

Visiting Scholars Program



2006–2007 Visiting Scholars:
front (left to right): Anthony Mora,
Chair of the VSP Patricia Meyer Spacks,
and Ajay Mehrotra; back (left to right):
Bethany Moreton, Victoria Cain, Chief
Executive Officer Leslie Berlowitz,
M. Taylor Fravel, Director of the VSP
Alexandra Oleson, Anne Stiles, and
Laura Thiemann Scales

This year the Academy welcomes its fifth class of Visiting Scholars and a new program chair, Patricia Meyer Spacks, Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English Emerita at the University of Virginia and former President of the Academy. A teacher, scholar, and expert on eighteenth-century literature, Spacks is committed to encouraging promising younger scholars in fields where few fellowship opportunities exist. As she has said, “the future of scholarship in this country depends on the ability to identify and foster individuals who are dedicated to teaching and research and to enrich their apprenticeship with time for study and contemplation as well as intellectual interaction.” The Academy is deeply grateful for her continuing service as the leader of this important effort.

Founded in 2002 and supported by fifty University Affiliates nationwide, the Visiting Scholars Program supports the work of scholars who demonstrate extraordinary promise in the humanities, the social sciences, and policy studies. Each year, postdoctoral and junior faculty scholars are granted time to pursue their individual research in an environment that offers opportunities for collaboration with Academy Fellows and cooperation with neighboring institutions. The 2006–2007 class is undertaking a wide range

of studies, from an examination of how China has settled territorial disputes since the establishment of the People’s Republic to an analysis of the relation between neurobiology and popular fiction at the end of the nineteenth century to a project on the evolution of America’s natural history museums. The scholars represent institutions from across the country: Columbia University, Harvard University, Indiana University, MIT, Texas A&M, UCLA, and Yale University.

The program would not be possible without a close association with the Humanities Center at Harvard. The Academy is indebted to the Director of the Center, Homi Bhabha, and the Executive Director, Steven Biel, for their generous assistance in providing scholars with access to Harvard’s research facilities. Throughout the year, the Academy works with the Humanities Center to plan symposia and discussions and to host events.

This fall, for the first time, the Academy and the Humanities Center co-hosted a reception for Visiting Scholars and Fellows throughout the Boston-Cambridge area. Academy President Emilio Bizzi and Chief Executive Officer Leslie Berlowitz joined Patricia Meyer Spacks in welcoming visitors from throughout the country and abroad to the House of the

Academy. The reception was preceded by a program featuring a presentation on the historic buildings of Cambridge by *Boston Globe* architectural critic Robert Campbell and remarks by the several directors of neighboring institutes.

Homi Bhabha and the Director of the Radcliffe Institute Drew Faust urged the scholars to become part of a multidisciplinary intellectual community by participating in seminars and conferences at the varied fellowship programs in the area. As Faust noted, “I want to remind you of the long tradition of visitors who came to this community in the hope of gaining from the intellectual experience it offers. After graduating from college in Maine, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow wrote a letter to his father in 1824 saying, ‘I am very desirous to hear your opinion of my project for residing a year in Cambridge. I think a twelve-month’s residence at Harvard would be exceedingly useful. . . . Whatever I do study ought to be engaged in with all my soul for I will be eminent in something.’” Faust added, “I wish for all of you a year of uninterrupted time that enables you to get engaged in your work ‘with all your soul,’ and I hope you succeed as well as Longfellow did in achieving eminence ‘in something’ as he put it.”

Chair of the Visiting Scholars Program

Patricia Meyer Spacks – President of the Academy, 2001 – 2006. Edgar F. Shannon Professor of English Emerita, University of Virginia. Ph.D., University of California, Berkeley. M.A., Yale University. B.A., Rollins College. A renowned scholar of eighteenth-century literature and culture whose work encompasses issues of identity and selfhood, privacy, gossip, and feminism. Her most recent work is *Novel Beginnings: Experiments in Eighteenth-Century English Fiction*, an account of the diverse forms and themes that contributed to the development of the eighteenth-century novel.

Visiting Scholars, 2006 – 2007

Victoria Cain – Ph.D., Columbia University. B.A., Harvard University. *Selling Nature: America's Natural History Museums, 1869 – 1942*. An investigation of how consumer culture and Progressive reforms transformed American natural history museums, resulting in deep schisms between academic scientists and image-makers, and a new relationship between popular and professional conceptions of science.

M. Taylor Fravel – Assistant Professor of Political Science, MIT. Ph.D., Stanford University. B.A., Middlebury College. *The Long*

March to Peace – China's Settlement of Territorial Disputes. An exploration of why and how China has settled its territorial disputes since the establishment of the People's Republic in 1949, demonstrating that leaders are more likely to compromise when confronted by internal threats to regime security, including rebellions and legitimacy crises, and suggesting that domestic conflicts often create incentives for cooperation.

Ajay Mehrotra – Associate Professor of Law and of History, Indiana University School of Law. Ph.D., University of Chicago. J.D., Georgetown University. B.A., University of Michigan. *Sharing the Burden: Law, Politics, and the Making of the American Fiscal State: 1880 – 1930*. An investigation of the transformation of U.S. public finance from a system of regressive indirect national taxes to a progressive income tax regime guided not only by the need for greater revenue but also by concerns for equity and social justice.

Anthony Mora – Assistant Professor of History, Texas A&M University. Ph.D., University of Notre Dame. B.A., University of New Mexico. *Race Rivals: African-Americans, Mexican-Americans, and Ideologies of Racial Difference, 1890 – 1940*. An attempt to shift historical studies of race away from the “white” and “other” dichotomy by examining the relationship between these two groups in Chica-

go, where they lived in close proximity to each other and created their own understanding of race in America.

Bethany Moreton – Ph.D., Yale University. B.A., Williams College. *Wal-Mart World: The Globalization of the Sunbelt Service Economy*. An examination of how Wal-Mart and its philanthropic foundations harnessed evangelical Christianity to foster trust in corporate actors and the free market.

Laura Thiemann Scales – Ph.D., Harvard University. B.A., Yale University. *Speaking in Tongues: Mediumship and American Narrative Voice*. A study of the influence of prophets, spiritual mediums, and psychics on ideas of narrative personhood in the works of Stowe, Hawthorne, James, Hopkins, Faulkner, and other writers from the Second Great Awakening to the modernist movement.

Anne Stiles – Ph.D., University of California, Los Angeles. B.A., Harvard University. *Reading the Neurological Romance: Popular Fiction and Brain Science, 1865 – 1905*. A consideration of the complex relationship between neurology and popular fiction at the *fin de siècle*, when such scientifically trained novelists as Bram Stoker, Robert Louis Stevenson, and H. G. Wells intervened in controversies spawned by late-Victorian neurology and actively shaped public opinion about neurological innovations.



Drew Faust (Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study), **Homi Bhabha** (Humanities Center at Harvard), and **Patricia Meyer Spacks** (Visiting Scholars Program at the American Academy)



Fellows from research programs in the Greater Boston area at the fall reception.