

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

Silent Sparks: The Wondrous World of Fireflies, by Sara Lewis '75, RI '90 (Princeton, \$29.95). The author, an evolutionary biologist at Tufts, appropriately begins this profusely illustrated book, about the magical creatures that first lured many a child to science, with a preface titled "Confessions of a Scientist Enraptured." Her informed, enthusiastic guide to "the best-loved insects on Earth" is reason enough to look forward to summer nights.

Labor of Love: The Invention of Dating, by Moira Weigel '06 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26). Turning from insect to human courting: The author, now dissertating at Yale, examines the public and private management of love and sex since the late 1800s. Melding a feminist perspective with historical and economic contexts and her appealing personal insights, the book proceeds from the pang of realizing that "dating itself often feels like the worst, most precarious form of contemporary labor: an unpaid internship."

On Being Human: Why Mind Matters, by Jerome Kagan, Starch professor of psychology emeritus (Yale, \$35). Essays by the developmental psychologist raise fundamen-

Male blue ghost fireflies (*Phasis reticulata*) weave glowing paths in the forest as they search for wingless females.

tal questions with observations that are winningly accessible and clear. For example: "Some biologists are certain that research will eventually reveal direct links between particular genes and equally particular talents, mental illnesses, and personality traits. This hope is overly optimistic."

How to Grow Old, by Marcus Tullius Cicero, translated by Philip Freeman, Ph.D. '94 (Princeton, \$16.95). You think you have it bad? Cicero, in his sixties, was twice-divorced, had lost his daughter, and been pushed from public life by Julius Caesar, as Freeman, a classicist at Luther College, notes in his sprightly introduction to this translation of *De Senectute*. Among the "ancient wisdom" on later life that it offers, he notes, are sensible lessons on exercising the mind and on liberating oneself from the excessive youthful focus on sensuality.

The Path, by Michael Puett, Klein professor of Chinese history, and Christine Gross-Loh, Ph.D. '01 (Simon & Schuster, \$24.99). Drawing upon Ethical Reasoning 18, a General Education course that immerses students in the wisdom of Confucius, Mencius, et al., the authors suggest that ancient Chinese philosophers have much to teach about living a good life today. In an age of raucous self-assertion, the idea that influence can stem from self-restraint might come to have viral appeal.

The Big Picture, by Sean Carroll, Ph.D. '93 (Dutton, \$28). Proceeding along a different path from the ancient sages, Carroll, a theoretical physicist and cosmologist at Caltech, begins at the beginning ("We are small, the universe is big"), and proceeds to explore "the hardest problem of all, that of how to construct meaning and values in a cosmos without transcendent purpose." Note to publicists: the book may be too modestly titled.

5 Easy Theses, by James M. Stone '69, Ph.D. '73 (Houghton Mifflin, \$24.99). During an especially loud, unilluminating election campaign, a former financial regulator and insurance executive outlines "commonsense solutions" to "obviously consequential problems"—keeping Social Security solvent, delivering affordable healthcare, and so on. Of course, as those problems loom larger, "it seems that our politics become smaller." But Stone, summoning Adam Smith, remains hopeful.

Economics Rules: The Rights and Wrongs of the Dismal Science, by Dani Rodrik, Ford Foundation professor of international political economy (W.W. Norton, \$27.95). An economist, concerned that his peers "do a bad job of presenting their science to others," reveals the field's "large and evolving variety of frameworks, with different interpretations of how the world works" and diverse policy implications. The rap (that economics is a "single-minded paean" to markets and self-interest) is self-inflicted, he tells practitioners and lay readers alike.

Inside Ethics, by Alice Crary '89 (Harvard, \$49.95). A philosophy professor now at the New School critiques approaches to ethics, and explores the use of moral imagination. The subsequent applications, particularly focusing on the moral kinship of humans and animals, may prove more accessible to lay readers or those concerned with the issues apart from philosophic theory.

When We Are No More, by Abby Smith Rumsey '74, Ph.D. '87 (Bloomsbury, \$28). The subtitle ("How digital memory is shaping our future") suggests some of the tensions this archivist and historian explores. In an era of information overload and evanescent storage technologies, the future emphatically isn't what it used to be.

Emblems of the Passing World, by Adam Kirsch '97 (Other Press, \$24.95). The poet and critic, a contributing editor to this magazine, attempts the audacious: crafting poems to accompany August Sander's austere portraits from Weimar Germany. The results range from just right ("After so many decades in the sun,/The man of the soil begins to look like soil—") to qui-



COURTESY OF LESLEY LEE FRANCIS



Grandpa Robert Frost with Lesley Lee (left) and Elinor, circa 1941-42

etly devastating ("Cities are destroyed by fire/And rise again;/Conquering armies melt away,/Hemorrhaging men;...").

You Come Too: My Journey with Robert Frost, by Leslie Lee Francis '52 (University of Virginia, \$34.95). The iconic poet's granddaughter illuminates his life and work in a family memoir.

Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War, by Viet Thanh Nguyen, RI '09 (Harvard, \$24.95). A novelist turns to criticism and cultural inquiry to reveal how it is that "all wars are fought twice, the first time on the battlefield, the second time in memory." The conflict in question, of course, is the one that engaged his two countries; that it is known as both the Vietnam War and the American War makes the point bluntly.

Approval Junkie: Adventures in Caring Too Much, by Faith Salie '93 (Crown, \$27). The gold stars on the cover say it all. As the television and radio host and actor amusingly notes, her craving for approval "kept my high school GPA very high. It's kept my BMI somewhat low." But there is a serious point lurking. Accept your flaws? "You should probably do that if you can."

The William Hoy Story, by Nancy Churnin '78, illustrated by Jez Tuya (Whitman, \$16.99). As the National Pastime resumes, children and adults will enjoy this charming picture book about a deaf Major Leaguer who excelled in center field and at stealing bases. The Dallas-based author is a Rangers fan.

SOLUTIONS TO FIVE OF AMERICA'S MOST PRESSING ECONOMIC ISSUES, FROM HEALTHCARE TO EDUCATION TO INEQUALITY

For more information visit fiveeasytheses.com

#5EasyTheses



"Smart, thoughtful, clearly very informed—yet absolutely accessible. It can be difficult to strike this balance, but Stone has caught it exactly."

Rebecca Henderson
University Professor, Harvard Business School

"An extraordinarily impressive and important book. Stone is smart, balanced, and sensible. His analysis is penetrating, logical and powerful, without ideological spin. You don't have to agree with all of his proposals to realize his book's value to politicians, policymakers, and citizens everywhere."

Norman Ornstein
Resident Scholar, American Enterprise Institute

"Five Easy Theses sets out key issues of public policy easy to identify in concept but long unresolved in practice. Stone proposes sensible approaches to breaking the long-standing political deadlock. The specific measures should provide a guide for constructive debate as we choose our next president."

Paul A. Volcker
Former Chairman of the Federal Reserve and current Chairman of the Volcker Alliance

Established 1883

LEAVITT & PEIRCE

1316 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-547-0576
info@leavitt-peirce.com



FRESHMAN SMOKER

Reprint of lithographer Close, Graham & Scully's 1911 depiction of Harvard "club life" and its "price to pay." Reprinted on heavy matte stock. 34 1/16" x 19 1/16". \$39.95 (plus S&H). Shipped tubed.



JOHN HARVARD BOOKEND

Antiqued brass over zinc. 7" h x 4" w x 6" d. Over 5 pounds each. \$175 (plus S&H). USA made, exclusively for Leavitt & Peirce. Price is per bookend.

We're now online at
www.leavitt-peirce.com
online shop, store history and more



HARVARD TERCENTENARY MAP

Harvard recaptured in this famous Tercentenary map by Edwin J. Schruers '28. Painstakingly reproduced on quality "antique" stock 33 5/8" x 24 1/4". \$39.95 (plus S&H). Shipped tubed.