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from the dean

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An Introduction

I write to share my excitement at being named the new Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. It is a position for which I am enormously honored to have been selected. I have always believed that Harvard’s PhD and master’s programs are at the very core of the University’s mission, essential to our most basic values and commitments to new knowledge, understanding, and education.

Before going further, I want to thank Theda Skocpol for her exceptional service to the Graduate School. In particular her achievements in improving graduate financial aid and in streamlining the time to degree for PhD candidates have greatly benefited our students. The vision and energy she maintained throughout her deanship have significantly strengthened the Graduate School and provided a solid foundation for the new initiatives I hope we will devise and implement in the years ahead.

Certainly, all alumni/ae understand the importance of attracting the most talented and diverse group of future scholars, researchers, and educators. Going forward, we will need to find better ways for these students to enjoy the remarkable intellectual resources found across the University. I am hopeful that GSAS will help open new opportunities for important interdisciplinary collaborations among our students and faculty.

As a social scientist with appointments in both the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and the Medical School, I have seen firsthand how essential our interfaculty programs are to the future of graduate study. Dozens of FAS programs now combine with programs in the School of Public Health, School of Business Administration, School of Dental Medicine, Kennedy School of Government, the Medical School, and other Harvard faculties to create new areas of intellectual inquiry.

We will also need to develop new approaches to connect graduate education to the important innovations in the undergraduate curriculum. As many readers know from personal experience, graduate students who teach in Harvard College are often unfairly perceived as the lesser colleagues of faculty. Graduate students have a critical role to play in both the substantive intellectual and pedagogic challenges of developing and delivering a new curriculum.

The contributions of our graduate student teachers strengthen the undergraduate educational experience, and graduate teaching fellows are often the key to undergraduate understanding of complex and challenging academic material. As anyone who attended last fall’s inaugural ceremony for the Derek Bok Awards for Excellence in Graduate Teaching of Undergraduates can attest, undergraduates—as well as other faculty and department staff—benefit enormously from the intellectual rigor, dedication, and conscientious mentoring of our graduate students. I will be working to ensure that our TFs continue to participate actively in curriculum reform and in receiving the support and recognition that they deserve.

I expect to meet many GSAS alumni at the Harvard Alumni Association event in Shanghai, at our annual Alumni Weekend festivities this April here in Cambridge, and at other GSAS chapter events held throughout the United States this spring and next fall. Whether we meet in person or communicate via letter (electronic or otherwise), I look forward to hearing your thoughts and suggestions about how GSAS can improve student life and keep alumni/ae part of this vibrant community.

I welcome your ideas for improving graduate education. Contact me at University Hall, Harvard Yard, Cambridge, Mass., 02138, or through the Graduate School Alumni Association, gsaa@fas.harvard.edu.
Michele Holbrook maintains faith in the efficacy of biofuels but worries that politics could inhibit their development into a practical application. “Photosynthesis,” she notes, “is not free.”
Holbrook, a self-proclaimed “nerdy” child, grew up loving the outdoors—and loving to read about science. One summer during high school, she attended a glaciological institute in Alaska and saw her future. “It was the idea that you could ski across the glaciers of Alaska studying scientific phenomena, and get paid for it,” she says with residual wonder. “I couldn’t believe how great that was.”

As a Harvard undergraduate, Holbrook fell under the spell of forestry professor Martin Zimmerman, who studied how water flows through trees. The questions he investigated, which remain largely unanswered, included the problem of how trees raise water beyond 33 feet.

When you suck on a straw, the force that pushes the drink into your mouth is not your sucking. That merely creates a vacuum within the straw. It is the weight of the atmosphere that pushes the drink into the void that your sucking has created, in the same way it elevates mercury in an old fashioned barometer.

Atmospheric pressure can push water no higher than 33 feet. In a tree, above 33 feet, the pressure in the water column is negative. But what keeps the water column stable under these circumstances? How often does the water column break, and how does the plant respond to a broken water column? Zimmerman’s enthusiasm about these questions infected Holbrook, and she has been searching for their answers ever since those undergraduate days.

The water column breaks when the pressure becomes so negative that water actually vaporizes. That pressure gradient also allows air to diffuse in. The air forms a vapor lock that is akin to the nitrogen atmosphere that pushes the drink into the void that your sucking has created, in the same way it elevates mercury in an old fashioned barometer.

Michele Holbrook, the Charles Bullard professor of forestry, likes to say that land-based plants perform six impossible tasks, including: living on inorganic chemicals, harnessing solar energy, splitting water into hydrogen and oxygen, and, in the case of trees, raising water several hundred feet up into the air. Lately she’s begun to focus her research on a seventh “impossible task”—sustainably producing liquid fuels from plants.
The Ambivalent Americanist

BY SUSAN LUMENELLO

The cultural historian sits in his office in the Barker Center, his long fingers punching at an IBM Selectric typewriter. This is, generally, how one finds Daniel Aaron these days, working on smaller projects, compared to the scholarly tomes composed in his earlier years—handmade books of light verse, a private dictionary of unusual words with his wry homemade definitions.

Aaron’s office at the Barker Center, home of the History of American Civilization program, which Aaron effectively created, is small, cluttered, and has the unmistakable signs of an occupant who is moving on. A brown monster of a desk fills most of the room. The remaining space is taken up with chairs for his frequent visitors and a cot-like couch with a pillow that bears the impression of a regular napper. But at age 95, Aaron can be forgiven if he enjoys an occasional break from his toils, however pleasurable.

Bookcases line the office’s walls, but they’re half empty now. Aaron is in the process of donating his ample office library to the Am Civ program, and has already given his papers and letters to Harvard’s Houghton Library.

Officially, Aaron is the Victor S. Thomas professor of English and American literature emeritus at Harvard. Unofficially, he’s the elder statesman of American studies, a job for which he did not apply and one that arouses in him mixed feelings. Aaron’s lifelong passion for the field, however, is evident from his literary output—over 20 books that helped lay the foundation for an entire academic discipline.

He’s also a founder and former longtime director of the Library of America series, those comprehensive black-bound volumes comprising key works of our most important writers.

Aaron’s first major work was Men of Good Hope: A Story of American Progressives, published in 1951, in which he ascribed an evangelical impulse to the works of thinkers such as Edward Bellamy, Thorstein Veblen, and Theodore Roosevelt. In 1959, he coauthored (with Richard Hofstadter and William Miller) the foundational text, The United States: The History of a Republic.

Writers on the Left, published in 1961, covered the multifaceted relationship between American progressives and the Communist Party. In 1973, Aaron went back nearly a century for The Unwritten War: Writers of the Civil War, in which he pursued Whitman’s critique that the “more realistic aspects” of that war “didn’t make it into fiction.”

In 1985, Aaron brought out The Inman Diary: A Public and Private Confession, a two-volume abridgment of the legendary 17-million-word, half-century-spanning diary of Arthur Inman. “The spoiled scion of a rich family who fancied himself a poet” is how Aaron describes his subject. “But [Inman] did turn out to be a gifted diarist and wrote the book that Poe said could never be written ... a warts-and-all book.”

In the intervening years and after, Aaron has published hundreds of reviews and essays, many in collected volumes such as American Notes (1994), on nearly every
“America can’t be encapsulated,” says Daniel Aaron, who, in his new book, details his intellectual journey through American cultural history.

subject to do with American cultural history, from Melville to Welty and beyond.

But now comes The Americanist (2007, University of Michigan), a memoir constructed of “episodes” and, as such, unique among his body of work. Woven into the recollections of his boyhood in Hollywood of the 1920s and his roving intellectual life are “presidentiads,” brief personal essays on the American presidents of his lifetime, including John F. Kennedy, whose “so-so examination paper” Aaron, then a graduate teaching fellow, graded for an American literature course at Harvard.

Aaron, who was interviewed for this piece last fall, says the book’s title is “seriously unserious” and freighted “with a certain irony,” for an Americanist can no longer do his job fully, if he ever could. Such a scholar, he says, can never expect to understand the totality of American culture as it is presently. The place is too large, the culture too fragmented, the people’s impulses and undercurrents too disparate. Still, through his writing and teaching, Aaron has tried, and his efforts at understanding are recounted in the pages of this slim volume.

BEGINNINGS
Aaron was born in 1912 in Chicago, and before he was ten years old, he and his four siblings had lost both their mother and father to illness. He was reared partly in an unimaginably pastoral Los Angeles, California, and then returned to Chicago for high school and life with an aunt and uncle. Growing up, he writes that he found himself becoming a natural observer of events, feeling “neither estranged from the collective American family nor unreservedly clasped to its bosom.”

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alumni notes

Anthropology
Philip Smith, PhD ’62, reports that in October 2007 a four-day international colloquium of prehistoric archaeology, sponsored by the International Union of Prehistoric and Protohistoric Sciences, was held in Preuilly-sur-Claise, France, to discuss the Solutrean, a Stone Age culture of the last glacial period in Western Europe, four decades after publication of Smith’s book Le Solutrean en France. The book was based on Smith's 1962 dissertation, A Revaluation of the French Solutrean. He retired from the Université de Montreal in 2002.

Classics
Robert J. Penella, PhD ’71, has published Man and the Word: The Orations of Himerius (University of California Press, 2007). He chairs the classics department at Fordham University and was recently appointed to the editorial board of the New England Classical Journal.

Molecular and Cellular Biology
Gus Rosania, PhD ’97, received the 2006 Presidential Early Career Award for Scientists and Engineers from President Bush at a White House ceremony in November 2007. The award is the US government’s highest honor for those at the beginning of their independent careers. Rosania is assistant professor at the University of Michigan’s College of Pharmacy, a faculty affiliate of the Bioinformatics Program, and a member of the Comprehensive Cancer Center. For more information about his work, fellow alumni/ae are invited to visit www-personal.umich.edu/~grosania/.

Special Students
In honors handed out in December 2007, Timothy Hornsby, GSA ’62, was named a Commander of the British Empire (OBE) for public service. Hornsby served as commissioner of the National Lotteries Charities Board. Previously, he was Chief Executive of the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames, 1991–95. He also has held senior appointments in the Treasury and Department of the Environment in a civil service career spanning 1965 to 1991. He further served as Director General of the Nature Conservancy Council, 1988–91, and is currently a director of the Charles Darwin Trust and chair of the Harkness Fellows Association and of the Public Fundraising Regulatory Association. 

Submit Alumni Notes to: Colloquy, Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-3846; fax: 617-496-5333; or gsaa@fas.harvard.edu. Please include your telephone number or e-mail address. Alumni Notes are subject to editing for length and clarity.
IT WAS AT A MEMORIAL SERVICE for the wife of art historian Chu-tsing Li that the idea for this one-of-a-kind exhibition came to be. Li was the scholarly mentor of Robert Mowry, the Alan J. Dworsky curator of Chinese art at Harvard, and Mowry and other former graduate students of Li’s began to discuss the unjust obscenity of their venerated teacher’s important collection. “Li’s collection was our source of study,” says Mowry.

Li brought awareness of contemporary Chinese art to the Western scholarly world by acquiring works, often directly from the artists themselves. According to Mowry, the collection is the finest and most comprehensive of its kind in the West. Now, Harvard’s Sackler Museum is exhibiting dozens of works from Li’s collection to present the first survey of ink paintings produced during the second half of the 20th century in China.

The exhibition shows the three major trends in ink painting among artists from Hong Kong, China, and Taiwan: first, a continuation of the traditional style of Chinese ink painting, focusing largely on landscapes; second, an adoption of a Western style, using more personal and idiosyncratic subjects; and, third, a hybrid using traditional media (ink) and subjects (landscapes) but presented in a modern style.

—Susan Lumenello

A Tradition Redefined is on view at Harvard’s Sackler Museum until January 27, 2008. It will tour nationally in Phoenix, Arizona; West Palm Beach, Florida; and Lawrence, Kansas, in 2008–09. See www.artmuseums.harvard.edu/exhibitions/traveling.html for details or call 617-495-9400.
bottom left: “Tour Group in a Landscape” (1990) by Yu Peng (b. 1955). This hanging scroll (48.7 x 44.3 cm) was also done in ink on paper. Yu traveled widely in China, visiting historical sites where he absorbed visual imagery from ancient engraving and stonework. His artwork, writes Janet Baker, coauthor of the Tradition Redefined exhibition catalog, “reflects the displacement of the Chinese painting tradition in the modern world of Taiwan, where folk customs and popular culture flourish together.” Yu lives in Taiwan.

top left: “Monkeys” (c. 1989) by Chen Qikuan (1921–2007). This hanging scroll (34.2 x 44 cm) was done in ink on paper. After World War II, Chen came to the United States for graduate study in architecture. In the 1950s he worked with Walter Gropius and the Architects Collaborative in Cambridge, Mass., and eventually taught architectural design at MIT. Later, he held teaching positions at a Taiwan university. Augmenting Chen’s architectural background was his devotion to traditional calligraphy, as demonstrated here with these delicate if playful monkeys. However, his subject matter and liberated brush strokes transcend tradition.

opposite: “Baoguo Temple on Mount Emei” (1959) by Zhao Shaoang (1905–1998). This horizontal wall scroll (60.9 x 107.1 cm) was done in ink and color on paper. Mount Emei, in Sichuan, is a Buddhist pilgrimage destination and one of China’s sacred mountains. This painting, with its blend of traditional Chinese and Western techniques, paved the way for Zhao’s entry into the American art world. In 1960, he enjoyed a solo show that went on to tour several American museums. His work continued to be shown throughout North America, Europe, and Asia over the next few decades.
"We Start with the Bible"
By Peter J. Gomes

Gomes is the Plummer professor of Christian morals and the Pusey minister in the Memorial Church.

SOME YEARS AGO I was on a night flight from Boston to London on a Saturday and was to preach in a London church on Sunday morning; in those days I was not intimidated by jet lag and looked forward to my engagement within a few hours of landing at Heathrow Airport. Then, midway over the Atlantic Ocean we encountered significant turbulence and were warned to keep our seatbelts fastened. Less concerned about the storm than about my sermon, I took out my notes and my Bible, and as I read, the lady beside me, who had been mercifully quiet throughout the flight, observed me. As the turbulence increased she noticed that I was reading the Bible, and finally she asked me, nervously, “Do you know something that I should know?”

...No one in the Bible business simply says, “Read the text and it will be made plain to you.” Although many will argue for the “plain sense” of scripture, that sense is made plain only through the guidance of one who knows presumably more than we do; and there is the assumption that once we read and understand it, the Bible will have something useful to say to us. This confidence in the text’s ability to speak to our condition reminds me of the practice of settling disputes and troubles by opening the Bible at random and putting one’s finger on a verse, which is taken to be the answer to the problem. Had I applied that principle to the question of my seatmate on my flight to London, what would she or I have made of the situation if my finger had landed, for example, on John 6:12, which reads in part: “Gather up the fragments left over, that nothing may be lost”?

We start with the Bible because, like Everest, it is there, and it looms large. There is no point in pretending otherwise, but while we may begin there, are we meant to end up there as well? If it is a means, to what is it a means? I suggest that the Bible, in all its complex splendor, is but the means to a greater end, which is the good news, the glad tidings, the gospel. Jesus came preaching—we are told this in all the Gospels—but nowhere in the Gospels is there a claim that he came preaching the New Testament, or even Christianity. It still shocks some Christians to realize that Jesus was not a Christian, that he did know “our” Bible, and that what he preached was substantially at odds with his biblical culture, and with ours as well.

“Futureworld”
By David Rodowick

Rodowick is professor of visual and environmental studies.

FILMS ENTERTAIN AND MOVE US, but they also move us to thought. Imagine you are a young sociologist working around 1907. In the course of a year or two, on your daily ride to the university you witness an explosion of “nickelodeons” along the trolley route. They seem to operate continuously, day and night, and it is rare not to see a queue outside their doors. Because your children spend an extravagant amount of time and money unsupervised within their walls, and exhibit an extraordinary and sometimes incomprehensible fascination with the characters presented there and the people who play them, perhaps you yourself have gone inside to see a “photoplay” or two? How would it be possible to comprehend, despite the breadth and depth of your knowledge, that an entire new medium and an important industry were being created which, in many respects, would define the visual culture of the 20th century?
This is how I respond when friends and colleagues ask why my critical attention has turned to “new media” and digital culture in recent years. My hypothetical social theorist may have been fortunate enough to participate in early studies of cinema and radio as mass cultural phenomena. In retirement, this imaginary scholar’s interest may again have been piqued by the emergence of television. But the question remains: how would it be possible to imagine in 1907 what cinema would become in the course of the 50 years that followed? Or to imagine in 1947 what television would become in just ten or fifteen years? As the 20th century unfolded, technological, economic, and cultural changes took place on the scale of a lifetime. This was already incomprehensibly fast from the perspective of the 18th or 19th centuries. Now, at the edge of the 21st century, these same changes are taking place in less than a generation.

The rapid emergence of new media as an industry and perhaps an art raises a more perilous question for cinema studies. The 20th century was unquestionably the century of cinema, but is cinema’s time now over? And if so, what is to become of its barely matured field, cinema studies?

“Contested Boundaries”
By Charles E. Rosenberg
Rosenberg is the Ernest E. Monrad professor in the social sciences and a professor of the history of science.

Some years ago the New York Times front page reported the outcome of a much-discussed courtroom drama, the Andrew Goldstein murder trial. Previously diagnosed and treated—or more often not treated—as a chronic schizophrenic, Goldstein had killed a randomly chosen young woman by pushing her in front of a subway train. Despite his unchallenged diagnosis, the jury convicted Goldstein of second-degree murder. “He seemed to know what he was doing,” one juror said after the trial. “He picked her up and threw her. That was not a psychotic jerk, an involuntary movement.” Another juror explained that they had thought the defendant was “in control and acted with intent to kill.” “It was staged and executed,” he said of the lethal attack. “There was forethought and exquisite timing.”

This is a story of intellectual and institutional conflict, of inconsistent conceptions of disease and impulse control, and of a chronically ill-starred relationship between law and medicine. It is also a story that might have been written in 1901 as well as in 2001, and, of course, the formal categories of the cognitively defined right-and-wrong test for criminal responsibility still linger in most American courtrooms. Not too long ago, our media retailed the story of Houston mother Andrea Yates, who drowned her five children. The local prosecutor argued that there was no question concerning her responsibility. She knew right from wrong, he said. “You will also hear evidence that she knew it was an illegal thing, that it was a sin, that it was wrong.”

Such highly publicized forensic dramas represent just one—in some ways far from typical—example of a much larger and more pervasive phenomenon: the negotiation of disease in public and the particularly ambiguous status of hypothetical ailments whose presenting symptoms are behavioral or emotional. Most of us would agree that there is some somatic mechanism or mechanisms (whatever their nature or origin) associated with grave and incapacitating psychoses, but, as the dilemma of criminal responsibility illustrates, even in such cases we remain far from agreeing about management and precise disease boundaries. There is, however, a much larger group of individuals who represent a more elusive and ambiguous picture. They are men and women who experience incapacitating emotional pain, who have difficulties in impulse control, or who—even if they have not violated a criminal statute—behave in ways that seem socially or morally unacceptable to many of the people with whom they come into contact.

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bubbles that cause the bends when deep-sea divers surface too rapidly, putting the tube out of commission.

What Holbrook wants to know is whether the plant can somehow resurrect such tubes. She thinks some species probably can, while others can’t, and she would like to know precisely what makes tube resurrection possible. She would also like to know how expensive it is, in terms of energy, or constraints on the plant, to reconstitute a tube.

“When I was an undergraduate, we thought [forming a vapor lock in the tube] was very rare,” says Holbrook, who was studying the problem even then. “We now know plants live much closer to the margin.” Nonetheless, the system is “incredibly” redundant, with many tubes in parallel.

But researchers have thus far been unable to create a laboratory version of the water column, which would make it easier to study this problem. Cellulose, the material on the inner surface of the tubes, chemically attracts water in much the same way that glass does. Yet, water columns in glass microcapillaries are highly unstable, unlike their arboreal counterparts.

Compared to glass microcapillaries, the tubes of a plant are complex and dynamic. They can actually alter resistance to the flow of the water column.

“It’s as if the plumbing in your house could change diameter,” says Holbrook. The plant tube’s ability to influence the flow probably serves as a way of directing resources to where they are most needed, such as to branches that are bathed in sunlight, rather than those that are shaded, she says.

Holbrook and colleagues have found that hydrogels, an important component of the cell wall, serve as an active regulatory mechanism influencing the flow of water through the tubes. Hydrogels are networks of natural polymer chains that contain up to 99 percent water.

Holbrook has recently begun conducting research on plants that are being developed as models for improved feedstocks for biofuels, to determine exactly how sensitive they are to drought. Studying the physiology of plants for nearly three decades has given Holbrook a sober perspective on the limitations of growing crops for fuel.

The engine of plant-based fuel production is photosynthesis. Photosynthesis employs complex molecular machinery to make sugar molecules. Sugar molecules are both the storage vessels for the solar energy the plant has captured, and the building blocks of most of the structure of plants. Starch is made of sugar molecules strung together like poppet beads. Woody materials are more complex, branching chains of sugar molecules, which are far harder to break down.

Sugar molecules are made mostly of carbon and hydrogen, with a little bit of oxygen. The carbon comes from atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO₂), and the hydrogen from water, which the plant splits.

One of the impossible tasks on Holbrook’s list is photosynthesis in air—as opposed to in water, where photosynthesis evolved. The problem is that the concentration of CO₂ in air is an incredibly low 3.8 hundredths of a percent (this is rising with global warming), far lower than in water. The plant has to hold huge quantities of air inside its leaves in order to obtain adequate CO₂, but the extensive surfaces for absorbing the CO₂ lose water fast.

Given that, about 300 water molecules must cycle through the plant for every CO₂ molecule that is captured. That, cautions Holbrook, “is on a good day. If I turned the mass of my body into sunflower leaves, I’d have to drink two liters every 30 seconds.”

Water, then, is often the limiting factor in how much plant matter can be grown on an acre. One indication of how far we are pushing the limits is that one sixth of all US farmland is irrigated. Worse, one third of US food comes from irrigated land, which is of dubious sustainability since it tends to become salt-contaminated over time.

Furthermore, most of the suitable land is already being farmed. And if, for example, the entire US acreage now planted in corn were devoted to the production of ethanol, it would provide a mere 12 percent of the domestic need for liquid fuel.

To fully meet that ravenous demand would entail converting the majority of all US agricultural land to raising corn for ethanol, leaving us no corn on the cob for Fourth of July picnics or popcorn for the movies.

Such a conversion would also take an inordinate amount of fossil fuel, since corn production consumes more than half of all synthetic fertilizer. As food journalist Michael Pollan writes in his 2006 book *The Omnivore’s Dilemma*, “Growing corn... has in no small measure become a process of converting fossil fuels into food.”

Even growing woody plants in marginal lands is no panacea, says Holbrook. Lignin, the woody component of plants that prevents trees from rotting, is going to be expensive to break down into fuel.

Sugar cane, she says, is the model of a modern biofuels crop. The sugar is plentiful and easily extracted from the stems, and the plant waste can be burned to run the fermentation plant. But growing the cane requires ample water.

Holbrook worries that the quest for biofuels could aggravate greenhouse gas emissions. She cites the growth of the palm oil industry as one example. “In response to the rising price for biodiesel, they are cutting down peat forests and planting palm for oil.” These forests—also known as swamp forests—emerge where dead vegetation becomes waterlogged and accumulates as peat. They then become banks of carbon, which is released into the atmosphere when the forests are replaced with palm farms.

The pursuit of biofuels will also put pressure on the Amazon and other centers of biodiversity, which also sequester ample carbon.

“I’m enthusiastic about biofuels,” says Holbrook. “But they are no silver bullet.” Many different energy sources will be required to take the place of oil, and “the low hanging fruit is clearly conservation and better utilization.

“Unfortunately, that’s where the political process seems to be stuck. My big worry is that biofuels might be used to avoid doing the hard work of improving efficiency,” she says. “I think there is too much euphoria around biofuels—that photosynthesis is not free.”

David Holzman writes on science for *Calloquy*. He lives in Lexington, Mass.
He took his undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan in 1933, then looked around for what to do next, a somewhat risky approach to employment in the depths of the Depression. Aaron considered medical school but concluded it was a prospect for which he was "wildly unprepared."

While waiting to hear about a job as a court reporter for the Chicago News Bureau, Aaron received welcome news: he’d been accepted into Harvard’s graduate program in English and American literature and language.

After two years in the program, however, Aaron became dissatisfied with the lack of cultural context in which literature was analyzed. He took a leave to return to Michigan to study with Howard Mumford Jones, the literary critic who went on to win the Pulitzer Prize.

A year later, though, Aaron was back in Cambridge, following Jones who’d been hired to help form a new program of study in the History of American Civilization. Formed by a committee, including the historians F.O. Matthiessen, Perry Miller, and Arthur Schlesinger, the program examined the social ramifications of American literature, religion, art, and other cultural entities. It might have been designed for Aaron personally, so well-suited was he to it. And so the burgeoning academic became one of the two doctoral students to enroll in that inaugural class (the other was Henry Nash Smith, the noted Mark Twain scholar).

Harvard’s Am Civ program was seen initially by its critics as “grandiose and chauvinistic,” he writes, criticisms that Aaron could never simply dismiss. America, he says, “can be sketched or outlined. It can be mapped with a certain verisimilitude, but America can’t be encapsulated.”

Still, the program’s ambition allowed Aaron “to breach departmental boundaries; to take a three-year trip up and down and through undiscovered terrain; to compound history, literature, art, and politics,” he writes. “It offered a passkey to the society I was hoping to burrow into and explore; it legitimated my place and status; it sanctioned my would-be role of explainer of America at home and in foreign parts …”

Were he choosing today, though, Aaron says it’s doubtful he would enter the graduate program. Not because he finds it lacking—he taught Am Civ at Harvard for well over a decade—but because he now finds his country too unlike that of his youth and of his ideals.

“I have become aware that I grew up in the 19th century,” he says, referring to his education in the direction of the classic American journey, beginning as he did in California: “I was priding myself on telling the truth about my country,” he says. Something still nags at Aaron as he reflects on those strange days, though.

He spent part of the summer of 1966 as a lecturer on literature at the University of the Republic in Uruguay. His State Department liaison hoped he “would make useful contacts and investigate the possibilities of arousing interest in American studies” among the protesting university students.

In The Americanist, Aaron examines his motivations for promoting US culture around the world during the Cold War. On one hand, he deems himself a “cultural imperialist,” on the other, an honest spokesman for his country’s strengths and flaws. His inner debate remains unresolved.

Describing his time in post-World War II Salzburg, for example, Aaron writes of the striking contradiction between the freedom Europe offered African-American soldiers and the still-segregated units in which they served. Aaron and his fellow instructors rode the same buses with these GIs, he writes in recollection:

The African-American soldiers we encountered on these buses ostentatiously fondled their blond Austrian girlfriends while flashing us a look that said, “What do you white bastards think of this?” Our students observed these and comparable scenes with great interest and pried us with questions about lynchings and other violations of the democratic credo. I couldn’t tell whether their fascination with American violence was inspired by social concern or by an impulse to puncture American triumphalism.

“I prided myself on telling the truth about my country,” he says. Something still nags at Aaron as he reflects on those strange days, though.
Instead, Aaron found he was spending much of his time critiquing the United States’ war in Vietnam yet defending himself against charges of purveying American imperialism. All the while nervous members of the US Information Agency considered him “a crypto-Communist (if not the real article) and a loose cannon.”

With the anxious blessings of the State Department, Aaron eventually appeared on Uruguayan radio in a well-publicized debate with the Marxist editor of Marcha, a political journal.

On air, Aaron conceded that he was a “cultural imperialist,” but added “only if that term defines one who tries to make the best case he can for his country’s values and culture.”

In The Americanist, he writes that he was no more a cultural imperialist than the Leningrad Philharmonic, also visiting in Montevideo. But later in the book, he retracts that view, referring to it as “palaver and to himself as “disingenuous.”

“Cultural imperialism is something every nation indulges in,” he says. “If certain facts are withheld or lies are used knowingly, then that’s not what I have in mind. But when I talked about America, I talked about the America I loved, still love. And I always felt myself to be...an American and about the America I loved, still love. And when I talked about America, I talked then that’s not what I have in mind. But facts are withheld or lies are used knowingly, every nation indulges in,” he says. “If certain kinds of things that you intentionally don’t resolve, and you just leave hanging, and this is what I did.

“I always felt that the best way to represent my country was to tell the truth about my country, and I felt I always did that,” he continues. “I was never trying to ‘sell’ America. I was trying to tell what it was like.

“When it was praised with no warrant, when progress was declared when there was no progress, then I would say so. Wherever I was, I was speaking candidly, and I still believe that’s the right technique.” But it’s a different time now, and he wonders if today his openness might be taken as “disloyal.” The ideal of American universalism has been lost, he says, and with it Aaron’s intellectual grasp of his own country.

“This insatiable pursuit of money and power, and the kinds of people that represent that now—what is that doing to the moral fiber of the American electorate? We’re falling after false gods,” he says. “That happens in every society, but we’re doing it with a vengeance. I don’t know if I would even enter this field anymore.”

Instead, Aaron has been reading Greek tragedies lately. “They seem much closer to what’s going on and the meaning of life that I’ve been engaged in heretofore,” he says.

His days are filled with seeing people, old friends and new, and in writing and reading. The Internet or television holds no interest for him. “Time is too important to me now,” he says. “Every day has to count for something.”

One of his literary projects is a growing collection of light verse called “Mortuary Airs,” in which Aaron reflects on matters of mortality with more than a touch of gallows humor. “I may hand them out to friends for Christmas one day!” he says with a grin.

Aaron classifies himself as an observer of the American scene. Accordingly, much of The Americanist is taken up with his observations of his encounters with those who populated the intellectual landscape of the 20th century—Edmund Wilson, Max Eastman, Mary McCarthy, Alfred Kazin, Upton Sinclair, among them.

But Aaron also invites readers to observe the observer—and, for those who take up the invitation, the result surely will be gratifying.
GSAS ALUMNI ARE 2007 NOBEL LAUREATES IN ECONOMICS, MEDICINE

Two of the three winners of the 2007 Nobel Prize in economics earned their PhDs at Harvard. The honor was given for a mechanism design theory, initiated by laureate Leonid Hurwicz and further developed by Eric S. Maskin and Roger B. Myerson, both of whom received the PhD in applied mathematics in 1976. According to a Nobel Foundation statement: “[The theory] has helped economists identify efficient trading mechanisms, regulation schemes, and voting procedures. Today, mechanism design theory plays a central role in many areas of economics and parts of political science.” Maskin is the Albert O. Hirschman professor of social science at Princeton University’s Institute for Advanced Study, and was a Harvard faculty member (1985–2000). Myerson is the Glen A. Lloyd distinguished service professor in economics at the University of Chicago. Hurwicz is Regents professor of economics emeritus at the University of Minnesota. Maskin and Myerson will discuss their work at the Graduate School’s annual Alumni Day, April 5, 2008. See the back cover of this issue for more information.

One of the three Nobel laureates in medicine is Mario Capecchi, who received his PhD from Harvard in biophysics in 1967. A distinguished professor of human genetics and biology at the University of Utah and a Howard Hughes Medical Institute investigator, Capecchi shared the honor with fellow scientists Martin J. Evans of Cardiff University (United Kingdom) and Oliver Smithies of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for a series of groundbreaking discoveries concerning embryonic stem cells and DNA recombination in mammals. These led to the creation of “an immensely powerful technology referred to as gene targeting in mice,” said the Nobel Foundation. The technology is in use throughout biomedicine.

HARVARD ASTRONOMER IS “SCIENTIST OF THE YEAR”

In its December 2007 issue, Discover magazine named David Charbonneau, the Thomas D. Cabot associate professor of astronomy, its Scientist of the Year. Charbonneau, who earned his PhD from Harvard in astronomy in 2001, is renowned for his work with exoplanets, which orbit nearby Sun-like stars. This field of study is considered one of the most promising avenues to the discovery of life beyond earth. One of Charbonneau’s current interests is the MEarth project, which searches via telescope for “Earth-class planets.” These orbit small, dim stars are known as “M dwarfs.”

PRESIDENT HONORS HARVARD SCHOLARS WITH HUMANITIES MEDALS


HARVARD PHYSICIST, ECONOMIST WIN CAREER HONORS

Two longtime Harvard faculty members—and GSAS alumni—were honored last fall for the impact of their scholarship on their respective fields. Richard B. Freeman, the Herbert S. Ascherman professor of economics, was awarded the 2007 Prize in Labor Economics from the Institute for the Study of Labor (Bonn, Germany), it was announced last November. The prize honors “Freeman’s groundbreaking work on the sustainability of the welfare state and the role of trade unions in the labor market.” Freeman earned his PhD in economics from Harvard in 1969. Gerald Holton, the Mallinckrodt research professor of physics and research professor of history of science, received the 2008 Abraham Pais Prize for History of Physics “[f]or his pioneering work in the history of physics, especially on Einstein and relativity,” it was announced last October. The prize is sponsored by the American Physical Society, the leading professional organization for physicists. Holton earned his PhD from Harvard in 1948.

—Compiled by Susan Lumenello
**THE BETRAYAL OF FAITH**  
The Tragic Journey of a Colonial Native Convert  
By Emma Anderson, MTS ’98, PhD ’05, study of religion  

Eleven-year-old Pierre-Anthoine Pastedechouan was a 17th-century Innu living along the St. Lawrence River in present-day Quebec when he became part of a French effort to spread Catholicism in North America during a time of rising Protestant power in Europe. In telling Pastedechouan’s story, Anderson illuminates the cultural collision between missionary Catholics and practitioners of native religions. The author is assistant professor of North American religious history at the University of Ottawa.

**THE END OF BIBLICAL STUDIES**  
Knowledge and Power in American National Security  
By Richard K. Betts, AB ’69, PhD ’75, government  

This collection of essays examines the strategic use—and inevitable failures—of intelligence in the days before and after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. Its author is a longtime intelligence expert, who has advised the Central Intelligence Agency and served on the staffs of the Senate Intelligence Committee and National Security Council. Betts is currently professor of political science and director of the Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University. Here he looks at issues such as the problems of relying on models and analysis, and the politicization of intelligence agencies. Enemies and threats cannot be eliminated, Betts writes; the goal is to “raise the batting average of warning and forecasting.” His other publications include *Military Readiness* (1995).

**ENEMIES OF INTELLIGENCE**  
By Cemil Aydin, PhD ’02, Middle Eastern studies  

This intellectual history outlines the emergence and varieties of the anti-Western critique in the Muslim and non-Muslim East from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, roughly the height of Western imperialism. The author calls for an understanding of these historical roots as a means of cultivating a truly international dialogue based on shared values. Aydin is an assistant professor of history at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte.
CONFESSIONS OF A SPOILSPORT
My Life and Hard Times Fighting Sports Corruption at an Old Eastern University
By William C. Dowling, PhD '74, English and American literature and language

What is a literature scholar doing writing a book about college sports? When his long-time university—Rutgers—joined the Big East football conference, it made an enormous financial commitment, anticipating a comparable return. But at what cost? Dowling contends here that the move left Rutgers’ educational mission in dire straits—top students left, admissions standards fell, and smaller athletic programs were cut, as were certain academic programs. Dowling describes his quixotic efforts to create the Rutgers 1000, bringing together students and alumni to oppose the change. The author is University distinguished professor of English and American literature at Rutgers University. He has published widely in his field, including the book Oliver Wendell Holmes in Paris: Medicine, Theology, and the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table (2006); his writings about corruption in college sports have appeared in journals and newspapers.

THE YOUNG AMERICA MOVEMENT AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY, 1828–1861
By Yonatan Eyal, PhD '05, history

“Young America” wasn’t a 19th-century youth movement but rather a catch phrase and descriptor for a group of New York intellectuals seeking to establish a true American literary movement, quite apart from European antecedents. The author looks at the far-less-known political tangent of this movement bound by a “generational self-consciousness.” Comprising a loose group of editors, bankers, writers, and politicians, including Senator Stephen Douglas, Young America sought to counter the Jacksonian dominance of the Democratic Party with a program advocating “foreign expansion…and economic growth,” writes Eyal. The author is assistant professor of historical studies at the University of Toronto at Mississauga; his writing has appeared in Civil War History, among other journals.

FULL DISCLOSURE
The Perils and Promise of Transparency
By Archon Fung, Mary Graham, and David Weil, MPA ’85, PhD ’87, public policy

A nutrition label on a box of cookies, the fine print on a mortgage agreement, or the public accounting of private firms (witness Enron) are forms of the many corporate and governmental disclosures that rely on for their health, safety, and finances—and they’re often not good enough, write the authors. Politics—corporate and otherwise—is often to blame. The post-September 11 color-coded terrorist threat warning system, for example, gives no information for self-protection. The authors offer a blueprint for addressing the problem. Weil is associate professor of economics at the Boston University School of Management and coauthor of A Stitch in Time: Lean Retailing and the Transformation of Manufacturing (1999); among other books. Fung is associate professor of global strategy at IESE Business School (at the University of Navarra, Barcelona and Madrid) and the Jaime and Josefina Chua Tampo professor of business administration at Harvard (on leave). His publications include Strategy and the Business Landscape, 2nd Edition (2006).

REDEFINING GLOBAL STRATEGY
Crossing Borders in a World Where Differences Still Matter
By Pankaj Ghemawat, PhD '82
business economics

This ambitiously titled volume seeks “to help businesses cross borders profitably by seeing the world as it really is, rather than in idealized terms,” writes the author. Underlying his approach—a notion he calls “semiglobalization”—is a belief that companies must acknowledge differences among countries and adapt their business strategies accordingly; the borderless world is, he writes, an “illusion,” and “distance still matters.” Ghemawat is a professor of global strategy at IESE Business School (at the University of Navarra, Barcelona and Madrid) and the Jaime and Josefina Chua Tampo professor of business administration at Harvard (on leave). His publications include Strategy and the Business Landscape, 2nd Edition (2006).

ENFORCED MARGINALITY
Jewish Narratives on Abandoned Wives
By Bluma Goldstein, PhD '62, Germanic languages and literatures

Through readings in fiction, sociology, and contemporaneous histories spanning nearly four centuries, the author offers a panoramic view of a perhaps overlooked but intriguing subject in Jewish society: agunes or abandoned wives. According to Jewish law, these women could not divorce, even when their husbands left them and never returned. The law, while continued on next page
rarely enforced, still exists. Goldstein enriches her study with a personal perspective in which she reflects on growing up in the 1930s as the daughter of one such abandoned wife. The author is professor of German emerita at the University of California at Berkeley and the author of Reinscribing Moses: Heine, Kafka, Freud, and Schoenberg in the European Wilderness (1994).

EMPATHY AND THE NOVEL

By Suzanne Keen, PhD ’90, English and American literature and language

Can sitting down with a good novel make you a more compassionate person? The author thinks so: “[W]e come away from engrossed reading with the sense of knowing more about others, and sometimes also about the alien cultures and times called up by fictional worlds.” Here she examines how empathy is gained and how the phenomenon might be quantified. But she warns that readers must choose to transfer their empathy from the reading experience to the social stage—doing so is neither the responsibility of the novel nor its author. Keen is the Thomas H. Broadus professor of English at Washington and Lee University and the author of Narrative Form (2003), among other books.

ETERNALLY EVE

Images of Eve in the Hebrew Bible, Midrash, and Modern Jewish Poetry

By Anne Lapidus Lerner, AB ’64, PhD ’77, comparative literature

Centuries of interpretations of the Biblical Eve have given rise to certain cultural assumptions about women and their roles. But by rereading various Jewish texts on this representative woman, Lerner finds multiple meanings may be gained about Eve’s creation and her life in and out of “the Garden”—and not all of these fit into accepted views on gender, sexuality, and other topics. The author is assistant professor of Jewish literature and the founding director of the Jewish Women’s Studies Program at the Jewish Theological Seminary (New York).

DEMOCRACY’S DHARMA

Religious Renaissance and Political Development in Taiwan

By Richard Madsen, AM ’72, regional studies—East Asia,
PhD ’77, sociology

Madsen, a sociologist at the University of California at San Diego, rejects the sometimes proffered notion that a values system grounded in Confucian philosophy—in which societal demands are privileged over individual rights—inhibits the growth of democracy in some Asian countries. Taiwan exemplifies how a “religious renaissance” has helped strengthen a burgeoning democratic movement, writes Madsen. However, political and social “fault lines” exist in the young democracy; Madsen advises how to prevent these from cracking. He is the author of China’s Catholics (1998), among other books.

WHAT THIS CRUEL WAR WAS OVER

Soldiers, Slavery, and the Civil War

By Chandra Manning, PhD ’02, history

We know what historians and politicians of the day thought of slavery, but what did the soldiers—Union and Confederate—think of the issue? Did their views differ from those of their commanders or civilian neighbors? Did they really believe they were fighting to destroy or defend the institution? Manning answers these and other important questions. “Racism,” she writes, “was a nationwide, not exclusively southern, phenomenon, and it led some Union troops to denounce the idea of a war to end slavery.” As the war went on, however, that opinion shifted, and, argues Manning, Union soldiers “forged the crucial link between slaves and policy makers” in bringing an end to slavery. The author is assistant professor of history at Georgetown University.

THE TAO OF DECEPTION

Unorthodox Warfare in Historic and Modern China

By Ralph D. Sawyer, AM ’70, regional studies—East Asia, GSA ’82

To excel at unorthodox means of fighting meant being “as inexhaustible as Heaven, as unlimited as the Yangtze and Yellow rivers,” according to the great Chinese martial philosopher Sun-tzu in his Art of War. Understanding the thinking behind the use of hoaxes, double agents, and psychological operations, writes Sawyer, can inform contemporary military strategists, Eastern and Western. A fellow at the University of Calgary’s Centre for Military Strategic Studies, Sawyer has published several books on Chinese warfare, including Fire and Water: The Art of Incendiary and Aquatic Warfare in China (2003).

Authors: GSAS alumni who have published (as author or editor) a general interest book (no textbooks, reprints, or revised editions, please) 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, Holyoke Center 350, 1350 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02138-3846. Questions? E-mail gssa@fas.harvard.edu.
Alex Johnson, PhD '05, physics, has published in *Nature*, *Science*, and other equally prestigious journals, and he's conducted groundbreaking research in quantum computing. Even so, when he first applied for a postdoctoral appointment to conduct fuel cell research with Shriram Ramanathan, assistant professor of materials science, he didn't get the position.

Ramanathan, who had start-up funds for the research project, wanted Johnson to join his group, but he decided to allocate the salary to another candidate with specialized knowledge in environmental science.

The decision made Johnson take a hard look at his own background and goals. “Once I decided to move from a highly theoretical, complex field into energy research, I had a hard time making the leap,” says Johnson, who had a National Science Foundation (NSF) fellowship. “I have … good credentials in a pretty narrow field, and though you could say that I’d be a good person to hire in general, I wasn’t coming in with specific applicable skills.”

But with a compelling proposal to the Harvard University Center for the Environment, Johnson was able to secure a Ziff Environmental Fellowship, enabling him to work with Ramanathan without having to rely on limited federal grant money. These fellowships are awarded annually to scholars in wide-ranging fields, including government, biology, economics, and, as with Johnson, physics.

As a result, Johnson is using nanotechnology—engineering at the molecular scale—to develop hydrogen fuel cells, which can produce electricity as a source for power and heat. Based on the most fundamental element, hydrogen, these fuel cells burn clean—no pollution—and are easily renewable. The environmental benefits are clear.

Johnson’s former research advisor, physics professor Charles Marcus, explains that fellowships such as Johnson’s are critical, particularly with the shrinking availability of federal grant money, including the NSF funding that benefited Johnson as a graduate student.

“Fellowships let students and postdocs vote with their feet,” says Marcus, noting that only a minority have such support. “There is an opportunity cost for hiring someone who is crossing over from a different field. But funding, especially private fellowships that travel with the student or postdoc, makes it much easier for people to move across borders and explore new ideas.”

“Cross-fertilization has become a lot easier as a result of proximity,” continues Marcus. “Harvard, and especially the LISE building, offers the best facilities in the world for cross-disciplinary science, where biology meets engineering, meets physics and chemistry.”

The Faculty of Arts and Sciences continues to raise money for the $155-million building, but since its opening in fall 2007, the LISE building is already widely used, attracting top scientists to the faculty.

“The Center for the Environment is based on the idea of bringing together a broad group of people centered around a common goal, but with very different backgrounds,” Johnson says. “This necessarily has to be across disciplines, and I don’t really see any way to accomplish that goal other than through fellowships for students and postdocs.”

Cultivating cross-disciplinary opportunities is a top priority for GSAS. “Our students’ imaginations and ambitions are boundless, and with their own funding, they are freed to pursue their interests without running into the limits of grants,” says GSAS Administrative Dean Margot Gill.

A little more than a year after receiving his PhD from GSAS, Johnson has contributed significantly to three fields: quantum computing (which processes information based on units unique to quantum mechanics), magnetic resonance imaging, and environmental science.

With the right physical and financial resources, Johnson has been able to carve the path of his choice at Harvard. And after he completes his two years as a Ziff Environmental Fellow this spring, he hopes that path will lead to a career in the renewable energy industry.

For information about supporting the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, contact Marne Perreault, director of GSAS Giving, at 617-495-1629 or marne_perreault@harvard.edu.
Alumni Events and Notices

Contact the GSAS Office of Alumni Relations (gsaa@fas.harvard.edu, 617-495-5591) for more information about any of the following events or services.

CHAPTER EVENT
Wednesday, January 30, 2008 | Los Angeles, Calif.
David Rodowick, professor of visual and environmental studies, will speak on “Film is Dead. Long Live Cinema!” Rodowick’s most recent books are The Virtual Life of Film (2007) and Reading the Figural, or, Philosophy after the New Media (2001). In 2002, he was named an Academy Film Scholar by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences.

HARVARD ALUMNI ASSOCIATION GLOBAL SERIES
March 28–30, 2008 | Shanghai
President Drew Faust and the Harvard Alumni Association will lead a delegation of alumni/ae, Harvard faculty, and other leading experts on China and the region. A formal invitation with registration and event details will be mailed in early 2008. Until then, visit http://post.harvard.edu/globalseries for the most up-to-date schedule and speakers list. For more information, contact haa_globalseries@harvard.edu.

POST: HARVARD
Membership to the Harvard online community, Post.Harvard, is available to all Harvard alumni/ae and current students. You only need to register for the community once. Then you can find classmates and fellow alumni/ae using the search directory, set up your post.harvard e-mail address, and find career advisors or sign up to advise students and alumni/ae yourself. You can also find Harvard news items and link to Harvard@Home. Visit www.post.harvard.edu to get started.

ALUMNI WEEKEND
Friday, April 4, 2008 | Cambridge, Mass.
Department of Government Graduate Alumni Reunion
Be a part of the first-ever reunion for graduate alumni of the Department of Government. Scheduled speakers include Robert Putnam, the Peter and Isabel Malkin professor of public policy and author of Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community; and Michael Sandel, the Anne T. and Robert M. Bass professor of government and author of The Case Against Perfection: Ethics in the Age of Genetic Engineering. Attendees may also take a guided tour of the new Center for Government and International Studies complex. A reunion invitation will be mailed to government alumni/ae in early 2008.

Saturday, April 5, 2008 | Cambridge, Mass.
GSAS Alumni Day
Keynote speaker: Jeffrey Sachs—“Common Wealth: Economics for a Crowded Planet.” Sachs (PhD ’80, economics) is the director of the Earth Institute, the Quetelet professor of sustainable development, and professor of health policy and management at Columbia University. He is also special advisor to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. Other scheduled speakers include: 2007 Nobel Laureates (economics) Eric Maskin and Roger Meyerson, religion scholar Diana Eck, anthropologist Gary Urton, biologist David Van Vactor, Celtic scholar Catherine McKenna, and faculty from the School of Engineering and Applied Sciences. More information on these events will be mailed early in 2008 and posted at http://gsas.harvard.edu/alumni/alumni.php.