

Griffin's gift also includes \$10 million to establish the Griffin professorship of business administration at Harvard Business School (from which his wife, Anne Dias Griffin, who runs a separate hedge fund, earned her M.B.A. in 1997).

FAS dean Michael D. Smith declared himself "absolutely bowled over by the generosity of Ken Griffin and his leadership to provide a truly transformational gift" for the top College priority in the capital campaign. During an interview last autumn, before the campaign launch, Smith said the aid budget had "never been put on the table" in the aftermath of the 2008-2009 financial



Kenneth C. Griffin

crisis—even as the faculty's assets decreased by \$5 billion and family need rose during the ensuing recession. But, as he said in an interview concerning Griffin's gift, he has worried continuously about "truly making our program sustainable," even at its current scale. In the statement announcing the gift, Smith declared that Griffin's philanthropic leadership "has set financial aid...on a lasting foundation," and his gift "will impact the lives of students and their families, now and for generations to come." For a complete report on the gift and its implications for FAS, see <http://www.harvardmagazine.com/aid-14>.

In other campaign-related news, the University disclosed that The Harvard Campaign has secured gifts and pledges of \$900 million since last September, when it was launched with \$2.8 billion in hand; that brings the proceeds to 57 percent of the \$6.5-billion goal. And in a March 31 message to his faculty colleagues, Dean Michael D. Smith revealed that the \$2.5-billion FAS campaign, unveiled in late October with \$1.0 billion of gifts and pledges secured, had by the end of February raised an additional \$300 million of commitments, bringing the fundraising drive to 52 percent of its target; he highlighted progress on priorities including funding faculty positions and scholarly initiatives, House renewal and other aspects of student life, and of course undergraduate financial aid. For a detailed report, see <http://www.harvardmag.com/campaign-14>. Harvard Divinity School launched its campaign as this issue went to press; for additional information, visit <http://harvardmagazine.com/topic/capital-campaign>.

THE UNDERGRADUATE

Word-upmanship

by NOAH PISNER '14

Lexiphane, *n.* [lɛk'ʃɪfən] – Last week, I overheard one editor at the *Crimson* accuse another of being a lexiphane. The accused, quick to his wit, replied that to indict someone for lexiphanicism is the surest way to confirm one's hypocrisy. Meanwhile, I surreptitiously tapped the OED app on my iPhone to find out what all of this meant. *Lexiphane*: someone who fashions ostentatious exhibition of an eclectic vernacular via uttered or indited discernments declaimed *semper sans* prudent jocosity, fatuous futility, sagacious garrulity, and sesquipedalian rodomontade to ingratiate some semblance of highfalutincy that resonates more as pleonastic philosophunculum than connatural erudition. *Lexiphane*, I read: "someone who shows off by using big words."

But I already had words to describe this kind of person: *prolix/digressive/loquacious/*

circuitous/periphrastic/circumlocutory. Actually, *b.s.er* is probably the best synonym—it's a moniker just about any Harvard student will admit to affiliate with. Masses of Latinate and French words sift upon our facts when we speak, like parmesan on a pizza slice, obfuscating the topic, draping the details. Embedded in the language of the classroom are all the anxieties and social pressure we place upon ourselves as students. We tell ourselves that if we sound smarter, schmooze smarter, then we *are* smarter. When we do not know what to say in section, on an exam, in a paper, but feel compelled to say something anyway, we turn instinctively to long words and exhausted idioms. The problem, I'd speculate, is endemic to academia, to our professors whose job, an alien observer must think, is simply to invent new words for things we've

already named. Indeed, to invent a phrase or coin some disciplinic terminology (I'm coining "disciplinic," by the way) is almost as much a rite of passage for scholars as is tenure. Very little art or effort is involved in this lexical invention, which, more often than not, simply entails the suffixation of an *-ism*, *-ic*, *-ent*, *-ium*, or *-ation*, or a combination thereof, to an old word (e.g., *boredismization*).

There's nothing inherently wrong with a lengthy or redundant word. No, the issue isn't the word, but rather it's how it's used. Once, in a seminar on Cold War art, a seemingly sheepish-looking student piped up about a recently screened film: "Though the demidocumentary's utilization of unruly display—parenthetical: cannons, fireworks, et cetera—is viscerally sensational, it fails, subjectively speaking, to arouse the amygdala." It was an Oscar-worthy performance, like watching Leo DiCaprio freeze to death in a kiddie pool. Of course, what he meant was that he thought the pyrotechnics were cool but didn't really add much to the drama.

Harvard is a place where excess language fills the void of ignorance. Walk into just about any section meeting and I guarantee you'll hear at least one of the following: *ne plus ultra*, *problematize*, *preternatural*, *diaspora*, *hagiography*, *antipodal*. We all do it (myself in-

cluded, obviously). Just as we slip into suit and tie for our interviews, we dress up our language, too. It's expected: you may wear what you like linguistically in your dorm room or with friends, but it's only considerate, in academic settings, to smarten up your language: to be a lexicaphane.

We waste words here; we toss around *sesquipedalian*, *animadversion*, and *pulchritudinous*. When used for aural appeal, pun, rhyme, rhythm, assonance, alliteration, or intended excess the use is justified. But more often than not, none of these apply. I've heard students use *tendentious* for *biased*, or *lacuna* for *gap*. Worse yet, I've had classmates who think catch-alls like *Foucauldian* and *globalization* are always applicable and sometimes interchangeable. It's pomp, dressing, self-flattery. Not an effort to be obscure, but one to be unclear.

When I began college, I aimed to add a new word to my vocabulary every day. It took at least a year before I realized that most of the words I was adding were simply clutter. I decided I would instead attempt to eliminate one word from my vocabulary every day. Not vital words, mind you, not those without synonym (*ersatz*) or those of particular association (*ligan*)—a favorite professor once said to me, “If you lose something's word, you forget that at one time it was important enough to have a word associated with it”—but rather those that signify nothing other than in-toned pretention. What follows are five more useless words I learned at Harvard, words I have tried—but failed miserably—to forget.

Ivoriate, v. [*'aɪvəri'eɪt*] – Why was I shopping a Bronze Age archaeology seminar my first semester at Harvard? I don't really remember. I had probably just followed an older, attractive female grad student through the Peabody.... Anyway, there I was, learning about my Greco-Roman blind spots

from an anthropology professor, as the oldest teaching fellow I'd ever seen clicked through a manual slide show of various clay containers set against white backdrops. Pots, pots, pots slid across the slides. Disinterested and disengaged, I waited for the first hour to be over before trying to leave. That's one of those unspoken rules for shopping seminars in shopping week. I knew it. My peers knew it. The septuagenarian with clicker knew it. And yet, as I stood up, the professor, breaking custom, turned to me, grimaced, and said, “The *xoana* are up next.” I wasn't sure what to do so I stood by the door as the TF clicked to another slide, revealing a gold-plated plank set atop a pedestal. “A *xoanon*,” the professor continued, “was an early idol of a god—planks to begin with, but as men became more prideful, they metallicized and ivoriated them....” *Ivoriate*? I thought to myself. *Does he mean “to cover in ivory”*? Sure enough, the next slide was an ivory-plated statue. *Well okay then*. I had had enough. The professor ended by

talking about anthropomorphism, about an epoch of primitivity wrecked by vainglory and superciliousness. After an hour, my legs sore, I left.

Desideratum, n. [*dɪˌsɪdə'reɪtəm*] – “Let's look at your desiderata,” said the interviewer as I hunched in a chair. “We're looking for a candidate with integrity and a good knowledge of HTML.” I thought, for a moment, about how best to respond. “But in fact,” he went on, “HTML is vital.”

Overwrought, adj. [*'oʊvə(r)'rɒt*] – One of the very first short stories I ever wrote was about a boy on the bank of a lake who laments his lost youth and then gets into a fight with a prehistoric fish. I took the story to my fiction-writing class, where a fellow student began our discussion of it by saying, “It's lovely writing, but the concept is a bit *overwrought*.” Her well-meant intent was to soften the curse of calling it clichéd. The problem was that *overwrought* became the signifier of cliché in any of our work thereafter. “The dream component is rather *overwrought*,” someone would say. “Are you *overwrought* to be ironic?” another would ask. I love my classmates for their sensitivity and encouragement, but I hate *overwrought*.

Anagnorisis, n. [*ˌænəg'nɒrɪsɪs*] – I have a friend who tells me she's been waiting for *anagnorisis*. She tells me that's what she originally thought college was for—as Aristotle defined it in *Poetics*: “A change from ignorance to knowledge, producing love or hate between the persons destined by the poet for good or bad fortune.” She tells me now that she's not so sure that's what she means, but that she'll use the word anyway because she hasn't found one closer to what she does mean. “I'm waiting for something like *anagnorisis*,”



she says. "That undiscoverable moment of discovery, I guess." When she first told me this, we were sipping coffee in the Lowell House courtyard, which we've been doing recently at the end of especially stressful days. "What are you waiting for?" she asked. I had thought about it, of course, and so I told her quite candidly: "For me, it's kind of like opening a closed door. It's got nothing to do with what's behind a door, it's just the opening of a door itself, the motion." I told her it was like that moment right before you eat really warm pie, or when you let up on your brakes when riding your bike down a hill.

"It's the moment right before the door opens," I said.

"That's it," she said. "That's what I mean by *anagnorisis*!"

Acropodium, *n.* [*'ækroʊ'pɒdiəm*] – There is a man down Brattle Street who pretends to be a statue. I've seen him when I go running. He dresses up like a Revolutionary War soldier, paints himself silver, stands stock still on top of a rectangular box, watches admirers gather around, and hopes they throw a few coins into his cup. Recently I've started to wonder what would happen if, seeking even more coins and more admirers, he practices standing still longer and longer until one day he stands perfectly still—and no one notices him.

The worry hangs about me most days like flies on a horse, but especially so now, thinking as I have been about those *xoana* I heard about in that archaeology class. As I read later, they were simple wooden idols that the Greeks gradually began to re-sculpt into humanoid forms until the beautiful wood structures underneath were all but forgotten. To be plank-like isn't enough, it turns out. Simplicity is demanded, but immediately forgotten. A xo-

anon can no longer be a plank; the statue man can no longer be still. Our language mustn't be ours.

In the first draft of this column, I included the statue man under *ivoriate*. I showed that draft to my roommate. "Don't say *rectangular box*," he said. "Say *acropodium*." ▽

Berta Greenwald Ledecy Undergraduate Fellow Noah Pisner '14 recently finished his senior thesis, in which he used enumerate 39 times.

SPORTS

Speed to the Maks

Distance runner Maksim Korolev's record-breaking year

WHEN cross-country star Maksim Korolev '14 was a sophomore, he read a *Crimson* article in which basketball star Keith Wright '12 explained why he'd picked Harvard, which had never won an Ivy title, over perennial powerhouse Princeton. When a Princeton coach urged Wright to go there, citing the Tigers' rich basketball history, Wright replied, "I don't want to be

part of history. I want to *make* history."

That declaration mirrored Korolev's own reasoning. "I really liked [it]," the heavily recruited Missouri all-state runner says now. "And Harvard cross-country and track were real underdogs. Cross-country had been getting very poor results. But they were starting to come around." For example, Dan Chenoweth '11 (see "Hotfoot," November-December 2010, page 69) had just captured Harvard's first Ivy League cross-country championship in 15 years. "I was excited to be part of that," Korolev explains.

"Maks," as his teammates call him, has not only been part of that turnaround but has made some history of his own. Last fall, the *Crimson* qualified to compete at the NCAA cross-country championships for the first time in 35 years. Korolev finished third overall with a time of 29:59.5 over the 10-kilometer course, the highest such finish in Harvard history. He'd earlier posted an Ivy record time at the fall Heps while winning the conference title on an 8K course.

Indoors, at the Terrier Invitational in Boston in January, Korolev ran the 5K in 13:42.56, shattering the *Crimson* record of 13:59.35 by nearly 17 seconds.



Maksim Korolev running last fall in the NCAA Cross-Country Regionals at Van Cortlandt Park in the Bronx.