side the text of the Constitution, and many of these principles cannot even be traced directly to the document’s words. My favorite example of this seemingly self-evident but often-obfuscated observation is the basis of originalism itself. The Constitution nowhere instructs its inheritors to interpret its opaque terminology (“equal protection,” “due process,” “cruel and unusual punishments”) according to the original understanding of its drafters. The Constitution doesn’t offer guidance on whether to read those terms as static or evolving. There’s an argument to be made that the Founders’ intent deserves special deference, or maybe even something approaching exclusive deference. But such ideas are drawn from someone’s version of what Tribe calls the invisible Constitution: the unwritten premises and intuitions and experiences that have accumulated over more than two centuries of law and politics in America.

Tribe’s liberal version of the invisible Constitution is no secret, and he does not elaborate much on the substance of his views in this book. He believes that judges—whether they lean left or right—inevitably champion the values they perceive as underlying or animating the ambiguous admonitions and protections outlined in the Constitution. In articulating those values, judges give meaning to a phrase like “equal protection.” For him those words, applied to questions of racial relations, can be used not only to strike down intentional segregation but also to uphold race-conscious policies (“affirmative action”) that seek to remedy the lingering injustices of slavery and Jim Crow. For Justice Scalia, equal protection suggests that race can never be taken into account in any way in forming public policies. That’s a legitimate argument. Tribe’s point here is only that it can’t be settled by parsing at Passover in New Orleans.

As for the doodles—well, some of them I just didn’t get. For all its vectors and protractor-drawn circles, Geodesic Construction left me baffled. (Don’t feel bad if you have the same reaction; after all, Tribe’s undergraduate concentration was mathematics.)

Geodesic Construction, by contrast, is much easier to understand. Tribe has scribbled a many-faceted form similar to

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**Off the Shelf**

Recent books with Harvard connections

**The Case for Big Government**, by Jeff Madrick, M.B.A. ’71 (Princeton, $22.95). The editor of Challenge argues that “active and sizable government has been essential to growth and prosperity,” in a book that anticipated recent headlines.

**Wired for War**, by P.W. Singer, Ph.D. ’01 (Penguin, $27.95). Those drones over Afghanistan and Pakistan, says the Brookings Institution senior fellow, are but the leading edge of robotic conflict in the twenty-first century.


**The Crisis of the Twelfth Century**, by Thomas N. Bisson, Lea professor of medieval history emeritus (Princeton, $39.50). Amid collapsed leadership and governance, threats to social order and peace, new approaches to power and legitimacy arose. A sweeping scholarly history of Western Christendom.

**The Piano Teacher**, by Janice Y. K. Lee ’94 (Viking, $25.95). A debut novel of “romance, secrecy, and betrayal,” as the publisher puts it, in World War II and a decade later, set in Hong Kong, where the author (formerly of Elle and Mirabella magazines) was born and now lives.


**More Than Just Race**, by William Julius Wilson, Geyser University Professor (W.W. Norton, $24.95). Wilson’s latest installment in a career-long investigation of ghettos, low-skilled black men, and the fragmentation of African-American families—and of the changes needed to alter the status quo.

**All Other Nights**, by Dara Horn ’99 (W.W. Norton, $24.95). A different sort of Civil War romance, this novel begins with Jacob Rappaport planning a poisoning at Passover in New Orleans.

**The Scientific Life**, by Steven Shapin, Ford professor of the history of science (Chicago, $29). A densely reasoned examination of the moral life of scientists and why it matters, as they practice in the academy, within corporations, and as entrepreneurs in pursuit of riches.


**China between Empires**, by Mark Edward Lewis, JF ’86 (Harvard, $29.95). A Stanford scholar on the formative pre-Buddhist period of the Northern and Southern dynasties.