Then came more cheerful assignments: the madcap sitcom *Community* and a children's program, *Tumble Leaf.* Other projects were a crowd-founded video game and a music video for a band from his hometown, Tucson—small, handcrafted passion projects.

But Reckart always dreamed of working big. Raised on crowd-pleasers like *Jurassic Park* and *Honey, I Shrunk the Kids,* he aspired to enter the studio system and make the kind of movie that opens wide. He got his chance when Sony Pictures Animations recruited him to direct a computer-animated Nativity story about a donkey. "Animals in animation will never go away," observes Reckart. "Because animation's expensive and time-consuming, if you're going to make a movie in animation, oftentimes your question is, 'Why are you using animation to tell this?' *Because the animals talk.* That's a very clean, clear, obvious answer." They're also broadly relatable, he adds: "The nice thing about animals is that they represent this middle ground between adults and children."

The Star will come out in November 2017, and beyond that horizon, Reckart seems open to anything. He expresses interest in television, or working in live action. Compared to stop-motion, the latter is gratifyingly quick. His live action short (which is premiering at the 2016 Austin Film Festival in October) took two days to shoot, he marvels: "You can spend two days on *one shot* in animation." The trade-off is control. "In animation they use this word, 'iteration,'" he explains. "You can have a character design, and get another draft, and get another draft, and keep sending notes, and perfecting it, perfecting it, until you get the perfect thing. And in live action, it's like, 'Uh, here's what we've got. Do you want the red one or the blue one? If you wanted a purple one, too bad. We've got red and blue.'" Fitting, then, that *Grand Opening* follows a married couple on their restaurant's lackluster first day—a fable, says Reckart, about making the best of imperfect circumstances. Or, perhaps, about labors of love.

Reckart animated a surreal scene starring the stop-motion character Ice Cube Head for the final season of Community (above), and the fateful hallway encounter (top) in Anomalisa. That film's puppets (right)—including 18 versions of protagonist Michael and six of his love interest, Lisa (center)—were made with a 3-D printer.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: CHRIS "TOOTS" TOOTELL/COURTESY OF STARBURNS INDUSTRIES; COURTESY OF STARBURNS INDUSTRIES; © 2015 PARAMOUNT PICTURES/ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Lines of Friendship

Poet Jean Valentine on her career and literary companions

by LYDIALYLE GIBSON

"HAVE YOU EVER been to AWP?" Jean Valentine '56, RI '68, asks, almost out of the blue. "Oh, it's wonderful!" This comes toward the end of an interview about the peaks and valleys of a literary career. Hers encompasses 13 books of poetry—the first, *Dream Barker,* won the Yale Younger Poets prize in 1965; the most recent, *Shirt in Heaven,* appeared in 2015 to delighted reviews—and numerous awards, as well as 30 years of teaching. But at the end of the hour, the 82-year-old poet hits upon the happy subject of the annual conference and book fair for the Association of Writers and Writing Programs, an event that draws more than 12,000 participants. "You go there," she says, "and you have a sense of being 'among,' of being in a nation of hope."

Valentine knows the hunger for literary companions. "To have someone, fellow writers, encouraging you, understanding you, that can be like air to breathe," she says. As a young woman aspiring to poetry in the early 1950s, she had few models. From childhood onward, there were important teachers: Radcliffe office hours with poet and professor William Alfred were a turning point, and another Harvard professor, Edwin Honig, gave her "permission," she says, to write from her dreams, which became an abiding, defining characteristic of her poetry. But when it came to women mentors, the landscape was sparse.

Radcliffe and Harvard classrooms had gone coed only a decade before she

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Jean Valentine

TYLER FLYNN DORHOLT

arrived, and it would be another decade and a half before women were allowed into Lamont Library, with its fifth-floor poetry collection and its archive of recorded readings. But the campus did offer Valentine a critically important female guiding light: poet Adrienne Rich '51, Litt.D. '90. Valentine tells a story about how, when she was an 18-year-old newcomer to Cambridge, an older man said hello to her on Garden Street, and as they talked, he asked her if she'd ever heard of Rich, who was on her way to becoming a towering figure in American letters. Valentine hadn't, and the discovery was world-altering. "Someone I could imagine in my shoes," Valentine says. "Someone my age, and in the same place. Just, that it could be done."

Rich wasn't the only female poetic contemporary, but "there weren't very many of us," Valentine says. And some of the best and most famous in those early days of Valentine's career—Virginia Woolf, Sylvia Plath, later Anne Sexton—offered worrisome examples. Others whose lives didn't end in suicide were heavy drinkers or depressives. Concerned about what she feared might be poetry's "dark force," Valentine sought out a therapist in her late thirties and asked him if she should stop writing poetry. He told her

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

Someone is going to be president; the winner might consult **We Wanted Workers: Unraveling the Immigration Narrative,** by George J. Borjas, Scrivner professor of economics and social policy (W.W. Norton, $26.95), to concur with or rebut his findings that immigration depresses domestic workers' wages, is probably a fiscal wash, and introduces social challenges to the receiving society—and to devise policy responses. Turning to the planet, **Energy and Climate: Vision for the Future,** by Michael B. McElroy, Butler professor of environmental studies (Oxford, $34.95), similarly digests complex data to lay out the climate challenge, and the steps the United States and China could take (as they have agreed to do) toward a low-carbon energy future.

Turning to matters international, **Once within Borders,** by Charles S. Maier, Saltonstall professor of history (Harvard, $29.95), is a sweeping overview of territorial boundaries; it reminds any new commander in chief, contemplating, say, Syria, Turkey, Iraq, and the Kurds, that "The importance of spatial governance and…contestation has not diminished." **Capital without Borders**, by Brooke Harrington, Ph.D. '99 (Harvard, $29.95), points to governments' revenue problem as "wealth managers" help the one percent shield their capital from taxation and even basic scrutiny.

As the president faces pressing issues, expertise is at hand: **Negotiating the Impossible,** by Deepak Malhotra, Goldston professor of business administration (Berrett-Koehler, $27.95), ranges from the Cuban missile crisis to professional football owner-player differences to explore how to "resolve ugly conflicts," which are in huge supply. **Managing in the Gray,** by Joseph L. Badaracco, Shad professor of business ethics (Harvard Business Review Press, $35), pivots from negotiating to "resolving your toughest problems at work"—those gray areas where judgment comes into play, and the stakes challenge not your skills but "your humanity."

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A border, defended: Francesco di Giorgio's elegant hilltop fortress of San Leo, Marche, Italy, ca. 1480

The Poem Is You, by Stephen Burt, professor of English (Harvard, $27.95), is a gift tutorial for those phobic about contemporary poetry. Burt selects 60 examples, from 1981 (John Ashbery '49, Litt.D. '01) to 2015 (Ross Gay, RI '16), and succinctly analyzes each. Lay readers will latch on to such lucid ideas as that Louise "Glück's style evolved by subtraction." In **Naming Thy Name** (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, $27), an altogether different sort of work, Elaine Scarry, Cabot professor of aesthetics and the general theory of value, mines text, criticism, and history to advance "sweet Henry Constable" as the beautiful youth beloved by Shakespeare and extolled in his sonnets.

The Market as God, by Harvey Cox, Hollis research professor of divinity (Harvard, $26.95). Inspired by Pope Francis, the theological scholar probes the "self-divinizing" excesses of The Market, and the potential for a "reverse apotheosis," reducing it to the market again.

In **The Content Trap** (Random House, $28), Bharat Anand, Byers professor of business administration and faculty direc-

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no—that in fact poetry perhaps kept those writers alive longer than they might otherwise have lived. He told Valentine to write every day, including Christmas. And for the most part, she has.

Before *Dream Barker,* Valentine had never published a single poem, and she'd worked for several lonely years, as a young wife and mother isolated from other writers, to produce the manuscript. When it won the Yale prize, Adrienne Rich (who herself had won the award as a Radcliffe senior) got in touch. That letter of congratulation opened a correspondence and a close friendship that lasted until Rich's death in 2012. For most of that time, the women were also neighbors, living a few blocks from each other on the Upper West Side of New York. They read each other's poems and consulted on work in progress; they saw each other through divorces and depression and child-rearing, and into old age. "Adrienne and I have certainly lived to see each other happy," Valentine concluded in a 2006 essay in the *Virginia Quarterly Review*.

Oceanic and dreamlike, Valentine's poems offer glimpses of the personal and political, the here and now, but frequently inhabit more ambiguous, liminal territory: the unseen and fragmentary, the invisible, the unconscious, the mysterious and almost wild. The first poem in *Dream Barker*, "First Love," begins this way: "How deep we met in the sea, my love, / My double, my Siamese heart, my whiskery, / Fish-belly, glue-eyed prince, my dearest black nudge." Her poetry isn't narrative or confessional, though there is intimacy in the silences and in the ever-present "you." Reviewing *Shirt in Heaven*—an elegiac volume that addresses the ghosts of lost friends and loved ones (including Rich) and recounts her father's shattering trauma after World War II—poet Ann van Buren wrote: "At once shadowy and pelagic, the phrases in the book move like air across water. Valentine's is an invisible natural force so powerful that it conjures the feeling of having been part of us all along." Asked how her poetry has changed over the years, Valentine says, "I think that what changes is your life, and you're writing out of a changed life."

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Visit harvardmag.com to hear Jean Valentine read her poems.

Valentine continues to seek out the counsel and companionship of fellow poets, especially women. These days she takes part in a writers' group near her home in New York, and she relies on her friend, the poet Jane Mead, as a reader and adviser. "How do I know when a poem is finished? I know when my friend says so," Valentine explains. "Because when I'm in it, I'm just in it."

tor of the Business School's online HBX venture (described within), argues that digital strategy and success are decisively driven by connections, not content. The flip side, argues Tim Wu, J.D. '98, in **The Attention Merchants: The Epic Scramble to Get Inside Our Heads** (Knopf, $27.95), is the relentless success of advertisers and marketers (increasingly so, given everything digital) in ensnaring consumers and shaping their perceptions.

Urban Forests, by Jill Jonnes (Viking, $32). "A natural history of trees and people in the American cityscape" (the subtitle) not surprisingly includes much on the very significant horticultural work of the Arnold Arboretum. The author probed some of that work in "The Living Dinosaur," on wild ginkgoes (November-December 2011, page 31).

"Keep the Damned Women Out," by Nancy Weiss Malkiel, Ph.D. '70 (Princeton, $32). Lest we forget, a professor of history emerita at Princeton and past dean of its college delivers an authoritative history of the coeducation of elite institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom between 1969 and 1974. Invaluable history, beginning with Harvard, Yale, and Princeton, and enlivened with such vivid illustrations as Jim Berry's 1967 cartoon of two clubmen conferring from their wing chairs: "*Confused*—of course, I'm confused! I have a son at Vassar and a daughter at Yale!"

How Men Age, by Richard G. Bribiescas, Ph.D. '97 (Princeton, $24.95). The author, at Yale, applies anthropological and evolutionary biological lenses to a sweeping, succinct review of the phenomenon, and does so with good humor: there is a chapter on "Getting a Handle on Love Handles." Aging, rather than the alternative, means males may hang around to help care for offspring. In **Do Parents Matter?** (PublicAffairs, $25.99), Larsen professor of education and human development emeritus Robert A. LeVine and Sarah LeVine, Ph.D. '02, also range widely, beginning with kin-avoidance practices among the Hausa, in Nigeria, to offer reassurance that there are different ways to bring up youngsters—so "American families should just relax."

In **Welcome to the Universe** (Princeton, $39.95), the Hayden Planetarium's Neil deGrasse Tyson '80 and Princeton astrophysics professors Michael A. Strauss and J. Richard Gott '69 provide a lively, accessible guide to their (and our) capacious neighborhood. "Everything you think about the universe is less exotic than it actually is," Tyson begins—and reassuringly makes his first reference to Buzz Lightyear rather than to Einstein. In **The Glass Universe** (Viking, $30), Dava Sobel, bestselling author of *Longitude*, tells the story of the "calculators"—the women who interpreted astronomical observations and glass photographic plates made by the Harvard College Observatory, transforming comprehension of stars and the universe.

PHOTOGRAPH BY SUSAN WOOD/ROW2K.COM

Legendary crew coach Harry Parker on the water, where he belonged

Harvardiana. **The Sphinx of the Charles,** by Toby Ayer (Lyons, $22.95), chronicles legendary coach Harry Parker and the Crimson crew during 2008-2009. **The Best of *The Harvard Lampoon:* 140 Years of American Humor** (Touchstone, $26), goes back to early Gluyas Williams, A.B. '11, Fred H. Gwynne '51, and other golden-age figures, and some of their very funny successors.

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