

went to her professor's office a day early, completed the test, walked to the T, got to South Station, took a bus to Albany, and got on the road.

Their time in college has matured their songwriting. Chris, who concentrated in computer science, deals more heavily with the harmony and mixing side and Jocelyn deals more with lyrics and melody. Their sound has developed into something that Jocelyn—a former English concentrator—can't quite describe. Chris suggested "Indie blues rock" or "Alternative blues rock" as rough approximations. Bourgeois called it

"some new breed of millennialized authentic alternative rock."

Either way, it's unique. Their newest album, *The Fun and the Fight*, is their most cohesive yet. You might even guess they're siblings just by listening. Chris' rhythm guitar playing is almost voice-like, weaving through and echoing Jocelyn's emotional vocal lines, which can be upbeat one minute and sorrowful the next. On stage, Jocelyn often seems in a near-trance. Chris, also lost in the music, is a more serene presence.

Today, Chris said, they feel like everything they're doing has a little more weight and

significance. Their concert crowds, which often include both teenagers and baby boomers, give a pretty good indication of their musical range. On the music-streaming site Spotify, the group reaches just short of 50,000 listeners a month. On February 28, they performed on NBC's *Today Show*, their highest profile performance to date. It's hard for them to imagine that just a few years ago, they were pulling all-nighters to finish homework assignments between sets. "I know either one would've been a big deal for us, and for our parents, too," Jocelyn said. "I can't believe it when we look back."

# The Comic-Book Storyteller

Graphic novelist Amy Chu

by S.I. ROSENBAUM

**W**ATCHING AMY CHU, M.B.A. '99, stride through Midtown Comics in Manhattan's Times Square is like watching a queen visit the heart of her realm. The staff know her, of course. She looks up a few graphic novels by writers she knows, then heads upstairs to search for some of her own back issues, breezing past posters of characters she's written for DC and Marvel: Wonder Woman, Deadpool, Red Sonja, Poison Ivy, Green Hornet.

At 51, Chu is an established comics writer, working for the biggest publishers on some of the biggest titles in the business. She's living any comics nerd's fondest childhood dream. It just was never her dream. As a kid, Chu hadn't wanted to be comic-book writer—or any kind of writer. She certainly never planned on telling stories about antiheroes in spandex or metal-bikini-clad warrior babes for a living.

**Accidental comics writer Amy Chu, whose graphic novel, *Sea Sirens*, comes out this spring**

In fact, before 2010, the closest she'd come to writing a comic book was creating a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation in her old life as a business consultant. "It's not the same," she says now. "No one says, 'I was so moved by your PowerPoint presentation.'" But perhaps there were clues to Chu's destiny in her early

life. Born in Boston, she went to high school in Iowa, an experience she now describes as "fairly traumatic." Chu was nerdy and shy and one of the only Asian kids in town, and her dream was to play soccer. Only one problem: her school didn't have a girls' team. When the school district forbade her from trying out for the boys' team, Chu's parents sued and won under Title IX. She joined the boys' team. But the first time she stepped onto the field to play, the opposing team walked off en masse— forfeiting the game as a political statement, rather than face a female opponent.

She remembers the experience as mortifying. But it stood her in good stead when she eventually made it to Wellesley College, where she completed a double degree in East Asian studies and architecture, in a joint program with MIT. "You sue under Title IX," she jokes. "That's a really great thing to get you into a women's college."

At Wellesley and MIT, Chu was more in her element than in the mostly white Iowa town she'd left behind. "I'd never seen so many Asians," she says. "Suddenly I'm actually popular. I can actually be invited to parties." At one party, she met the future writer and business consultant Jeff Yang '89, then a Harvard undergraduate. Chu had founded a literary journal for Asian-American stu-



dents at Wellesley, and Yang was editing a student publication at Harvard. “His whole thing was, ‘Let’s start a real magazine, an Asian-American magazine for the Asian-American population,’” Chu recalls.

The result was *A Magazine*, a periodical Yang and Chu co-founded with two other friends. They bootstrapped the publication by throwing parties for Asian Americans in New York. “If we’d stuck to the parties, we would have made a ton of money,” she says.

(As it was, the glossy publication lasted for a dozen years and had several hundred thousand readers at its height.)

After graduation, Chu tried several different jobs, including running an arts nonprofit and—through a chance encounter at a fundraiser—running the Macau tourism office in Hong Kong (despite not speaking Cantonese). By 1999, she says, “I thought for whatever reason I should get a business degree” and applied to Harvard Business

School, “just to get it out of my system.”

She enjoyed her time there (“It was awesome, actually,” she says. “I was pleasantly surprised.”) and became a management consultant, specializing in biotech firms. That might have taken her to retirement, if she hadn’t run into an old friend at Harvard’s first-ever Asian-American alumni summit in 2010.

Filmmaker and television writer Georgia Lee ’98, M.B.A. ’09, wanted Chu’s help

## Off the Shelf

Recent books with Harvard connections

The three latest installments in the Cass R. Sunstein-book-of-the-month-club, as three academic presses publish current work by the wildly prolific Walmsley University Professor (see “The Legal Olympian,” January-February 2015, page 43): **On Freedom** (Princeton, \$12.95), a succinct essay on democracy and navigating toward life’s better choices. **How Change Happens** (MIT, \$29.95), an exploration of social norms and challenges to them—making sexual harassment suddenly visible and unacceptable, for instance, while white nationalism simultaneously amplifies its voice and apparent following. **Conformity: The Power of Social Influences** (NYU, \$19.95), a complementary dive into the phenomenon of the title, and dissent.

**How Finance Works**, by Mihir H. Desai, Mizuho Financial Group professor of finance and professor of law (Harvard Business Review Press, \$35 paper). A teacher (and contributor to these pages) succeeds at his sternest educational challenge: making

financial statements, and the underlying flows of cash and capital, clear and useful to the quantitatively shy.

**The 8 Broken**, by Nancy Berliner ’79, Ph.D. ’04 (Museum of Fine Arts, \$55). The museum’s Wu Tu senior curator of Chinese art has crafted the first book on *bapo* (“eight broken”) painting, which originated in nineteenth-century China. The works, depicting antique texts, art, and ephemera, seem strikingly modern. Perhaps reflecting the turmoil of their era, they can evoke strong nostalgia for declining cultural norms.

**State Capture**, by Alexander Hertel-Fernandez, Ph.D. ’16 (Oxford, \$29.95). The author, at Columbia, searchingly investi-

gates the nexus among the Koch brothers’ political network, deregulatory business interests, and entities like the American Legislative Exchange Council, all bent toward shaping state and local policymaking—in one ideological direction.

**This Is How We Pray**, by Adam Dressler, M.T.S. ’05 (FaithWords/Hachette, \$20). A down-to-earth, personal—as opposed to theological or doctrinal—approach to prayer. The author has made a personal journey from Oral Roberts University to Harvard Divinity School to Grace Community Church in Clarksville, Tennessee, where he is now lead pastor.

**The Code of Capital: How the Law Creates Wealth and Inequality**, by Katharina Pistor, M.P.A. ’94 (Princeton, \$29.95). A Columbia law professor explains the status in law of capital in all forms, and how financial assets, intellectual property, and their brethren affect the ownership and distribution of wealth.

**Good Charts Workbook**, by Scott Berinato (HBR Press, \$35 paper). A Harvard Business Review senior editor provides vivid guidance on how to make “better data visualization” (a description inferior to the graphical contents within)—a good proxy for vivid thinking.

**The Role of the Scroll**, by Thomas Forrest Kelly, Knafel Research Professor of music (W.W. Norton, \$29.95). A gorgeously illustrated exploration—both scholarship and a passion project—of “fascinating objects that have always been shrouded by an intriguing kind of aura, and a quality of some-

**An untitled 1900 ink and color work by an unidentified artist, exhibiting the strikingly modern “eight-broken” style**



© MUSEUM OF FINE ARTS, BOSTON



with a startup idea she had: a comics imprint for books aimed at girls. She knew Chu had helped found *A Magazine* and wanted her to handle setting up the business.

To Chu, it seemed like a low-cost venture. “Let’s do it,” she said. She threw herself into research, buying and reading comics for the first time and taking a class on writing comics.

It was immediately clear that the class was not a place where Chu fit in: like the

soccer scene in Iowa in the 1980s, “Lo and behold, it’s all dudes,” she recalls. “I didn’t even know if Wonder Woman was DC or Marvel; they’re arguing over Martian Manhunter.”

The first assignment was a five-page story. Chu turned in a tale about a female cabdriver/mercenary in a dystopian metropolis who is hired to rescue a hostage named Abby (the twist: Abby is actually a cat). When she turned it in, something she calls

how standing outside of time,” not least because they continued to be produced after the invention of the eminently more practical codex and its spread in the Middle Ages. The author, who previously wrote *First Nights*, and taught the eponymous course, is an incorporator of this magazine.

The health beat. **Diabetes Head to Toe**, by Rita R. Kalyani '99 et al. (Johns Hopkins, \$22.95 paper), is a comprehensive guide to understanding and living with an epidemic, chronic disease. **Well: What We Need to Talk About When We Talk About Health**, by Sandro Galea, M.P.H. '00 (Oxford, \$24.75), Boston University’s public-health dean, addresses Americans’ misguided confusion of medicine with health, and the costly mistakes (“[W]e spend so much and get so relatively little for it”) stemming from that category error—and what to do about it.

Debut novels. **The Organ of Sense**, by Alan Ehrlich Sachs '07 (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, \$26). “In an account sent to the *Philosophical Transactions*... a young G. W. Leibniz...” runs the opening sentence of a fiction, set in 1666, concerning a solar eclipse, a blind astronomer, and much else. The author, a Harvard Lampoon alumnus, concentrated (no surprise) in the history of science. Chia-Chia Lin '03, J.D. '07, did

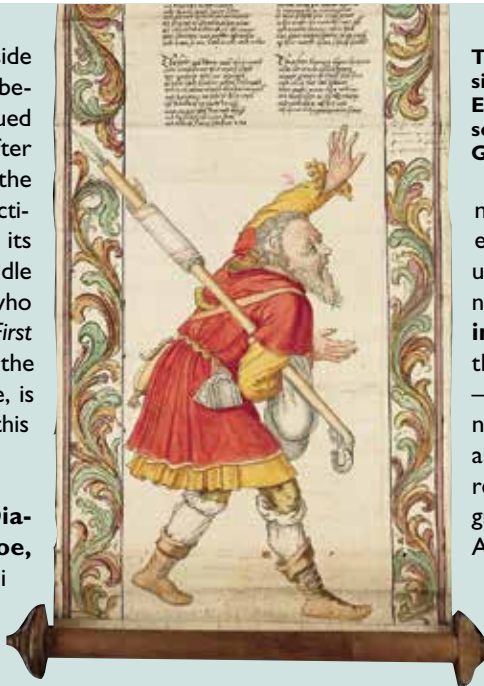
po, \$15.99), an emergency physician, is a breezy checklist of nutrition, exercise, sleep, and other tips new mothers can use to get—and keep—it together. **Elderhood**, by Louise Aronson, M.D. '92 (Bloomsbury, \$30), is a memoir, meditation, and guide to “redefining aging, transforming medicine, reimagining life” by a geriatrician with an M.F.A. who runs UC, San Francisco’s health-humanities program. Her examples and spirit are lovely, and wise.

**VC: An American Industry**, by Tom Nicholas, Abernathy professor of business administration (Harvard, \$35). A first history of venture capital, which has played an outsized role in propelling U.S. entrepreneurship and growth. The author grounds readers well, linking investments in, say, artificial-intelligence startups today to those in whaling expeditions two centuries ago.

The bottom of a sixteenth-century English alchemical scroll associated with George Ripley

not. An Iowa Writers’ Workshop graduate, she begins her novel, **The Unpassing** (FSG, \$26), with the feigned collapse—a stroke?—of the narrator’s mother, and proceeds to a real Taiwanese immigrant family’s loss, in Alaska.

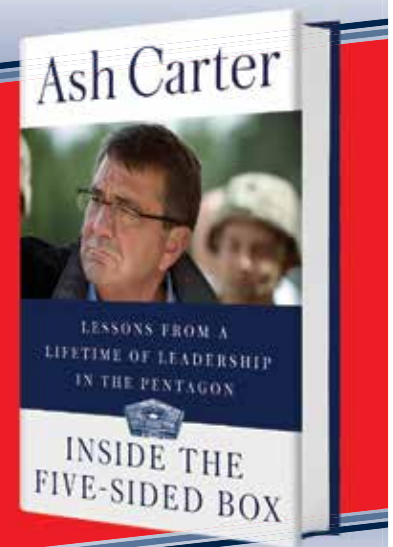
The lifespan. **Mom Hacks**, by Darria Long Gillespie, M.B.A. '05 (DaCa-



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From Chu's oeuvre: a 2019 comic book tied to KISS's "End of the Road" tour and a comics imprint created by rapper DMC, with a graffiti-artist heroine.

ics in 2011, but Chu kept writing. The following year she self-published her own book, *Girls Night Out and Other Stories*, a collection of short comics, and started promoting it at conventions and comics stores around the country, which eventually led to professional writing jobs. Soon she

marked by a focus on human quirks and diversity. In her Red Sonja holiday special, for example, the Hyrkanian warrior takes a whirlwind tour of the many holiday traditions represented in New York City.

Her work is not all heavy metal and superheroes. Chu's first full-length graphic novel, *Sea Sirens*, drawn by Janet K. Lee and being published this June by Random House, is the story of a Vietnamese-American girl who tangles with an undersea world of mermaids and sea serpents.

It's an unusual thing to start a new career at 45, let alone one as talent-driven and difficult as comics writing, *let alone* to thrive at it. But Chu says every twist and turn in her own story has contributed to her current career; on her LinkedIn page, her bio says simply: "I tell stories."

"I don't think I could have done this when I was 23," she says, heading out the door of Midtown Comics with a stack of fresh books in her hand. "I wouldn't have been good at it."

"mind-blowing" happened: the instructor loved it. "A little light bulb went off," she recalls. "I could actually be semi-decent at this. People are having a reaction to something I made up."

Lee and Chu launched Alpha Girl Com-

was being entrusted with legacy characters at the two biggest comics publishers, DC and Marvel—characters like Ant-Man, Deadpool, even KISS. (Yes, the band. Yes, they have a comic book.) No matter what character she's writing, Chu's comics are

## A New Story of Suffrage

*Fresh portraits of foot soldiers for women's right to vote*

by MARINA N. BOLOTNIKOVA

IF THE women's suffrage movement took place today, what would it look like? Radically different, surely, from the way it did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when its organizers

rode through the country on horseback, shouted through town squares, dropped leaflets from airplanes, and marched in neatly choreographed pageants to spread the word about their cause. Today's world

of online activism can feel deprived of that vitality—which makes Susan Ware's *Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote*, all the more of a delight for a modern reader. Ware tells a new history of women's suffrage through portraits of 21 women (and one man) both famous and obscure, from the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

Ware tells a new history of women's suffrage through portraits of 21 women (and one man) both famous and obscure, from the 1848 Seneca Falls Convention through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.

"How can someone demand the vote without having that basic political right in the first place?" asks Ware, Ph.D. '78, an independent scholar of women's history and associate of Harvard's history department. Part of the answer is that the suffragists were intrepid and relentless. They were the first political pro-

*Why They Marched: Untold Stories of the Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote*, by Susan Ware (Harvard, \$26.95)



**National Women's Party members picket the White House, 1917. In the years leading up to the Nineteenth Amendment's passage, the protesters were a regular presence in Lafayette Square.**