ing says. One of those scenes, written about Woman in White by the Impressionist Berthe Morisot, survived her rigorous private editing, which nearly halved her original, 450-page manuscript.

Years before completing her novel, Houghteling shared early chapters with professors and fellow master of fine arts students at the University of Michigan. (She attended the program between 2001 and 2003 after teaching for a few years, first at the American School of Paris and then at her former high school in Brookline, Massachusetts.) Michigan awarded her a summer research grant for travel to Paris, and, after receiving her M.F.A., Houghteling won a Fulbright that allowed her to return to France for a full year.

She had first traveled there as an undergraduate, writing for the student guidebook series Let’s Go (see “A Pact with Solitude,” November-December 1998, page 102). But on her later trips, she traded scoping out beaches and restaurants for interviewing survivors and descendants of the Parisian postwar art community. She met a lawyer, Marianne Rosenberg, whose collector-grandfather Paul became the model for Max’s father. Knowing Marianne helped Houghteling piece together a tricky character: “Seeing her gave me a glimpse of what her grandfather was probably like—someone with a lot of humor and a formidably sharp intellect.”

Rose Clément, the object of Max’s affection, is also based on an historical figure. Rose Valland was a curator who managed to stay on at a museum after the Nazis had kicked out other French workers. She catalogued the Germans’ thefts and devoted much of her later life to tracking down the stolen art. But despite her heroism (and an autobiography), Valland remains largely unknown. “I remember seeing a picture of her in which she’s very unassuming,” wearing what looked like men’s clothing, says Houghteling. “I wanted to find out more about her. On the Internet there was nothing, nothing, nothing.” She found at least a partial answer when she learned, at a posthumous exhibition honoring Valland in her home-

---

**Off the Shelf**

Recent books with Harvard connections

**Unpacking the Boxes: Memoir of a Life in Poetry**, by Donald Hall ’51, JF ’57 (Houghton Mifflin, $24). The 2006–2007 U.S. poet laureate writes, sparcely, of the “stony loneliness” of Exeter, the “thrilling” liberty of his Harvard years—a time of poetic flowering—and, lately, of a bipolar episode after his wife’s death and of the “planet of antiquity.”


**On the Side of the Angels: An Appreciation of Parties and Partisanship**, by Nancy L. Rosenblum, Clark professor of ethics in politics and government (Princeton, $29.95). You may not want to hear it after a long presidential campaign, but there is justification, in political science and theory, for appreciating parties and partisanship. Rosenblum makes this point, in scholarly fashion, in pursuit of “an ethic of partisanship.”


**Shakespeare and Modern Culture**, by Marjorie Garber, Kenan professor of English and of visual and environmental studies (Pantheon, $30). An inquiry into Shakespeare and modern understandings of the human condition—and how the two interact—by way of essays on 10 plays, with reference to New Yorker cartoons, George W. Bush’s college courses and presidential reading list, Shakespeare in Love, and more.

**Stepping Stones: Interviews with Seamus Heaney**, by Dennis O’Driscoll (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, $26). A thematic biographical portrait of the 1995 Nobel laureate in literature and Harvard honorand (1998), professor, and poet-in-residence—conducted, appropriately enough, by a Dublin-based civil servant in Irish Customs. (For a radically shorter approach to the same subject, see Adam Kirsch’s appreciation in this magazine’s November-December 2006 issue.)

**Sweet Land of Liberty: The Forgotten Struggle for Civil Rights in the North**, by Thomas J. Sugrue, Ph.D. ’92 (Random House, $35). A professor of history and sociology at Penn, past winner of the Bancroft Prize, and this past fall a visitor at the Graduate School of Design, Sugrue...