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Taking up the Challenge: The Origins of Radcliffe

Sally Schwager

Writing in 1962, on the eve of a dramatic new agreement between Harvard and Radcliffe, professor of history and former Harvard provost Paul Buck argued that the original scheme--the establishment of Radcliffe College in 1894 as a separate, degree-granting institution--had been “an illogical and wasteful adaptation.” The separate women’s college, he suggested, was a contrivance “forced upon the local friends of higher education for women by the obstinate resistance of the Harvard Governing Boards.”¹

Those friends of women’s education had labored for decades to win access to Harvard, and finally, at the end of the nineteenth century, they believed that Harvard would agree to take over the instruction of women and grant them academic degrees. The private “Harvard Annex,” created in 1879 as an earlier compromise, had demonstrated women’s ability to handle the intellectual work; the Woman’s Education Association of Boston had raised substantial funds to support the education of women at Harvard; and the Annex was prepared to transfer its property to the College. President Charles Eliot initially had seemed to support these efforts, but when confronted with the actual transfer of women, property, and the provision of academic degrees to Harvard College, he disavowed any such notion. “Eliot remained obdurate,” wrote Buck, “and the antifeminism that he represented, or, at least, accepted, survived him.”²

It also, of course, had preceded him. The establishment of Radcliffe College at the end of the nineteenth century was the culmination of a series of measures negotiated by the

university in an effort to stave off women's challenges to the College. As early as the 1820s, several young women had made informal arrangements to study with Harvard professors. By the middle decades of the century, women schoolteachers and amateur scientists were studying privately in Harvard's new biology and botany laboratories. Cambridge women were invited to attend summer courses and evening lectures sponsored by the university. But women were denied access to the College as well as to the Medical School, the Law School, and the Divinity School. It soon became clear that Harvard would accommodate women only to the extent that their presence served the university's own purposes.³

In the decade following the Civil War, increased advocacy on the part of Boston and Cambridge women led to proposals for coeducation in the College and the founding of organizations such as the Woman's Education Association of Boston and the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women (the so-called Harvard Annex or just "the Annex") to promote the education of women at Harvard. Male faculty sympathetic to the women's cause appealed to Harvard's Board of Overseers in 1872, but the Board declined even to investigate the question of coeducation.⁴ The Woman's Education Association countered with a proposal whereby the university would grant degrees to women who might pass all of the examinations required of Harvard men. But Eliot refused to support *any* plan by which women would earn a Harvard degree, he explained, "because it would be as much to say that I thought the Harvard course as suitable for young women as for young men--which I do not."⁵ Conversely, he had no scruples about exploiting non-degree programs and women's private tuitions to advance the work of the College. Eliot not only tolerated courses taught by Harvard faculty to women at the Annex, and later at Radcliffe, but

shamelessly promoted them as “perks” when it helped him recruit new faculty for the university.⁶

The history of Radcliffe’s origins, then, is a story of sustained advocacy on the part of women and a policy of containment on the part of the university. Their interplay is reflected in the work of the Boston and Cambridge women who were at the heart of the challenge and in the concessions that resulted. It began unceremoniously with a few young women arranging to attend the lectures of a Harvard professor.

Antebellum Forays

The extent to which women sought access to Harvard College in the years before the Civil War is difficult to assess. The College kept no records of isolated cases, but women’s memoirs suggest that informal arrangements, though rare, were not unheard of. Ann Storrow, a Cambridge girl, attended the lectures of George Ticknor, Harvard’s first Professor of Modern Languages and Literature, in the late 1820s or early 1830s. Lucretia Crocker, a science educator who taught at the State Normal School in West Newton and later at Antioch College, attended lectures and worked in the laboratory of Louis Agassiz, professor of zoology and geology, in the early 1850s. This informal arrangement may have been the impetus behind a petition submitted to the Corporation by Mary Peabody Mann in 1855, requesting that teachers from the Normal School be allowed to attend Agassiz’s lectures at Harvard. President James Walker disapproved, and the Corporation denied the petition.⁷

The University Lectures

Women's interest in studying under Harvard scientists persisted, however, and for nearly a decade beginning in 1863, women were permitted to attend lectures in an adjunct program established by President Thomas Hill. The University Lectures, given by Harvard professors and other scholars, were predominantly scientific in subject. Women, to the surprise of many, consistently comprised the majority of the students. By 1870, 74 courses of lectures had been presented, and in that year alone women accounted for 72 percent of the 155 students enrolled.⁸

Many of the women who attended this series were teachers or amateur scientists working without institutional affiliation. For these students, the program was one of the few opportunities available to study with professional scientists. As historian Sally Gregory Kohlstedt has pointed out, for much of the nineteenth century women scientists typically pursued their work in relative isolation. Barred from professional societies as well as from university departments, women scientists had few opportunities to publish or to work except in support roles. As a consequence, many women scholars became schoolteachers, textbook writers, or educational reformers. For these women, contact with Harvard professors provided "a certain validation of their interest" as well as important substantive training.⁹

President Hill's University Lectures later were hailed as "the germ of the graduate school."¹⁰ The series had been part of a larger reform effort that Hill considered the centerpiece of his plan to make Harvard "a university of a high order."¹¹ The program was not, however, embraced by Charles W. Eliot, who assumed the presidency in 1869. Shortly

after his inauguration, Eliot pronounced the University Lectures a “hopeless failure.” Eliot’s reform objective was to provide systematic graduate training in the sciences to graduates of Harvard and other institutions--not to attract a preponderance of women science teachers. He declared the University Lectures “under-enrolled” and suspended them in 1872.¹²

Eliot’s Inaugural Address

Eliot had set the tone for his administration’s attitude toward the higher education of women in his inaugural address of 1869. The two-hour speech, which the *Boston Post* hailed as “a turning point in higher education,” contained only two paragraphs regarding the education of women. Eliot maintained that it would be irresponsible for the university to sponsor the collegiate education of women. “The world knows next to nothing about the natural mental capacities of the female sex,” he argued. “Only after generations of civil freedom and social equality will it be possible to obtain the data necessary for an adequate discussion of women’s natural tendencies, tastes, and capabilities.” Eliot thus exempted the university from the responsibility to educate women. He declared, simply, that it was not the business of the university to “decide this mooted point . . . a matter concerning which prejudices are deep, and opinion inflammable, and experience scanty.”¹³

Women’s supporters responded that Eliot seemed to be blind to women’s intellectual successes in coeducational academies, colleges, and universities across the country. Had he looked at the evidence, wrote Thomas Wentworth Higginson in *The Woman’s Journal*, “he must have seen that instead of this being ‘a matter concerning which prejudices are deep, and opinion inflammable, and experience scanty,’ it is, on the other hand, a matter where

prejudices are turning out to be shallow, and opinion is becoming reasonable, and experience is very large, and accumulating day by day.”¹⁴ Teachers’ associations, heads of girls’ schools, and the wives and daughters of many of Eliot’s faculty continued to rail against his position. “Let women be able through all the advanced methods of higher education, to determine her actual and relative mental status, that she may have a helpful consciousness of what she is and what she can do,” they challenged.¹⁵

The University Courses of Instruction

But Eliot held the line, offering only a modest appeasement. As a gesture of the university’s commitment to fostering liberal culture and improved preparation for women teachers, he would devise “a safe, promising, and instructive experiment.” Women, he announced, would be allowed to enroll in the new University Courses of Instruction, a series of lectures on literature and philosophy.¹⁶

The program, however, was poorly conceived and poorly funded. Few people outside Harvard’s immediate neighborhood knew of its existence, and its relation to advanced study was vague. Only thirteen people enrolled in the program: six men and seven women. These women, however, were representative of the intellectually ambitious teachers and reformers who continued to campaign for women’s access to Harvard. Mary Allen, an abolitionist and teacher, had recently returned from working in the freedmen’s schools in Charleston, South Carolina; Harriet Pitman, the daughter of local philanthropists, served for a time as a teacher with Anna Eliot Ticknor’s Society to Encourage Studies at Home and later attended the Harvard Annex. Charlotte Brooks organized and hosted the

first meeting of the Woman's Education Association, whose purpose was to secure the Harvard degree for women.¹⁷

Eliot, meanwhile, turned his attention to more formal mechanisms for graduate study within the College, and his "safe, promising, and instructive experiment" was disbanded after its second year. In 1872 the Governing Boards approved a Graduate Department and established higher degrees.¹⁸

The consolidation of all advanced courses into the Graduate Department meant, of course, that women teachers and other unmatriculated students lost access to instruction at Harvard. Although women teachers would continue to study for a time in special summer courses taught at the Botanic Gardens, at the Bussey estate in Jamaica Plain, and in a summer course in chemistry, opportunities for most women declined in the 1870s. When specialized study was an ancillary feature at Harvard, women enjoyed more access to advanced study than they did after the graduate program had become a flourishing and important department of the university. Moreover, even the summer program for local teachers changed its policy regarding women students when the Summer School became a permanent feature of the university in 1886. The mounting exclusion of women reinforced Harvard's growing exclusiveness. By 1891 only Harvard undergraduates and Harvard graduate students were admitted to summer courses, and the phasing out of women and of male students not affiliated with Harvard, was completed.¹⁹

Harvard Women and the Founding of the WEA

To many women, however, it had been clear from the beginning of the University Courses that President Eliot's provision was inadequate. Informal studies in liberal culture through adjunct, non-accredited lectures seemed a fitting solution to Eliot and to many of the Harvard faculty, but the network of educated Boston and Cambridge women who championed Harvard degrees for women found it wanting. Meeting together, they lamented "the great and crying want, which as each woman felt it in her own life she knew existed for all women, of more and better wider and higher education." And they felt it only natural that the university in Cambridge should embrace their ambitions for themselves and for subsequent generations of women.²⁰

The Boston and Cambridge women who organized the Woman's Education Association of Boston in 1872 were accustomed to working together on behalf of educational, literary, and scientific projects--many of which they pursued in association with their husbands and other kin at Harvard. These were the nineteenth-century "Harvard women." They were the wives, mothers, daughters, and sisters of men affiliated with the College. Many were writers or scholars in their own right, and their own intellectual quests informed their activism on behalf of women and girls. They represented a long tradition of private study and intellectual pursuits among the women from learned families in New England, and although many of them held conservative views about women and politics, they believed that women held an equal right with men to the best possible education.²¹

Two such Harvard women, Zina Fay Peirce and Charlotte Brooks, invited a group of their friends and associates on December 22, 1871 to the first meeting of the Committee on

Better Education of Women, a group which was organized shortly thereafter as the Woman's Education Association of Boston (WEA). Among the guests who gathered at this meeting were Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, later Radcliffe's first president; future Radcliffe supporters Mary Hemenway and Mrs. Charles G. Loring; Emily Otis Eliot, wife of Harvard overseer Samuel Eliot; and science educator Lucretia Crocker--all of whom had ties both to Harvard University and to the movement for women's higher education.²²

These women, and others who joined them in forming the WEA, were related not only through their educational work and, in many cases, through family connections, but also through their shared experience of having studied with Harvard professors. Zina Fay had been a student of Professor Louis Agassiz in 1860 and 1861 at the school run by Elizabeth Agassiz in her home on Quincy Street, opposite Harvard Yard. In 1862 Fay married the philosopher Charles Saunders Peirce, the Agassizs' young friend and colleague. Charlotte Brooks studied philosophy under Charles Peirce and the other Harvard philosophers who taught in the University Courses of Instruction. Lucretia Crocker had, of course, studied with Louis Agassiz in the 1850s. And Elizabeth Cary Agassiz as a young woman in the 1840s had been guided in her studies by Professor Cornelius Felton, her brother-in-law and later president of Harvard University.²³

It was therefore natural that the committee led by Peirce and Brooks would seek support from their friends at Harvard when they resolved to sponsor a conference on women's education in 1872. It also made sense that they would look for leadership from two very popular men who had supported them in other projects—the Reverend Phillips Brooks and Dr. Samuel Eliot. When asked to present speeches on the subject of women's

education, however, the men demurred. Brooks declined on the grounds that “not having thought upon the subject of Women’s Education [he was] not prepared to speak.” Samuel Eliot agreed to preside at the meeting in Wesleyen Hall in Boston, but he limited his remarks to praise of the lectures that were available to women under the auspices of the University Courses of Instruction.²⁴

The women of the committee reportedly were disappointed by this narrow perspective on their need for higher education. Professors Frederic Hedge and Francis Child, along with Samuel Eliot, observed that women were, indeed, the majority of those attending the lectures at Harvard. But they also revealed their entrenched bias against admitting women to the University. “We were told,” reported the women, “not to disturb the present system of education, which is the result of the wisdom and experience of the past, and bears so large a part in the molding of our republican life.” The men at the meeting were in agreement, however, on the need for a more advanced girls’ high school in Boston.²⁵

Eight days later, Peirce, Brooks, and their committee of 15 women adopted a constitution, reorganized themselves into the Woman’s Education Association, and directly confronted Harvard by inviting President Eliot to a meeting later that week to discuss women’s access to the College. Eliot, though called on short notice, arrived at the January 1872 meeting with minutely detailed notes to argue against the education of women at Harvard. He argued first that statistics regarding women who had sought instruction at Harvard College demonstrated that not enough women wanted to take the college course to make it worthwhile. Second, he stated flatly that the lower classes at Harvard were overcrowded already, and that consequently there was no space available for women

students. The women could not help but note the inconsistency of these two arguments and later ridiculed Eliot's logic in the press. Furthermore, they asked, how was Harvard to gauge women's desire to attend Harvard College?²⁶

Zina Fay Peirce enlisted Eliot's own argument about the crowded condition of Harvard's classes to propose an alternative path to the Harvard degree. She asked Eliot if Harvard would give its degree to women who could educate themselves and pass all of the examinations required of Harvard men. Eliot is reported to have said that he saw "no difficulty about that," and Peirce's Committee on Intellectual Education immediately enlisted twelve Harvard professors and several other Boston educators to help them prepare a proposal. They developed a plan whereby women would pursue Harvard courses in day classes held in Boston and then would be examined by Harvard professors. But when the WEA presented their plan to Eliot, he reversed himself. Eliot warned that the Corporation would not approve of their plan; and moreover, even if they were willing, he would oppose it. The matter was officially considered at the Corporation meeting in March, and the president was instructed to reply that: "1) a certain amount of time in residence at Harvard College was required for the degree; and 2) the University does not propose to give its degrees to women."²⁷

A Faculty Proposal for Coeducation

Women's challenge to Harvard College was not settled, however, by Eliot's report to the Woman's Education Association. Several members of the Harvard faculty had by now become strong advocates of coeducation at Harvard, and both the popular press and

professional journals actively promoted the idea. James Freeman Clarke, a prominent Unitarian minister in Boston and a member of the Board of Overseers, took up the cause, and the Woman's Education Association simultaneously launched a campaign to negotiate further with the Corporation. At the April 1872 meeting of the Board, Clarke presented a motion that a committee of the Board of Overseers be appointed "to inquire into the practical operation of the system of the coeducation of the sexes." The motion was passed, and the committee was asked to report its findings and its opinions on the adoption of the system by Harvard.²⁸

Clarke, whose 20-year-old daughter Cora was studying botany with professors at Harvard, and whose wife Anna was a founding member of the WEA, had long supported women's rights and women's higher education. These credentials apparently did not impress the Overseers, as the inquiry soon unraveled. Eliot, in an address to the annual meeting of the Social Science Association in May, argued against the education of women at Harvard on the grounds, among others, that moral injury would be sustained and that religious tenets would be violated. It was reported that nine-tenths of the Board of Overseers and the whole of the College faculty would obstinately resist any effort to bring women to campus or to award them the Harvard degree. Former Harvard president James Walker, on behalf of the investigative committee, reported to the Board of Overseers in September that James Freeman Clarke had "ceased to be a member" and that the remaining members unanimously recommended that no further action on the matter of coeducation be taken. The committee was discharged, and a minority report by Clarke was suppressed.²⁹

Clarke had argued in his report that friends of Harvard had daughters as well as sons to educate; that it was more appropriate for men to work in the company of women than to be isolated and removed from their refining influence; and that Harvard's elective system made the introduction of women into the college particularly suitable, as the course of study could be adapted to particular needs and interests. His arguments, however, failed to influence the Overseers or the president. *The Woman's Journal* reported that Eliot had refused to have a full report of the debate published and claimed that he also was unwilling to publish a paper in favor of coeducation by Thomas Wentworth Higginson. The Boston press vigorously censured Eliot for his extreme views, and Eliot's speech to the Social Science Association led women's rights advocate Julia Ward Howe to inform him that, in her opinion, he was "possessed by the very Satan of human society." In defiance of Eliot's proclamation, suffragist Mary Livermore's daughter applied to Harvard and was promptly rejected on account of her sex. The issue had become of concern to the Boston public, and public opinion was critical of Harvard's intransigence. But popular support wielded little sway over Harvard, and even before Clarke's minority report was issued, the Woman's Education Association had begun to formulate a more feasible interim plan.³⁰

The Harvard Examinations for Women

Their idea was to provide a series of examinations--but not instruction--that would be sponsored by Harvard for young women of college age. Unlike the WEA's earlier examination proposal that had provided for a Harvard degree, this new plan would simply certify that women had passed exams equivalent to the Harvard entrance exams. The

concept had been suggested by Samuel Eliot as a result of his research into the University Examinations for Women in England. A similar examination sponsored by Harvard, it was argued, would raise the standard of work at girls' schools, academies, and the public high schools. Moreover, the concept might appeal to the Harvard faculty, who, by preparing and correcting the examinations, would establish a national standard for girls' education.³¹

Several members of the Woman's Education Association vehemently opposed this compromise, however, and the issue of whether to continue to press for a Harvard degree or to switch to other means for improving the education of women divided the association. Zina Fay Peirce, lamenting the readiness of her associates to compromise, resigned from her post as chairwoman of the Intellectual Committee. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, who succeeded her, reflected the opinion of the majority who were unwilling to adopt an adversarial stance in relation to the university. Both Peirce and Agassiz were devoted to the cause of women's higher education, but their approaches differed. Mrs. Agassiz and her associates—women like Anna C. Lowell and Mary Parkman who previously had worked with the Sanitary Commission and the Freedmen's schools; Lucretia Crocker, Harriet Caryl, and Margaret Badger, prominent Boston teachers and reformers; and Catherine Ireland, who had taken over and expanded the Agassiz's school—were what historian Karen Blair has called “feminists under the skin.” They were intent on advancing women's opportunities, but they avoided ideological labels that might hinder their efforts. Determined not to jeopardize the potential for amicable negotiations with Harvard, the WEA denied membership to Julia Ward Howe, Caroline Dall, Edna Dow Cheney, Abby May, Elizabeth Peabody, and Mary Peabody Mann because they were known suffragists, and thus controversial figures.³²

The Harvard Corporation, meanwhile, agreed to conduct the examinations--but only on the conditions that Harvard's role be limited to writing the exam questions and that the WEA would cover all expenses. A Harvard faculty committee was put in charge, and the first Harvard Examinations for Women were administered in 1874. President Eliot wrote in his Annual Report that these examinations would provide for girls' schools what entrance examinations had done for boys' preparatory schools: set a standard and prescribe a judicious program of study. "The experiment is an interesting one," he wrote, "which should cause no interference with the work of the University."³³

The Harvard Examinations for Women evoked mixed reviews, however. To the women who took the examinations between 1874 and 1883, the experience could mean significant personal or professional advantage. The majority expected to teach upon completion of the exams, and many who already were teachers received better posts as a result of passing the exams. Eugenie Homer and her friend Helen Cabot, after taking the exams in 1874, went on to receive training in chemistry at the Woman's Laboratory at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Homer later continued her studies at the Harvard Annex. Susan Monroe was offered a teaching position at Wellesley College after taking the advanced section of the Harvard Examinations in 1875. Harriet Williams taught Greek and Latin at Smith College after passing the preliminary and advanced exams.³⁴

At the same time, women critics of the compromise protested that they aspired to instruction at Harvard, not to examinations in a rented room in Boston. When the second administration of the exams was announced, one writer to *The Woman's Journal* wryly observed, "thus women have, again, the opportunity to show whether they can do as well

without the instruction of Harvard, as the regular students can with it.” Attracting candidates, moreover, proved to be difficult. In spite of significant advertising, only seven women took the first examination held in Boston in June 1874; and the Harvard Examinations, which were moved the next year to Cambridge in the hope of attracting more participants, never drew more than eleven candidates in a given year. Hoping to increase their clientele, the WEA proposed a plan to offer women the *actual* Harvard entrance examinations, arguing that the new women’s colleges might then adopt the examinations as their standard for admission. President Eliot resisted the idea, however, as he feared that women who passed Harvard’s own entrance examinations might then seek admission to the College. In 1879, however, the development of a new program in Cambridge under the leadership of Elizabeth Cary Agassiz promised to avert this danger.³⁵

Harvard Women and the Founding of the “Harvard Annex”

The “Harvard Annex,” the program that was established in 1879, was marked by confusion about its relationship to Harvard University from the outset. The very name by which this organization quickly and almost mysteriously came to be known was misleading: the “Harvard Annex” had no official relationship to the university. It was, as its proper name indicated, a program of “Private Collegiate Instruction for Women” in which a small group of Harvard professors agreed to repeat their lectures to groups of private women students. Thirteen members of the faculty were enlisted to teach the first year, and courses were offered in ancient and modern languages, English, philosophy, and political economics. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz led the program with a committee of friends and associates, the

majority of whom were wives or daughters of Harvard professors: Ellen Hooper Gurney, wife of Professor Ephraim Gurney; Mary H. Cooke, wife of Professor Josiah Cooke; Mary Greenough, wife of Professor James B. Greenough; Alice Mary Longfellow, daughter of William Wadsworth Longfellow; Lilian Horsford, daughter of former Professor Eban Horsford; and Stella Gilman, wife of Cambridge author and principal of the Gilman School for girls, Arthur Gilman, who had helped to organize the new program and who served as its Secretary.³⁶

The public and the press, however, immediately picked up on its Harvard connections and touted the program as the “Harvard collegiate course for women.” When the first announcement was issued in February 1879 under the banner, “Private Collegiate Instruction for Women by Professors and other Instructors of Harvard College,” the *New England Journal of Education* lauded it as “the entering wedge of joint-education” at Harvard. This notion was fueled by conversation in Cambridge about a brilliant young woman, Abby Leach, who had arranged that fall to study Latin, Greek, and English Literature with Professors James B. Greenough, William W. Goodwin, and Francis J. Child, respectively. Leach’s work was lauded as being equal to the most advanced work in the College, and supporters celebrated her example in comments that were widely quoted in the press. Mary Hughes, a prospective student who had read the about the new program in the *Cambridge Tribune*, wrote to Arthur Gilman inquiring about “the new plan of opening Harvard College to lady students.” Even Mrs. Agassiz referred to the program as “Harvard Education for Women.”³⁷

President Eliot had expressed concern about the public's predilection to highlight the university's role when he read a draft of the circular announcing the program. He insisted that they change the phrase, "the ladies of the Committee," which he feared might be construed to mean that there also were men on this steering group. Eliot was particularly anxious to avoid confusion about the source of the graduation certificates that were to be awarded to women students. "I think it should be clearly stated that they are to be given by the Committee or its officers," he instructed the committee. "People are incredibly apt to misunderstand such announcements. It is impossible to make them too plain and full."³⁸

The fact that Harvard was *not* more formally associated with the new opportunity for women also was criticized. Many saw this new effort not as a wedge in the door, but as a subterfuge that could impede women from gaining admission to the legitimate Harvard program. A graduate of the University of Illinois wrote that she found it incredible that Annex women would do as much work as young men "without being regarded as students, without a student's use of the library, and with no prospect of a degree." The *Springfield Republican* called the Annex a "postern-gate and back door contrivance to preserve the prestige of 'the superior sex'."³⁹

Elizabeth Cary Agassiz and her committee, however, were very hopeful about the success—and the significance—of the program. They believed that the Annex program would offer women opportunities for advanced study that were greater in both quality and variety than those available at any other institution in the country. Agassiz refused to allow a "ladies' degree" to be created for the Annex, and she maintained from the beginning that women deserved "the largest liberty of instruction." She was confident that the

opportunities of Harvard, with full equality of academic standards, would finally be made available to women.⁴⁰

Elizabeth Cary Agassiz and the Agassiz School

Elizabeth Cary Agassiz was 56 years old when she undertook the leadership of the Annex. She had been working on behalf of improved education for girls since the 1850s, and it was she who ultimately would negotiate the agreement for the founding of Radcliffe College in 1894. At the time of the Annex's founding, she was writing a two-volume biography of her husband, the Swiss-born naturalist Louis Agassiz, who had died in 1873.⁴¹

Much of her time during the late 1850s and early 1860s, however, was devoted to running the Agassiz School for girls, which she opened in her Cambridge home in 1855 and directed until 1863. Elizabeth Agassiz directed every aspect of the school, from financial accounting to faculty recruitment; and under her leadership the school was extremely successful, both academically and financially. The school promoted progressive practices and attitudes about the education of girls, and, in fact, its faculty included several of the Harvard professors who later would agree to teach at the Harvard Annex.⁴²

Agassiz's educational ideas undoubtedly were informed by her own early experiences and her family's progressive attitudes regarding education. She had witnessed the teaching of her younger siblings at an experimental school taught by Mary Peabody, sister of the educational reformer Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and protégé of Horace Mann, whom she later married. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz's cousins studied with progressive educator and Transcendentalist Bronson Alcott at his celebrated Temple School. Her sisters,

Mollie, Sallie, and Emma Cary, were sent to George Emerson's pioneering school for girls. "Lizzie" (the name by which Mrs. Agassiz was known to family and friends throughout her life) was educated at home, and under the tutelage of the family's governess, Miss Lyman, she learned to make studying a habit of life, independent of school. In 1834, she joined her sister and her cousin at Elizabeth Peabody's afternoon "Historical School," where Peabody employed Bronson Alcott's Socratic method to teach her young women students to think critically. A later biographer noted that at Miss Peabody's school, "Lizzie Cary learned to keep her mind awake, to study under her own volition and never to imagine that she had finished her education."⁴³

This independence and progressive attitude characterized Elizabeth Cary Agassiz's later work at the Harvard Annex and at Radcliffe. She considered her management of the Agassiz School as "training" for her new tasks at the Annex and her collaboration with Harvard professors in this work as the model for Radcliffe College. "But for the school," she wrote, "the college (so far as I am concerned) would never have existed." Moreover, her confidence in the purposefulness, independence, and scholarly abilities of young women was reflected in her design for the new program. "I am as independent as the air," wrote Abby Parsons to her parents in 1879, describing life at the new Annex. Elizabeth Agassiz always referred to Parsons and the other Annex students as her "Harvard girls," for she believed that they were worthy of the highest intellectual advantages and deserved the freedom to order their own lives and learning.⁴⁴

The Annex Students

Abby Parsons' parents undoubtedly were relieved to receive such happy news from their daughter after her first few months at the Annex in 1879. Her father James Parsons, a high school principal, had personally prepared his daughter to meet Harvard's entrance requirements and had written to President Eliot only a year or so earlier to ask if there were any prospect of girls being allowed to study in Harvard College. To his disappointment, Eliot had responded that there was "no such prospect, near or remote." Parsons had thus sent his daughter to the Annex with some hesitation, as he was distressed that not all of the courses available at Harvard were offered to women in the Annex. Mary Byrd, a graduate of the University of Michigan, also was apprehensive about Harvard attitudes toward women. "I wish, if possible, to learn beforehand how much discomfort I shall find in a school where coeducation is regarded as something strange and unnatural," she wrote.⁴⁵

Mary Byrd, like several other of the college-trained women who applied to the Annex, feared that the atmosphere in Cambridge might be hostile; but the lure of study with Harvard professors was powerful and proved to be advantageous. Byrd came to the Annex as a graduate student in 1882 and studied for a year under the direction of Edward Pickering at the Harvard College Observatory. She left to teach at Carleton College and later became director of the observatory at Smith College. Emily Norcross, who had received her bachelor's degree from Wellesley in 1880, also taught at Smith after pursuing classical studies in the Annex. Two years later, Grace Chester, a biologist who had studied at the Annex, joined the Smith College faculty.⁴⁶

In all, 27 students enrolled in 1879, 25 of whom completed the first year. The Annex, like Harvard College, drew its student body from a predominantly local, urban population. But unlike Harvard (and unlike nearby Smith and Wellesley), a significant number of the women who studied at the Annex were older “special students” or “graduate-specials” who came to pursue focused study for a year or two. Among this class of “specials” in the first year of the Annex were Ellen Gurney, Lilian Horsford, and Alice Mary Longfellow, all members of the Executive Committee. Gurney was by far the most advanced of all Annex students in Greek that year, studying along with Abby Leach under Professor William Goodwin.⁴⁷

Abby Parsons, Annie Barber, and Annie Ware Winsor were among the younger women who came to the Annex to pursue a regular four-year course of study. They were academically serious students whose families distinctly supported their college ambitions. Annie Barber recalled that her mother invariably had told friends that she would send her daughter to Harvard. “When Annie is ready for Harvard, Harvard will be ready for Annie,” she had insisted. Annie Winsor was encouraged in her studies by several generations of women in her family who had attended normal schools and academies and then had served as teachers. Winsor later wrote about this legacy and highlighted the Annex students’ shared commitment to serious study--a commitment that distinguished them from the men at Harvard. “A little common-sense and mathematics will show . . . that the Annex girl, coming to the Annex as she does because she chooses to study, is likely to do faithful and good work; while no such presumption can be made about the College man, for he comes to

College from every variety of reason and mostly not from love of study,” she wrote.⁴⁸

Clearly, these young women felt themselves to be participants in an important undertaking. No other women ever had come so near to being Harvard students; but, ironically, having reached this goal, they experienced new conflicts about their intellectual and professional ambitions and about the roles that they were expected to fulfill as adult women. Annie Winsor sat down with her diary one evening, apparently in a mood of triumph: “And now my plans are pretty well made for my work in life,” she wrote. “I have set out to outfit myself to be a professor of English. Bryn Mawr is in my eye.” But then she wrote an addendum: “Of course if I am married I shall not be a professor, but my studies will not hurt me for that future.”⁴⁹

Challenges at the Annex

The situation of the Harvard Annex was fraught with uncertainty resulting from the Annex’s lack of authority and its dependence on the good will of Harvard professors. The organization of the Annex was intentionally informal in anticipation of the time “when, as was fondly hoped,” wrote Arthur Gilman, “the President and Fellows of Harvard College would undertake the work of teaching women.” This, of course, had long been the hope of the Woman’s Education Association. Within two years, by 1881, the managers had determined that their “experiment” was a success, and Mrs. Agassiz was formally instructed to speak with President Eliot about taking over the Annex. Eliot must have raised the issue of an endowment, for coming out of their meeting, Agassiz recommended that the Annex

ask the Corporation whether it would be willing to take over their work and inquire “how large a sum of money would be required.”⁵⁰

The Annex managers also advised the Corporation that the program could not continue in its current state: the difficulties of enlisting professors and guaranteeing continuity of the program were insurmountable. Although all 53 members of the Harvard faculty had been invited to teach in the Annex, and 44 had agreed to contribute in some form, only 13 had actually taught in the first term. Most professors taught only one course, and the program grew to include only 20 or 30 courses per year. By comparison, the number of courses in Harvard College was over 120.⁵¹

Furthermore, professors’ attitudes toward the instruction of women varied--even among those who supported the Annex. Barrett Wendell’s examination questions were embarrassingly superficial and skewed toward the students’ so-called feminine natures. George Martin agreed to teach with the provision that he would have “no examination books to read and no papers to make out.” John Williams White decided to abandon his Greek class in the middle of the year. Other professors could offer only one or two hours a week to the program, and as a consequence Annex students spent eight to ten hours a week with their instructors, compared to fifteen or sixteen hours a week in the College. Abby Parsons wrote that it was impossible for the students to “keep up with the yard students in two recitations a week.” She also had concluded after only two months at the Annex that her history composition would be badly treated. “You know,” she explained to her parents, “that ridicule is the Harvard College theory.”⁵²

The Corporation, meanwhile, declined to take action on the Annex's request, and by March 1882 Elizabeth Agassiz and the other managers were reconciled to the necessity of raising funds to continue their work, as it stood, for several more years. Arthur Gilman proposed an endowment drive to support a more independent women's institution. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz intervened, however, and reiterated her long-held position that the goal of their efforts was to provide a Harvard education to women. She explained to Gilman that although she, too, had at one point considered the idea of running a separate program with a supplementary faculty, she had come to fear such a step. "The more I think of this, the more I fear that we shall drift into the building up of another female college, distinct from the University," she explained. "I believe this would be a great mistake. . . . We must be careful to avoid this rock," she warned.⁵³

The Annex, therefore, was reorganized and incorporated in 1882 as the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women, with Elizabeth Agassiz elected president, Arthur Gilman secretary, and Lilian Horsford treasurer. The charter placed the Annex in a position to raise an endowment, and they hoped that this would convince Harvard to establish the work on a permanent basis.⁵⁴

The endowment drive was immediately adopted by the Woman's Education Association as a major campaign. Subscriptions of \$5,000 each had already been received from Mary Hemenway, Ellen Mason, Pauline Agassiz Shaw, Thomas Appleton, and the George O. Hovey estate. Supporters of the Annex pointed out that American women had given considerably over one million dollars to colleges for men, including over \$325,000 to Harvard. The WEA beseeched them to turn their attention instead to the Annex, and

Elizabeth Agassiz claimed that this support made her feel “doubly sure of our permanent success.”⁵⁵

Such success was not swift in coming, however. Only two-thirds of the required sum had been raised by February 1884 when the executive committee of the Annex met to discuss its future. Thoughts of petitioning Harvard were put aside, and the issue was again tabled at the annual meeting in 1885. Fearing that the Corporation would not accept their proposals unless a larger endowment were attached, they discussed instead the use of the endowment income to offset current expenses, and a committee was established to determine what might be salvaged. The next major negotiations with Harvard would not take place until 1893, when the topic of discussion would not be the education of women in Harvard College, but rather the establishment of a new women’s institution--Radcliffe College.⁵⁶

The Radcliffe Compromise

By 1890 it had become clear to the Annex managers that the program could not survive. The Annex had grown into a school of over two hundred students; it owned land, a large building (Fay House), and had an endowment of approximately \$75,000. Elizabeth Agassiz explained that in spite of such success, the Annex program was untenable. The managers could not guarantee stable instruction, they could not afford to offer postgraduate courses, and the Annex certificate was considered by most to be a poor substitute for a college degree.

Elizabeth Agassiz initiated a series of conversations with President Eliot, and the Woman's Education Association, which was hopeful that their goal might finally be within reach, launched a new fund-raising effort to raise an additional endowment of \$250,000. Eliot's response to their effort, however, was equivocal. On the one hand, he suggested that the university might take over the Annex if it could be made self-supporting; on the other hand, he explicitly stated that he had no authority concerning the possibility of uniting the Annex with the University and claimed that he did not know the Corporation and Overseers' positions on the matter. The Woman's Education Association nevertheless continued its efforts, and in March 1893, the Annex offered the Corporation all of its present property—an invested capital of \$150,000 with real estate. They promised, further, that they would continue to raise funds for ongoing support and future development.⁵⁷

The immediate approval of the Corporation was not to be won, however, by this promise or by the property of the Annex, which was so insignificant that it could not possibly have been considered as the basis of bargaining power. As Le Baron Russell Briggs later wrote, the Annex “had nothing to offer Harvard but girls, whom Harvard did not want.”⁵⁸

Instead, after a series of negotiations the Corporation agreed to consider the establishment of a new institution, “X. College,” which would be self-governing in all respects and which would offer its own diplomas, to be countersigned by the president of Harvard. The president and fellows of Harvard College would serve as “Visitors” of the college and would approve all faculty appointments. This organizational interdependence, it was argued, would give the women's institution all of the security and status it might require

for practical purposes, and yet it still would maintain the independence of the Harvard Corporation from the enterprise of educating women--a condition that was not subject to negotiation.⁵⁹

This plan was not, of course, the plan that had been promoted by the WEA, nor was it the plan that the Annex had set out to secure. The idea that the Annex grant academic degrees to its graduates had been proposed earlier, in 1886, but was defeated because of the desire on the part of Elizabeth Agassiz and other board members to secure the Harvard degree for women. Agassiz repeatedly had insisted that she saw no purpose in establishing another women's college, but now it appeared that the Annex had no choice in the matter. The Annex committee voted on October 31, 1893, to accept the Corporation proposal, and the new college for women was christened "Radcliffe College." The proposal was approved by the Overseers on December 6, 1893, and, in spite of protests by the WEA, a committee of Annex Alumnae, and the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, the charter for Radcliffe College was signed by the governor of Massachusetts on March 23, 1894.⁶⁰

On May 25, 1894, two months after the approval of Radcliffe College by the commonwealth, the Harvard Board of Overseers adopted a resolution that the degree of Bachelor of Arts should not be given to women by the university under any circumstances. They also rejected a proposal that a separate degree be developed by the Faculty of Arts and Sciences that might entitle women to earn a Harvard degree for postgraduate work. The Overseers did, however, allow a provision that Radcliffe graduate students might, under certain conditions, study in graduate courses at Harvard. One of the conditions was that the new privilege could be revoked at any time.⁶¹

In Retrospect

As it was conceived, Radcliffe College by its very status as an “affiliate” rather than an integral part of Harvard, by its financial uncertainty, and by its lack of privileges and political rights within the university reflected the precariousness of women’s role in the intellectual life of the nineteenth century. It was not clear to the women who had sought admission to Harvard University in the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s what their ultimate relationship to the university would be in the next century. The terms under which women might receive postgraduate training at Harvard still were unclear, alumnae continued to press for the Harvard Ph.D., and women students did not know what new roles might be available to them as college graduates.

Moreover, the odd arrangement between Harvard and Radcliffe served to reinforce the larger social debate pertaining to women’s intellectual abilities and social roles. Charles William Eliot claimed that the establishment of Radcliffe College did not deny women greater opportunities. Rather, he argued, the separate women’s college would serve to enhance and stimulate women’s own distinctive intellectual natures. He argued that the movement of nineteenth-century women to gain access to programs designed for the education of men, and the concomitant efforts of women’s colleges to imitate the curricula and purposes of the men’s colleges, would prove eventually to have been a misguided endeavor. “The prime motive of the higher education of women,” Eliot argued, “should be recognized as the development in women of the capacities and powers which will fit them to

make family life and social life more intelligent, more enjoyable, happier, and more productive.”⁶²

Such arguments concerning woman’s special needs and accolades regarding her domestic virtues had changed little from the emergence of women’s collegiate education in the years before the Civil War to the consummation of the agreement between Harvard and Radcliffe at the close of the nineteenth century. The purpose of educating women according to President Eliot, and according to dean Le Baron R. Briggs, who succeeded Elizabeth Agassiz as president of Radcliffe College, was to enhance women’s ability to serve in their traditional roles as wives, mothers, and teachers of the young. The status and relation of men to women, and the distinctive purposes proposed for women’s education throughout the nineteenth century, were more constant and more enduring than any other aspect of the college curriculum or university structure. The purpose of educating women continued to be cast in terms of women’s relationship to men and women’s responsibilities to others. “Can any greater gift be made to man than to keep him in the presence of a highly trained and spiritual woman?” asked President Eliot of the Radcliffe graduating class in 1898. Can any responsibility or occupation bring educated women more happiness and influence, asked Briggs in 1904, than their work “as sisters, as wives, as mothers, as friends, as helpers to all that is noble?”⁶³

Still, these first college women looked back on the century they were leaving as one that had been generous to them. It had granted them new opportunities, a larger share in the culture’s learning and intellectual life, and a somewhat wider choice of occupations that could lead to personal independence. Elizabeth Agassiz beheld these new possibilities as

“great gifts which the nineteenth century has given women,” and she celebrated the gains that the establishment of Radcliffe represented. “I am very happy about Radcliffe College,” she wrote to a former Annex student. “In my own youth,” she later elaborated, “the path which you . . . tread without let or hindrance, almost without comment or criticism, would have been absolutely beyond the reach of girls of average acquirements and positions.”⁶⁴

In the context of the tremendous changes that she had known in her own lifetime, Elizabeth Agassiz did not doubt that Radcliffe would soon be absorbed by Harvard. She had assured the Annex alumnae when Radcliffe was established that she felt the arrangement to be only a temporary solution--the best that was within their immediate reach. To Agassiz and to the other Harvard women, the founding of the Harvard Annex and the establishment of Radcliffe were part of the brilliant and ongoing success story of the nineteenth century. Their work on behalf of women’s education was rooted in a personal faith and confidence in the capacities of women, in the strength of education as a moral force, and in the progress of the age in which they lived.

When President Agassiz framed her parting words to the last Radcliffe class to graduate in the nineteenth century, she reiterated this hope and trust: “Among the numerous and startling changes that have marked this century,” she remarked, “the progress in the education of women has been singularly striking and novel. For one whose life has kept pace with that of the century, beginning with its earlier years and sharing now in its decline, the retrospect as regards women is simply amazing.”⁶⁵

Harvard, however, was hardly progressive in its attitude toward the higher education of women. The advances it did promote invariably served the university’s own institutional

interests, and the obstacles it installed led to uncertainties that would continue to condition women's education at Harvard and at Radcliffe for another hundred years. The Eliot era, which generally has been acclaimed as a period of unprecedented reform, and one that was critical in the shaping of American higher education, takes on a new aspect when examined from this vantage. The challenges of the nineteenth-century Harvard women bring into question the extent of reform-mindedness at Harvard.

Notes

1. Paul Buck, "Harvard Attitudes Toward Radcliffe in the Early Years," paper read before the Massachusetts Historical Society at the May 1962 meeting, *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (1962), 34. The provisions of the 1963 agreement included the granting of Harvard degrees to Radcliffe seniors, a merger of the Radcliffe Graduate School and the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, and the opening of all programs of the Harvard Business School to women. See Agreements Between the President and Fellows of Harvard College and the Trustees of Radcliffe College, Radcliffe College Archives [hereafter, RCA]. The 1963 agreement is discussed in Dorothy Elia Howells, *A Century to Celebrate: Radcliffe College, 1879-1979* (Cambridge, Mass.: Radcliffe College, 1978), 33. For an extended discussion of the controversy surrounding the 1894 agreement and the establishment of Radcliffe College, see Sally Schwager, " 'Harvard Women': A History of the Founding of Radcliffe College" (Ed.D. diss., Harvard University, 1982), 326-68.
2. Buck, "Harvard Attitudes Toward Radcliffe," 49.
3. Schwager, " 'Harvard Women' ," 80-98. For action on petitions to the Medical School, see Channing to Harvard Corporation, July 19, 1847 and vote of the Corporation, misc. series, Harvard University Overseers' Records [hereafter, OR], 63; Holmes to Corporation, Dec. 11, 1847, misc. series OR, 239; Hunt to Corporation, Dec. 17, 1847, misc. series, 240. For Divinity School, see Corporation Report dated Aug. 14, 1869, Harvard University Corporation Records [hereafter, CR], 136; *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University* (1870), 29-30; and Corporation Report dated June 24, 1872, CR, 389, all in Harvard University Archives [Hereafter HUA].

4. For discussion of coeducation proposals, see Schwager, “ ‘Harvard Women’ ,” 98-105. For official responses to the 1872 proposal for coeducation, see CR, vol. 11: 364-67, and OR, vol. 11: 69-70.

5. The WEA proposal was considered by the Corporation in 1872. See CR, March 25, 1872, vol. 11: 364. For Eliot’s response, see *Boston Daily Advertiser* article by Zina Fay Pierce, reprinted in *The Woman’s Journal*, April 17, 1875. Eliot held to this belief that men and women should be educated differently throughout his career. For statements of his opinion, see Charles W. Eliot, address delivered at Smith College, June 16, 1879, quoted in L. Clark Seeyle, *The Early History of Smith College, 1871-1910* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1923), 47-49; and “Higher Education for Women,” in William Allan Neilson, ed., *Charles W. Eliot: The Man and His Beliefs*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Bros., 1926), 160-67 (originally published in *Harper’s Bazaar*, 1908). On the scientific ideas that underlay Eliot’s position, see Cynthia Eagle Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989). A number of men and women educators challenged Eliot on this point, most eloquently president M. Carey Thomas of Bryn Mawr. For her response to Eliot, see Thomas’s 1900 address, reprinted as “Should the Higher Education of Women Differ from That of Men?” *Educational Review* 21 (1901): 1-10. The best discussion of Thomas’s criticism of Eliot is Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *The Power and Passion of M. Carey Thomas* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994), 317 and 321-22.

6. Charles W. Eliot to Edward Cummings, Jan. 19, 1891; Eliot to William Ashley, May 12, 1892; Eliot to Fred Norris Robinson, March 25, 1896; Eliot to George James Peirce, Feb. 4, 1897; Eliot to Thomas N. Carver, May 15, 1900, letter press volume, Eliot Papers, Harvard University Archives. Sociologist Lawrence Nichols notes that the practice of recruiting faculty with the promise of added compensation from Radcliffe continued under President Lowell. See Lawrence T. Nichols, "Sociology in the Women's Annex: Inequality and Integration at Harvard and Radcliffe, 1879-1947," *American Sociologist* (Fall 1997): 8. I am grateful to Margaret Rossiter for this reference.

7. *Letters of Ann Gillam Storrow to Jared Sparks*, ed. Frances Bradshaw Blanchard, *Smith College Studies in History*, vol. 6, no. 3 (Northampton, Mass.: Smith College, 1921), 210, as cited in David B. Tyack, *George Ticknor and the Boston Brahmins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1967), 91. Ticknor's openness reflected his larger reform agenda. See Tyack, *George Ticknor*, chap. 3, and Julie A. Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 24-25. On Crocker, see Ednah D. Cheney, "The Women of Boston," in *The Memorial History of Boston including Suffolk County, Massachusetts 1630-1880*, vol. 4, ed. Justin Winsor (Boston: James R. Osgood & Co., 1881), 345; and Norma Kidd Green, "Lucretia Crocker," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950*, ed. Edward T. James and Janet Wilson James (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 407-9. On Mary Mann's appeal, see Edward Lurie, *Louis Agassiz: A Life in Science* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 200-201. Crocker later became a founding member of the WEA and one of the first women elected to the Boston School Committee. See Ednah Dow Cheney, *Memoirs of Lucretia Crocker and Abby W. May* (Boston: Massachusetts School Suffrage Association, 1893), and Polly Welts Kaufman, *Boston Women and City School Politics, 1872-1905* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994).

8. Samuel Eliot Morison, ed., *The Development of Harvard University Since the Inauguration of President Eliot, 1869-1929* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1930), 453; and *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University* (1870), 18, Harvard University Archives. See also Mary Hume Maguire, "The Curtain-Raiser to the Founding of Radcliffe College: The Search for a 'Safe, Promising, and Instructive Experiment'," *Proceedings of the Cambridge Historical Society* 36 (1957): 29. I have benefited from Maguire's careful documentation of women's participation in this and several other university programs that I discuss herein; I disagree, however, with her overall conclusion that Harvard was a liberal benefactor of women's higher education.
9. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt, "In from the Periphery: American Women in Science, 1830-1880," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 4, no. 1 (Autumn 1978): 81-96. See also Margaret W. Rossiter, "'Women's Work' in Science, 1880-1910," *Isis* 71 (1980), reprinted in *History of Women in the Sciences: Readings from Isis*, ed. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 287-304; and Mary R. S. Creese, *Ladies in the Laboratory? American and British Women in Science, 1800-1900* (London: Scarecrow Press, 1998).
10. The term was used by Eliot and others. See Francis G. Peabody, "The Germ of the Graduate School," *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* (Dec. 1918), 176-81. For an excellent discussion of this program in the context of university reform and the development of the graduate department at Harvard, see Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America: The Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 38.

11. *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University* (1868), 8; and Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America*, 38.
12. *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University* (1870), 19-30; and *Annual Report* (1872), 13. See also Morison, *Development of Harvard University*, 453.
13. Charles William Eliot, "Inaugural Address," reprinted as *A Turning Point in Higher Education: The Inaugural Address of Charles William Eliot as President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869*, ed. Nathan Pusey (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969), 17-18. The *Boston Post* epithet is cited in Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard, 1636-1936* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1946), 328.
14. For a reprint of Higginson's remarks and discussion, see *The Schoolmaster: A Journal of Educational Literature and News* 3, no. 20 (Jan. 15, 1870): 5-6.
15. *The Woman's Journal* (Nov. 27, 1875); for other critics' responses to Eliot, see *The Schoolmaster* 3, no. 20 (Jan. 15, 1870): 5-7; and *The American Educational Monthly* 10 (Nov. 1873): 509-13.
16. Eliot, "Inaugural Address," 18.

17. The *Harvard University Catalogue* (1870), 102-3, lists the University Courses of Instruction and the students enrolled in both courses. Maguire, "The Curtain-Raiser to the Founding of Radcliffe College," 28, reports her conversation with Allen's daughter, Mary Faben Boles (Radcliffe, '03) regarding Allen's teaching in Charleston. On Allen's enrollment in the program see also Mary Chandler Faben Boles' report in "Class Notes--1903," *Radcliffe Quarterly* 51, no. 4 (Nov.-Dec. 1967): 29, and Faben alumna folder, RCA. On Pitman, see receipt for tuition of \$50 made out to Miss Harriet Minot Pitman for the second term of courses in modern literature, Pitman alumna folder, RCA. For evidence of her work with the Society to Encourage Studies at Home, see *Society to Encourage Studies at Home Founded in 1873 by Anna Eliot Ticknor* (Cambridge, Mass.: Riverside Press, 1897), 186. On the Society's work, see Schwager, " 'Harvard Women' ," chap. 2. Charlotte Brooks (Mrs. B. F. Brooks) hosted the "Committee on Better Education of Women" in December 1871. The committee was reorganized as the WEA in January 1872. See WEA, Minutes of Committees, quoted in Elizabeth Briggs' notes under heading, "Massachusetts Historical Society, Minutes of Committees," Elizabeth Briggs Papers, RCA.

18. Morison, *Development of Harvard University*, 454. For discussion of faculty opposition to Eliot's plan and the subsequent growth of the Graduate School, see also Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*, 334-36; and Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America*, 54-58.

19. On summer courses, see Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard*, 390, and *The Woman's Journal* (Dec. 11, 1875). In 1875, eleven women studied chemistry and thirty studied botany. See *Harvard University Catalogue (1874-75)*, 147-48, HUA. President Eliot advocated botany as an avocation for young ladies and encouraged women's organizations to contribute funds to the Bussey Institution, whose financial condition was precarious. Women were admitted, however, only to three courses held in the summer, and, unlike their male classmates, they received no Harvard credit. See Morison, *Development of Harvard University*, 508-17; *Annual Report of the President of Harvard University* for 1870, 1871, and 1872; and vote to admit women to the three courses in CR, April 28, 1871, 288, HUA. In 1875 women were invited to attend a new evening readings series on "masterpieces of literature." Eliot introduced the program to provide extra teaching and earnings for some faculty. It also served, like earlier initiatives, as a gesture of Harvard's accommodation of women. See *Annual Report of the President (1875)*, and *Harvard University Catalogue (1875-76, 1876-77, 1878-79)*, HUA. The pattern of declining access for women at Harvard confirms what Patricia Graham has observed more generally regarding the differential impact on men and women of changes in the structure of higher education. See Patricia Albjerg Graham, "Expansion and Exclusion: A History of Women in American Higher Education," *Signs* 3, no. 4 (Summer 1978): 759-73. Eliot's wholesale exclusion of women from Harvard's mandate contrasts sharply with his meritocratic ideals as applied to men. For an interesting discussion, see Kim Townsend, *Manhood at Harvard: William James and Others* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 83-97. On patterns of exclusion earlier in the century,

20. Woman's Education Association, *First Annual Report, for the year ending January 16, 1873* (Boston: W. L. Deland, 1873), 5.

21. For evidence of the tradition of learned women in Boston, see Ednah D. Cheney, "The Women of Boston," and Schwager, "'Harvard Women,'" chap. 1. On New England women more generally, see Catherine E. Kelly, *In the New England Fashion: Reshaping Women's Lives in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999). For a discussion of the liberal educational reforms of Harvard men, see for example, Daniel Walker Howe, *The Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press), chap. 9. On family connections and the pattern of Harvard professors who married prominent (and wealthy) Boston women, see Story, *Harvard and the Boston Upper Class*, 86-87. Peter Dobkin Hall discusses this pattern as an aspect of the changing social order: see *The Organization of American Culture, 1700-1900: Private Institutions, Elites, and the Origins of American Nationality* (New York: New York University Press, 1984), 198-206. On kinship networks among Boston's aristocracy, see Betty G. Farrell, *Elite Families: Class and Power in Nineteenth-Century Boston* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1993), chap. 4. I have chosen to call these women "Harvard Women" to emphasize both their close association to the university and, in many cases, their study under Harvard professors. They did not use the term to describe themselves, though Elizabeth Cary Agassiz referred to the Annex students as "the Harvard girls." See Elizabeth Cary Agassiz (hereafter cited as ECA), diary entry for Sept. 24, 1879, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Papers, Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College [hereafter, SL].

22. WEA, Minutes of Committees, Elizabeth Briggs papers, RCA. For officers and charter members, see WEA, *First Annual Report*, 16-17.
23. On the Agassiz School and its students see Georgina Schuyler, typescript of speech given at memorial meeting, Dec. 8, 1907, Rosamond Lamb Papers, SL; Ellen Emerson to ECA, Sept. 26, 1905, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Papers, SL; Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, ed., *Louis Agassiz: His Life and Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1885), 526-30; and Louise Hall Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance: The Story of the Agassiz Family of Boston* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1959), 139-44. Elizabeth Agassiz later wrote of how important Felton's tutelage had been to her life and education: ECA to Mary Perkins Cary, Feb. 11, 1868, box 2, folder 17, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Papers, SL. Felton served as Harvard's president from 1860 until his death in 1862.
24. WEA, Minutes of Committees, Elizabeth Briggs Papers, RCA.
25. Ibid. See also newspaper report, "The Woman's Education Association," dated Jan. 16, 1873, and signed by J. Marcou, H. L. Cabot, and A. C. Lowell, Harvard Examinations for Women folder, RCA; WEA, *First Annual Report*, 8.
26. This meeting was not officially reported by the WEA. The only source regarding its details is an article by Peirce published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* and reprinted in *The Woman's Journal*, April 17, 1875. Eliot appears not to have denied the substance of Peirce's article. Within the year, the WEA grew to a membership of 107 women. See List of Members, WEA, *First Annual Report*, 16-17.
27. On the development of the plan, see Peirce's article in *The Woman's Journal*, April 17, 1875; and WEA, *First Annual Report*, 9. On Harvard's action, see CR, 11: 364.
28. OR, 11: 39-40; see also *Reports to the Overseers*, 3: 75-76.

29. The women in Clarke's family may have encouraged his commitment to women's education. Cora H. Clarke was a well-regarded botanist and entomologist and in 1884 was named a fellow of the AAAS. Anna Huidekoper Clarke was a founding member of the WEA. See Margaret W. Rossiter, *Women Scientists in America: Struggles and Strategies to 1940* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 77; and WEA, *First Annual Report*, 16. For report of Eliot's address, see *The Woman's Journal*, July 26, 1873. On action by the Board, see OR, 11: 69-70.

30. On suppression of Clarke's report, see *American Educational Monthly* 10 (Nov. 1873): 509-12; and references in obituaries, *Boston Herald*, June 9, 1888, and *Boston Transcript*, June 9, 1888. No reference to the report exists in the Corporation Records or in the Minutes of the Board of Overseers. On Eliot's speech, see also *Boston Daily Advertiser*, May 16, 1873.

31. The most comprehensive description of the Harvard Examinations is an unsigned manuscript (probably written by Katharine P. Loring), dated Jan. 1, 1884, Harvard Examinations for Women folder, RCA. See also *Annual Reports of the Woman's Education Association for the years 1873-1884*; Elizabeth Briggs notes, RCA; and Maguire, "The Curtain-Raiser," 32-38. *Reports of the President of Harvard University* for the years 1872-1878 also include some information. Samuel Eliot, first cousin of Charles W. Eliot, was a lecturer in history at Harvard from 1869 to 1873. Earlier he had served as professor of history and then president of Trinity College, president of the Perkins' Institution and Massachusetts School for the Blind, and Harvard Overseer. In 1873 he became Master of Girls' High School in Boston. See Walter Graeme Eliot, *Eliot Family* (New York: Livingston, Middleditch, 1887), 90-91.

32. On controversy within the WEA see *The Woman's Journal*, July 26, 1873, Sept. 20, 1873, and April 17, 1875. On the women on Agassiz's committee, see: Ednah D. Cheney, "The Women of Boston," 344-45 and 353; Harriet Dix et al., eds., *A Memorial of Harriet Elizabeth Caryl, 1834-1918* (Boston: privately printed, 1919); Olive White, *Centennial History of the Girls' High School of Boston* (Boston: Paul Blanchard, 1952); and Emily Greene Balch, ed., *Catherine Ireland, 1838-1925* (Boston: privately printed, 1929).

Elizabeth Cary Agassiz repeatedly hailed women whose reform activities were conducted with "quiet unobtrusiveness." See, for example, her memorial to Anna Eliot Ticknor in *The Society to Encourage Studies at Home*, 6. For quotation, see Karen Blair, *The Clubwoman as Feminist: True Womanhood Redefined, 1868-1914* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 1. Peirce resigned from the WEA in protest when Howe and the others were rejected. See *The Woman's Journal*, April 17, 1875.

33. Corporation Minutes for Aug. 7, 1872, CR, 11: 402-3; OR, vol. 22: 64-65; *Annual Report of the President* (1872), 26-28, HUA. See also Maguire, "The Curtain-Raiser," 32.

34. Minutes of the Committee on Harvard Examinations, Jan. 14, 1884, and "Report on the Committee on Harvard Examinations for Women," Harvard Examinations for Women folder, RCA.

35. For critics' arguments, see *The Woman's Journal*, July 26, 1873; July 5, 1873; and June 5, 1875; and Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in *New England Journal of Education* 1, no. 2 (Jan. 9, 1875): 21. On the history of the exams and the decision to end them in 1883, see "Report of the Committee on Harvard Examinations for Women," June 1, 1884; Minutes of the Harvard Examinations Committee for Dec. 1, 1882; Eugenie Homer to Elizabeth Briggs, April 25, 1932, Briggs' notes on the Harvard Examinations, Elizabeth Briggs Papers, RCA. On Williams' tenure at Smith, see "Officers of Instruction and Administration," *Smith College Alumnae Association Biographical Register*, series 30, no. 1 (Nov. 1935), Smith College Archives, Northampton, Mass. For a detailed discussion of the Harvard Examinations and their relation to the Annex, see Schwager, " 'Harvard Women' ," 108-26.

36. The origin of the sobriquet is unknown; one version attributes it to an unknown Harvard student: Lucy Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz: A Biography* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 203-4; and Mary E. Howard, "It Happened Seventy-Five Years Ago," *Radcliffe Quarterly* (Nov. 1954), 9. Details of the program and names of the managing committee appear in the first circular, dated Feb. 22, 1879, RCA. For WEA membership, see *Annual Report of the Woman's Education Association for the Year Ending January 13, 1881* (Boston: Cochrane & Sampson, Printers, 1881), 27-29. Arthur Gilman, in his own histories of the Annex, claimed a more central and exclusive role in its founding than probably is deserved. For an extensive discussion of the Gilmans' role and the historiography, see Schwager, " 'Harvard Women' ," chap. 4.

37. *New England Journal of Education* 9, no. 24 (June 12, 1879). Thomas Wentworth Higginson, in *The Woman's Journal* 10, no. 9 (March 1, 1879): 1. On Leach see also Maguire, "The Uniqueness of Radcliffe," 2-3. Leach had a long and distinguished career as head of the Greek Department at Vassar College. See Ann Townsend Zwart, "Abby Leach," in *Notable American Women, 1607-1950*, vol. 2, ed. Edward T. James and Janet Wilson James (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), 379-80. Mary E. Hughes to Arthur Gilman, March 13, 1879, box 1, Arthur Gilman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society [hereafter, MHS]. ECA, diary entry, Feb. 11, 1879, Elizabeth Cary Agassiz Papers.

38. Charles W. Eliot to Arthur Gilman, Feb. 7, and Feb. 18, 1879, box 1, Gilman Papers.

39. Mrs. R.A. Reynolds, *The Woman's Journal* (May 10, 1879), 147; *Springfield Republican* article reprinted in *The Woman's Journal* (March 15, 1879), 84.

40. Mary Gilpin Armstrong, "Alice Longfellow's 'Adopted Child': Her Last Interview--On Radcliffe," *Boston Sunday Globe*, Dec. 16, 1928, RCA. Hugh Hawkins, "Elizabeth Cary Agassiz," in *Notable American Women*, 1: 24. The "ladies' degree" was introduced with coeducation in the antebellum colleges. The degree typically substituted French for Greek and Latin. See Roger Geiger, "The 'Superior Instruction of Women' 1836-1890," in *The American College in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Roger Geiger (Nashville, Tenn.: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 185-92. For an important discussion of regional differences, see Christie Anne Farnham, *The Education of the Southern Belle: Higher Education and Student Socialization in the Antebellum South* (New York: New York University Press, 1994), chap. 1.

41. The only full-length study of Elizabeth Cary Agassiz is Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz*. This work was the result of a commission formed by Radcliffe College in 1917, and it has served since then as the major source of information on Agassiz's life and her work at Radcliffe. It is not, however, a critical biography. Several popular biographical accounts and family reflections contain useful information as well. See, for example, Emma Forbes Cary, "A Sketch of Mrs. Louis Agassiz," in Caroline Gardiner Curtis, *Memories of Fifty Years in the Last Century* (Boston: privately printed, 1947), 116-17; Louise Hall Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance: The Story of the Agassiz Family of Boston* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co, 1959); and Mary Caroline Crawford, *Famous Families of Massachusetts*, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1930), 1: 214-32. The best biographical essay is Hawkins, "Elizabeth Cary Agassiz," in *Notable American Women*, 1: 22-25.

42. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, *Louis Agassiz: His Life and Correspondence*, 2 vols. (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1885), 1: 526-27; Edward Lurie, *Louis Agassiz: A Life in Science* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 201. On students at the Agassiz School, see Nellie to Mother, Sept. 29, 1856, Sarah Ellen Browne Papers, SL; Charlotte Whiton, quoted in Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance*, 143. Faculty who taught in the school included Professors Felton, Schmidt, Monti, Gurney, Lowell, and Child. Other faculty members were Helen Clapp, Katherine Howard, Emily Howard, Augusta Curtis, Catherine Ireland, Ida Agassiz Higginson, Mlle. Le Clère, and William J. Stillman: see Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz*, 396-97.

43. Tharp, *Adventurous Alliance*, 28-30.

44. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz to Emma F. Cary and Louisa Fulton [June 26, 1903], quoted in Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz*, 350-51. The identification of the Annex with the Agassiz School also is noted by ECA's sister, Emma Forbes Cary, in her "Sketch of Mrs. Louis Agassiz," 124. For student quotes, see Abby Parsons MacDuffie, *The Little Pilgrim* (New York: privately printed, 1938), 27; and Cora Burr Hardon, student memoir dated May 1939, RCA. For a student description of the Annex, see Eleanor Pearson, "Harvard Annex Letter," *The Wellesley Prelude*, 1, no 7 (Oct. 17, 1889): 99-101.
45. MacDuffie, *The Little Pilgrim*, 9; and James C. Parsons to Arthur Gilman, March 4, April 3, and April 26, 1879; Mary Byrd to Arthur Gilman, March 14, and June 19, 1882, all in box 1, Arthur Gilman Papers.
46. On Byrd, see Bessie Zaban Jones and Lyle Gifford Boyd, *The Harvard College Observatory, 1839-1919* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), 414. On careers of graduate students see alumnae surveys dated 1928, 1931, 1934, 1937, and 1940; and Memorial Biographies, alumnae folders, RCA.
47. Number of students calculated from Class Lists, first and second terms, 1879-1880. Registrar's Records, RCA. For statistics on special students at the Annex, see annual reports by year, RCA. In 1912, a committee headed by William Byerly investigated "the Special Student question" at Radcliffe. The report indicated that "Specials" still were numerous at Radcliffe: for the fifteen previous years they had formed about 25 percent of the student body. See Byerly Report (1913), RCA.

48. Annie Barber Clarke, "A Member of Radcliffe's First Class Speaks for Herself," *Radcliffe Quarterly* (Nov. 1954), 16; see also undated letter in Annie Barber student diary, following entry for Jan. 3, 1880, RCA. Annie Winsor, "Annex vs. College," student theme dated Nov. 17, 1886, box 1, folder 2, Annie Ware Winsor Allen Papers, RCA. The role of educated mothers in promoting the careers of their daughters warrants further study. The Annex and Radcliffe data suggest that mothers who were educated in the nineteenth-century female academies, seminaries, and normal schools--and those who had served as teachers--provided important impetus to their daughters' decisions to attend college. For discussion see Sally Schwager, "'Harvard Women,'" chap. 5.
49. Annie Winsor, entry for Jan. 9, 1885, Annie Ware Winsor Allen diary, SL. See also, Annie Winsor, sophomore theme dated Dec. 1, 1884, box 1, folder 1, Annie Ware Winsor Allen Papers, RCA.
50. Arthur Gilman, "In the Beginning," *Radcliffe Magazine* 7 (June 1905): 80-81; and Arthur Gilman Private Records, entry for May 30, 1881, Radcliffe College Documents, RCA.
51. Arthur Gilman Private Records, entry for June 4, 1881; Arthur Gilman to President Eliot, June 14, 1881, and enclosure addressed to the President and Fellows of Harvard College, copies in Arthur Gilman Private Records, pp. 50-52, Radcliffe College Documents, RCA. Arthur Gilman to Joseph B. Warner, Dec. 11, 1893, Radcliffe College Documents; "Report of the Work of the First Year," dated Nov. 10, 1880, RCA. The number of Harvard courses is approximated from my count of those listed in the *Harvard University Catalogue* (1879-80), 77-90.

52. Barrett Wendell's comments date to 1884. See comments written on first sophomore theme, dated Dec. 1, 1884, box 1, folder 1, Annie Ware Winsor Allen Papers, RCA.
- George Martin Lane to Arthur Gilman, n.d. [received March 19, 1879], Radcliffe College Documents, RCA. On Williams, see William E. Byerly to Arthur Gilman, Dec. 21, 1883, box 2 Arthur Gilman Papers. John Tetlow, "The Eastern Colleges for Women: Their Aims, Means, and Methods," Part I, *Education* 1 (May-June 1881): 483-84, describes scheduling in the Annex and compares the work of the Annex to that of Vassar, Smith, Wellesley, and the College of Liberal Arts of Boston University. Abby Parsons to her parents, Oct. 26, 1879, quoted in MacDuffie, *The Little Pilgrim*, 18-20.
53. Arthur Gilman, "Report of the Secretary," in *Private Collegiate Instruction for Women Second Year Reports*, 11, RCA. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz to Arthur Gilman, March 24, 1882, as quoted in Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz*, 205-6.
54. See notes on meeting of Managers and Advisory Board, Arthur Gilman Private Records; and Academic Board Meeting Minutes, Radcliffe College Documents, RCA.
55. On endowment drive, see minutes of the Executive President's Office, Council Records, vol. 1; and circular dated Feb. 22, 1883, RCA. On WEA's campaign and ECA's response, see Woman's Education Association, *Annual Report for the Year Ending January 8, 1885*, p. 5.
56. Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women, "Subscription List," dated Feb. 22, 1884, RCA; minutes of the Executive Committee, Feb. 4, 1884, Council Records, vol. 1; minutes of the annual meeting, 1885, Minutes of the Trustees, RCA.

57. Charles W. Eliot to Annie Barber, Jan. 24, 1893, letter press volume, Eliot Papers, HUA (copy of this letter also in folder 3, Elizabeth Briggs Papers, RCA). Elizabeth Agassiz to C. W. Eliot, March 25, [1893], letter press volume, Eliot Papers, HUA. For detailed discussion of the negotiations, see Schwager, “ ‘Harvard Women’ ,” chap. 6.
58. Le Baron Russell Briggs, “Not Always to the Swift,” *Radcliffe Quarterly* 11, no. 2 (April 1927): 20.
59. C. W. Eliot to Mrs. Louis Agassiz, May 29, 2893, letter press volume, Eliot Papers, HUA.
60. For vote by the Annex, see Minutes of the (Associates) Trustees, October 31, 1893; also Arthur Gilman to Charles W. Eliot, Nov. 1893 (copy), Arthur Gilman scrapbook, RCA; and WEA, *Annual Report* for the year ending Jan. 18, 1894, pp. 15-16. In 1640, Lady Mowlson (née Radcliffe) had contributed one hundred pounds sterling to Harvard for a scholarship fund and hence was considered the first woman benefactor of Harvard College. For Overseers’ vote, see OR, Dec. 6, 1893, 13: 138, HUA. For a detailed discussion of alumnae and other protests, see Schwager, “ ‘Harvard Women’ ,” 347-66. For accounts of the hearings regarding the charter and actions by the Commonwealth, see Mary Coes, “Radcliffe College,” *Harvard Graduates Magazine* 2, no. 8 (June 1894): 551-52; Arthur Gilman, “Incorporation of Radcliffe College,” dated July 31, 1909, Radcliffe College Documents, RCA; and Paton, *Elizabeth Cary Agassiz*, 249-56.
61. OR, May 25, 1894, vol. 13: 154-55.
62. Charles W. Eliot, Radcliffe Commencement Address, 1894, reprinted in *Harvard Graduates’ Magazine* 3, no. 9 (Sept. 1894): 105; and “The Higher Education for Women,” in *Charles W. Eliot the Man and His Beliefs*, 166-67.

63. Charles W. Eliot, Radcliffe Commencement Address, 1898, reprinted in *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* 7, no. 25 (Sept. 1898): 83; Le Baron Russell Briggs, "Commencement Address at Wellesley College," in *Routine and Ideals* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company), 129.
64. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, Radcliffe Commencement Address, 1898, reprinted in *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* 7, no. 25 (Sept. 1898): 82. Elizabeth Agassiz to Abby Parsons McDuffie, March 18, 1894, Radcliffe College documents, RCA. Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, Radcliffe Commencement Address, June 1899, reprinted in *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* 8, no. 29 (Sept. 1899): 66-67.
65. Agassiz, Radcliffe Commencement Address, June 1899, 66-67.