

neer Bill Monroe called “the high, lonesome sound”—but even the obviously contemporary works like “Always Do” seem instantly familiar. The richly textured arrangements build into a warm, enveloping sound that invites listeners in.

The musicians balance tour commitments with outreach to radio stations, booking agents, and producers; they plan to release a second, full album later this year. “Especially in Nashville,” Shirey says, “you get sold this myth of getting discovered.” As O’Connor puts it, “We try to take as much as we can into our own hands.” Wisewater is named for an imaginary ocean, on a made-up map, that he drew during a childhood Tolkien phase. Now, two more people share in that dream, and they’ll chart the course together. ~SOPHIA NGUYEN

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Harvard Art Museums’ installation and film series by Jesse Aron Green ’02 harvardmag.com/green-15



Empathy and Imagination

What animals can teach us

by NELL PORTER BROWN

ONLY THE ANIMALS, by Ceridwen Dovey ’03, is a beautifully wrought, disconcerting collection of stories told by the souls of dead animals. A cat is picked off by a sniper on the Western Front; a blue mussel drowns in Pearl Harbor; a courageous tortoise is launched into Soviet-era space; and a self-mutilating parrot is abandoned in Beirut amid the 2006 Israeli air strikes. Yet Dovey lightens and layers these tales with humor, imagination, and an ingenious literary construct. Most of the animals are connected to writers—Colette, Jack Kerouac, and Gustave Flaubert, among others—who have featured animals in their own fiction, and can emulate their literary voices. (The Kerouacian mussel saying good-bye to a friend: “We didn’t understand but we let him go, hurtling, as the flames of a hot red morning played upon the masts of fishing smacks and danced in the blue wavelets beneath the barnacled

docks.”) Thus, what Dovey says began as “an experiment” in retelling historic incidents of mass suffering through voiceless, vulnerable beings “to shock readers into radical empathy” became, instead, “this weird mix of short story, literary biography, and essay—with lots of details that are true to life—and then also a sort of love-letter tribute to these authors who fascinate me.”

Published last year in Australia (Dovey lives in Sydney), *Only the Animals* elicited a helpful blurb from J.M. Coetzee, along with several awards; it was due out in the United Kingdom in August and Farrar, Straus and Giroux will release the American edition on September 15.

Some of the book’s themes—conflict, abuse of power, and the amorphous origins of cruelty, inspiration, and empathy—also surface in Dovey’s very different debut novel, *Blood Kin* (2007). Set in a nameless country during a military coup, the slim, edgy

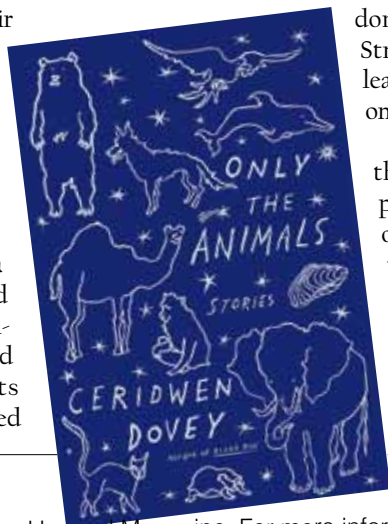
Ceridwen Dovey



COURTESY OF CERIDWEN DOVEY

book mines the complexities of collusion, with an undercurrent of danger and eroticism, through the first-person accounts of the ex-president’s barber, cook, and portraitist, all of whom are imprisoned at a remote country estate.

No doubt Dovey draws from her childhood in apartheid-era South Africa. There was, she says, “a sense of being complicit [in the system] at some level because your



A Magnet for Old Men

Alexandra Petri '10 has been funny as an amateur (a co-writer of two Hasty Pudding Theatricals, a writer for *On Harvard Time*, and a Class Day Ivy Orator) and professionally (as the ComPost opinion columnist for *The Washington Post*). In a self-important era, her humor is winningly self-deprecating. It now assumes longer form in *A Field Guide to Awkward Silences* (New American Library, \$25.95). From the sixth chapter, about an unusual older acquaintance who shares Petri's passion for the stage:

I have a strange affinity for old men. Not "older men," the type who are fortyish but still in their prime, men like Mr. Big, who notice that you are stumbling along the sidewalk and stop their limousines....

No, not older men—*old men*. I must exude an oddly specific musk, like mothballs and racism.

I guess you could say this is my superpower. I can't fly or freeze things with my breath...but I can summon elderly men from great distances. For instance, every Monday afternoon for months, I managed to attract visits from an octogenarian named Mr. Oliver.

Mr. Oliver and I met laboring under the same misconception. My high-school history teacher had telephoned me and insinuated that Mr. Oliver would "get me on Broadway." As an aspiring playwright, I thought this sounded amazing! Eagerly I awaited the arrival of this Mr. Oliver, whom I pictured as some kind of old-timey theater magnate, chomping a large cigar. "It ain't Noël Coward," he would say, perusing my first script, "but I think it's the real Tabasco, kid!"

Instead, what I saw when I came down to the lobby of the Post was an old man wearing shorts with a Band-Aid over his forehead at a rakish angle. He was carrying a large bag of old newspaper clippings.

"I hear you're going to get me onto Broadway," he greeted me.

It took us several meetings to sort out this confusion, and by then it was too late. We had gotten into the habit, and, more important, the lady at the front desk had become convinced that he was my long-lost grandfather and would buzz me immediately whenever he showed up....

Mr. Oliver turned out to be quite an accomplished gentleman. A retired lawyer, he had written dozens of plays, one about Hitler (a light comedy entitled "How Much Time Do We Have?!"), one about a happy housewife who talked some sense into Simone de Beauvoir, and another one about how, as far as he can recollect, everyone in his college fraternity was gay but no one thought anything of it at the time.

The basic plot of the Hitler play was... *Springtime for Hitler* but not on purpose.

privilege is conferred through the pain other people are experiencing. But you were too young to have been held fully accountable." Her parents, Teresa Dovey, a pioneering scholar of Coetzee's works, and Kenneth Dovey, an educational psychologist, were politically active. Political and personal reasons led the family to shuttle between South Africa and Australia five times between 1982 and 1987. By 1995 apartheid had ended, and the Doveys took sabbaticals in Sydney. When the time was up, however, Dovey and her sister—Lindiwe Dovey '01, now an African film and culture scholar, teacher, and filmmaker in London—were so happy at school that they chose to stay on, alone. "It was a very brave decision for my parents to make," she says. "They came and visited whenever they could. We were not abandoned at all."

At Harvard, she concentrated in visual and environmental studies and anthropology, and for her senior thesis made a documentary film, *Aftertaste*, about changes in labor relations and cultures on South African "wine farms." After graduation she moved to Cape Town, where she wrote *Blood Kin*, which was first published by Penguin South Africa. She returned to the United States for graduate studies in social anthropology at New York University, earned a master's but left without a doctorate, then eloped in 2009 with her now-husband, Blake Munting, and moved back to Sydney, where their son, Gethin, was born in 2012. (They are expecting another child by the end of the year).

Writing has always been among Dovey's "creative outlets." She has actually completed eight novels (six of which, in her mind, don't merit publication), but, despite positive reviews for *Blood Kin*, she continued to work as an environmental researcher and on ethnographic film projects until *Only the Animals*, which she readily calls "a strange book," was published. "I never expected that. I was writing characters that were dead animals," she



explains, “and had no idea if I had gone completely nuts.” Rising confidence, along with a growing preference for the solitude and autonomy that literary art affords, led her to commit to writing full-time last year, including freelance nonfiction for *The New Yorker*’s blog.

Motherhood also played a role: “It made me more grateful for the time I have to write,” she adds—and ultimately more creative, especially while finishing *Only the Animals* in 2013. The nature of pregnancy, nursing, and caring for a newborn intensified her kinship with “the whole family of mammals.”

The book’s title stems from the work of Boria Sax: “What does it mean to be human? Perhaps only the animals can know.” Like Coetzee, Sax, an author and academic best known for his writings on animal-human relations, has influenced Dovey, who also admits to feeling “bewildered to the point of inaction in terms of the ethical responsibilities we have toward animals and the obligations we owe them as the dominant species on earth. We treat animals in the most appalling ways right now.”

Chapter & Verse

Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Aron Golberg requests a source for “I don’t mind your thinking you are a poached egg, as long as you don’t make me sit on pieces of hot buttered toast.” He notes that “the first few words may be in error, but the rest is accurate.”

David Rigney hopes someone can provide a source (Gandhi has been suggested) and original wording for the assertion, “Always act in such a way as to not reduce the self-respect of the opponent.”

“...this is supernuts” (May-June). Daniel Rosenberg located an attribution to the mathematician Richard Courant in a June 4, 2000, *New York Times* article, “There’s One Born Every Minute,” by the same Ed Regis who wrote *Who Got Einstein’s Office*.

“A generalization is useful” (July-August). Bernard Witlieb identified one potential—but less elegantly phrased—source, tracked down not in a work by Henry James but in his brother William’s lecture series published as *The Variety of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. The relevant text, from “Lecture X: Conversion,” states, “One must know concrete instances first; for, as Professor [Louis] Agassiz used to say, one can see no farther into a generalization than just so far as one’s acquaintance with particulars enables one to take it in”—suggesting Agassiz as the original source.

Send inquiries and answers to “Chapter and Verse,” *Harvard Magazine*, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138 or via e-mail to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.

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Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

Imperial Gamble: Putin, Ukraine, and the New Cold War, by Marvin Kalb, Murrow professor of practice emeritus (Brookings Institution, \$29). Amid other geopolitical concerns, it is easy to overlook Ukraine. Kalb explains the history leading to the current conflict; keeping the current confrontation “cold” might be a fortunate outcome, in a fraught part of the world.

Two more takes on the world and management of its perceived trouble spots: **The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire**, by Susan Pedersen '81, Ph.D. '89, RI '95 and '03 (Oxford, \$34.95). A sweeping global history of the League of Nations and the “mandates” (World War I territorial conquests) that it oversaw, as the modern world took shape—up to the resumption of global war.



The author is professor of history at Columbia. **Kissinger's Shadow: The Long Reach of America's Most Controversial Statesman**, by Greg Grandin (Metropolitan Books, \$28). A critical interpretation, by a New York University historian, argues that Henry A. Kissinger '50, Ph.D. '54, as national security adviser to President Richard Nixon, created a militarized, imperial presidency. The book opens with a stark confrontation with former Harvard colleagues over the U.S. invasion of Cambodia.

The Graduate School Mess, by Leonard Cassuto, Ph.D. '89 (Harvard, \$29.95). A Fordham professor of English—one of those humanities fields afflicted with long times to the Ph.D., vanishing academic job prospects, antiquated requirements, etc.—draws attention to universities' relative inattention to an ethic of teaching and preparation of students for life, likely largely *outside* the research university.

Leadership: Essential Writings by Our Greatest Thinkers, edited by Elizabeth D. Samet '91 (W.W. Norton, \$35). The newest Norton anthologist, a professor of English at West Point (and faculty adviser to Army Baseball), draws incredibly widely (from Virgil and Lao Tzu to Eugene Debs and Zadie Smith) to illuminate the essential tasks of leadership: from studying a system to cultivating trust—and beyond.

Frederick Law Olmsted: Plans and Views of Public Parks, edited by

Charles E. Beveridge '56, Lauren Meier, M.L.A. '83, and Irene Mills (Johns Hopkins, \$74.95). Beveridge, the preeminent Olmsted scholar (and editor of his collected *Papers*, working here

Top: View from Longwood Bridge (1920) along the Olmsted-redesigned Muddy River, Boston and Brookline.
Bottom: 1867 plan for “Fort Green or Washington Park, in the city of Brooklyn,” New York

with colleagues on the project) gathers in a sumptuous, gorgeous volume the designs that defined what made many American cities great, and livable.

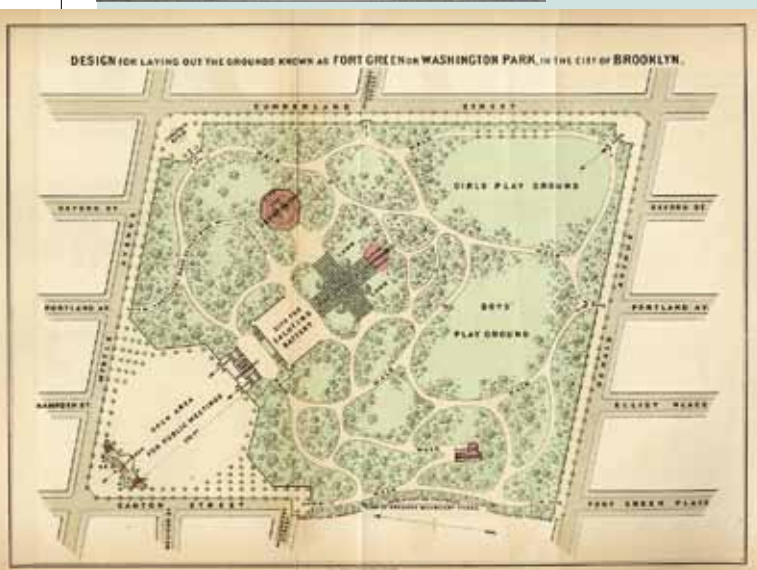
Climate Shock: The Economic Consequences of a Hotter Planet, by Gernot Wagner '02, Ph.D. '07, and Martin L. Weitzman, professor of economics (Princeton, \$27.95). The Environmental Defense Fund's lead senior economist and a Harvard professor explain, in lay terms, why uncertainty about the degree of global warming, and the possibility of catastrophic change, ought to induce action, much as one would insure against any other kind of risk. In **Harness the Sun** (Beacon Press, \$32), Philip Warburg '77, J.D. '85, past president of the Conservation Law Foundation, makes the case for solar power as a mainstream solution.

All the Wild That Remains, by David Gessner '83 (W.W. Norton, \$26.95). A nature writer immerses himself in the lives and visions of Edward Abbey and Wallace Stegner, two writers who conjured the modern West, in radically different ways.

Beethoven's Symphonies: An Artistic Vision, by Lewis Lockwood, Peabody professor of music emeritus (W.W. Norton, \$29.95). The leading Beethoven scholar introduces each symphony in turn, presenting them as “individual works of art” placed in the context of their “historical, biographical, and creative origins.”

The Rise of the Right to Know, by Michael Schudson, Ph.D. '76 (Harvard, \$29.95). An examination of “Politics and the Culture of Transparency, 1945-1975” (the subtitle), by a Columbia journalism professor, emphasizes the relative infancy of the right to know, from the Freedom of Information Act to fuller disclosure on product labels and environmental-impact statements.

Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature, by Alva Noë, Ph.D. '95 (Hill and Wang, \$28). Lest the intersection of art and philosophy seem daunting, the author, professor of philosophy at Berkeley (where he also works on cognitive science), writes with brilliant clarity about the intersec-



AT LEFT, TOP: COURTESY OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE, FREDERICK LAW OLNSTED NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
BOTTOM: PLAN FROM DESIGN FOR LAYING OUT GROUNDS KNOWN AS FORT GREEN OR WASHINGTON PARK, IN THE CITY OF BROOKLYN, 1867 COURTESY OF THE PROSPECT PARK ALLIANCE

tion of the scientific (why can humans see much from such limited neural data?) and artistic (why do humans see so little) perspectives. Stimulating throughout.

Car Safety Wars: One Hundred Years of Technology, Politics, and Death, by Michael R. Lemov, LL.B. '59 (Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, \$85). In a year of record recalls of exploding air bags, a consumer-product-safety lawyer reviews the history of automotive design and regulation.

My Beautiful City Austin, by David Heymann, M.Arch. '88 (John Hardy Publishing, \$24). The author, an architect and University of Texas professor of that craft, here writes seven stories about a young practitioner who cannot dissuade clients from rotten decisions—hence, as the first tale puts it, “the scar tissue of a city.”

After Nature: A Politics for the Anthropocene, by Jedediah Purdy '97 (Harvard, \$29.95). On a planet increasingly shaped by human action (climate change, industrial emissions laid down in geographical strata), Duke's Everett professor of law explores how to proceed in an era where people and nature, far from being separate, are increasingly one and the same.

Birth, Death, and a Tractor, by Kelly Payson-Roopchand '92 (Down East Books, \$24.95). From Somerville, Maine, “Connecting an Old Farm to a New Family,” as the subtitle puts it, from the early 1800s to the arrival of newcomers in 2008. **The Point of Vanishing: A Memoir of Two Years in Solitude**, by Howard Axelrod '95 (Beacon Press, \$16 paperback), is a differently situated (Vermont) northern New England memoir, by an occasional contributor to these pages, who focuses on cultivation of the self, rather than the land.

Married Sex: A Love Story, by Jesse Kornbluth '68 (Open Road, \$12.99 paper). A Manhattan divorce lawyer, his wife (a Barnard dean), and lover. A first novel by the cultural counselor who created Head Butler (see “Passionate Concierge, September-October 2006, page 21).

Yet *Only the Animals* is apolitical. It engenders empathy, shame, and sadness, but also wonder at these spirited creatures. They face what life and death bring with enviable presence of mind and body, as visceral beings. “What choice did she have,” asks the parrot in Beirut, “but to hook my cage to the awning overhead and leave as quietly as she could, before I realized I was alone?”

“I am very aware that we are all creatures who suffer together, and that existence is hard for us all,” Dovey reflects. “There is something, also, about the bond we have

with animals, the care and connection that we don't appreciate or see the magic in as much as we should.” Animal guides, she points out, have graced children's literature throughout the world. “They are like oracles, there at our very earliest attempts to build empathy and imagination.” And that takes work, she says: those capacities “do not come automatically, in the sense that cruelty is a failure of the imagination. Something happens in reading through these animal guides that is very tied up in what it means to be a good human being.”

Mathematics from the Inside Out

A practitioner on the human enterprise of pure mathematics

by AVNER ASH

IN 1940, in the shadow of World War II, G.H. Hardy, one of the great mathematicians of the twentieth century, published a short book called *A Mathematician's Apology*. Hardy argued that the great bulk of higher mathematics—and in particular his branch of it, number theory—while useless, derives its worth from its enduring truth and beauty.

Hardy was dogmatic in his thinking and style. For example, here is what he said about his own endeavor in writing his book:

If then I find myself writing, not mathematics but “about” mathematics, it is a confession of weakness, for which I may rightly be scorned or pitied by younger and more vigorous mathematicians. I write about mathematics because, like any other mathematician who has passed sixty, I have no longer the freshness of mind, the energy, or the patience to carry on effectively with my proper job.

The world is now much changed. Advanced number theory is crucially applied to cryptology, enabling, among other things, fairly secure transmission of credit card, financial, and other data over the Internet—and presumably the spying activities of the National Security Agency. The

attachment to Truth and Beauty felt by Hardy has been shaken to its foundations by postmodern thought.

It is high time for Michael Harris's book, *mathematics without apologies*. Note, for starters, the lack of capital letters in the title. Harris, also a great mathematician past the age of 60 (he is a professor at Columbia and the Université Paris Diderot), has written a very interesting, very peculiar, and very timely essay on the “what” and “why” of pure mathematics.

Unless you are also a mathematician, you are not likely to have much understanding of the inner professional life of a mathematician, even if you have studied the subject for many years in school. Why is that? And should you care? If you do care, then this book may help explain why the essence of mathematics is so foreign to most people, how the practice of mathematics feels to the working research mathematician, and what attracts mathematicians to their work.

By mixing memory and desire with mathematics, Harris has provided fresh responses to all the standard questions: “What do mathematicians do, actually?”

mathematics without apologies: portrait of a problematic vocation, by Michael Harris, Ph.D. '77 (Princeton, \$29.95)