



Poster for *Small Mouth Sounds*, listed as one of the best plays of 2015

simultaneously. She wrote a play about a young woman recovering from eight medicated years in a mental institution, and another about a young man trying, with professional help, to get into Harvard (“It’s really about the meritocracy and where it succeeds and where it fails”).

She found small parts in films and television shows, and briefly moved to Los Angeles. But as her writing picked up speed, it became too hard to juggle both. She chose writing.

But acting still strongly influences her

work. “So many things I learned have been helpful,” she says, “like the experience of thinking about character from the inside out, and having a sense, almost on a cellular level, of whether something is playable or not.”

Wohl’s new play, *Continuity*, debuting this spring at the Manhattan Theatre Club, is a dark comedy following a film crew in New Mexico through six takes of a single scene in a high-budget thriller about climate change. As usual, a figure of authority is missing. “There’s a sense of, ‘Is anybody out there?’” she says. “‘What’s going to happen to us?’ We’re sort of stranded on this planet and nobody is taking care of us in the way we had hoped.”

It took eight years and several drafts to write the play—for a long time she struggled with how to bring the subject

audience and watching people on stage perform these words that I had written. And I just felt this click, like, ‘This is something I could actually do.’”

After Yale, Wohl kept acting and writing

Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

A Lens of Love: Reading the Bible in Its World for Our World, by Jonathan L. Walton, Plummer professor of Christian morals and Pusey minister in the Memorial Church (Westminister John Knox Press, \$16 paper). If you can’t hear him preach on Sundays, Reverend Walton’s voice is readily accessible this way. “I am an avid reader of the Bible,” he writes simply, because he is professionally, personally, and morally committed to a life “led by our faith, not by our fears.”

Sabina Augusta: An Imperial Journey, by T. Corey Brennan, Ph.D. ’90 (Oxford, \$85). A careful excavation of the life and reputation of the wife of the Roman emperor Hadrian—one in a series on women in antiquity—by a professor of classics at Rutgers; working from 200 words of textual references, sculptural repre-

Making scant (and mute) evidence tell its story: the empress Sabina, sculpted A.D. 136-138



sentations, and other sources, he effects a remarkable reconstruction of an iconic empress—all the more so given Hadrian’s complicated family and personal life.

The Incomplete Book of Running, by Peter Sagal ’87 (Simon & Schuster, \$27). With a half nod to Jim Fixx, the host of NPR’s *Wait Wait... Don’t Tell Me* applies his voice to his running life, observing that at age 40 (intimations of mortality and all that), “I went from being a person who ran to being a runner.” Unlike his most serious brethren, he can confess, “Sometimes running sucks.”

The Limits of Blame, by Erin I. Kelly, Ph.D. ’95 (Harvard, \$35). A professor of philosophy at Tufts addresses head-on the assumptions underlying criminalization of people, sorting out the problem that “the legal criteria of guilt do not match familiar moral criteria for blame.” An atypical philosophical inquiry, with immediate application—to America’s vast system of incarceration.

The Age of Surveillance Capitalism, by Shoshana Zuboff, retired Wilson professor of business administration (PublicAffairs, \$38). A daunting, alarmed argument

about “the fight for a human future at the new frontier of power” (the subtitle), brought about by technologically enabled capitalism that treats “human experience as free raw material for translation into behavioral data”—and then renders every sphere of life into commerce.

Driving Digital Strategy, by Sunil Gupta, Carter professor of business administration (Harvard Business Review Press, \$32). And on the other hand, a nuts-and-bolts guide for businesses about rethinking their strategy, value chain, customer engagement, and organization to succeed in a pervasively digital era.

Globalization and Inequality, by Elhanan Helpman, Stone professor of international trade (Harvard, \$26.95). Addressing the literature and technical issues for lay readers, Helpman finds that “rising inequality in recent decades has been predominantly driven by forces other than globalization.” Problems there are, in other words, but choking off the global trade system won’t resolve them.

Wit’s End, by James Geary, deputy curator, the Nieman Foundation for Journalism (W.W. Norton, \$23.95). Beginning with the identification of Adam and Eve’s forbidden fruit as a pun (from the Latin *malum*, meaning both “apple” and “evil”), probes the what, how, and why of wit, seriously but lightly—an apt approach for someone who is also an accomplished juggler.

to the page in a way that felt compelling. “So much of climate change is a failure of narrative,” she says. “When you talk to scientists, they say, ‘We haven’t found a narrative that connects with people enough.’ That’s what a writer is trying to do as well.” But as with other eternal questions concerning mortality and how to cope with it, theater is the right vehicle, she says. “Because plays themselves are so temporary. And the moment we have with them is so fleeting, and it never comes back. That’s what’s so exciting and precious about them to me. There’s something very resonant about looking at how temporary and fragile everything is in the context of this made thing that is here and then gone.”

Uses—and Abuses —of Austerity

Economists revisit an unsettled economic policy.

by IDREES KAHLOON

PRECIOUS FEW WORDS in economics evoke emotional responses of any kind. But austerity, the reduction of government deficits through tax increases or pared-down spending, is an exception. Discussions of austerity quickly devolve into moralizing—between supporters, who see austerity as a kind of virtuous self-denial, and opponents, who portray it

as self-defeating, self-flagellating nonsense. Ten years after the Great Recession pushed many European countries with precarious finances to embrace austerity measures, the debate continues.

And worse, it remains deeply unsettled. Now Ropes professor of political economy Alberto Alesina seeks to rectify that with his matter-of-factly titled *Austerity: When It Works*

An Inclusive Academy: Achieving Diversity and Excellence, by Abigail J. Stewart, Ph.D. '75, and Virginia Valian (MIT, \$29.95). Senior professors at the University of Michigan and Hunter College, respectively, comprehensively review the research, and draw on their own experiences, to direct academic institutions toward realizing their aspirations for broadening their faculties.

A Few Thousand Dollars: Sparking Prosperity for Everyone, by Robert E. Friedman '71 (The New Press, \$26.99). The founder of Prosperity Now (formerly the Corporation for Enterprise Development) prescribes universal savings interventions that would enable the most economically marginalized members of society to begin to get a purchase on the levers that lead to an income—and everything that follows in its wake—in a society where the wealth gaps have become impossibly large.

The Promise of Elsewhere, by Brad Leithauser '75, J.D. '79 (Knopf, \$26.95). The quietly prolific novelist and poet's seventeenth book: a comic novel about a stuck middle-aged professor at a Midwestern college whose tour of world architectural sites (his field) is deflected by a doomed romance. A journey about yearnings.

The Hell of Good Intentions: America's Foreign Policy Elite and the Decline of U.S. Primacy, by Stephen M. Walt, Belfer professor of international af-

fairs (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$28). A critic of both “liberal hegemony” and the present moment of trashing international agreements and organizations willy-nilly, Walt argues for foreign policy guided less by ambition and military prowess and more by the pursuit of peace, exemplary restraint, and the building of alliances.

Words & Works: Scenes from a Life in Architecture, 1948-2018, by Henry N. Cobb '47, M.Arch. '49 (The Monacelli Press, \$45). The acclaimed architect in his own words. On the Center for Governmental and International Studies, straddling Cambridge Street (represented in handsome photographs here), he gracefully notes of the protracted back-and-forth with Cambridge neighbors and officials, “the extended negotiations and consequent reconsiderations created opportunities that led to improvements in design.”

Peaches Goes It Alone, by Frederick Seidel '57 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$24). New poems by a poet whose work

Architect and client: Henry Cobb presenting an early scheme for Place Ville Marie to William Zeckendorf Sr. in 1956—aboard the latter's DC-3

can provoke discomfort (see Adam Kirsch's “Again, A Dangerous Art,” a review of *Poems 1959-2009*, November-December 2009, page 19); the publisher categorizes the latest work as adding “new music and menace to Seidel's masterful body of work.” In the same form, but from a different perspective, Michael H. Levin, J.D. '69, a lawyer and solar-energy developer, publishes **Man Overboard: New and Selected Poems** (Finishing Line Press, \$14.99); their gentler language often encompasses bracing, current realities, too.

