"There are a lot of people who believe not only, as I do, that he's a genius, but believe he is a fascinating and extraordinary genius of a certain kind," says Ricks. "It was interesting to see Simon & Schuster easily convinced when the Nemrows made the case for the book to be this size."

Ricks describes their design as inspired and lauds their creation of a format that allowed the three editors to present the lyrics graphically, with the rhymes and emphasis true to the songs as they are heard.

Do the lyrics stand on their own as poetry? Ricks likens the question to asking whether it would be edifying for someone to read only the screenplay of *Citizen Kane*.

"The words in the movie are terrifically good, but they only constitute part of the art that it is," he says. "It clearly is an amputation of a song to reduce it to its words. But if the words are really very, very good, then there's plenty of reward in them. Clearly there are things in Shakespeare that are a combination of what people say with the body language they use—there's a kind of a vocal body language that you feel."

Pressing fists to his chest for effect, Ricks cites what he calls "the physical nature" of a verse from "Just Like a Woman": "your long-time curse hurts, but what's worse, is this pain in here, I can't stay in here..."

"Now that's directly physical writing," says Ricks.

"We can learn to hear the songs better if we comprehend and apprehend the words more assuredly—or *less* assuredly when that is the better response," says Ricks, who explains that one reason the book is so big is that "it's got lots and lots of full alternative versions of a song."

And with Dylan, a song may be altered with different instrumentation or different words during its long life, to the point where it is less a version of a song than a new song. Dylan likes to change the order of his stanzas or play with pronouns, as in the "Tangled Up in Blue" line that morphs from "I was laying in bed" to "he was laying in bed," Ricks explains.

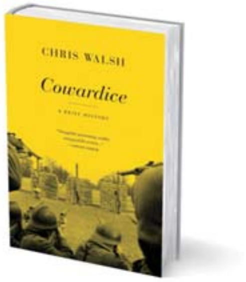
Dylan and his agents approved both the text and the design of the book, and offered any material or information that Ricks and the Nemrows needed to get it right, they say.

Beyond a reverence for Dylan, the book reflects a partnership born at BU, and a shared commitment to timeless words and craftsmanship.

As Ricks puts it, the only thing predictable about Un-Gyve is that it's unpredictable. "But, our books are, predictably, always made of paper and ink. We're traditionalists," Lisa Nemrow says. "Our effort is to ensure that books that are supposed to be made *are* made and get made in the right way."

Book Asks: Are Terrorists Cowards?

Chris Walsh breaks ground with Cowardice: A Brief History BY RICH BARLOW



WHAT IS A COWARD? Many Americans called the 9/11 hijackers and the Boston Marathon bombers cowards, with no clearer proof than the photo accompanying this story of a labor union's sign after the attack. Chris Walsh (GRS'95,'00) disagrees, and he can claim considerable credibility: he's written what he says is the first scholarly book on pusillanimity. His book argues that the misuse of "coward" has caused enormous harm throughout history. But properly understood, Walsh says, the word and the idea behind it are essential to promoting ethical behavior.

This sign, put up by a labor union about the Boston Marathon bombings, spoke for many, Walsh writes.

MICHAEL P. MONAHAN, BUSINESS MANAGER, LOCAL 103, IBEW, BOSTON

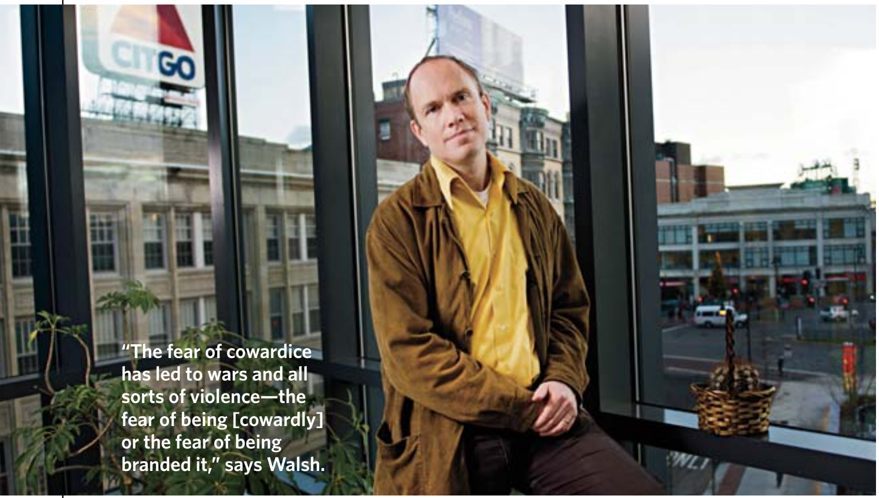
Cowardice: A Brief History, published by Princeton University Press, began as Walsh's PhD dissertation at BU. He now directs the College of Arts & Sciences Writing Program and is a CAS assistant professor of English.

His research plumbed diverse disciplines and sources. These include fiction such as Dante's *Inferno*, which consigned to hell those souls too cowardly to live life fully, and Stephen Crane's Civil War novel, *The Red Badge of Courage*. Nonfiction informed him, too—in particular *The Execution of Private Slovik*, a 1954 account of the titular World War II soldier who was the last American executed for desertion.

Bostonia spoke with Walsh about his exploration of the use—and misuse—of the problematic word.

***BOSTONIA:* How did you go about researching as unwieldy a topic as cowardice?**

WALSH: I did it in an unwieldy way. It was my dissertation back in the '90s. I abandoned it for five years and went back to it [in 2005]. The dissertation was what one of my friends called "intellectually diapered," looking at a selection of American fiction and asking, what does it tell us about cowardice? I decided if it were to be a book, it would have to look into history



"The fear of cowardice has led to wars and all sorts of violence—the fear of being [cowardly] or the fear of being branded it," says Walsh.

JACKIE RICCIARDI

and become more philosophically informed and informed by psychology.

I focused it [by] concentrating on the military context on the battlefield. I argued that the archetypal home for the coward was the military. I did tons of Google searches, but I started this before Google existed. There were books that were models, especially a book called *The Mystery of Courage* [by William Ian Miller].

Why does this topic matter?

The fear of cowardice has led to wars and all sorts of violence—the fear of being [cowardly] or the fear of being branded it. LBJ was having dreams about being called a coward and did say, "If I left that [Vietnam] war, I would be considered a coward and my country would be considered cowardly, and nobody would trust anything we do again."

The American history of cowardice starts in the French and Indian War with a preacher saying, "These French and Indians are killing our countrymen, and you people in Virginia are too cowardly to do anything about it." His sermon, "The Curse of Cowardice," got a bunch of people to join a company, and they marched on Fort Duquesne [in modern Pittsburgh] and the French scurried. But the British authorities did not think much of the colonial soldiers and thought them cowardly come the 1770s, when the colonists start to rebel.

You write that people misuse the word "coward."

You've got that hashtag COWARDS from the Boston Marathon bombing, and the word was thrown around after the 9/11 attacks about the perpetrators. It's understandable; it was used because, without uttering an obscenity, we could lash out as harshly as possible. But I give a definition of cowardice, drawing on Aristotle and the Uniform Code of Military Justice today: the failure of duty because of excessive fear. That means it's hard to see how the 9/11 perpetrators were cowards. They may have been guilty of what I call the "cowardice of their convictions," where they wouldn't recognize things that [might] change their views, because they were afraid of new ideas, of tentativeness, of not acting. But I don't think that's the way most people used it. The problem with using it that way is it makes it seem something villainous and spectacular, and therefore cowardice has nothing to do with us, and it's not something that needs to inform our own ethical decision-making.

That military code [definition] offers a clear message. Much of the book is about how the term has become less applicable to war, because we know more about human psychology, and we rightly attribute failures in battle to things like post-traumatic stress disorder. The world would be a better place if some people worried less about being cowardly. If only LBJ was not worried about being cowardly.

Fiction and Poetry

Blind

Rachel DeWoskin (GRS'00)

Viking

DEWOSKIN SAYS SHE WROTE *Blind* so she could "feel her way through someone else's experience," her "favorite part of both reading and writing." From the moment we meet ninth-grader Emma Sasha Silver, the writer succeeds in having us see—and that is the correct word—the world as it unfolds for, and confounds, someone who has lost her sight at an age even the sighted find difficult to navigate. Blinded by a wayward firework at a Fourth of July party, Emma must learn to hone her senses of smell, hearing, touch, and memory. She strains to hear, for example, "the cold sounds of snow."

WHAT DO YOU SEE WHEN YOUR WORLD GOES DARK?
BLIND
A NOVEL
Rachel DeWoskin

The narrative turns on the drowning death—most likely a suicide—of a popular classmate, and the heart-stopping crushes, tender moments, and random humiliations that illuminate or further darken the strange new landscape into which Emma is cast. Her mom "smells like pasta and lavender," while her dad has a halo of "mint and rubbing alcohol."

Guided through the cacophonous maze of high school with the help of her loyal, mischievous friend, Logan, and her companion dog, Spark, Emma soldiers on with her cane, sunglasses, and a mixture of feisty determination, occasional self-pity, and newfound wisdom. Her yearlong convalescence, during which she attended a school for the sight-impaired and learned braille, made her realize "that even if I stayed on the couch without moving for fifty years, we would all still get old and die. In case getting blinded hadn't made it clear, recovering taught me that my small life didn't matter to the world overall, which I don't think is something you're supposed to understand until you're old."

The first year of high school is a minefield for everyone, but as the story progresses Emma gains a strength