The Blank Slate, the Noble Savage, and the Ghost in the Machine

Psychologist Steven Pinker Unmasks Theories of Human Nature
Defender of the Fungi
Botanist Donald Pfister, director of the Harvard Herbaria, wants to “de-mushroomize” mycology, the study of fungi. Find out why he thinks fungi deserve better seats at the mycological table.

The Logic of Difference
Working at the intersection of science and culture, Professor Evelynn Hammonds (PhD ’93, history of science) discusses how scientists since the Civil War have defined race and used it to “study human variation and to naturalize prejudice.”

Disproving the Blank Slate
Professor Steven Pinker shows how historically dominant theories of human nature can be disproved by the modern sciences of mind, brain, genes, and evolution.

New Writing by Harvard Faculty
Excerpts from new books: Peter Galison’s Einstein’s Clocks, Poincaré’s Maps; Andrew Knoll’s Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Evolution on Earth; and Richard Pipes’s Vixi: Memoirs of a Non-Belonger.

Alumni Books
Behind the scenes: making Martin guitars, the Thirty Years War, Mars, and Russia’s move toward capitalism.
Graduate Housing: Near, Middle, and Long Term

Peter T. Ellison, GSAS dean, PhD ‘83, biological anthropology

For years, we in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences have been stressing the need for the University to provide more housing opportunities for graduate students, opportunities that are both close to campus and affordable.

This winter has already seen significant progress on this issue, progress that will bear fruit in the near, middle, and long term.

The most immediate developments have been the opening of the new building at 1 Western Avenue in Allston and opening of the remodeled building at 29 Garden Street in Cambridge. Together, these buildings increase the number of beds for graduate students in the University’s portfolio by 485.

The 29 Garden Street building also introduces a new style of housing targeted for GSAS student budgets: the “double studio” or two small living/sleeping studios, each with a private bath and shared kitchen. Additionally, there is the choice of a less-expensive double studio with shared bath and shared kitchen.

Most important for the medium term is the announcement of an agreement between the University and our neighbors in the Riverside community that will allow a significant amount of new housing (our goal is 480 beds) to be built along the river adjacent to Mather House (Banks and Grant streets), and including the site now occupied by Mahoney’s Garden Center along Memorial Drive.

In the many hearings and community discussions that led to this agreement, the contribution that graduate students make as members of the larger community was frequently noted with positive effect.

Construction on an apartment building in Boston’s Fenway neighborhood is expected to begin next spring. The proposed 580-unit complex would contain 170 apartments for Harvard graduate students, faculty, and staff connected to the Longwood Medical Area (LMA). This development will increase the beds available for LMA-based students by 243.

Like the 29 Garden Street property, the Fenway development will include studios, double studios, and one-bedroom apartments. The project is scheduled for completion by summer 2006.

Finally, in outlining his vision for the future of the University’s Allston property, President Summers unequivocally endorsed the development of a new “residential campus” that would bring together graduate students and faculty.

Together, these advances will help ensure the place of graduate students at the physical, as well as the intellectual, heart of the University.

For more information on new housing at Harvard, visit Harvard Real Estate Services at www.hres.harvard.edu.

I also wanted to report on our successful visit in London last November. Approximately 150 Harvard alumni living in Europe gathered to hear professors Michael Hays and Nell Levine discuss how Spain’s Guggenheim Museum Bilbao has affected the architectural and marketing philosophies of other art institutions.

The GSAS event, part of the “Harvard in Europe” series, was an ideal opportunity to meet with our European graduates and to hear their thoughts on continued improvements for graduate student life.

The London visit marked the second time GSAS has gone overseas to meet with GSAS alumni. In 2001, we enjoyed a productive conference in Beijing and we plan to hold a similar event in Mexico in 2005. GSAS has a highly international student body and, consequently, a worldwide alumni population. We want to ensure that we maintain a lively dialogue with this most important group.

from the dean
Say fungus and most people think of mushrooms, or the matter that grows on the sides of trees, like decks for leprechauns.

Donald Pfister, the Asa Gray Professor of Systematic Botany, wants to change that.

Pfister (pronounced feast-er), who is also director of the Harvard Herbaria and curator of the Farlow Library and Herbarium of Cryptogamic Botany, has nothing against mushrooms. He even enjoys eating them. It’s just that he thinks other fungi are more important. A fungus-like organism caused the potato famine in Ireland. Another fungus, Candida albicans, is one of the leading causes of infections in hospital patients, and a scourge of people with compromised immune systems.

While Homo sapiens could do better without those fungi, the absence of certain others would leave us bereft. Fungi more commonly known as yeast leaven bread and ferment beer. Others help plants grow or recycle nutrients on a global scale. Still others are used as biological pest controls. One of the best-known, penicillin, a derivative of the fungus Penicillium, ushered in the age of antibiotics. “If I have a mission,” says Pfister, “it’s to ‘demushroomize’ mycology.”

From the perspective of the human animal, the life of a fungus might seem constrained, like that of a carless suburbanite. The fungus lacks both the animal’s mobility and its ability to ingest food. The poor fungus can’t even manufacture its own food using photosynthesis, as plants do.

The part of the fungus that we can see—and sometimes eat, if it isn’t microscopic—is the fruiting body. Fruiting bodies are supported by a network of threadlike filaments—called hyphae—which form the vegetative state of the organism. In fact, all the mushrooms in a field may be part of a single organism, supported by one network of hyphae, like apples on a single tree. A single network of hyphae can sometimes cover many acres.

Hyphae do the job of both roots and stomach, secreting digestive enzymes into their local environment—which might be wood, leaf litter, or cheese, to name just a few examples—decomposing it and absorbing the nutrients. The fungi in one particular group are like Venus flytraps, Pfister says. They “eat” tiny invertebrates called nematodes by having their hyphae growing special structures that then trap their prey.
COUNTING ON FUNGI

Pfister’s lean physique, unassuming dress, and gentle manner are reminiscent of Mr. Rogers. Pfister’s neighborhood growing up was a farming community in Ohio. “I kicked mushrooms as a kid,” he says. “I went to college thinking I’d study botany.” But the enthusiasm of his mycology professor drew him into the still mysterious world of fungi.

A conservatively estimated 1.5 million species of fungi inhabit earth. But only about 70,000 species have been described, says Pfister. “Where are the rest of them?” he asks rhetorically. Whole worlds of fungi have barely been explored.

For example, there are microscopic fungi that inhabit the leaves and stems of plants. These are called endophytes (endo = within; phyte = plant). A single leaf may harbor several species, a veritable mycological metropolis, says Pfister. They do no harm, and some may protect their host’s leaves from grazing insects by manufacturing very bad-tasting compounds.

Then there are microscopic fungi that dwell on the surfaces of certain insects, notably some beetles, water bugs, cockroaches, and a few flies. They nourish themselves through tubes used to penetrate the bug’s exoskeleton.

Pfister describes the work of one of his scientific ancestors, Roland Thaxter, who spent his career at Harvard during the late 19th and early 20th centuries studying those fungi. “He collected insects from everywhere,” says Pfister, who has been on the Harvard faculty since 1974.

“The more Thaxter looked, the more fungal species he found. In the end, he had described 1,000 new species of these fungi. Yet, if you read the introduction to the fifth and last volume of his memoir, he seems to be at his wits’ end, because even after 40 years, he knows he’s still leaving out whole genera.”

Then there are yeasts that inhabit insect guts, synthesizing insect vitamins, perhaps, or breaking down complex molecules so that insects can digest them in the way that certain bacteria inhabit the bovine digestive tract and break down cellulose, enabling cows to eat grass.

Even many of the fungi that are large enough to be seen on nature walks are far from thoroughly catalogued. One out of five species collected in places like the Caribbean will be new, says Pfister.

“There is almost no place on the surface of the earth where you don’t find fungi,” he notes. Biologists recently described a mycorrhizal fungus that grows on the rhizoids—underground absorptive structures—of liverwort in Antarctica. (Mycorrhiza are root-bound fungi that help plants extract nutrients from the soil.)

Still, no one is predicting extraterrestrial fungi, the way researchers at Harvard continued on page 8

CHEMISTRY

Jeremy M. Berg, PhD ’85, was appointed the new director of the National Institute of General Medical Sciences (NIGMS), a branch of the National Institutes of Health. He has served as director of the Institute for Basic Biomedical Sciences and as professor and director of the Department of Biophysics and Biophysical Chemistry at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. As NIGMS director, Berg will oversee a $1.8-billion budget that funds basic research in cell biology, biophysics, genetics, biological chemistry, and related fields.

THE CLASSICS

Michael W. Taylor, PhD ’75, was recently named of counsel to the Firm of Parker, Poe, Adams, & Bernstein of North Carolina. Taylor is also the author of books on ancient Greece, and on the Civil War and North Carolina history.

ENGLISH AND AMERICAN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE

Paul Levy, PhD ’79, writes that he is editing The Selected Letters of Lytton Strachey for publication in July 2004 by Farrar, Straus, and Giroux (and by Penguin in the United Kingdom). Levy wrote the introduction to Eminent Victorians: The Definitive Edition (Continuum, 2002) and edited The Penguin Book of Food and Drink (1998). His collected food journalism was published in Out to Lunch (1987, reprinted, 2003), which won a Seagems/IACP Award in 1988. For ten years, Levy was the senior arts correspondent for the Wall Street Journal in Europe. Since 2003, he has written for the Wall Street Journal Europe, the New York Times, Gourmet, the Times Literary Supplement, and other publications.

REGIONAL STUDIES—MIDDLE EAST

Chalom Schirman, AM ’69, was reappointed international dean of Shanghai International MBA (SIMBA) in September 2003. SIMBA is a joint venture between École Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées-MBA in Paris, where Schirman is associate professor of international business negotiation, and the Tong Ji University School of Management, Shanghai. Schirman is also a regular visiting professor at the Technion in Haifa (Israel), the University of Edinburgh, the University of Nagoya, and the Hassania School for Public Works (Morocco).
When Science Meets Race:
Discussing the Logic of Difference

A scholar working at the intersection of science and culture, Evelynn Hammonds (PhD ’93, history of science) is professor of the history of science and of African and African American studies at Harvard.

She spoke recently about how scientists since the Civil War have defined race and used it to “study human variation and to naturalize prejudice.” Hammonds’s forthcoming book is The Logic of Difference: A History of Race and Science in the United States (University of North Carolina Press).

How have conventional scientific ideas of race changed over time?

Evelynn Hammonds: At the end of the 19th century, race is viewed by scientists and the lay public as an integrated concept that embodied biological, cultural, linguistic, psychological, and moral characteristics. ... But over the course of the 20th century, a variety of scientific experts began to more carefully characterize race within specific disciplines.

Biologists began to ask, “What are the biological aspects of this thing we call race? Is the thing we call race useful to understand human variation?” While anthropologists starting in the early 20th century began to separate the biological aspects of race from cultural aspects. After World War II, with developments in genetics, biologists began to express the view that the concept of race did not reflect the most important facts about human variation from an evolutionary or genetic perspective.

Yet, as ideas about race changed among scientists and social scientists, the idea that race is an innate, immutable, fixed aspect of human groups that conveys important information about our bodies and our biology continued to be the dominant view among lay people.

It is important to recognize that by the middle of the 20th century, biologists had come to different conclusions about the meaning of the concept of race than had social scientists. Social scientists emphasized that the meaning we give to the concept of race in the United States is a reflection of our history of slavery and immigration and the ways in which peoples who were not of northern European ancestry were mistreated based on the perception of their biological, cultural, and social differences from Americans of European ancestry.

So for sociologists, for many philosophers, for other kinds of humanists, race is a social construct that reflects this history and the socio-political and institutional practices that have privileged white Americans over Americans of other ancestries.

Is the history of the use of race in medicine different from what you described for biology and the social sciences?

EH: In my view it is. The example I use is a study of ovarian cysts at the turn of the [19th] century ... in two articles published in 1899 and 1900. The first was by a white physician at Johns Hopkins [who] opened his paper saying that ovarian cysts were rare if not non-existent in black women. He reported on his own small study to prove this point.

In the following year, an African-American physician, Daniel Hale Williams, responded quite vehemently to this article. He described the hundreds of African-American women that he had treated for ovarian cysts. Williams argued that many of these women had been ignored by white physicians because of the pervasive view that they did not and could not have such cysts. Williams attributed the blindness of white physicians to their view that black women had not “evolved to the cyst-bearing stage.”

This example highlights, in my view, the ways in which medical practitioners tended to define the health conditions of African Americans in racial terms. Such practices continued, I argue, well into the 20th century and were not questioned until the 1970s. Nor were such practices affected by debates in biology or genetics until quite recently.

How widespread was the 19th-century attempt to measure “difference”?

EH: Quite extensive. During the Civil War large amounts of anthropometric and medical data were collected on Northern soldiers. Much of this data was collected by Army medical personnel and was later analyzed by social scientists in order to determine the physical characteristics of the men who served. This data was analyzed in terms of racial differences between white and African-American soldiers and to a smaller extent between groups of Native Americans who were under Army control.
Three theories of human nature have dominated Western thought for the past few centuries, but they have failed to address our innate complexities and defy modern scientific realities, says Steven Pinker, the renowned Harvard psychologist and author.

Pinker spoke last fall to GSAS alumni in Cambridge about his most recent book, The Blank Slate: The Modern Denial of Human Nature (Viking, 2002), a treatise on the “political, moral, and emotional colorings of the concept of human nature,” according to its author. Pinker, the Johnstone Family Professor of Psychology, received his PhD in psychology from the Graduate School in 1979.

According to Pinker, the dominant theory of human nature in modern intellectual life is the Blank Slate, along with its ideological cousins, the Noble Savage and the Ghost in the Machine. Each of these theories is being challenged “by the modern sciences of mind, brain, genes, and evolution,” he said.

The Blank Slate theory is commonly associated with English philosopher John Locke. It holds that the human mind is “white paper” and is “burnished” only with experience. Through the 20th century, psychologists and other social scientists used the Blank Slate to explain human behavior as the result of “a couple of simple mechanisms of conditioning and association,” Pinker said.

The doctrine of the Noble Savage is associated with French philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau. This creature, Pinker said, was designed in reaction to Thomas Hobbes’s distinctly un-noble savage, the one who continually lived in a warlike condition and whose life was “nasty, brutish, and short.”

Rooted in the idea of the Blank Slate, the Noble Savage theory holds that man is born innocent and only needs the correct upbringing to achieve perfection. One can see this theory’s influence in a distrust of man-made things and faith in natural foods, natural childbirth, natural medicines, and permissive styles of child-rearing, Pinker said.

The doctrine of the Ghost in the Machine is usually associated with French philosopher René Descartes, who wrote, “The mind, or soul of man, is entirely different from the body.”

Over the centuries, this idea of the mind operating apart from physiological reality has been used to defy biological understandings of the mind, Pinker said. “The Ghost in the Machine is behind the fact that freedom, dignity, and responsibility are often seen as incompatible with the biological understanding of the mind—which is commonly denounced as reductionist or determinist,” Pinker said.

“We see it in the stem-cell debate, where some of the ethicists who have weighed in on this controversy have framed it in terms of when in embryonic development ensoulment takes place—which means that perhaps the most promising medical technology of the 21st century is being debated in terms of when the Ghost first enters the Machine.”

All three doctrines are flawed, Pinker said, and have led to wrong-headed yet pervasive ways of governing, planning, and parenting.

“The reason we don’t act on every one of our impulses is precisely because the human mind is not a Blank Slate. Rather, it’s a complex system of many parts, and some of those parts can inhibit others.”

**DECONSTRUCTING THE DOCTRINES**

The trouble with the Blank Slate theory is not that learning and culture don’t affect the human experience, Pinker said. “The trouble is that learning and culture are only possible in the first place because of innate abilities to learn, to create culture, and to pass on culture in distinctively human ways. And cognitive science has begun to characterize these faculties, such as the ability to conceptualize quantity, recognize three-dimensional objects, and create language,” he said.

Evolutionary psychology has also shown that much of human nature can be explained by examining its ancestral roots.

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This book is about that clock-coordinating procedure. Simple as it seems, our subject, the coordination of clocks, is at once lofty abstraction and industrial concreteness. The materialization of simultaneity suffused a turn-of-the-century world very different from ours. It was a world where the highest reaches of theoretical physics stood hard by a fierce modern ambition to lay time-bearing cables over the whole of the planet to choreograph trains and complete maps. It was a world where engineers, philosophers, and physicists rubbed shoulders; where the mayor of New York City discoursed on the conventionality of time; where the Emperor of Brazil waited by the ocean’s edge for the telegraphic arrival of your age, was just about possible for a man of highest thought—and creative power.

At the heart of this radical upheaval in the conception of time lay an extraordinary yet easily stated idea that has remained dead-center in physics, philosophy, and technology ever since:

To talk about time, about simultaneity at a distance, you have to synchronize your clocks. And if you want to synchronize two clocks, you have to start with one, flash a signal to the other, and adjust for the time that the flash takes to arrive.

What could be simpler? Yet with this procedural definition of time, the last piece of the relativity puzzle fell into place, changing physics forever.

This illustration of the control room (circa 1880) at the Rue de Télégraphe in Paris shows early efforts at clock synchronization. Compressed air was injected into the pipes and then modulated to pneumatically synchronize clocks throughout the city via an underground system. A 15-second delay was required for the pulses to reach the periphery of the city network, so “retarding counterweights” were mounted on each pneumatic clock, depending upon its distance from the control room.
FROM "THE TREE OF LIFE"

By Andrew Knoll

Wandering through an alpine forest or snorkeling above a coral reef, we observe an ecology shaped by plants (or seaweeds) and animals, with large vertebrates at the top of the food chain and other creatures below. Ecosystems also contain many organisms that we can’t see, but concern for their contributions is generally fleeting—surely bacteria and other microorganisms, tiny and simple, eke out their living in a world of our making?

—From Life on a Young Planet: The First Three Billion Years of Evolution on Earth (Princeton University Press, 2003). By Andrew H. Knoll (PhD ’77, geological sciences), Fisher Professor of Natural History and curator of the Paleobotanical Collections, Harvard University Herbaria.

FROM “POLAND, ITALY, AMERICA”

By Richard Pipes

... Nietzsche was the first intellectual influence on me, and the notion that I was entitled to be myself—to think as I chose if not always to act as I chose—has remained with me ever since.

I scoured the secondhand book stores on Holy Cross Street where I would buy for pennies the works of Schopenhauer, Kant, and other philosophers in the original German or in Polish translation. I had no philosophical preparation, so I only dimly understood what I read: but something remained and the passion to know burned undiminished. Father was not very happy with my philosophical interests. On one occasion when he saw me reading Kant’s Prolegomena he said that I was “burdening” my mind and should study more practical things.

As far back as I can remember, I felt that the reality we perceive with our senses is merely a veneer behind which lies concealed ultimate reality. As a small boy playing with my cousins on their street in Cracow I was attracted by the sound of running water coming from below a sewer grate: it was a most ordinary sewer outlet and the most ordinary wastewater, but the sound from an invisible source reinforced in me the belief that we move in a world of shadows. (Needless to say, I had not even heard of Plato then.) I had the same experience at a country fair where, equipped with a fishing rod, I was to pick up a present hidden behind a screen: what else lay behind that wall, I wondered. On another occasion it struck me that the ideas we have of objects do not render them as they really are but serve as mere “symbols” for reality that enable us to deal with it without ever understanding it. This sense has remained with me throughout my life: my studies were always driven by the compulsion to seek out the “real” behind the apparent.

and elsewhere anticipate the possibility of bacterial life on the ocean-covered Jovian moon, Europa, or on Mars. Unlike some bacteria, all fungi need preformed sources of organic carbon. “The bacteria [on Europa or Mars] are going to have to get busy and build up some biomass before fungi can grow,” says Pfister.

And while they are not as hardy as bacteria—none has been found in hot springs, for example—“I’m always surprised where I can find fungi,” says Pfister, alluding to having found them both in deserts and in bottles of caustic reagents such as potassium hydroxide.

Pfister has spent much time recently studying Pezizales, a group of fungi whose most famous member, among gourmets, at least, is the morel, pictured here. This work has taken Pfister to the Caribbean, the West Indies, Europe, China, and Thailand.

All this adds up to a lot of biodiversity, something that has long interested Pfister. Much of his research involves describing new species and clarifying relationships among old ones within the Pezizales, a group of fungi whose most famous member, among gourmets, at least, is the morel. This work has taken him to the Caribbean, the West Indies, Europe, China, and Thailand.

“It’s an interesting family because of the diversity of both ecology and morphology,” he says. “Some are mycorrhizal, some are parasitic on mosses. The phoenicoid fungi grow on areas that have been burned. But the natural history of many of these fungi is still unknown.”

Pfister is also interested in gaining a better estimate of the total number of species of fungi. The estimate of 1.5 million is based on a rule of thumb that was derived from calculations done in the British Isles, in which it was determined that for every species of vascular plant—that is, a plant containing a system of connecting tissues for the distribution of water and carbohydrates, such as a fern—there were six species of fungi. And there are 300,000 known species of vascular plants worldwide.

The estimate is a very rough approximation, says Pfister. Fungi have so many different ways of making a living, and different types of strategies may proliferate in different climates. The ecology of the tropics, for example, is far more complex, and no one knows how that might affect the ratio, he says.

Pfister hopes to determine the fungus-to-vascular-plant ratio for Iceland. The harsh climate there limits the complexity of the ecology and the potential species diversity—limits that make the task more manageable than in most other places. So, over a number of years, researchers might actually be able to come up with a reasonable estimate of the number of fungi that inhabit Leif Ericsson’s native land, since Iceland’s vascular plant flora are already pretty well catalogued.

A ratio for Iceland won’t pin down the extent of fungal diversity in the world, even if it turns out to be identical to that of the British Isles. Nonetheless, it might illuminate whether such a rule of thumb has any connection to reality, or if mycologists need to go back to the drawing board. The work would be an important early step, but it will undoubtedly take many careers to complete the book of fungal diversity. We do know, however, that Pfister will be a primary author of that book.

—David Holzman is a freelance writer living in Lexington, Massachusetts.

Race Meets Science
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The physicians who were engaged in this work came to it with preconceived notions that there were extensive anatomical, physiological, and mental differences between African-American and white peoples. They believed that African Americans had different responses to various diseases, that they were susceptible or immune to different kinds of diseases than were whites. The project that analyzed the Civil War data was among the first in this time period to systematically examine such differences.

The thing about looking for differences is, once you look for them, you find them. So analysts found differences in sizes of chests, breadth of chests, length of limbs, capacity of lungs, and so on. And, of course, they read those differences through the lens of race. They concluded, for example, that all African Americans could be characterized as having a smaller lung capacity than all whites or whites of various ethnicities. That is to say they believed that differences in lung capacity was a “racial” difference.

“Race is a human invention. We created it; we have used it in ways that have been in many, many respects quite negative and quite harmful. And we can think ourselves out of it.”

By the end of the 19th century there is hardly a body part or a disease that was not characterized in racial terms. You can find articles in the medical literature about the Negro ear, the Negro nose, the Negro leg, the Negro heart, the Negro eye, the Negro foot, and so on. … It is an almost endless catalogue of differences.

Physicians, anthropologists, and statisticians looked only for differences between African Americans, other stigmatized groups, and white Americans. Similarities were almost always ignored or discounted. Indeed they expected to find differences. And almost any kind of difference was worthy of commentary. This search for difference in bodies I argue has a logic of its own and in many respects has profoundly shaped the ways in which race has been understood in the American context as innate and embodied.

Do we need to worry about scientists racializing their data and conclusions today?

EH: I’m not particularly worried that we’ll have a repeat of the practices of the 19th century, or of early 20th-century eugenics, or the excesses of Nazism in the 1930s. I believe that what we have to worry about is how questions of human difference will be framed and what meanings we’ll give to
In the early 20th century, some scientists believed African-American women were not highly evolved enough to suffer from ovarian cysts. Consequently, many cases were left untreated, sometimes with deadly results. Pictured here are officers of the Women’s League of Newport, Rhode Island, circa 1900.

the issues of difference that will be brought to the fore by the new genetic research.

Unfortunately, because of our historical use of race and our continuing problems in addressing questions of racial differences in health status, education, and a host of other issues, it will be very easy for some to see genetics research as providing answers to heretofore intractable social problems. The scientific interpretations of such problems will stand in uneasy tension beside newspaper accounts that hype genetic research or policymakers’ interpretations of that research.

Because we are still a society that’s organized in very important ways around notions of race, the potential social consequences of this research are quite significant for good and for ill. My view is that race is a human invention. … We created it; we have used it in ways that have been in many, many respects quite negative and quite harmful. And we can think ourselves out of it. We can unmake it and find better ways to frame our questions and practices around human differences.

Interview conducted for the documentary series “RACE: The Power of an Illusion,” available on video and DVD from California Newsreel at www.newsreel.org. For the complete interview transcript, visit the series companion Website at www.pbs.org/race.

Robert F. Hutton, PhD ’66, chemistry, died October 17, 2003, at 72. After conducting postdoctoral research at MIT with C. G. Swain (PhD ’44, chemistry), he joined the Chemistry Department at Brandeis University. At Waters Associates, a manufacturer of instrumentation for high-performance liquid chromatography, he served as a marketing specialist and manager, then as principal lecturer in the company’s liquid chromatography school, presenting lectures at corporate headquarters and universities in Europe and the United States.

C. Weldon Jones, AB ’75, PhD ’80, organismic and evolutionary biology, died September 22, 2003, in St. Paul, Minnesota, after a brief illness. Jones was a professor of biology and department chair at Bethel College, and was a visiting scientist at the Mayo Clinic. He received several awards for both his teaching and his scholarship.

John Krutilla, PhD ’53, economics, died June 27, 2003, at his home in McLean, Virginia. From 1955 until his retirement in 1988, Krutilla was a staff economist with Resources for the Future, a Washington, DC–based think tank. His work contributed to the development of economic analyses of the value of natural resources and influenced public discourse on the environment and the economy. He was the author of nine books on aspects of environmental economics.

Edward F. Lobacz, SM ’48, applied sciences, died June 24, 2001. He was a soils engineering consultant in Hanover, New Hampshire.

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Our “thirst for revenge” is a typical form of human behavior that cannot be understood as a means of improving our current lives, given the futility of blood feuds and cycles of violence. But it had a “rationale in a world in which you couldn’t dial 911” and “in which a reputation for toughness and a resolve to retaliate against injuries was one’s only defense against becoming a permanent punching bag,” Pinker said.

The human tendency to choose mates by their physical appearance is also a puzzle: Why would we want to spend our lives with a person just because he or she had a cute nose? “Evolutionary psychology has shown that physical beauty is an indicator of underlying health, fitness, and fertility,” Pinker said. “By being attracted to people with those physical signs, we’re maximizing the chances that our genes will combine with the fittest other genes available.”

Neuroscience and behavioral genetics too have undercut the Blank Slate theory. Pinker said, such as in studies conducted on identical twins. Quite the opposite of blank slates, identical twins, who share 100% of their genes; exhibit “highly similar brain anatomy,” he said, which leads to highly similar behavior.

“My favorite example is the pair of twins, one of whom was brought up as a Catholic in a Nazi family in Germany; the other was brought up by a Jewish adoptive father in Trinidad. When they met in their 40s in the lab, both of them were wearing identical navy blue shirts with epaulets; both had rubber bands around their wrists; both liked to flush the toilet before using it as well as after; both liked to sneeze in crowded elevators to watch the other people jump,” said Pinker.

“These coincidences may seem too good to be true, but they are never found in fraternal twins who are separated at birth—those who only share half their genes, he said. “And they’ve been corroborated in objective tests of intelligence and personality, which show strong correlations between twins separated at birth. They’re similar also in real-life, consequential behavior, such as the probability of getting divorced, numbers of hours of television watched, likelihood of having brushes with the law, and just about everything else. Which leads us to what behavioral geneticists call the first law of behavioral genetics, namely: All behavioral traits are partially heritable,” Pinker said.

Traits such as having an antagonistic personality, a tendency toward violent crime, or a lack of conscience or psychopathy can all be inherited. And quantitative studies of pre-state societies reveal that their rates of death in warfare are much higher than ours. “So, when it comes to life in a state of nature, Hobbes was much closer to the truth than Rousseau,” Pinker said.

Social psychologists have found in studies that about one-third of men and 15 percent of women frequently think about killing people they don’t like—“most often romantic rivals, stepparents, and people who have humiliating them in public,” Pinker said. According to the study, about 75 percent of men and more than 60 percent of women at least occasionally thought about killing another person. Not terribly noble and certainly savage.

The Ghost in the Machine doctrine appears to have the shakiest theoretical legs, Pinker said. “Cognitive science has shown that this formerly mysterious power we call intelligence can be explained in mechanistic terms by considering beliefs as a kind of information, thinking as a kind of computation,” he said.

“Babies are not putty to be molded by their parents. Geneticists have shown that children’s intellects and personalities are shaped only in part by their parents. They’re also shaped by genes; by culture, which includes their class, country, and peer group; and by pure chance.

“And emotions can be understood in cybernetic terms, as mechanisms of feedback and control.”

Psychotherapeutic and recreational drugs, or natural variations in neurotransmitters or hormones, can profoundly affect emotion and personality by changing the brain’s chemistry, he added.

Surgery too can affect the mind. “This is seen most dramatically in the case of split-brain surgery in which a neurosurgeon treating epilepsy may sever the corpus callosum joining the two cerebral hemispheres, which results in two independent consciousnesses, co-residing in the same skull,” Pinker said, putting the lie to the Cartesian theory that the mind is one and indivisible.

“The reason we don’t act on every one of our impulses is precisely because the human mind is not a Blank Slate. Rather, it’s a complex system of many parts, and some of those parts can inhibit others,” Pinker said.

“Indeed, the social progress we undoubtedly have enjoyed over the past few centuries didn’t come about from denying human nature, or erasing it and starting over with something new, but rather by taking one aspect of human nature—the moral sense—and expanding its range of application,” he said.

PARENTS, KIDS, AND THE BLANK SLATE

The most pervasive example of the belief in the perfectibility of humans is child rearing. “For it is parents, above all, who were thought to write on a Blank Slate,” Pinker said.

However, geneticists have shown that children’s intellects and personalities are shaped only in part by their parents.

“Of course parents play a major role in their children’s lives, he said, noting, “‘Parenting, above all, is an ethical responsibility.’ But, despite the important influence of parents, their little Slaters are by no means Blank, even at the very start.”

Harvard University GSAS
MAKING ADVANCES: NEW RESEARCH AT HARVARD

Following are two notable examples of the wide-ranging research and scholarship ongoing in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

LASER NANOSURGERY AND NEW PHOTODIODES
Nature magazine spent considerable time last fall reporting on breakthrough research conducted by Eric Mazur, Gordon McKay Professor of Applied Physics and professor of physics, and his team of researchers. In October 2003, the magazine noted a remarkable new surgical technique Mazur and colleagues developed. Using pulses of intense laser light, the team was able to destroy tiny structures inside a living cell, leaving surrounding cells intact. The laser is extremely powerful—it generates the heat of the sun, according to one researcher—it only remains in a very small space for a very short amount of time. It is hoped that, among other medical and optical uses, this technology will enable medicine to remove cancerous cells without damaging surrounding healthy tissue. At present, tumors are found only when they are too big for such treatment. Mazur’s colleague Donald Ingber, professor of pathology, described the technique as “a microscopic James Bond type of scenario.”

It also was reported in the November 2003 Nature that the Mazur group had developed a new light detector made of silicon that fuses microelectronic and light-based information processors. The detector can “carve” information directly onto a silicon chip, which means that circuits using chips—most fiber-optic telecommunications—can be manufactured smaller, more cheaply, and more efficiently. For more information about the Mazur Group, go to http://mazur-www.harvard.edu.

CHIMPSTEACH EVOLUTION
Decades of study into chimpanzee behavior have given anthropologists greater insight into the evolution of human behavior than resources such as the fossil record ever could, write Richard W. Wrangham, the Ruth Moore Professor of Biological Anthropology, and colleague Michael W. Eson of the University of Minnesota, in the October 2003 issue of the Annual Review of Anthropology. W. Wrangham and W. Eson found that reconstructions might be made of how human society developed based on its primate beginnings, found in chimp society.

For example, humans live in a sexually integrated, family-based society, while chimps live in sexually segregated ones. Movement away from that, they write, may have evolved because hunter-gatherer societies, more balanced between males and females, allowed greater access to a more plentiful food supply. The heritability of war and aggression is also under analysis, chimps being a fighting species. W. Wrangham and W. Eson: “Chimpanzee studies illustrate the promise of the behavioral biology approach for understanding and addressing the roots of violence in our own species.”

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Eric Mazur, left, and his colleagues, including PhD student Samuel Chung, right, have developed a surgical laser that can burn out individual structures within a cell. They are pictured here in Harvard’s McKay Laboratory.
ALUMNUS LENTZ IS NEW DIRECTOR OF THE HARVARD ART MUSEUMS

In October 2003, Thomas W. Lentz was named Elizabeth and John Moors Cabot Director of the Harvard University Art Museums. Lentz previously served as the director of international art museums at the Smithsonian Institution and was a curator at the Museum of the Rhode Island School of Design, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, and the Freer Gallery of Art. An expert in Persian painting, Lentz received his PhD in fine arts from Harvard in 1985. He succeeds another GSAS alumnus, James Cuno (PhD ’85, fine arts), now director of London’s Courtauld Institute of Art. GSAS alumna Marjorie B. Cohn (AM ’61, fine arts), the Carl A. Weyerhaeuser Curator of Prints, served as acting director of the art museums from December 2002 to November 2003.

MELTON TO SHARE NEW STEM CELL LINES WITH FELLOW SCIENTISTS

Douglas Melton, the Thomas Dudley Cabot Professor of Natural Sciences, who is working to find a cure for diabetes, has created 17 new stem cell lines, which he will make freely available to fellow scientists in early 2004, according to an Associated Press report. Melton, who has two children with insulin-dependent or Type 1 diabetes, said he hopes the stem cell lines would encourage more researchers to use this technology to battle illnesses such as diabetes and Parkinson’s disease.

In 2001, the federal government set out restrictions that prohibit the creation of more than a small number of stem cell lines, which are derived from discarded human embryos. These cell lines, scientists have said, are too few and will deteriorate over time, rendering them useless. Because of the governmental restriction, Melton conducted his work in Singapore, funded by the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation International and the Howard Hughes Medical Institute. Because stem cells can develop into any body tissue, scientists have been working with them in an effort to treat or even cure a variety of diseases, including diabetes, as well as spinal cord injuries. Melton’s work involves turning stem cells into insulin-producing cells that will be injected into diabetics.

MACARTHUR “GENIUS” GRANTS TO ALUMNI, FACULTY

Jim Yong Kim (MD ’86, GSA ’91, anthropology), a physician with the World Health Organization and a founder of Partners in Health, was named as one of the recipients of a 2003 MacArthur Foundation Grant, announced in October 2003. Kim specializes in the control and eradication of infectious diseases and also serves as chief of the Division of Social Medicine and Health Inequalities and director of the Program in Infectious Disease and Social Change at Harvard Medical School. In that capacity, he formulated new models for containing multi-drug-resistant tuberculosis, a disease that was once considered by major health organizations to be untreatable in some settings around the world.

Also honored were Eve Troutt Powell (AB ’83, PhD ’95, Middle East studies), a historian at the University of Georgia; and Xiaowei Zhuang, assistant professor of chemistry and chemical biology at Harvard. Powell’s most recent book is A Different Shade of Colonialism: Egypt, Great Britain, and the Mastery of the Sudan (University of California Press, 2003), which traces the development of Egyptian nationalist identity during the time of British colonial rule over Egypt and the Sudan. She also co-edited The African Diaspora in the Mediterranean Lands of Islam (Markus Wiener Publishers, 2002).

Zhuang was honored for her work using optical spectroscopic methods to reveal the behavior of individual molecules. She has made several widely cited contributions to understanding the basic principles of liquid crystal behavior, findings that have direct applications to the design of computer displays. Zhuang has been on the Harvard faculty since 2001.

In all, 24 fellows were selected for 2003. Each will receive $500,000 in “no strings attached” support over the next five years. The MacArthur Fellowship Program has existed for more than 20 years and awards individuals in the arts and sciences who demonstrate work that is “distinctively bold and original.”

ALUMNI BERANEK AND WITTEN NAMED NATIONAL SCIENCE LAUREATES

Leo L. Beranek (SD ’40, physics) was among eight scientists and engineers to receive the National Medal of Science from President Bush in October 2003. Beranek, founder of the Cambridge, Massachusetts-based BBN Technologies, began his career during World War II. He designed new communications and noise reduction systems for military aircraft, among other advances. He went on to use his physics acumen in music to create acoustical standards used in concert halls around the world.

Edward W.itten (GSA ’80, Junior Fellows Program), the Charles Simonyi Professor of Physics at the Institute for Advanced Study, also received a medal for advances in string theory.

Established in 1959, the National Medal of Science is sponsored by the National Science Foundation and represents the nation’s highest honor for career researchers who have made major innovations in science and engineering.

HEALTH POLICY PROFESSOR IS HEINZ AWARD HONOREE

Julius B. Richmond, professor of health policy emeritus and the John D. MacArthur Professor of Health Policy and Management, was named one of five recipients of the tenth annual Heinz Awards in December 2003. The Heinz Awards are among the largest individual achievement prizes in the world. In addition to his teaching at Harvard, Richmond is a former US surgeon general and one of the founders of Head Start. Richmond also served as director of Harvard’s Division of Health Policy Research and Education and as director of the Judge Baker Children’s Center, a pro-
gram dedicated to helping troubled children and to the healthy development of children through research and education. The awards were created to honor achievement in the arts and humanities, technology, and public policy, the category for which Richmond was recognized. Other recipients for 2003 included playwright August Wilson and Senator Richard Lugar.

INSTITUTE OF MEDICINE ELECTS HARVARD ALUMNI, FACULTY AS NEW MEMBERS

In October 2003, the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences announced 65 newly elected members, raising the Institute’s total active membership to 1,382. GSAS alumni elected were: Paul E. Farmer (MD ’88, PhD ’90, anthropology), Presley Professor of Medical Anthropology, department of social medicine, Harvard Medical School; Judith Feder (PhD ’77, government), professor and dean of public policy, Georgetown Public Policy Institute, Georgetown University; H. Robert Horvitz (PhD ’74, cellular and developmental biology), David H. Koch Professor of Biology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; and Jeffrey D. Sachs (AB ’76, PhD ’80, economics), professor of health policy and management and director of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. Rakesh K. Jain, A.W. Cook Professor of Radiation Oncology, and Jeffrey S. Flier, George C. Reisman Professor of Medicine, both at the Medical School, also were elected.

Established in 1970 by the National Academy of Sciences, the Institute of Medicine is a national resource for independent, scientifically informed analysis and recommendations on issues related to human health.

HENTOFF HONORED BY NEA

The National Endowment (NEA) named music critic Nat Hentoff (GSA ’46, history of American civilization) a Jazz Master for the Arts, it was announced in November 2003. Hentoff began his distinguished career in journalism as associate editor of Down Beat magazine (1953–57), then became co-editor of Jazz Review (1958–61). He also produced for the Candid label (1960–61) important sessions by Charles Mingus, Benny Bailey, Otis Spann, Cecil Taylor, Abbey Lincoln, and other jazz giants. Among Hentoff’s many books are The Jazz Life (1961), The Jazz Makers (1975), Jazz Is (1984), and the memoir Boston Boy (2000). He continues to write on jazz and other subjects for The Village Voice, JazzTimes, New York Times, New Yorker, Wall Street Journal, and other publications. The NEA Jazz Masters program was established in 1982 to “help forge new connections between the American people and one of their greatest artistic traditions.” Hentoff’s recognition marks the first time a jazz critic has been honored. The 2004 NEA Jazz Masters, including musicians such as Nancy Wilson and Chico Hamilton, will receive a one-time fellowship award of $25,000.

RECENT LOSSES

A pioneer in the history of science, I. Bernard Cohen (SB ’37, PhD ’47, history of science), Victor S. Thomas Professor of the History of Science Emeritus, died June 20, 2003. He was 89. A renowned scholar of Sir Isaac Newton, Cohen produced Principia: Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy, the first English translation of Newton’s Principia since 1729. Cohen’s translation is 974 pages and took 15 years to complete. He also helped found Harvard’s Department of the History of Science, one of the first in the country, in 1966. His books include Benjamin Franklin: His Contribution to the American Tradition (1953), Franklin and Newton: An Inquiry into Speculative Newtonian Experimental Science and Franklin’s Work in Electricity (1956), and Revolution in Science (1985). In 1974, Cohen was awarded the George Sarton Medal and, in 1986, the Pfizer Book Prize, both from the History of Science Society. He received the Centennial Medal from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1998.

Franklin Ford (PhD ’50, history), professor of history emeritus and dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences during the 1960s, died August 31, 2003. He was 82. Ford was a scholar of European history and the author of several books, among them Robe and Sword: The Regrouping of the French Aristocracy After Louis XIV and Political Murder: From Tyrannicide to Terrorism. He served as dean during one of Harvard’s most tumultuous periods of student unrest, largely due to Harvard’s support of ROTC during the Vietnam War. Ford stepped down as dean in 1970, and retired from teaching in 1991.

Civil War historian William Gienapp died October 29, 2003. On the history faculty since 1988, he taught “Reconstruction: 1865–1877” and “Jacksonian America, 1815–1845,” but was also known for the extremely popular course, History 1653, “Baseball and American Society, 1840–Present.” The course was less about Babe Ruth’s exploits and more about how the development of the sport mirrored the growth of the country’s middle and leisure class. His books include Abraham Lincoln and Civil War America: A Biography (Oxford University Press, 2002) and The Origins of the Republican Party, 1852–1856 (Oxford, 1994). Gienapp was 59.

Two prominent GSAS alumni passed away recently. Presidential historian and advisor Richard E. Neustadt (PhD ’51, government) died in England on November 2, 2003. He was 84. Neustadt was Douglas Dillon Professor of Government Emeritus and a founding faculty member of the Kennedy School of Government. He served as advisor to presidents Truman, Kennedy, and Johnson, and wrote one of the most influential books on executive decision-making, Presidential Power: The Politics of Leadership (1960).

Scholar and writer Edward Said (PhD ’64, English and American literature and language) died September 25, 2003. He was 67. Though he lived most of his adult life in the United States, Said was born in Jerusalem, then part of British-ruled Palestine, and he advocated for an independent Palestinian state. He was professor of English and comparative literature at Columbia University, where he had taught since 1963. Said’s many books include Orientalism (1978), Culture and Imperialism (1992), and The End of the Peace Process: Oslo and After (2000).
The Jesuits and the Thirty Years War: Kings, Courts, and Confessors
By Robert Bireley, PhD ’72, history
Four Catholic courts were involved in the Thirty Years War: Vienna, Munich, Paris, and Madrid. Bireley, professor of history at Loyola University, looks at the pro- and anti-war advocacy of Jesuit leaders in their roles as confessor-receivers to rulers in those courts. Bireley is the author of The Refashioning of Catholicism, 1450–1700: A Reassessment of the Counter Reformation (Catholic University of America, 1999), among other books.

Visions of Persia: Mapping the Travels of Adam Olearius
By Elio Brancaforte, PhD ’01, comparative literature
In his first book, Brancaforte brings readers on a journey into the 18th century, specifically mercantile Germany, Russia, Iran, and Iraq as seen through the eyes of Adam Olearius, an author and merchant who traveled in search of silk. Olearius’s books, writes Brancaforte, introduced Persian literature, history, and arts to the German-speaking public; his eyewitness accounts of Persian customs foreshadowed a Western fascination with the “mystic East.” Brancaforte is an assistant professor of German at Tulane University.

Shakespeare and the Question of Culture: Early Modern Literature and the Cultural Turn
By Douglas Bruster, PhD ’90, English and American literature and language
The “cultural turn” in the subtitle refers to the assessing of literature in the cultural context of its time, rather than as a body of work in isolation—which is how Bruster seeks to revisit Shakespeare’s work. The author is assistant professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin. His previous books include Quoting Shakespeare: Form and Culture in Early Modern Drama (Nebraska, 2000).

Magnificent Mars
By Ken Croswell, PhD ’90, astronomy
Using a large-format book to present NASA photography from recent spacecraft visits to Mars, noted science writer Croswell immerses readers in the world of Mars. In an informative yet conversational style, he tells what’s special about the planet’s terrain, atmosphere, and volcanoes; discusses evidence of Martian lakes and an ocean; and offers a brief history of man’s attempts to understand the red planet. Croswell’s other books include The Universe at Midnight: Observations Illuminating the Cosmos (Free Press, 2001) and Magnificent Universe (Simon & Schuster, 1999).

At War with Time: The Wisdom of Western Thought from the Sages to a New Activism for Our Age
By Craig Eisendrath, PhD ’70, history of American civilization
Throughout their history, Westerners have comforted themselves in an insecure world with notions of permanence—as seen in such concepts as the idea of an eternal soul and fixed natural laws. However, writes Eisendrath, this attitude has evolved into a “permanence complex,” an aversion to natural impermanence and, thus, to the complexity of life. He calls for a new attitude, one that accepts the world as ever-changing and leads, as we recognize our impermanence, to greater interconnectedness between people. A senior associate at the Center for International Policy in Washington, DC, Eisendrath has taught at MIT, Temple University, and other institutions. His previous books include National Insecurity: US Intelligence After the Cold War (Temple, 1999).

For Love of Insects
By Thomas Eisner, AB ’51, PhD ’56, organismic and evolutionary biology
Insect life is far more interesting, strange, and diverse than most might think. This is particularly so in the variety of self-defense mechanisms these creatures have adopted, from ambulatory spray guns expelling boiling hot liquids, to caterpillars that cover themselves with flower petals to hide from predators. Eisner, professor of chemical ecology at Cornell University, takes us inside that world through engaging stories of his decades of fieldwork and some mesmerizing photography. He is also the author of Chromatic Fantasy: Leaves in the Midst of Change (Sinauer Associates, 2000) and a recipient of the 1989 GSAS Centennial Medal.

The Grasshopper King: A Novel
By Jordan Ellenberg, AB ’93, PhD ’98, mathematics
This satirical campus novel centers on Professor Stanley Higgs, who brings notoriety to tiny Chandler State University for...
his scholarship on an obscure poet. Byzantine academic machinations follow when Higgs takes a vow of silence. Ellenberg is an assistant professor of mathematics at Princeton University; his column “Do the Math” appears in the online magazine Slate.

**Following Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World**

By Carl W. Ernst, PhD ’81, study of religion


With this work, Ernst transcends the “Islam 101” books published for Western audiences and presents a “nonfundamentalist understanding of Islam.” Practiced by one in five people (only about 20 percent of whom are Arabic), Islam has a diversity little understood by non-practitioners and often misunderstood (willfully and otherwise) by Muslims, Ernst writes. The key to understanding by all is accepting that Islam “has never meant one thing” and is a pluralistic faith, according to Ernst. The author, professor of religious studies at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, became the center of controversy when, in 2002, he included Michael Sells’s *Approaching the Qur’an* in the university’s summer reading list to address many post-9/11 questions about Islam. A local Christian group accused Ernst, a scholar of Asian religions, of religious intolerance.

**Sailing in the Wake of the Ancestors: Reviving Polynesian Voyaging**

By Ben R. Finney, PhD ’64, anthropology


Finney tells the story of sailing from the Marquesas to Hawaii on the Hawai‘iloa, a Polynesian sailing boat built using traditional methods and materials. The journey and its aftermath reveal insights into revived shipbuilding technique, the ups and downs of seafaring, and the political tensions around the revival and celebration of Polynesian culture. Finney began building and sailing traditional canoes and other crafts in the 1950s. He is professor of anthropology emeritus at the University of Hawaii and also co-editor of *Interstellar Migration and the Human Experience* (University of California, 1985), among other works on contemporary and historic Pacific life.

**Voices from the Camps: Vietnamese Children Seeking Asylum**

By James M. Freeman, PhD ’68, anthropology; and Nguyen Dinh Huu


Freeman and Huu collected life stories of more than 200 Vietnamese who fled their homeland following the end of the Vietnam War in 1975. According to the authors, ten percent of refugee children died. Most of the more than 1.6 million who survived either landed in refugee camps in Southeast Asia or received asylum in the United States and elsewhere. Voices from the Camps makes clear that, whatever their final destinations, those who remained orphans (or de facto orphans) have faced continued suffering. They have frequently been victims of abuse or neglect—often by the individuals or agencies charged with their protection, as well as by failed efforts at repatriation. The authors make a strong argument for better institutional safeguards for children growing up in war zones.

Freeman also has written on Vietnamese refugees in such books as *Changing Identities: Vietnamese Americans 1975-1995* (Pearson Allyn & Bacon, 1996; as co-author) and *Hearts of Sorrow: Vietnamese-American Lives* (Stanford University, 1989). He is professor of anthropology emeritus at San Jose State University.

**The Piratization of Russia: Russian Reform Goes Awry**

By Marshall I. Goldman, PhD ’61, economics


In his usual lively style, Goldman tells the story of the Russian buccaneers who roiled the fledgling marketplace following the collapse of the Soviet Union, exerting “undue influence and self-dealing, all in the name of reform.” Goldman takes on the debate over whether the rampant corruption that quickly led to an oligarchy in leading industries was the fault of the country’s broken system or its so-called leaders. The author is associate director of Harvard’s Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and Davis Professor of Russian Economics Emeritus at Wellesley College. He is also the author of *Lost Opportunity: What Has Made Economic Reform in Russia So Difficult?* (Norton, 1996), among other books on modern Russia.

**C. F. Martin and His Guitars, 1796-1873**

By Philip F. Gura, AB ’72, PhD ’77, history of American civilization


C. F. Martin guitars have long been considered among the best acoustic instruments available. Illustrated with numerous excellent color photos of the company’s first guitars, Gura’s book offers insights into early advertising and business strategy by a company that offered fine craftsmanship at a mass level. The book also recounts how the guitar became an important part of American culture. Gura is the William S. Newman Distinguished Professor of American Literature...
and Culture at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He is co-author of America's Instrument: The Banjo in the 19th Century (North Carolina, 1999) and an editor for the Norton Anthology of American Literature.

**Mystics, Mavericks, and Merrymakers: An Intimate Journey Among Hasidic Girls**

By Stephanie Wellen Levine, PhD ’00, history of American civilization  

Hasidic girls’ lives are highly restricted within Orthodox Judaism: a fervent form of religion dominates their lives; they have little contact with boys; they cannot watch most movies or TV shows, or wear jeans or shorts; and so on. Yet after spending a year with these girls in Crown Heights, New York, Levine found that certain aspects of their traditional lifestyles may actually support a feminist outlook. Levine does not call for girls to follow a Hasidic life, but she admires raising young women to become “confident, secure adults.” Levine’s PhD dissertation served as the basis for this book. The author is a lecturer in English at Tufts University.

**Where Have the Old Words Got Me? Explications of Dylan Thomas’s Collected Poems**

By Ralph Maud, PhD ’58, English and American literature and language  

In his introduction, Maud writes that he first tried to write this book while still a Harvard graduate student. Instead the book that emerged from those years was Entrances to Dylan Thomas’s Poetry (Pittsburgh, 1963), based on Maud’s dissertation on the poet’s work. But the volumes of Thomas’s letters, poems, and stories that appeared in the 1980s and 1990s presented a turning point for Maud, a leading Thomas scholar. This new book is the authoritative result of his analyses—“a full inventory of the ingredients”—of Thomas’s collected poems. Maud is professor emeritus of English and an associate of the Institute for the Humanities at Simon Fraser University, British Columbia. In addition to his critical writing, Maud has edited much of Thomas’s work, including The Notebook Poems, 1930–1934 (J.M. Dent, 1989) and Collected Poems, 1934–1953 (Dent, 1988).

**Occupied Voices: Stories of Everyday Life from the Second Intifada**

By Wendy Pearlman, GSA ’00, government  

Between 2000 and 2003, the author, a Harvard PhD candidate in government, made several extended visits to the West Bank and Gaza Strip, taking down the stories of ordinary Palestinians she met and sometimes lived with. This book collects those voices. Although the author has received criticism for presenting only Palestinian views, it is people’s pain and frustration over their war-torn lives that generally is expressed, rather than hatred of Israelis.

**American Jesus: How the Son of God Became a National Icon**

By Stephen Prothero, PhD ’90, study of religion  

Since its founding, America has molded the image and idea of Jesus Christ to suit not just our changing and pluralistic religious purposes, but our political and cultural ones as well. Assigned the roles of pacifist, soldier, freedom fighter, among others, Jesus became a “cultural captive” and a celebrity borne of the vibrancy of American religious pluralism, writes Prothero. A professor of religion at Boston University, Prothero is also the author of Purified by Fire: A History of Cremation in America (California, 2001) and White Buddhist (Indiana, 1998).

**The Cultural Nature of Human Development**

By Barbara Rogoff, PhD ’77, psychology and social relations  

Culture is more than an integral contributor to human development, Rogoff writes. It’s also the only way to truly understand our development. Based on extensive fieldwork, she describes culture’s primordial role in areas from language acquisition to child-rearing. Rogoff is a professor of psychology at the University of California at Santa Cruz and author of Apprenticeship in Thinking: Cognitive Development in Social Context (Oxford, 1990), among other books.

**A History of Modern Germany Since 1815**

By Frank B. Tipton, PhD ’72, history  

This concise (given its subject matter) volume examines how the politics of one generation have defined life in succeeding generations. Its focus is on problems of unification (in both the 19th and 20th centuries) and the search for a common history, and the Nazi years and their lasting impact on the German psyche. Tipton is an associate professor of economic history at the University of Sydney, Australia. 📚

**Authors:** GSAS alumni who have published a new book within the past year and would like it to be considered for inclusion in Alumni Books should send a copy of the book to: Colloquy, Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Byerly Hall 300, 8 Garden Street, Cambridge, MA 02138-3654. Questions? E-mail gsaa@fas.harvard.edu.
As Theodore H. (Ted) Ashford (AB ’58) approached his 45th reunion, he knew he wanted to make a different kind of gift in honor of the occasion. “My family has had a tradition of focusing on giving that is unique and has leverage,” he said.

Ashford’s interest in Harvard was echoed by members of his immediate family. His late wife, Jane, attended the Harvard-Radcliffe Program in Business Administration at the Business School, while both of his sons, Theodore III (AB ’86) and Timothy (AB ’88), attended the College.

Ashford was intrigued by a renewed emphasis on graduate education emanating from both Massachusetts and University halls. President Lawrence H. Summers, who has displayed a keen interest in the undergraduate experience, has also been a powerful advocate for the centrality of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences to the University’s mission. To improve financial aid for graduate students, Summers created the Presidential Fellowships, which supplement annual awards and add a $25,000 full-year dissertation fellowship in the final year.

Summers funded these awards for three years, with the expectation that others would step in to keep them going. Ashford decided to take on the challenge.

“I asked people at Harvard to tell me what the new president wanted to achieve,” he said. “When I heard about his concern over the competition we face from other schools for the most talented graduate students, I was very sympathetic to the argument that something needed to be done right away or we would begin to fall behind.”

The result is the Ashford Dissertation Fellowship, aimed at the most talented prospective students in the humanities and social sciences. These dissertation fellowships will be awarded to a total of ten students admitted over the next five years. Such awards make an enormous difference in students’ careers, recognizing them through an additional stipend on admission, and later allowing them to focus on their dissertations without needing to teach to support themselves.

Reflecting their strong interest in the pioneering efforts being made in biology, Ashford and his family also decided to designate a previous gift in honor of his 40th reunion to establish the Ashford Graduate Fellowship in the Sciences. These fellowships provide an additional $3,000 per year over the next 14 years for 20 graduate students committed to combining biology with another discipline.

Concurring with Summers’s comments were Dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences William C. Kirby and Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences Peter T. Ellison. According to Kirby, “All of our students, both in the College and the GSAS, will benefit greatly from the support that Ted Ashford has provided and the example he has set.” Ellison added, “These fellowships are absolutely critical in helping us to remain competitive with our peers.”

In Ted Ashford’s words, “My experience as an undergraduate was very special, and I have always felt strongly about giving something back. I am also one of those graduates of the College who has recently come to see the vital importance of the Graduate School to maintaining our tradition of excellence in undergraduate education. This seemed like the ideal gift.”

To learn more about supporting the Graduate School Fund, please contact Jennifer Campoli, director of GSAS giving, at 1-800-VERITAS or at jennifer_campoli@harvard.edu.

— Frank White is deputy director of communications, Alumni Affairs and Development.
Faculty Talks & GSAS Events

Call (617) 495-5591 or e-mail gsaa@fas.harvard.edu for more information on any events.

FACULTY TALK: J. RICHARD HACKMAN
MONDAY, MARCH 15, 2004
NEW YORK, NY

J. Richard Hackman, the Cahners-Rabb Professor of Social and Organizational Psychology, will speak on “What It Takes to Connect the Dots: Individual versus Team Approaches to Intelligence Analysis.” Hackman’s most recent book is Leading Teams: Setting the Stage for Great Performances.

FACULTY TALK: SIDNEY VERBA
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31, 2004
LOS ANGELES, CA

Sidney Verba (AB ‘53), Carl H. Pforzheimer University Professor, professor of government, and director of the Harvard University Libraries, will speak on “Unequal Voices: Citizen Participation in American Democracy.” His most recent book is The Private Roots Of Public Action.

FACULTY TALK: MARIA TATAR
FRIDAY, APRIL 9, 2004
SARASOTA, FL

Maria Tatar, professor of Germanic languages and literatures and Harvard College professor, will speak on “Scenes of Storytelling: Fairy Tales and their Cultural Effects.” Her most recent book is The Annotated Classic Fairy Tales.

GSAS EVENTS: ALUMNI WEEKEND 2004

• ECONOMICS GRADUATE ALUMNI REUNION
FRIDAY, APRIL 16, 2004
CAMBRIDGE, MA

GSAS will sponsor the first-ever reunion for graduate alumni of the Department of Economics on the day before Alumni Day (see below). Why not make it a Harvard weekend?

• ALUMNI DAY
SATURDAY, APRIL 17, 2004
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Alumni Day 2004 brings together GSAS alumni from all years and departments for a day of faculty symposia, food and drink, and a chance to renew old acquaintances. Keynote speaker: William Schneider (PhD ’72, government), CNN senior political analyst and a 2003 GSAS Centennial Medalist, will speak on “The Forty-Years War in American Politics, 1964–2004.”

GSAS EVENT: CAREER OPTIONS PANELS
THURSDAY, APRIL 29 & FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 2004
CAMBRIDGE, MA

Panels featuring GSAS alumni will explore both academic and non-academic careers. On Thursday, panelists in academe will discuss teaching and doing research. On Friday, panelists will discuss how their advanced degrees have led to careers in education, publishing, international development, financial services, consulting, biotech, and other fields. Co-sponsored by the GSAS Alumni Association Council and Office of Career Services.