Cultivated retreats (above): the water garden, with surrounding planters, and the vine-covered folly. A statue of Titania holds a solar-powered orb.

acter in *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis—also a Renaissance lit scholar; another statue depicts Titania, the queen of the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream.* And one of the garden's "rooms" is a white garden (based on white foliage and flowers) designed in tribute to a room at Sissinghurst Castle in Kent, England, the creation of Vita Sackville-West, a lover of one of Ilona Bell's favorite authors, Virginia Woolf.

Seeing Sissinghurst in the 1970s "was a revelation," Bell says. "The complexity of the design—each room had a different wood, tone, color scheme, architecture. In England, a garden room is an enclosed area, often surrounded by walls that can be eight or 10 feet high. Here, I've tried to create a distinctness to each area." Rather than brick walls or high clipped hedges, as at Sissinghurst, she used a pergola, for example, to separate her extensive kitchen garden from the neighboring water garden, where goldfish swim among water lilies and lotuses in a small pond piped to allow a burbling flow of water. A folly composed of a few "ruined" columns defines another space ("I call it 'Bob's folly,'" she explains, "but he calls it 'Ilona's folly.'") The wooden window, a classic garden element, helps frame the central space, and supports climbing vines.

HM▶

Visit www.harvardmag.com/extras to view a video of the literary garden.

As in many English gardens, the Bells grow various trees (including a gingko and a weeping beech), shrubs, and perennial flowers. Their "hot border" features flowers selected for their deep warm hues like red, gold, and fuchsia; Bell studs the border with annuals like canna, perilla, and red salvia to keep the heat turned up as the seasons change. The garden is constructed so that there is always something in bloom in every space. But with thousands of plants, it's challenging (despite an inventory on Bell's computer) "to keep it all in your mind—to remember what's blooming on May 1, or June 15, and how they all go together."

As someone immersed in the literary arts, Bell readily sees the garden as an art form—created in partnership with Mother Nature and involving a temporal dimension, over seasons and years. It satisfies the senses of sight, sound, touch, smell, and even taste (the Bells eat some flowers, as well as their homegrown vegetables). She has explored its dimensions in a lengthy essay, "Superego in Arcadia: Gardening as Performance," which appeared in a special issue of *The Southwest Review* in 2010. "The trouble with the garden as art," she explains, "is that as soon as you get it the way you want it, something gives up the ghost. One of our hemlocks got diseased and had to be removed—that changed *everything*."

She does have some advice, though, for those seeking a perennial philosophy. "If you want a garden to look good," she says, "you have to pay more attention to the leaves than the flowers, as they are there all season long." No matter the season, the endless project never loses its allure. "I like the imaginative complexity of the challenge it poses," she says. "There are so many elements in play."

Harvard Square, the Novel

A café-goer's view of Cambridge, a generation ago

A young exile comes to Cambridge, masters his studies, and succeeds—that's the life story, at Twitter length, of André Aciman, Ph.D. '88. An Egyptian Jew from a once-wealthy family, Aciman arrived at Harvard in 1973 to study comparative literature. More than a decade later, he earned his doctorate and launched a doubly successful career: writer or editor of eight books of fiction, essays, and memoir, and Distinguished Professor in comparative literature at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York.

His third novel, recently published, is *Harvard Square* (Norton). In its brisk and stylish prose, an Egyptian Jew from a

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onetime-wealthy family is a graduate student in Harvard's comparative literature department, obsessed with Proust and the 1678 French novel *La Princesse de Clèves*. Set in the summer of 1977, *Harvard Square* is an interwoven series of romances, with Harvard, women, and an outsider culture vying for the narrator's attention.

Caught between worlds, the narrator is friendless. At Café Algiers on Brattle Street, he meets an exile from Tunisia who's everything he's not: when Kalaj isn't driving a cab, he holds down a table in a series of Cambridge restaurants, delivering machine-gun bursts of rage that provoke men and, on a good night, attract women.

The narrator's friendship with Kalaj (a nickname shortened from "Kalashnikov,"

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

1940: FDR, Wilkie, Lindbergh, Hitler—the Election Amid the Storm, by Susan Dunn, Ph.D. '73 (Yale, $30). Some elections really *are* watersheds. Here, the indefatigable Third Century professor of humanities at Williams College extends her prior narrative, *Roosevelt's Purge* (on the president's effort during the 1938 midterm campaign to defeat party members who resisted his initiatives), with a gripping narrative of the dramatic 1940 contest for the White House.

Intuition Pumps and Other Tools for Thinking, by Daniel C. Dennett '63 (W.W. Norton, $28.95). The author, University Professor at Tufts and co-director of its Center for Cognitive Studies, presents a lay summing-up of his work as a philosopher, introducing "intuition pumps" and other devices for provoking, and providing insight into, thought.

In the Balance: Law and Politics in the Roberts Court, by Mark Tushnet, Cromwell professor of law (W.W. Norton, $28.95). A legal historian and scholar of judicial review on the Law School faculty examines the Supreme Court, as led by Chief Justice John G. Roberts Jr. '76, J.D. '79, and finds not neutral "umpiring" but a politicized jurisprudence on a politically divided court in a highly partisan era.

Sidetracked, by Francesca Gino, associate professor of business administration (Harvard Business Review Press, $25). A specialist in negotiation and decisionmaking details the obstacles—narrow focus, lack of perspective, and so on—that derail decisions, and suggests strategies for sticking to the plan.

Bioluminescence: Living Lights, Lights for Living, by Thérèse Wilson, senior research associate emerita, and J. Woodland Hastings, Mangelsdorf research professor of natural sciences (Harvard, $45). A clear explanation, beautifully illustrated, of the mechanisms and evolutionary dispersal—far beyond summer's fireflies—of one of nature's most beguiling phenomena.

The Citizen Patient, by Nortin M. Hadler, M.D. '68 (University of North Carolina, $28). A professor of medicine and microbiology/immunology and a rheumatologist, the author is a skeptic about the contemporary healthcare system and "the many perversities that characterize" it, driving up costs and clouding the doctor-patient relationship. He addresses consumers, urging them to understand the system and to envision reform for the benefit of patients.

How Everyone Became Depressed, by Edward Shorter, Ph.D. '68 (Oxford, $29.95). The Hannah professor in the history of medicine—and professor of psychiatry—at the University of Toronto examines the ever-broadening diagnosis of depression, its frequently inappropriate (in his view) treatment with antidepressants, and, he asserts, the fundamental misunderstanding of a suite of symptoms and problems in need of informed care.

Probably Approximately Correct, by Leslie Valiant, Coolidge professor of computer science and applied mathematics (Basic Books, $26.99). A scholar at the intersection of computing and evolutionary neuroscience, Valiant explores "ecorithms": algorithms that learn by interacting with their environment, not from their designer—and so are fundamental to the process of evolution. His text is clear and approachable, with some work; the argument is sweeping.

Alice Aycock Drawings, by Jonathan Fineberg '67, Ph.D. '75 (Yale, $45). The Gutgsell professor of art history emeritus at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, who also curates at various institutions, provides the analytical continuity for an exhibition catalog/book of the industrial-techno sculptor's fantastically detailed drawings.

Designed Ecologies: The Landscape Architecture of Kongjian Yu, edited by William S. Saunders (Birkhauser, $54.95). The former editor of the Graduate School of Design's *Harvard Design Magazine* here assembles expert views on, and project descriptions of, the work of Kongjian Yu, D.Dn. '95. Yu still commutes from Beijing to teach studios at the GSD; his firm, Turenscape, is perhaps the preeminent landscape enterprise in China, and he is a leading voice for environmentally sound design in a country that desperately needs a new model of urban development. His work was covered in "Global Reach" (May-June 2010, page 51).

Red Ribbon Park, along the naturally verdant Tanghe River in Qinhuangdao, Hebei Province, China, 2007

COURTESY OF KONGJIAN YU

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STU ROSNER

In his old haunts: novelist André Aciman in the center of Harvard Square

for his rapid-fire rants) is anything but a feel-good buddy story. "Perhaps he was a stand-in for who I was, a primitive version of the me I'd lost track of and sloughed off living in America," the narrator says. "My shadow self, my picture of Dorian Gray, my mad brother in the attic, my Mr. Hyde, my very, very rough draft. Me unmasked, unchained, unleashed, unfinished: me untrammeled, me in rags, me enraged. Me without books, without finish, without a green card. Me with a Kalashnikov."

Harvard Square is a book of contrasts, all brutal. An undergraduate writing her thesis on Proust comes to talk to the narrator and becomes his lover. She's any exile's dream of a trophy wife—beautiful, rich, whip smart, principled, and, of course, a WASP. Lacerated by her nobility and goodness, he ends the romance and returns to Café Algiers, where, as Aciman explains, "Kalaj teaches him how to read people—and once you can read people, you can read books."

Autobiographical? All of it. Like his narrator, Aciman was obsessed with Proust and *La Princesse de Clèves* at Harvard. Like his narrator, he was a resident tutor in Lowell House. Like his narrator, he was disabused of his illusions at Harvard. They even share the same Coop number. And as in all of Aciman's fiction, the narrator is unnamed. "If you write in the first person and use your name, it's memoir, and if you make up a name, it's fiction," Aciman says. "I write 'faction.' "

Novels occasionally pose the question: What is the truth? Because it is so autobiographical, *Harvard Square* poses that question in a way that presents the reader with an uncomfortable problem. It's not hard to sympathize with an outsider struggling to assimilate, and Aciman's narrator is doing his best; as the author says, "The story of my life is the opportunity to marry up." But assimilation and upward mobility

Visit www.harvardmag.com/extras to hear Aciman read a portion of his novel aloud.

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are rarely smooth, and the narrator often falls out of love with Harvard and dreams of going home.

Kalaj, in contrast, shares none of the narrator's ambivalence. Like the narrator, he's needy and vulnerable and oh, so lonely, but his tenderness is masked by his nonstop aggression. His hostility toward America is so transparent—"Americans are not born, they are manufactured. Ford-ersatz, Chrysler-ersatz, Buick-ersatz"—that the reader wants Aciman to call it an exaggeration and disown it. But he doesn't.

"The narrator tells you things he's not happy about, and Kalaj is even more brutally honest," Aciman says. "My writing is unusually bold—those rants of Kalaj's, I wrote them—but I write in a way that's smooth, even elegant, so you're not overwhelmed by how savage life can be."

Harvard...savage? Aciman doesn't back off. "Have I ever felt at home at Harvard, at home in America? No. But I was no more at home in Egypt. I'm an outsider who is still trying to learn how to fit in. But really, there are no insiders. Like my characters, we're all exiles." ~JESSE KORNBLUTH

COURTESY OF JOHN HUTH

John Huth navigating through a rock slot of Placentia Island in coastal Maine

How Not to Be Clueless

Navigating the smartphone world

by ISABEL W. RUANE

We're living in a smartphone world. It seems everyone's roommate, professor, kid brother, and even grandmother lives, eats, and breathes for access to 4G (and good battery life). Ask (almost) anything of (nearly) anyone at (just about) any time, and her smartphone's got the answer. Lose track of how to get to the doctor's office, forget your appointment's time, or need, indeed, to *find* a doctor, and your smartphone's got your back. It hardly seems hyperbole to designate the smartphone the most revolutionary tool for the dissemination and acquisition of knowledge since Gutenberg's storied press.

But as fun, helpful, and *indispensible* as our smartphones may seem, might they also be our biggest crutch? In his new book, Donner professor of science John Edward Huth, a high-energy physicist, argues just that.

In *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way*, Huth reexamines the post-smartphone world with an eye to the losses we have incurred in exchange for boundless information at our fingertips. The book is a fascinating guide to the "primitive" (and yet, we soon realize, incredibly sophisticated) techniques by which our forebears charted, measured, predicted, and navigated their place in space. Most important, Huth weaves through all his practical information the argument that in order to maintain touch *with* our natural world, we must relearn and retain direct understanding *of* the natural world. Humans' loss of our intrinsic, visceral connection to nature would be regrettable—and, in some cases, tragic.

Huth's story starts with kayaking. An avid paddler, he became disoriented in fog several years ago while exploring the waters around Maine's Cranberry Islands. He had neither map nor compass. Using his knowledge of primitive navigation techniques—then quite rudimentary, though well beyond the average smartphone addict's—Huth called up a mental map of the area, noted wave angles and incidences to determine where the coast lay, listened for shore-crashing waves, and counted out time as he paddled straight toward his anticipated landfall. Eventually he made it. Rattled, yet pleased with his use of general navigational techniques, Huth decided to study offshore-navigation techniques more carefully before next setting out.

Several months later, Huth again found himself paddling in fog, this time off the coast of Cape Cod. Better prepared by his study, he had noted wave, shore, wind, and sound patterns *before* setting out, and thus, when the fog hit, he navigated home without worry. But the next day, he read in the newspaper about two other Cape Cod kayakers who had not been so lucky. Sarah Aronoff, 19, and Mary Jagoda, 20, had been enveloped in the same fog; they never made it back to shore. Huth surmises that, equipped with neither compass and map nor his knowledge of navigation techniques, the young women became *truly* lost. This tragedy convinced Huth that he needed not only to study primitive navigation for himself, but to get knowledge of those techniques to the smartphone-dependent public. *The Lost Art of Finding Our Way* is dedicated to the memory of Aronoff and Jagoda in the hope that it may educate other adventurers who someday find themselves lost.

The Lost Art of Finding Our Way, by John Edward Huth (Harvard, $35)

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