Montage
Cowles associate professor of music. “It was a wonderful challenge to teach the undergraduates, because at Eastman everyone was at such a high musical level,” she says. “At Harvard, the kids were so intelligent but didn’t always have proficiency with instruments. And, of course, one of the major perks was the wonderful library. I spent a lot of time in the Nadia Boulanger archives.”

Today, Lash’s preferred instruments are the piano and especially the harp. “It’s so unusual for a composer to be a harpist,” she acknowledges. “I can’t say it influences my music, but I do enjoy the saturation of sound. And although the harp isn’t a very loud instrument, I do feel it has a resonance—you feel like you’re awash with sound.”

Serendipitously, while playing harp for The Fantasticks in New York, she met actor Steve Routman; they married in 2010. Not being especially religious, Lash eschewed both a traditional ceremony and traditional music. Instead, she gave her guests instruments and what she calls “a graphic score” so they could play an original percussive piece for chimes, bells, a small gong, and two Tibetan singing bowls. Like all of her work, it was keenly felt.

“I wanted it to feel like, ‘We’re celebrating this and it is very private but also we’re here together,’” she says, smiling. “So I imagined how it is when you sit in the evening in the summer and you start to hear one frog call and then you hear a whole bunch of frogs start to call, too. Each one is sort of in his own isolated spot, yet it’s this common experience.”

Brutish Beginnings
The “mixed multitudes” of early Colonial America—and the Native Americans
by DANIEL K. RICHTER

Colonial history, I’ve often told my students, isn’t pretty. The well-scrubbed Williamsburg, Virginia, that tourists see today would have been unrecognizable to Thomas Jefferson, much less to the enslaved laborers who made up most of its population in the eighteenth century. And almost anywhere in British North America during that century was a paradise compared to what had existed a hundred years earlier. Today’s images of the seventeenth century—up the road from Williamsburg at Historic Jamestowne or down the road from Harvard at Plymouth Plantation—aren’t so well scrubbed. But neither site can begin to recreate the stench, the terror, the misery that haunted every place and everybody in that bloody era.

Living-history museums dare not drive away those they hope to educate by revealing too much of the bitter truth. And so Web surfers are cheerily invited to “Dine at Plimouth Plantation.” In the accompanying photograph, a jolly Jacobean couple stands behind a modern man hoisting a huge roast turkey leg, while a multiracial tableful of guests lift their glasses and entice visitors to join them. What, one wonders, might the starving band of seventeenth-century religious zealots—who had watched half their compatriots perish during their first horrible winter on Cape Cod—have made of this cheerful picture?

The eminent Harvard historian Bernard Bailyn, Ph.D. ’53, LL.D. ’99, has a pretty good

Both sides now: mutually beneficial trade between Native Americans and English people. From Theodor de Bry’s America series, 1634.

idea. “Death was everywhere,” he says in his aptly named new book, The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600–1675. “America, for these hopeful utopians, had become a graveyard.” No one is better qualified to survey the carnage at Plymouth than Bailyn, now Adams University Professor emeritus, who began teaching at Harvard in 1953, published the first of his more than 20 books in 1953, and has earned the Pulitzer Prize for history twice. The heaping dishes he would serve to latter-day Plymouth diners are not pretty to look at—indeed they often purposefully turn the stomach—but they provide some necessary doses of past reality that only someone of his vast learning and experience could prepare.

The Barbarous Years resumes a series that Bailyn began in 1986, with the publication of a brief overview called The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction, and a massive tome entitled Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution. The opening pages of the shorter volume conjure “a satellite circling the globe from the early medieval period to the advent of industrialism.” Its camera, Bailyn says, would reveal that “the transforming phenomenon was...the massive transfer to the Western Hemisphere of people from Africa, from the European mainland, and especially from the Anglo-Celtic fringes of the British Isles.” Voyagers to the West is a high-resolution snapshot, developed from intense analysis of every recorded departure from the British Isles for North America between late 1773 and early 1776. Packed with numbers, tables, graphs, and maps, it traces broad patterns. But Voyagers is also full of personal stories revealing the motives, experiences, and emotions of those who made new homes in North America.

As Bailyn admits, for the seventeenth century “the data do not exist” for this kind of comprehensive analysis. The Barbarous Years must therefore be far more impressionistic than its predecessor, although it does the best it can with the fragmentary passenger lists, port records, and other materials available. Colorful characters—familiar and often unfamiliar—leap from its deeply researched pages. Groups of chapters organized by region—Virginia and Maryland, New Netherland and New Sweden, Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay—survey what is known about the varied backgrounds, controversies, and personalities in the founding years of European colonization in each place.

The three regions, each treated mostly in isolation from the others, differed in geography, environment, and economy, but “of one characteristic of the immigrant population there can be no doubt. They were a mixed multitude.” Chesapeake colonists spanned a vast range of social statuses, and they came from all over the British Isles.

Chaos and violence were the orders of the day, not just among the colonists themselves but especially in their relations with indigenous people.

New England Puritans mostly sprang from middling social strata but brought with them multiple local traditions of farming and government. And once they escaped their common enemies in England, they discovered huge theological disagreements among themselves. Meanwhile, New Netherland and short-lived New Sweden—the substrate on which, after two military conquests, the later English colonies of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Delaware would be built—“left behind, on the shores of North America, one of the strangest assemblages of people that region would ever know,” a “farrago” of Finns, Jews, Walloons, and motley others.

Presiding over this assemblage were Dutch rulers like Willem Kieft and Petrus Stuyvesant, “the chronicle of whose administrations read at times like Tacitus’s annals of imperial Rome.” Dominant figures in New England and the Chesapeake were no less remarkable, and their populaces no more governable. Chaos and violence were the orders of the day, not just among the colonists themselves but especially in their relations with indigenous people. Beginning with its title, The Barbarous Years highlights the brutality that Europeans and Indians inflicted on each other.

Still, for all the book’s learned strengths, its discussions of Native Americans are disappointing, even for a study focused on European migrants rather than Indian affairs. Many of the problems involve unfortunate choices of language, beginning with the decades-old decision to call the series The Peopling of British North America. In an opening chapter entitled “The Americans,” Bailyn makes clear that he does not think the continent was empty before Britons peopled it. Yet that chapter phrases things in ways that minimize Indian presence on the land. Indigenous communities were “few in number by modern demographic standards.” “No one was completely sedentary,” because “most villages were only seasonally occupied.” Moreover, “most people remained in their ‘home’ villages only through the spring and summer months, and even then wandered out from time to time in small bands to coastal and riverside fishing areas.” Some of this is accurate, for some places and times, but why put home in inverted commas, and why use words like wandered when writing about people whose towns were often substantial places surrounded by acres of corn, beans, and squash and marked by the graves of their ancestors?

My sensitivity to these issues is heightened by a recent scholarly essay by historian James Merrell about how our word choices continue to trap all of us in old colonial habits of mind. But there is more to it than that. Bailyn describes Native Americans living in a “magico-animist world,” where “deep strains of anxiety tinged their lives” even before they met Europeans. Because “Americans experienced life as a delicate balance, which had to be carefully maintained,” the principal—perhaps even only—imaginable explanation for their behavior would then appear to be a desperate attempt to maintain that balance. There is little room for readers to imagine that something more complicated might have been going on, that Native people and Europeans might have engaged in hard-headed calculations of what one side had to offer the other, or that the two sides might have occasionally transcended fixed ideas to learn how to deal with each other.

Or, for that matter, that there might even have been more than two sides who stared
uncomprehendingly at each other across a clear racial divide.

Thus the Native American trade of furs and hides in exchange for imported tools, weapons, and cloth can only be conceived as “the start of a degenerative spiral” for delicate cultural systems. Yet, as a stack of historical and archaeological studies has shown, trade with Europeans also empowered many Native peoples to craft new art forms, to transform internal and external power relationships, and to exploit new military and other technologies in ways firmly rooted in their own traditions. Clearly, as Bailyn concludes, “by 1664 the Indians’ world in coastal North America had been utterly transformed” by commerce with the colonists, but it is too simple to conclude universally that “their lifeways [were] disrupted and permanently distorted.” There were indeed devastating distortions and bloody warfare, but there were also many Native people who—at least in the medium term—benefited greatly from their engagement with the Atlantic economy. They eagerly sought out trade and alliances with the newcomers, and those efforts often provided the economic glue—as well as the explosive military force—that tied together the colonial regions that, when Natives are left out of the picture, seem united by little except the mixedness of their multitudes.

A case in point are the people known as the Susquehannocks, whose homeland in what later became central Pennsylvania linked the Chesapeake Bay region with the Delaware watershed, and thus connected Virginia and Maryland to New Sweden and New Netherland. Though the Susquehannocks appear relatively frequently in The Barbarous Years, the book conveys little sense of how, in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, these people were playing Swedes, Dutch, Marylanders, and Virginians against each other on behalf of more important strategies involving Native wars and trade routes in that “less palpable, less easily identified...interior” of the continent. As the late Francis Jennings put it 30 years ago, “the Susquehannocks were the Great Power in their part of the world,” and, as historian Cynthia Van Zandt has recently argued, they “regarded themselves as the protectors of the New Sweden colonists and as the superior party in the alliance.” If Bailyn’s imaginary satellite were to shift its camera’s focus from the Atlantic Ocean and the ships that sailed its winds to the Susquehannocks’ country and the Europeans who lived there at their bidding, the forces that shaped the flow of migrants to North America might look quite different.

If the importance of the Susquehannocks gets short shrift, the power of Indian people in what Europeans called New England receives almost no notice at all. The Pequot War of 1637–1638 does earn brief attention for its brutal violence, yet that violence comes across mostly as English rage spilling over from the Antinomian Crisis, which was at the same time pitting Anne Hutchinson against the leaders of what became New England Puritan orthodoxy. In the latter’s minds, “the savagery of the Indians, undoubtedly in league with Satanic power, and the challenge of the antinomians...were conjoined in their malevolence.” Perhaps so, yet the historians who have been reanalyzing this war for more than 30 years also know that the Pequot War was a many-sided conflict rooted in far more than mindless Puritan rage. Pequots, Mohegans, and Narragansetts, colonists from Massachusetts and Plymouth, and diverse other intruders all were contending for lands and trade routes along what the English called the “Connecticut” and the Dutch the “Fresh” River. Two new English colonies—Connecticut and New Haven—emerged from the violence, New Netherland’s scope retracted, Massachusetts Bay flexed its strength, and the Mohegans, under their chief Uncas, filled the power vacuum left by the utter defeat of their Pequot enemies. Perhaps no other single event in the first half of the seventeenth century did more to shape subsequent English posses-

Chapter & Verse
Correspondence on not-so-famous lost words

Peter Williams seeks help in locating a bit of light verse rhyming “elderly gentlemen” with “unornamental men,” possibly from the Saturday Review around 1960.

Ginny Schneider would like a citation for a statement “attributed since at least 1982” to Alexander Haig: “They can march [protest?] all they want, as long as they pay their taxes.”

Dan Snodderly hopes someone can identify a survey that “asked if people had participated in the following activities associated with the Sixties: attending a demonstration; having sexual intercourse before marriage; smoking marijuana; taking hard drugs (LSD, mescaline, etc.). Fewer than half the respondents had done two. Less than 5 percent had done all four.”

Stanley Liu requested a source for a remark widely attributed to Albert Camus: “Some people talk in their sleep. Lecturers talk while other people sleep.” C&V asked Eric Mazur, Balkanski professor of physics and of applied physics, who has used the quip himself (see “Twilight of the Lecture,” March-April 2012, page 23), for guidance. He reports: “It turns out that the quote is attributed all over the English-speaking Web to Albert Camus, and it turns out all the English-speaking sites are wrong. The quote is due to Alfred Capus, a well-known French journalist: Certains hommes parlent pendant leur sommeil. Il n’y a guère que les conférenciers pour parler pendant le sommeil des autres. I guess that the first person to refer to it in English thought that ‘Alfred Capus’ was a typo and changed it to ‘Albert Camus.’”

“You like because of” (November-December 2012). Dan Rosenberg sent in the last paragraph of William Faulkner’s essay “Mississippi,” published in Holiday magazine in 1954: “Loving of all of it even while you had to hate some of it because he knows now that you don’t love because; you love despite; not for the virtues, but despite the faults” (from William Faulkner: Essays, Speeches, and Public Letters [2004], edited by James B. Meriwether).

Send inquiries and answers to “Chapter and Verse,” Harvard Magazine, 7 Ware Street, Cambridge 02138, or via e-mail to chapterandverse@harvardmag.com.
Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Pennsylvanian. He is author of, among other books, for Early American Studies at the University of History and Dunn director of the McNeil Center. Daniel K. Richter is Nichols professor of American History and Dunn director of the McNeil Center for Early American Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He is author of, among other books, Before the Revolution: America’s Ancient Past (2011) and Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America (2001, and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize), both published by Harvard University Press.

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