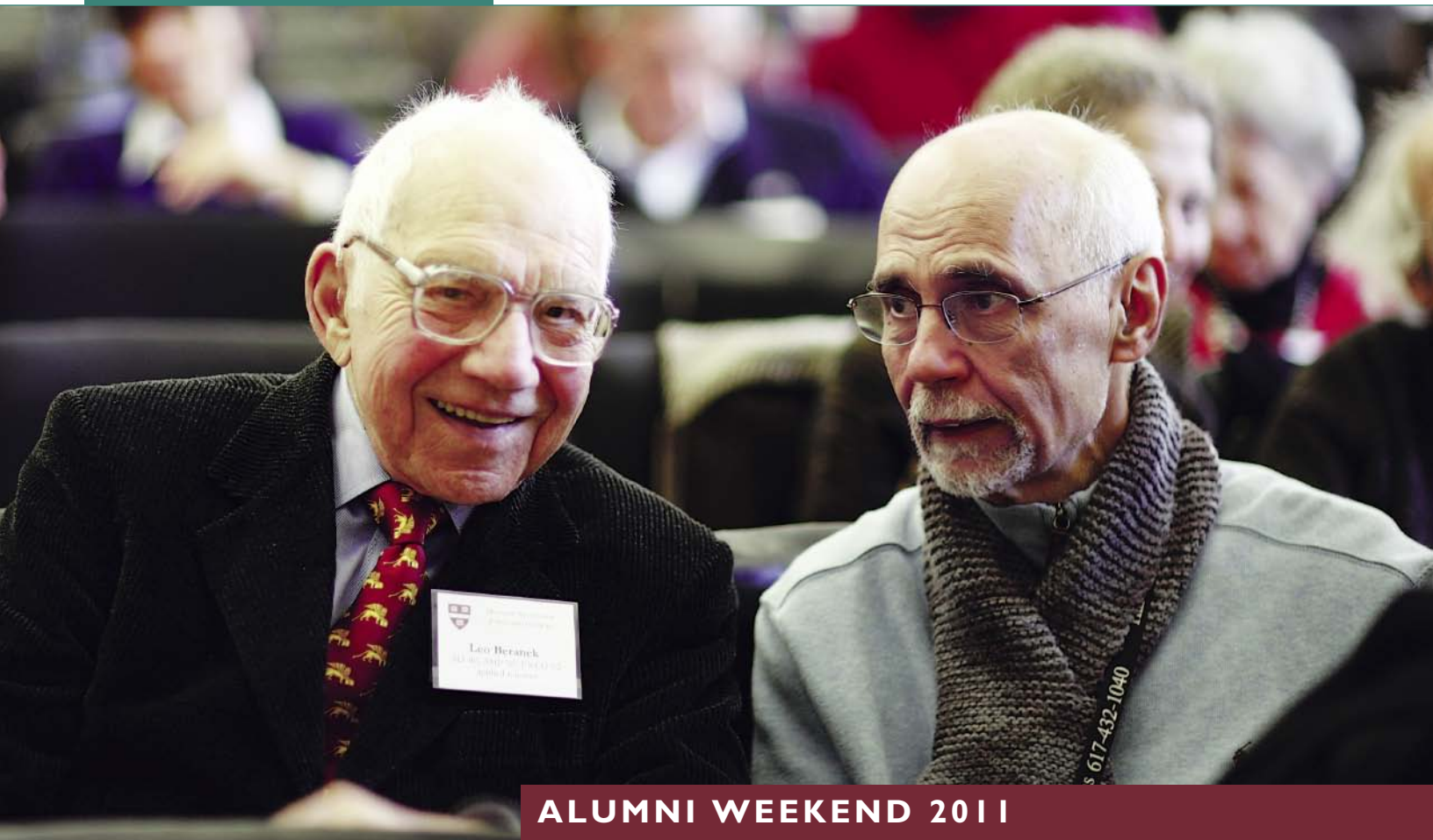
We must invest in innovation in teaching and learning, so we can help our graduate students become the educational leaders that the world needs them to be.

We must invest in a diverse student population, both by fortifying the pipeline that will prepare the most talented minority students to come to Harvard and by creating structures to support them fully once they are here. And we must assure that we are educating the finest minds, irrespective of gender, across all fields of inquiry. To achieve gender equity in the Graduate School, we need to offer better support to our students who are parents.

We must invest in better writing programs for our students, so that we ensure they build the communication skills that are increasingly essential to professional success in every field.

Finally, we must examine the relationship between disciplinary excellence and interdisciplinary opportunity. Increasingly, our top applicants crave the opportunities for interdisciplinarity that Harvard's resources make so compelling. They expect to be able to move fluidly across traditional academic boundaries, and we need to create contexts in which they can do so.

GSAS is responding by continuing to expand our roster of secondary fields — intellectually coherent courses and experiences in a given field that offer students desirable breadth as they chart their professional paths. This past year, we added new secondary fields in critical media practice, computational science, and science, technology, and society — all with exciting interdisciplinary possibilities. As we go forward, this is precisely the kind of cost-effective innovation we must encourage.



ALUMNI WEEKEND 2011

# Generations *of* GSAS

By Bari Walsh

**This spring's Alumni Weekend celebration** at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences had a notably intergenerational flair. Enlivened by the presence of current students and young alumni — some drawn back by a celebration of Dudley House — the weekend featured opportunities to connect and network, to share and seek advice, and to get to know the members of this diverse and collegial community. Faculty symposia reflected that diversity, but the state of the world's economy provided the theme that unified two days of events. On Friday, April 1, graduate alumni of Harvard's economics programs held a reunion that featured talks by renowned senior thinkers and up-and-coming new voices. And on Saturday, April 2, global economist Kenneth Rogoff delivered the Alumni Day keynote address at Emerson Hall.

Photographs by Jessica Scranton



**SAVE THE DATE**

**Alumni Weekend 2012**

**April 13–14**

## Table Talk

A recurring highlight of Alumni Day is lunch at the Harvard Faculty Club, and this year, guests had the chance to socialize at discipline- or department-specific tables. Many alumni took advantage of the opportunity for these interest-based points of connection, which were facilitated by current PhD students designated as hosts for the day, alongside GSAS Alumni Council members. The students joined alums for lunch to talk about their work, prompting

discussions of how life as a graduate student has changed — or not — over the years. After lunch, alumni and students headed back to Emerson Hall to sample offerings from an interdisciplinary menu of faculty symposia — on computer science and computer-assisted political science, on empire and insurgency, on punishment and inequality, on the science of blindness, and on the philosophical comforts of the classics.

At left, Leo Beranek, SD '40, applied science, and Fotis Constantine Kafatos, PhD '65, molecular biology, share a chat before the Alumni Day keynote address. Above, clockwise from top left, Susan Milmoie, AB '65, PhD '74, psychology and social relations, and Jennifer Sheehy-Skeffington, a PhD candidate in psychology; Erin Henry, a PhD candidate

in organizational behavior, whose research interests combine economic sociology, entrepreneurship, and development; Louis and Anna Sebok joined their daughter Veronica Sebok, AB '83, SM '83, applied sciences, MBA '88, for lunch at the Faculty Club.





*Clockwise from left, Alice Adler, PhD '61, chemistry, celebrated her 50th Harvard reunion with Ed Ginsberg; GSAS Dean Allan Brandt on stage for the Alumni Day keynote address; Jessica Tollette, a PhD candidate in sociology, whose interests include racial identity, class, gender, and inequality; Keith Stone, a PhD candidate in Near Eastern Languages and Literatures, specializing in the Hebrew bible, chats over lunch with George Bates, AB '54; GSA '56, physics; MBA '58.*

**ALUMNI OF ALL AGES MINGLED WITH CURRENT STUDENTS AND FACULTY, GIVING THIS ANNUAL RITE OF SPRING A TRULY INTERGENERATIONAL FLAIR.**



Surveying the history of economic meltdowns produces one bit of cheery news, says Ken Rogoff. “So far, all financial crises have come to an end.”



## Eight Centuries (and Counting) of Financial Folly

**Kenneth Rogoff** is a premier thinker on matters related to national and global economic policies, and his keynote address at Alumni Day was full of colorful history and insider’s tidbits, drawn from his experience as section chief at the International Finance Division of the US Federal Reserve Bank.

In discussing his latest book, *This Time Is Different: Eight Centuries of Financial Folly* — he joked that it spent a week in fourth place on Amazon’s bestsellers list, behind three Stieg Larsson novels — Rogoff traced the history of debt crises and defaults back to 1340, when Edward II, invading France as part of the Hundred Years War, defaulted on loans to Italian lenders. Rogoff highlighted a connection between early European debt crises and the aspirations of

those developing nations to grow and colonize. He noted that today, it is the rich countries whose debt is at or near all-time highs, a reality that will hinder growth over the next 5 to 10 years.

Drawing on his experience as former chief economist at the International Monetary Fund, Rogoff described how he and his coauthor, economist Carmen M. Reinhart, were able to collect voluminous data from vastly disparate global archives, data that prior to their work was difficult to find and use. Noting the rhythmic cycle of debt crises over history — and the seemingly endless varieties of “folly” that preceded each — he consoled his audience with one conclusion of his research: all economic crises do eventually end.

Top, Kenneth Rogoff, a professor of economics and the Thomas D. Cabot Professor of Public Policy, delivers the Alumni Day keynote address. At right, from left to right, faculty symposia leaders Gary King of the Department of Government, Caroline Elkins of History and African and African American Studies, Bruce Western of Sociology,

and Hanspeter Pfister of Computer Science. Sean Kelly of Philosophy and Constance Cepko of the HMS departments of Ophthalmology and Genetics also led symposia.





## Celebrating the Old and New in Economics

**Welcoming alumni** to the graduate reunion of Harvard's programs in economics, business economics, and political economy and government on April 1, GSAS Dean Allan Brandt described the impact of Harvard's economics programs on private, public, and nonprofit sectors around the world. And impact was the catchword of the day, it turned out, as junior and senior faculty talked with alumni about some of the most pressing issues facing the world — and some of the most hopeful ideas for new directions.

Economics chair John Campbell kicked things off by talking about tradition. “The Harvard tradition is embodied not just in buildings but in people,” he said over lunch in the intimate confines of the Faculty Club Library. “It’s a living tradition that evolves over time. You can see that living tradition in

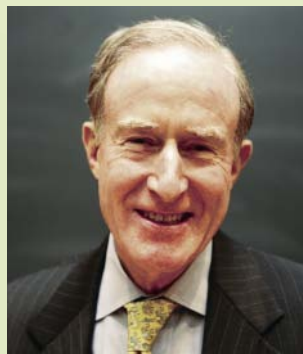
this room.” He went on to describe how tradition enriches a department like Economics, which has especially benefitted from the “wonderful chain of influence that connects faculty of one era to their students, who become faculty of the next era.”

But then Campbell talked about bucking tradition, saying that one of the things he was most excited by was the infusion of youth and energy into the faculty ranks in recent years. The department today boasts an “intellectual breadth that envisages economics as a big tent,” he said — and that point was driven home during afternoon panels that featured just the vibrant mix of accomplished scholarship and energetic expansiveness that Campbell cited.

In the first panel, Raj Chetty, PhD '03, and Roland Fryer talked about their innovative work in education. Chetty has correlated

the quality of one's kindergarten experience with earning power in adulthood, and Fryer has worked on measuring the impact of incentive-based reforms in US public schools. On the same panel, Nava Ashraf, PhD '05, and Erica Field looked at correlations between wealth and health and at ways to increase the effectiveness of global health initiatives by focusing on the behavior of the patient/consumer.

In the second panel, several of the department's senior leaders weighed in on the global financial crisis. Benjamin Friedman, Andrei Shleifer, Jeremy Stein, and Gita Gopinath engaged their audience with a fascinating look at how things reached crisis level, how financial models malfunctioned, how risk was neglected, which corrective steps were successful (and which not so), and what lessons were learned.



*Top, left to right, Carmen Robinson Henry and LaVaughn Henry, PhD '91, economics, at the economics reunion luncheon; Professor Jerry Green, chair of the business economics PhD program, welcomes alumni and reminisces about his predecessors, John Lintner and Dick Caves. At left, from left to right, Henry Rosovsky,*

*PhD '59, the Lewis P. and Linda L. Geysler University Professor emeritus and former Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences; Nava Ashraf, PhD '05, an associate professor at Harvard Business School; Benjamin Friedman, AB '66, PhD '71, William Joseph Maier Professor of Political Economy.*





## Dudley House

### 20th ANNIVERSARY REUNION

Showering affection — and flowers — on Dudley House's longtime administrator, Susan Zawalich, are former Dudley fellows (from left) Bayliss Camp, PhD '03, sociology; Oliver Dinius, PhD '04, history; Luca Marinelli, PhD '02, physics; and Daniel Kramer, PhD '03, Germanic languages and literatures. Photo: Jonathan Ruel

**When Dudley House** was dedicated as the graduate student center at GSAS 20 years ago, the idea of building community among graduate students was still considered experimental. The move was the culmination of years of effort by the GSAS Alumni Council, deans and administrators, and students themselves, all of whom recognized a need for graduate students to come together, to decompress, to leave the lab or library (on occasion), and generally to maintain the interests and hobbies that brought them to Harvard — interests that would enrich not only their own lives, but their Harvard community.

It has been a grand success, a model for peers, and a refuge for students — especially those at the beginning of their programs, seeking to find their place at Harvard. “There really is nothing like this at most graduate schools,” says Jim Hogle, the Edward S. Harkness Professor of Biological Chemistry and Molecular Pharmacology and chair of the PhD program in biophysics. He has been co-master of Dudley House since 2002, with his wife, patent attorney Doreen Hogle.

GSAS celebrated the 20th-anniversary milestone by hosting a laugh-filled reunion over Alumni Weekend for Dudley fellows from each of those 20 years. About 85 fellows and guests mingled at a casual open house on

Friday, April 1, an evening that featured specially crafted Dudley-themed cocktails — the Dudley Daiquiri and the Lehman Lemonade, served in embossed pint glasses. They attended Alumni Day events on Saturday and then returned to the House for a soiree that evening.

From its commanding location in Lehman Hall, on the southwest corner of Harvard Yard, Dudley is a central point of connection for the Graduate School's 4,000 students. Under the direction of the House Masters and longtime administrator Susan Zawalich, as well as the fellows (GSAS students all) who plan activities each year, Dudley has its own orchestra, jazz band, literary magazine, dining hall, coffee house, film series, game room, and intramural sports program, among other gems. It sponsors student outings to museums, plays, and performances around Boston and to recreational sites further afield.

The Harvard community will pause to mark Dudley's 20th anniversary as the graduate student center in October, when — as part of the University's 375th anniversary festivities — the House will host a gala dinner to celebrate not only the special qualities of the building and the people who help it flourish, but also the central role that graduate students play in the life of the University.

#### Anthropology

**Daniel T. Potts, AB '75, PhD '80**, announces that a collection of twenty of his papers — entitled *Mesopotamia, Iran and Arabia from the Seleucids to the Sasanians* — has been published by Ashgate Variorum as part of its Collected Studies series. Potts is the Edwin Cuthbert Hall Professor of Middle Eastern Archaeology at the University of Sydney in Australia.

#### Astronomy

**David Barrado, GSA '96**, has contributed to the recent publication *Postcards from the Edge of the Universe: An Anthology of Frontline Astronomy from Around the World* (ESO, 2010). The book is based on the science carried out by a hand-picked selection of the best bloggers from the “Cosmic Diary,” one of the 12 cornerstone projects of the International Year of Astronomy 2009. It provides a unique snapshot of contemporary astronomy.

#### English

**Leon Guilhamet, PhD '67**, has published his third book in eighteenth-century studies, entitled *Defoe and the Whig Novel: A Reading of the Major Fiction* (University of Delaware Press, 2010). Recently retired as professor and former chair of English at the City College, City University of New York, Guilhamet presents a reassessment of *Robinson Crusoe* and five other works of fiction by Daniel Defoe in light of Whig culture in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.

#### Germanic Languages and Literatures

**Wm. A. Little, AM '53**, has published *Mendelssohn and the Organ* (Oxford University Press, 2010), exploring Felix Mendelssohn's lifelong engagement with what Little argues was his instrument of choice, the organ. The book examines the resulting influence on the composer's professional and personal life.

#### Government

**Robert H. Binstock, AB '56, PhD '65**, has produced the seventh edition of *The Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*. He is professor of Aging, Health, and Society at the Case Western Reserve University's School of Medicine. A former president of the Gerontological Society of America, Binstock has served as director of a White House Task Force on Older Americans.

#### History

**Leslie Dossey, PhD '98**, has published *Peasant and Empire in Christian North Africa*, tracing the region's social and cultural history from the Punic times to the eve of the Islamic conquest.

*continued on page 9*

# col·lo·quy: a conversation, a dialogue

...with **WILLIAM PANNAPACKER**

On the humanities conundrum with the *Chronicle's* provocateur

By Bari Walsh

**I**n the world of education journalism, there are few opinion voices as potent as that of William Pannapacker, PhD '99, history of American civilization.

Writing under the pen name Thomas H. Benton in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Pannapacker has caused sensations — and jammed up the online comment section — with articles like “Why Do They Hate Us” (September 26, 2010), about a certain kind of public disdain for academia, and “The Big Lie About ‘The Life of the Mind’” (February 8, 2010), about what he sees as an institutional failure to address the realities of graduate education. Perhaps his most notorious piece is “Graduate School in the Humanities: Just Don’t Go” (January 30, 2009), which enjoyed a long shelf life among the most-read articles on the *Chronicle's* website.

An associate professor of English at Hope College, in Holland, Michigan, Pannapacker has a knack for illuminating the anxieties within contemporary academic culture. Reader reactions, ranging from virtual shouts of hallelujah to strong rebuttals, collectively testify to his skill at finding issues that resonate.

**You have — pretty dramatically — advised people not to go to graduate school in the humanities. Why?**

**Pannapacker:** The problem is the dramatic conversion of full-time, tenure-stream academic positions into part-time, non-tenurable, no-benefit positions. Institutions can exploit teachers when there are no regulations and so many graduates willing to work under those conditions. Since those practices are not likely to change out of good will towards academic workers, I focus my efforts on the supply side of the problem. If we could reduce the number of PhDs on the market — and expand their career options — we might see some improvement in the



Courtesy William Pannapacker

William Pannapacker, PhD '99, history of American civilization, in his office at Hope College.

conditions of academic employment, particularly in humanities.

I regularly meet students who have been encouraged to enroll in programs that offer no funding and no reliable information about job placements after graduation. After all, we are trained to believe that more education always equals more opportunity and that educational debt is always “good debt.” And professors who deviate from that message are seen as undercutting higher education. But I am not saying anything that has not been said by the AAUP [American Association of University Professors], and backed up by their data, for more than 30 years.

**Do the emerging practices of digital humanities trigger hopes for more jobs?**

I wish I could provide a Horace Greeley moment: “Go into the digital humanities, young scholar.” But I do think the digital humanities offers new possibilities for intellectual collaboration and dissemination of work. It allows us to visualize data in new ways, and to see patterns that were previously obscured in the mass of archival information. And there are some good positions emerging

as universities become aware of the value of this constellation of fields. But the number of positions is much smaller than the number of outstanding candidates.

One positive sign is that digital humanists tend to have an “alt-ac” [alternate academic] sensibility: they see themselves as adaptable to a variety of employment contexts — technology, information, education, administration, programming, and so on. I am seeing some success stories (in a traditional academic sense), but I am also seeing more people in the digital humanities having careers that look more like the norm for people in non-academic careers: multiple short-term and concurrent positions, freelance work, and a lot of moving around.

**Have your opinions evolved since you first took on this issue in the late 1990s?**

Yes, my concerns are less self-interested now. I am no longer reflecting on my own job search. Mainly, I care about what happens to my students at Hope College. I also identify, sympathetically, with what’s happening to graduate students and all those faculty members who do not have reliable academic positions. And, of course, I also care about

the future of higher education, particularly in the humanities. Contingent labor is a symptom of a much larger problem; namely, as Martha Nussbaum [PhD '75] has argued, the United States has become so focused on profits — and education has become so expensive — that few people can afford to study anything without direct, practical applications, unless they are already financially secure.

There are some points of light — including Harvard, I am sure — but nearly all trends point in the other direction: funding cutbacks, program consolidation, for-profit education, and declining support for the liberal arts (largely caused by fears about employment). It doesn't help that we are living through another era of politically motivated hostility towards higher education. I wish I could say that things will get better, but, for most graduate students, the best advice seems to be to make alternate plans for the future. But I know that's hard to do when just being a successful graduate student requires every bit of energy you can muster.

*The Graduate School has amplified career services for students on nonacademic tracks and offered transition workgroups for students considering the switch. What else should universities be doing to assist graduate students?*

Harvard's Office of Career Services provided a refuge for students like me who were wondering what they were going to do with their degrees. I am glad to know those efforts are expanding. Most of all, I would support creating alt-ac or non-ac internships, preferably paid ones, to allow graduate students to get relevant experience and build networks that might lead to job offers. I also hope that seeking alternate career paths is less stigmatized now than it was a decade ago.

At the same time, I think individual programs need to provide more detailed information about job placement after graduation, not just the success stories, traditionally understood as tenure-track positions at major research universities. They should also inform prospective students about acceptance rates, time to degree, attrition rates, and funding. If they do that, my hope is that competitive pressure for the best students will bring significant reforms.

*If we were to see a substantial decline in PhDs, what would that mean for our country and its research landscape?*

I do not think that most PhD programs in the humanities effectively use the talents and energies of the students who populate them. On the contrary, I think they tend to use their

students' labor, harvest their tuition payments, and send them into a marketplace that has no room for them. We need to re-envision satisfying and productive career paths for people with the humanistic values and intellectual capacities that led them into graduate programs in the first place. Our current system is a tragic waste of resources; it has been that way for generations now, and it must change.

*Let's talk about the rewards of a scholarly life. Why were you drawn to this life?*

Because I like doing research. I enjoy literary studies, particularly 19th-century American literary culture in an interdisciplinary context. I often like teaching — though I mostly teach out of my field — and I like working with students.

I was drawn to this life because I believed that I could continue the experiences I enjoyed as an undergraduate and make a living at it. I got lucky, and I do not believe for one second that I have a tenured position because I was more qualified than most of the PhDs of my generation who did not. Increasingly, I see my role as creating a context in which students — and faculty members — can cultivate their scholarly passions and find a way to make a living at that. One way I try to do that is by directing the Andrew W. Mellon Scholars Program in the Arts and Humanities at Hope College. It's designed to integrate traditional research methods with digital technologies and to encourage students to explore career directions that may not lead directly to graduate school.

*What about your own scholarly interests?*

I am considering writing a book on student-faculty collaborative research based on my recent experiences with the Mellon Scholars Program. I want to find ways to integrate the liberal arts with digital technology and to cultivate students who are prepared to explore options besides graduate school, or to at least select graduate programs with an eye toward their applicability for a range of options besides college teaching.

I have an ongoing interest in the relationship between literature and place, and I hope I'll find time in the next five years to complete a project on Whitman and Philadelphia and Camden (my two hometowns) that integrates literary history with geographic information systems — if providence grants me, as Melville says, "time, strength, cash, and patience." ☺

## Music

Composer **Faye-Ellen Silverman, AM '71**, music composition, has recorded a CD titled *Transatlantic Tales* with guitarist Volkmar Zimmermann. All the works feature guitar, ranging from solo to guitar quartet to works for voice with guitar. Silverman earned her DMA from Columbia in 1974 and has been a member of faculty at The New School since 1991.

## Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations

**Carrie E. Duncan, AM '04**, was awarded the 2011 Charlotte W. Newcombe Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship. The Newcombe Fellowship is the nation's most prestigious such award for PhD candidates in the humanities and social sciences addressing questions of ethical and religious values. Duncan is now a doctoral candidate in religious studies at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill. Her dissertation explores representations of women in Jewish inscriptions from Late Antiquity.

## Regional Studies—East Asia

After spending more than two years as a staff member at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, handling Asia-Pacific policy considerations for Democratic Chairman Howard Berman, **Jessica Lee, AM '08**, is now foreign policy adviser to Congressman Jim McDermott (D-WA). Lee was recently selected as a 2011 Spring Fellow at the Partnership for a Secure America, a think tank that promotes bipartisan national security solutions. She is participating in the Young Turkey/Young America program, sponsored by the Atlantic Council and Sabanci University, with emerging leaders from two countries.

Submit Alumni Notes to: *Colloquy*, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-3846; or [gsoa@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:gsoa@fas.harvard.edu). Alumni Notes are subject to editing for length and clarity.



# Fertile Ground

Increasingly, humanists are turning to cognitive and neuroscientists — and vice versa — to gain new insights into perception and experience

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By Janelle Weaver

If you've ever seen Claude Monet's *Impression, Sunrise*, an 1873 painting of a misty harbor at dawn, you may have noticed that the red-orange sun glowing in the sky seems to pulsate amidst the surrounding gray clouds. This jittery effect is not just a trick of the imagination; it's actually a neuroscientifically measurable byproduct of the disconnected nature of visual processing in the brain.

While brain regions that respond to color detect the boundary between Monet's sun and clouds, other parts of the brain that process light intensity do not, because these shapes reflect the same amount of light. In a black-and-white version of the piece, the sun would vanish. Because of the lack of luminance information,

which normally helps us pinpoint items, the sun appears to move around, and the work of art comes to life.

This technique, called equiluminance, has frequently been used by Impressionists and pointillists to make their paintings sparkle. But working artists are not alone in their explorations of how our brains shape our perceptions. Scholars from fields as seemingly disparate as art and neuroscience, or psychology and literature, are increasingly recognizing how their knowledge can mutually enlighten one another, and they are acting on the need to break down longstanding barriers between the humanities on one end, and cognitive science on the other.

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## The Art of Seeing

Having taken personal inspiration from art for decades, Margaret Livingstone, a professor of neurobiology at Harvard Medical School who works with PhD students in neuroscience, regularly includes art slides in her presentations to illustrate how vision works.

Early on, Livingstone didn't know much about art history, so she decided to brush up on the topic. While reading an art book in her office in 2000, she came across a picture of Leonardo da Vinci's *Mona Lisa* and pondered a question that has teased admirers of this masterpiece for centuries: Why is Mona Lisa's smile so elusive? "I looked at it as if I had never seen it before and noticed that the effect had something to do with where I was looking," Livingstone says. When she stared at Mona Lisa's mouth, its outline was sharp and clear, but when she gazed at the background, the lips appeared blurry.

As she was riding her bicycle one crisp fall day, she was struck by an idea: Perhaps the smile's ambiguity is caused by differences in spatial acuity between the center of gaze and the peripheral visual field. To simulate what the smile would look like to central and peripheral vision, Livingstone filtered the image to exaggerate either coarse shapes or fine features, such as lines and edges. She



Professor of neurobiology Margaret Livingstone pursues an active side interest in using “what we know about vision to understand some of the discoveries artists have made about how we see.”

found that the blurry mouth seems more cheerful than the sharp one, and so the strength of Mona Lisa’s smile depends on where the viewer looks.

A few years after logging this discovery, Livingstone traveled to Paris to find out whether equiluminance could explain the shimmering quality of the sun in *Impression, Sunrise*. During a trip to the Louvre Museum, she entered a room full of Rembrandt self-portraits and noticed that the painter’s eyes did not align properly,

suggesting that he had trouble perceiving depth. This casual observation stimulated an experimentally testable question: Is poor depth perception linked to artistic ability? “Some artists are so talented that you have to consider the possibility that there’s something about their brain that makes them better at art,” she explains.

Upon returning to the US, Livingstone piled dozens of Rembrandt self-portraits on her desk and measured his eye alignment, confirming her hunch. She later found that

established artists are more likely to have deviating eyes than the general population. Artists often close one eye to more easily portray three-dimensional scenes on flat surfaces using pictorial depth cues, such as perspective, occlusion, and shading. “If somebody already sees the world as slightly flatter, they have a built-in advantage when they’re kids that might make them tend toward wanting to become an artist from the get-go,” Livingstone says.

## Left Brain, Meet Right Brain

**Inspired by conversations** with colleagues in Cambridge, Stephen Kosslyn, Harvard’s former dean of social science and John Lindsley Professor of Psychology — and an expert on mental imagery — has organized a two-week summer workshop exploring intersections between the humanities and cognitive sciences at Stanford University’s Center for Advanced Study in the Behavioral Sciences (CASBS). Advanced graduate students and young investigators were admitted from a variety of humanistic fields, from film studies to philosophy, to explore fundamental principles of cognitive science and neuroscience and relate them to work in the humanities. “The ultimate goal is to enrich both the humanities and the sciences,” says Kosslyn, who now directs CASBS.

Participants will survey a range of topics, from perception and imagery to motivation and morality, and focus on such interdisciplinary questions as why audiences empathize with certain movie characters and how different types of music elicit distinct emotions. “If you know basic

facts about how the mind works, you can begin to understand why some pieces of art, music, and literature are more successful than others,” Kosslyn says. “I don’t think there’s going to be any shortage of possible connections between various aspects of the humanities and cognitive science and neuroscience.”

Forging these connections has become easier in recent years, says Anne Harrington, who is a co-director of the summer workshop at Stanford and a professor of the history of science at Harvard. “Neuroscience and the cognitive sciences have themselves become more expansive and interested in things that speak to intrinsic concerns of the humanities,” she says. “That makes the perceived potential for dialogue much more attractive and potentially much more constructive for a lot of people than it might have felt a generation or two ago.”

Dialogue between areas of study — engaging topics like information processing, memory, aesthetics, emotions, the unconscious, and ethics — is essential for a strong university, adds Harrington, whose most recent book is *The Cure Within: A History of Mind-Body Medicine*. “In the end we’re one academy, and over the long term the



Professor of the history of science Anne Harrington has long been interested in mind-body interactions, particularly focused on clinical treatments and outcomes.

academy can’t be as robust and can’t flourish if we set up these silos in which we burrow down and do our own work without asking about what our colleagues in the next building might know about the same phenomenon,” she says. “The most important thing going forward has to be to try to create a community in which the genuinely important insights and methods of people in both camps can be understood and respected.”

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## The Literary Brain

**By describing the way** dappled light streams through a window and falls onto a chair, or the way a man and a woman circle around one another on a dance floor, writers can evoke mental images that are almost as vivid as objects we see in front of us, creating rich sensory worlds out of nothing but black marks on a page.

As literary theorists are coming to appreciate, the effectiveness of these writerly techniques can be explored not only through the narrative itself, but through experimental research in fields such as psychology. “A lot of great thinking about the mind goes on across the University, within different disciplines,” says Elaine Scarry, the Walter M. Cabot Professor of Aesthetics and General Theory of Value, who considered questions of how literature produces rich interior imagery in her 1999 work, *Dreaming by the Book*. “There’s more and more good will toward the idea of working across disciplines” — taking research and new modes of thinking out of the silos that limit their impact.

To encourage interaction among humanists and scientists, Scarry cofounded the monthly Seminar in Cognitive Theory and the Arts in 2000, with Alan Richardson, PhD ’85, a professor of English at Boston College who published *The Neural Sublime: Cognitive Theories and Romantic Texts* in 2010. The seminar, held at Harvard’s Mahindra Humanities Center, is still going strong, attracting faculty and graduate students from neuroscience, literature, music, philosophy, and art history.

Joshua Rothman, a PhD student in the English Department, is a regular attendee who gave a talk last fall about 19th- and 20th-century novelists’ descriptions of the varying timescales of conscious experiences, from a single day to a lifetime. “Novel writing was the real psychology before there was experimental psychology,” he says. “Reading

literature tells you a lot about people — how they behave, what they’re made of, and how to think about them.”

People read fiction because they enjoy thinking about the intentions of others, says Anna Henchman, PhD ’04, an assistant professor of English at Boston University who is one of the directors of the seminar. “We can learn a lot about our mental abilities from studying texts, which are much more complex than a lot of psychological experiments.”

To understand these elaborate psychological scenarios, more literary scholars are turning to cognitive theory, including Henchman herself. For her new book, she is applying what she has learned in the seminar about theory of mind — the ability to attribute knowledge, intentions, and feelings to others — to crawl into the heads of tiny creatures, such as worms and ants, as they burrow into the ground or walk along a blade of grass. “There’s not one objective perceptual world that we as humans have access to,” she says. “We all have certain perceptual organs and certain things that we try to pay attention to in the world, and the world is constructed by those perceptual organs.”

At the same time, neuroscientists are asking questions that pertain to literary studies. For example, seminar participant Joshua Greene, an assistant professor of psychology, has used neuroimaging to examine the influence of emotions and reasoning on moral judgments, and Daniel Schacter, the William R. Kenan, Jr. Professor of Psychology, has used the same method to investigate the relationship between remembering the past and imagining the future.

“Moral conundrums are constantly explored in the arena of fiction, and acts of prediction and forecasting are at the center of what a reader does in moving through a narrative,” Henchman says. “By the end of the story, there are all these possibilities and shadow plots that have already been imagined by the reader.”

## Many Minds Together

Harvard’s Mind/Brain/Behavior Interfaculty Initiative (MBB) has brought together faculty and students from many disciplines since 1993, when then-President Neil Rudenstine called for programs that would unite scholars in the brain and mind sciences across Harvard’s schools. Co-directed by Alfonso Caramazza, a professor of psychology at FAS, and Albert Galaburda, a professor of neurology at Harvard Medical School, the MBB provides courses, seminars, lectures, and research awards and builds community for undergraduate and graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and faculty who are examining the nature of the mind using a variety of approaches, such as behavioral testing, electrophysiology, computer modeling, biochemical techniques, genetics, neuroimaging, and philosophy.

The MBB has long offered track programs and secondary fields to undergraduates, but starting this fall, a secondary field in MBB will be offered to graduate students, who “oftentimes provide the connective tissue between faculty members in different departments,” Galaburda says.

PhD students in the core MBB disciplines will be able to follow a specialized secondary field, while a general track will be offered to other graduate students. A steering committee composed of eight graduate students has led to alliances with related graduate-student groups, such as the Student Association for Law and Mind Sciences at Harvard Law School, in addition to symposia and a seminar series that have explored topics including the history of violence, moral cognition and the law, the usefulness of emotion for computer science, and complex decision making and the brain.



## ALUMNI BOOKS

### Violence Taking Place

(Stanford University Press, 2010) explores the destruction of architecture in the Kosovo War (1998–99). Author **Andrew Herscher** (PhD '02, urban planning) first surveyed the wartime damage to Kosovo's

architectural heritage for the International Criminal Tribunal. This book broadens the story, looking back to socialist urban renewal efforts beginning in the late 1940s, which razed Ottoman-era bazaars to erect modernist government buildings and apartment blocks. During the 1980s, rising tensions between Kosovo's ethnic Serbs (Orthodox) and Albanians (Muslim) led to vandalism of mosques and Orthodox churches. Herscher notes ironies in the representation of destructive acts — Serbian actions were viewed as ethnic cleansing and genocide; UN and NATO bombings, in humanitarian terms; and postwar destruction of Orthodox churches by Muslim Kosovars was largely ignored.

### Your Creative Brain: Seven Steps to Maximize Imagination, Productivity, and Innovation in Your Life

(Jossey-Bass, 2010)

is more than a typical self-help book. And its focus is far broader than the title suggests. **Shelley Carson** (PhD '01, psychology) surveys research on the brain to plumb the physiological sources of creativity and provide an

accessible introduction to synapses and neurotransmitters, brain-wave studies, imaging research that has identified functional regions of the brain, and 1960s-era studies of patients whose brain hemispheres were surgically split (to treat severe epileptic seizures). Carson

stresses that discussions of creativity are broadly applicable outside the rarified world of the Mozarts, Einsteins, and Van Goghs among us. We all can nurture and draw on creativity every day, she argues, and her book includes a variety of exercises to help do just that.

A child of Indian immigrants, **Natasha Warikoo** (EdM '97, PhD '05, sociology) has a deep interest in the process of assimilation. In **Balancing Acts** (University of California Press, 2011), she studies young second-generation immigrants in New York

and London, looking particularly at the impact of rap or hip hop culture on their academic success. Efforts to address the superficial markers of that cultural influence — to ban low-slung pants, for instance — are wrong-headed, she argues. In a conclusion that should reassure parents and grandparents (who once likely embraced musical/cultural styles that perturbed their elders), as well as the educators and policymakers she seeks to reach, Warikoo sees this youth culture identification as being peer-driven (striving to fit in with peers) rather than oppositional — and *not* intrinsically opposed to academic engagement.

In **Confederate Minds** (University of North Carolina Press, 2010),

**Michael Bernath** (PhD '05, history) recounts the Civil War effort to create a distinctly Southern literary culture. This undertaking failed on several grounds. Southern

defeat insured its political end; lack of literary talent undermined it in a practical sense. But most telling was the programmatic approach

Southern intellectuals took toward their culture-building endeavor. During wartime, partisanship too often trumps all, and wartime literature is often short-lived. The lasting writings from this conflict (e.g., Crane's *Red Badge of Courage*, Bierce's short stories) came much later, a phenomenon hardly unique to the Civil War. Yet ultimately the South achieved literary greatness, from William Faulkner to Toni Morrison — a story that could have been elaborated in the book's conclusion.

### After Evil

(Columbia University Press, 2011)

critiques U.S.-dominated human rights discourse since the end of the Cold War. **Robert Meister** (PhD '76, government) contrasts post-Cold War human rights thinking with the 1789 Declaration

of the Rights of Man. The Declaration, he argues, recognized the reality of victims and perpetrators and the need for justice, including redistributive justice. Human rights actions in recent years have aimed at halting immediate violence, without addressing underlying or preceding social injustices. Thus South Africa's post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission sought resolution through emotional catharsis, not redress involving (white) haves and (black) have-nots. Among many examples, Meister's densely argued narrative addresses the reunification of North and South after the Civil War, the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and — as its defining example — the Final Solution.



In **Impressionist Children** (Yale University Press, 2010), **Greg Thomas** (PhD '95, fine arts) examines how the French Impressionists have colored our collective vision of children and childhood.

This lavishly illustrated, large-format volume draws on the paintings of Renoir, Cassatt, Monet, Manet, Morisot, and others, with topical chapters exploring the ways in which the Impressionists portrayed children and families — in public places and private gardens, outdoors and indoors, and as little bourgeois consumers (evidently providing a ready market for dresses, dolls, jewelry, and toys of all sorts). The Impressionists, Thomas notes, played a role in making bourgeois family life the Western social ideal. Most significant, however, the Impressionists wrenched themselves free of past allegorical models (biblical, mythological) to capture children as autonomous individuals.

**Common Sense** (Harvard University Press, 2011) is a meticulously researched intellectual history. Its author, **Sophia Rosenfeld** (PhD '96, history), recounts how the concept of “common sense,” with its classical roots, emerged in the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries as a well-honed political tool. Scots and Englishmen from the northern counties were centrally important in giving common sense its bite, making it a parry against abstruse university scholasticism and a strategy for closing the distance between intellectual philosophy and the general populace. Contemporary Holland, a hotbed of radicalism, was likewise instrumental in spreading the notion. And Rosenfeld explores the influence of the best-known, most enduring call for

political common sense, Thomas Paine's 1776 pamphlet of that name. In more recent years, she concludes, common sense has had a rocky existence, linked to anti-intellectualism and simplistic, “kitchen-table” political solutions.

In 2008, some commentators pronounced that Barack Obama's election revealed a new, “post-racial” America. The essays collected in **Race in the Age of Obama** (Emerald, 2010) critique such views. This volume,

as editors **Donald Cunnigen** (PhD '88, sociology) and Marino Bruce observe, helps clarify the “contours and complexities” of race — and underscores its continuing relevance. Individual essays probe Obama's foreign policy toward Africa and initiatives in the area of college education; three essays focus on the challenges Michelle Obama faces as First Lady. Perhaps most memorable are Nadia Kim's firsthand account of her experiences as a volunteer in Obama's 2008 presidential campaign and a sobering discussion by Adam Murphree and Deirdre Royster on the depths of racial animosity expressed by contributors to conservative Web discussions.

**Philip Freeman** (PhD '94, classical philology) envisioned **Alexander the Great** (Simon & Schuster, 2011) as “first and foremost a story.” And Freeman's Alexander — tempestuous, hard-drinking, and “exceedingly fond of war, horses,

beautiful women, and handsome young boys” — leaps off the page and across the centuries. Freeman opens with a cinematic anecdote: a messenger breathlessly riding to tell Philip of

Macedonia that his horse has won the Olympics. That day Philip also learned that his troops gained a major victory and that he was father to a son, Alexander. Philip issued a decree honoring “the good news he valued above all others . . . the victory of his horse.” Alexander, of course, eclipsed his father, conquering lands from the Danube to the Upper Nile to the frontiers of India.

The World War II-era destruction of European Jewry and the postwar exodus to Israel, the United States, and elsewhere have received much scholarly attention. But **Shimon Redlich** (AM '64, regional studies, USSR) tells a story less

familiar — and equally fascinating. **Life in Transit** (Academic Studies Press, 2010) recounts the brief flowering of a postwar Jewish community in Lodz, Poland. Redlich offers both history and memoir, having lived in Lodz as an adolescent from 1945–50. With the end of hostilities, Jews returned to Lodz and created a vibrant array of community organizations, an active political life, and a strong presence in the arts. But endemic Polish anti-Semitism, the growth of Zionist organizations and sentiments, and the imposition of a Soviet-backed regime brought an end to the Lodz Jewish community.

Reviews by James Clyde Sellman, PhD '93, history

**Alumni authors:** Would you like your book (general interest, published within the past year) considered for inclusion? Send it to *Colloquy*, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138. Question? E-mail [gsaa@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:gsaa@fas.harvard.edu).

Harvard News Office



Dudley Herschbach, PhD '58; Rosalind Krauss, PhD '69

**HARVARD HONORS FOR HARVARD'S OWN**

Two alumni of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences were among the nine people awarded honorary degrees by Harvard University at its 360th Commencement, on May 26. Nobel Prize-winning chemist **Dudley Herschbach, PhD '58, chemical physics**, the Frank B. Baird Jr. professor of science *emeritus*, who has been a member of the faculty since 1963, was praised not only for his own scientific achievement, but also for his warmth and his dedication to advancing the scientific enterprise at all levels. He was awarded a Phi Beta Kappa teaching prize during the honor society's annual Literary Exercises in Sanders Theatre on May 24. Historian and theorist of 20th-century art **Rosalind Krauss, PhD '69, fine arts**, a University Professor at Columbia, was honored for helping to define the post-structuralist mode of art criticism in writings on artists from Picasso to Pollock, as well as in her work on minimalism, surrealism, and the development of photography.

**WORKING FOR THE PUBLIC GOOD**

Three GSAS students were among the first cohort of winners of Harvard's new Presidential Public Service Fellowships, established last year by President Drew Faust. Ten students won grants of up to \$5,000 for undergraduates and \$10,000 for graduate students, out of more than 100 who applied. The inaugural class of fellows includes **Evelyn Boettcher**, an AM candidate in regional studies-East Asia who hopes to expand her efforts to build a strong US-China bilateral relationship. She will serve in the US military's China Strategic Focus Group at US Pacific Command (PACOM) in Hawaii, working on the development of foreign policy as it relates to China, and the groundwork she's laid has opened the door to other Harvard students interning at PACOM. The cohort also includes **John Hulsey**, a writer, artist, and filmmaker pursuing a PhD in film and visual studies. This summer, he will work with Boston community organizations City Life/Vida Urbana, the Bank Tenants Association, and others to build a media production group that will generate performances, projections, and public actions to speak about the experience of people facing foreclosure. The final GSAS fellow for 2011 is **Tsione Wolde-Michael**, a PhD candidate in history, with a secondary field in African and African American studies, whose research interests include the intersections of gender and race, particularly as they relate to comparative nineteenth-century slavery. She will take a curatorial internship at the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, contributing to exhibitions that will connect her interest in public history to her commitment to community engagement.



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AM candidate Evelyn Boettcher



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Janet Lewis, a PhD candidate in government, interviews civilians in eastern Uganda about their experiences living near rebel militia groups. Lewis is exploring why some people become powerful insurgents in Africa and others do not. "Once they become major threats, it's much more difficult to stop them and the humanitarian costs that typically accompany them," says Lewis, who is a recipient of the Hartley R. Rogers Dissertation Completion Fellowship. To read more about Janet's research, visit [alumni.harvard.edu/colloquy/harvard-is](http://alumni.harvard.edu/colloquy/harvard-is).

**INCREASING OPPORTUNITY  
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Hartley R. Rogers '81, MBA '85

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"Harvard has a broad impact on the world, and I wanted to help advance its world-class research," says Hartley R. Rogers, who, along with his wife, Amy C. Falls, funded the Hartley R. Rogers Dissertation Completion Fellowship, an endowment administered by the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in direct partnership with the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs.

The most recent recipient is PhD student Janet Lewis, who researches insurgency and counterinsurgency in Africa.

"Africa is the last great emerging market, with potential for economic growth and development that could go a long way in alleviating human suffering," says Rogers, who has been immersed in global business ventures since 1981 and travels to Asia frequently as chair of Hamilton Lane, a private equity firm located in Pennsylvania.

"I know there is an acute need to help graduate students, and I'm delighted that my gift helps international development," says Rogers. He gives for personal reasons, too, which include his time at Eliot House and his studies as a concentrator in geology. Whether it's the memory of running An Evening with Champions, a Jimmy Fund benefit, or working alongside professors Stephen Jay Gould and John A. Wood, remembering his time at Harvard inspires Rogers to give.

"Harvard laid the foundation for a wonderful career, tremendous friends, and a formative experience like no other," he says.

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# Colloquy

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### CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

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Help GSAS recognize its most distinguished alumni through nomination for the Centennial Medal. The medal recognizes contributions to society as they have emerged from graduate study at Harvard. Past recipients include historian Bernard Bailyn, author Susan Sontag, biologist E. O. Wilson, economist Jeffrey Sachs, and historian and memoirist Jill Ker Conway.

To nominate: Submit a letter stating your reasons for selecting the candidate, marked for the Centennial Medal Nominations Committee, to [gsaa@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:gsaa@fas.harvard.edu) or GSAS Alumni Association, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138.

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Do you want to connect with Harvard's alumni services? Reconnect with the Graduate School? Learn about upcoming events, and stay on top of news about GSAS students and alumni? We invite you to make the GSAS alumni web portal your central point of connection. Access all the services and information you need here: [www.gsas.harvard.edu/alumni](http://www.gsas.harvard.edu/alumni).

### STAY IN TOUCH

  Join HarvardGSAS on Twitter and Facebook to stay connected with goings-on in Cambridge. You'll get short updates about career events, research achievements, campus happenings, and issues related to graduate research education at Harvard and across the country.

### PUBLIC SERVICE ON THE MAP



GSAS alumni, we invite you to post your public service experiences on the Harvard Alumni Association's "Public Service on the Map" website, which functions as a clearing-house of volunteer opportunities around the world — as well as a testament to Harvard's impact. Let other alumni know about the causes and organizations that are important to you. Visit [onthemap.harvard.edu](http://onthemap.harvard.edu).

### A GLOBAL PASS FOR ACCESS

Connect to the 190 Harvard Clubs that exist in more than 70 countries around the globe through the HAA's Global Pass program. Members of participating Global Pass Clubs can attend events held by any of the other participating Global Pass Clubs, on a space-available basis, and pay the local member price for that event. Learn more at [www.clubsandsigs.harvard.edu](http://www.clubsandsigs.harvard.edu).