LETTER
from the
DIRECTOR

by Martha Howell

Priscilla Ferguson has now ended her term as Associate Director of the Institute. Priscilla has served at the Institute in countless ways since she joined us in 1990 - as representative to numerous college committees on curriculum, as chair of the Civility Committee’s Subcommittee on Gender, as organizer of a university-wide effort to expand parental leave programs at Columbia, as expert supervisor of administrative matters in the office, as counsel to the students who published the Barnard-Columbia Women’s Handbook, as organizer of the original "Friday Film Series" at the Institute, as the founder of the "More on the Core" lecture series...the list is long. But more than that, Priscilla has been a wonderful companion, an often needed level head and a wise sounding board during the two years we’ve worked together. I will miss her and so will the students and faculty who frequent the Institute.

Priscilla is now taking a well deserved leave to finish her book on nineteenth-century Paris, but will be back on campus in the fall and, we hope, a frequent visitor to the Institute.

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LETTER
from the
PROGRAM DIRECTOR
by Kathryn Gravdal

It is an unmitigated pleasure to find myself Program Director of Women’s Studies at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender this year, particularly given the enthusiasm and intelligence of our majors and concentrators in this program. It was an exciting fall, full of cliffhangers and eleventh-hour miracles.

Without a doubt, the high point of my initial semester as Program Director was the first Columbia Women’s Studies Senior Seminar. Our eight senior majors spent one semester writing their Senior Essay, an original feminist research project in a discipline of their own choosing. This year the Seminar’s format was transformed from the year-long format used at Barnard to a one-semester course. This more intense work format was supported by the presence of two graduate student tutors, Rebecca McLennan and Sarah Markgraf, who made themselves available to the majors on an individual basis.

Three of our majors did research in questions of legal scholarship. Diana Lathi studied sexual harassment policies on Ivy League campuses and discovered the mechanisms that continue to silence undergraduate victims, despite university policies against sexual discrimination and harassment. Amy Longo focused on one Ohio law which requires parental consent for minors seeking abortions. Pamela Papish investigated cases of women forced into pornography who seek compensation for their coerced performance,

THE LESBIAN
and
GAY STUDIES GROUP
gets ready for the
UPCOMING SEMESTER
by Patrick Horrigan

This past semester the Lesbian and Gay Studies Group at Columbia grew significantly in strength and numbers. Our largest meeting drew over fifty eager, although somewhat overcrowded, participants. Thanks to a grant from the President and Provost’s Student Initiative Fund and the ongoing intellectual, institutional and material generosity of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, we’ve managed to maintain a diverse and exciting program throughout the fall and into the Spring.

Many of our colloquia this term examined the intersections of identity, politics, and theory. Using Stuart Marshall’s film "Desire" as a launching pad, we started with a provocative discussion of Nazi persecution of gay men and lesbians and the appropriation of the pink triangle and the rhetoric of holocaust by gay and AIDS activists. Our next few sessions directly engaged different kinds of splits and alliances in queer communities: the dialogue between lesbian/gay theory and feminist theory, queer identity and lesbian identity, teachers and students. In our final colloquium, two members presented works in progress to a small but enthusiastic audience.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 07)
A PERSONAL LOOK
at
"THEORETICAL PARADIGMS"
and
FEMINIST SCHOLARSHIP
at
COLUMBIA

by Pamela Brown

Each year the Institute offers a special seminar called "Theoretical Paradigms in Feminist Scholarship," a graduate-level, interdisciplinary course that is team-taught. The focus changes each year: this past fall, historian Martha Howell and anthropologist Elaine Combs-Schilling led the course, which had a somewhat forbidding title: "The Male Master Narrative in Mediterranean and European Society and Culture." Before the course started, I picked up the heavy packet of readings. Paging through it, I hit on a group of stories that turned out to be versions, visions, and revisions of the Red Riding Hood story. Some were erotic, others grotesque. I was intrigued. Were these male master narration dismantling tools? Flipping forward, I glanced through a dense essay about sonograms and fetal monitors and their impact on concepts of motherhood, identity, and risk. How would this relate to the cluster of articles on doweries and wills in early modern Europe, or to ritual hand-dying in Morocco—or for that matter, to Hitchcock's Notorious? And where were the "master narratives" I had been expecting--legal codes, the Bible, the Koran, Freud, Barbie Doll advertisements?

I soon learned that these and other "master" texts were very present anyway, in the debates that developed over the readings. Made up of mainly of graduate students of history, anthropology, and literature, the class had an alert, vocal, and alive feel to it, quite different from that in most seminars I've taken in the English Department. There was simply less fear and pretension, although there was often more contention. The simple experience of seeing two professors dealing with the group in tandem was illuminating, especially when they disagreed. Unfortunately, because of budgetary constraints, Columbia discourages team teaching of this sort.

As part of the course, we students were required to keep journals of our reading, which was heavy at times. After one intense class in November centering on childbearing in present-day America, I wrote this entry:

"I will remember these articles (R.P. Petchesky's on fetal imaging and Noreen Esposito's on an alternative birthing center) for the rupture they provided in the seminar. It was the first time that people seemed to be connecting many of the things that had been said to their own (suddenly) unwritten future rather than to the past, with its constantly updating files of memory and justification. The topic of childbirth divides and dismays, awes and angers, has its haves and have-nots, somehow making the natural seem unnatural and the unnatural seem natural..."

This "rupture," which had been so emotionally charged, provided me with one of the most revealing, exciting, and challenging classes of the semester; others reacted with feelings of anger, frustration, or confusion. One thing is clear: the master text of the body, at least, cannot be read the same way by everyone. For this speaking subaltern, the thing with feathers has flutters in it yet, and this seminar had something to do with it.
rewriting
the
world
of
feminist scholarship

by philomena mariani

feminist legal theory, feminists theorize the political, regulating womanhood, feminist perspective in criminology, body/politics, the making of the modern body, feminism and methodology, feminism and science, representing reality: these are anthologies of writings, produced over the last fifteen years or so, are representative of the vast literature on the inclusion of feminist theory in the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. across the traditional disciplines—anthropology, sociology, law, history, literature, the natural sciences—feminists are not only rewriting and reconstructing knowledge, but creating new knowledge, and in the process dismantling disciplinary boundaries. out of this rewriting have come multiple feminisms—postenlightenment, postmodern, postcolonial, multicultural, postliberal—from which we may eventually draw to develop genuinely coalitional forms of political struggle.

but this very reconstruction poses a problem for the development of feminist pedagogy. the question becomes: how to create an institutional context for the teaching of knowledge that is cross-disciplinary? feminists have been grappling with this problem for at least a decade, attempting to construct more expansive and inclusive frameworks, all the while under assault by cultural conservatives and constrained by budget cuts.

in this regard, the institute for research on women and gender offers an exemplary seminar, entitled "theoretical paradigms in feminist scholarship," that addresses the needs of students interested in feminist education. the reiterative use of feminist here is deliberate, for the course is feminist both in content and structure. team-taught by professors of different disciplines, (this year by professor martha howell from the department of history, and professor elaine combs-schilling from the department of anthropology) the course is organized thematically around issues in feminist scholarship and politics, some of which are highly charged and polemical. it combines the best of seventies-style consciousness-raising (radical feminism’s "the personal is the political") and the theoretical concepts of postliberal feminism in a nonhierarchic framework. pleasure in the text and theoretical rigor characterize the approach to the material, both of which are enhanced by the highly democratic atmosphere of the classroom. as a former student in "theoretical paradigms", i would like to see the course expanded to a year-long seminar -- so rarely does a feminist find herself in an academic situation that so thoroughly challenges outworn theoretical models, so fully endorses exploration of fresh, often discomforting, ideas.
A LOOK AT
WHAT YOU MAY
HAVE MISSED
LAST SEMESTER

The Fall Semester at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender produced a tremendous variety of events, lectures, films and parties. Our newest lecture series, entitled "More on the Core," was off to its debut this semester with Professor Caroline Bynum from our own Department of History, and Professor Vincent Wimbush from the Union Theological Seminary. The aim of this lecture series is to offer different, or deeper, perspectives on what is generally taught in the "core curriculum" classes. Professor Bynum gave her interpretation of "Medieval Views of the Human Person in Aquinas and Dante," and Professor Wimbush spoke on "Early Christianity as Rhetorical and Social Formation."

Continuing with last year's "Going Public: Feminist Critiques and Historical Perspectives" presentations, Columbia faculty and students had a welcome diversion during the semester with a trip to Johns Hopkins University for the final seminar on "Commons, Commerce and Custom."

Over the course of the semester, the Institute welcomed several visiting professors to campus. Sheila Robotham, feminist activist and author from England, spoke on contemporary feminist issues in a talk called "Equal or Different - What do Women Want?" Professor Helen Hardacre from Harvard University gave a fascinating lecture entitled: "God Changed My Gender for the World's Salvation." Professor Zvi Razi, from Tel Aviv University in Israel lectured about "The Myth of the Immutable English Family," and from Nigeria, Ms. Ifeyinwa Iweriebor engaged her audience with her talk on "Women in the Evolution of the Nigerian Constitutional and Political Order Since Independence, 1960 - 1990's."

In addition, Dr. Jane Bennet, formerly of Barnard's Women's Studies Program, spoke to a crowd about the ways in which victims of rape represent their experiences. Her presentation, "None So Deaf: Survivors' Representation of Rape in New York" was both enlightening and disturbing.

Finally, the Institute wishes to thank all the professors who participated in last semester's "Family Values" Friday Film Series. For our debut film, Professor Jane Spinak from the School of Law made introductory remarks to the movie "Kramer vs. Kramer." Professor Elaine Combs-Schilling from the Department of Anthropology spoke on the very popular film "Fried Green Tomatoes," which drew an exceptionally large crowd. Professor Kathryn Gravdal, a member of the French Department and our current Program Director showed the French film "Cousin/Cousine," and Professor Kathryn Neckerman of the Department of Sociology revived the classic "Rebel Without a Cause" for a nostalgic audience. And for the finale, Professor Margo Jefferson from the English Department led the discussion after the film "One False Move." The whole series was a tremendous success, and we owe it all to our speakers.

For those of you who enjoyed last semester's film series, take note that this semester's line up is shaping up quite nicely. For a complete description, please see the article on page 06.
FRIDAY FILM SERIES BREAKS THE MOLD

by Sandra Bramwell

Our new theme for the Spring, 1993 Friday Film Series is "Women Breaking the Mold...And Out of the Doll House." The theme came as a brainstorm to the events planning committee as we wanted to consider women who have left the "doll house," and entered the public sphere, as seen through the eyes of independent women film makers. All the films have had limited distribution, and are rarely seen by the general public.

Seven innovative films were selected: "Superstar - The Karen Carpenter Story", "Lesbian in the Pulpit", "Women of Gold", "Jessica Mitford - The Muckracker", "When Cinderella Awoke She Was Fifty", "Sugar Cane Alley". We are also working with Molly Haskell and the Film Division to have graduate students co-chair the film series. We will resume showing the films on alternate Fridays at 1 p.m.

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...SCREAM (continued from page 1)

Professor Kathryn Gravdal, and members of the Senior Seminar of Fall, 1992, presented IRWG Director Martha Howell with a four-foot, inflatable "scream," modeled after Edvard Munch's. For the seniors, and for Martha as well, the "scream" sums up the stress and frustration that all of us feel sometimes. Especially around the end of the semester, which was when we photographed Martha with her new friend.

...Letter from the Program Director

(continued from page 2)

Another group of seniors wrote essays touching on aspects of sexuality. Betsey Sparrow proposed a theoretical reading of bisexuality as the praxis of gender deconstruction in feminism. Joan Stewart critiqued images of black female sexuality in the films of Spike Lee, particularly "She's Gotta Have it" and "Mo' Better Blues." Beth Stryker posited an interpretation of Wonder Woman as lesbian and as survivor of sexual violence, paying particular attention to the historical transformation of the comic book character over the years.

On December 15, the seniors presented their work publicly - to other majors, faculty advisers, relatives, and friends of the Institute. The seniors can now choose to continue working with their tutor and faculty advisor by expanding the essay into a thesis in an independent study next semester. I look forward with pleasure to the privilege of directing the second Columbia Senior Seminar in Fall 1993.

Plans are underway for several other events in Spring 1993, including a Symposium on Women and Publishing in February, and a Feminist poetry reading in April. As Program Director I would welcome any and all suggestions about speakers, events, and activities of interest to undergraduates. Please come by and introduce yourselves. My Spring semester office hours will be on Wednesdays from 12:00 to 2:00 in 763 Schermerhorn Extension, and on Mondays I can be found in 503 Philosophy Hall from 1:00 to 2:00.
Meanwhile, Kathryn Gravdal is continuing as Women's Studies Program Director and will, I am happy to report, be teaching the senior seminar again next year, following the very successful new format introduced this year (see page 02).

Our search for an Assistant Professor in Women's Studies and Program Director is still underway, and the applicant pool is impressive. Two candidates for the position, Dorice Elliot and Kathryn Nasstrom, have already given lectures early this term, and two more will be speaking over the next several weeks: Maggie Sale, who is scheduled for February 8th; and Philomena Mariani, who will be scheduled soon after. Please call Molly Logan at the Institute (854-3277) for the specifics.

Plans for next year are also taking shape. Professor Jean Howard of the Department of English and Comparative literature will be joining us as "Senior Scholar in Residence," a new position designed to provide a faculty member with the resources to organize interdisciplinary workshops, seminars, and conferences involving resident and non-resident scholars. The theme of Jean's program will be "The Material of Culture in Early Modern Europe," a topic that will engage a great many local faculty and will surely interest scholars elsewhere.

Furthermore, the spring calendar is filling up with lectures and workshops which supplement our list of course offerings. Check our calendar in this issue and add your name to our mailing list to receive notices of newly scheduled events.

Our speakers this semester -- James Saslow of Queens College, Gregory Nreddbeck of Johns Hopkins University and Margo Jefferson, visiting faculty at Columbia -- guided us through queer history from Michelangelo to Oscar Wilde to Mae West and Ethel Waters. Next term promises an equally exciting roster of lectures; so far we have scheduled Diana Fuss, author of the influential Essentially Speaking: Feminism, Nature, and Difference, Patrick Morrigan, a graduate student in American literature and Culture (as well as a member of our group), and Marcellus Blount, a leading scholar of African-American Literature.

Our biggest challenge, though, is coordinating our first conference. Entitled "Crossing Over:" the March 6th conference will bring together graduate students from the tri-state area to examine our relationship to lesbian and gay studies, academia, our multiple communities and the places in which we live and work.

And, of course, we'll be holding our biweekly colloquia. In the Spring we'll be dealing with topics as varied as police brutality, queer film, lesbian stand-up comedy and much, much more. Thanks again to the Institute -- Martha Howell, Aloka Dalal, Molly Logan, and all the fabulous work-study students -- for their incalculable role in our success this year. Our events are listed on the Institute calendar; if you're interested in participating in or attending our upcoming conference, please call Sarah Chinn at (718) 789-2073, or Patrick Morrigan at (212) 928-6839.