Women and War in Afghanistan

On October 24, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender presented an evening of film and discussion on the predicament of women in Afghanistan. The centerpiece of the evening was a screening of Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s _Qandehar_, official selection of the Cannes 2001 Festival and winner of the UNESCO Federico Fellini Award. The event, co-sponsored by MEALAC, CCLS, The Barbara Black Lectures in Women and Law, and the Department of Anthropology, took place at the Altschul Auditorium and featured a distinguished panel, including Professor Margaret Mills, Chair of the Department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at Ohio State University; Ms. Nelofer Pazira, activist and star of _Qandehar_; Ms. Marissa Berenson, actress and Goodwill Ambassador for UNESCO; Professor Hamid Dabashi, Chair of MEALAC; and Professor Rosalind Morris, Associate Professor of Anthropology and Director of IRWaG.

Public response to the event was overwhelming; the Altschul Auditorium was filled to capacity, and close to 500 people remained outside, unable to enter. In a logistical _tour de force_ in the face of this unprecedented turnout, two simultaneous screenings were offered on the following night, October 25, at Jerome Greene Hall. These screenings, too, played to a packed house, and though Professor Mills, Ms. Berenson, and Ms. Pazira

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For all of us at the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, the past few months have been difficult ones. A semester that began with excitement and anticipation was shattered by the events of September 11, and the subsequent war in Afghanistan continues to leave us uncertain about the future. The specter of bio-terrorism, which rose on our horizon during the weeks of October, also took its toll. Our discomfort was not unique, of course. We have simply shared in the predicament of New York. Indeed, we were grateful for our survival, for a location in the city that exempted us from the worst injuries and losses—even as we grieved for those less fortunate.

In the aftermath of these events, and in the shadow of war, our tasks at IRWaG have been many. First and foremost, we have maintained the

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Feminist News is published by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender

763 Schermerhorn Extension
1200 Amsterdam
Columbia University
New York, NY 10027

(212) 954-3277
FAX: (212) 954-7466
http://www.columbia.edu/cu/irwg/

Institute Office Hours:
Monday-Friday, 9 am-5 pm

Rosalind Morris, Director
Associate Professor of Anthropology

Elizabeth Blackmar
Graduate Director
Professor of History

Lila Abu-Lughod
Undergraduate Director
Professor of Anthropology

Kathleen Savage
Assistant to the Director

Page Jackson
Administrative Assistant

Maryam Moshaver
Staff Writer
Feminist News

Kathy Hollen
Design and Production
Feminist News

The Institute for Research on Women and Gender is the locus of interdisciplinary feminist scholarship and teaching at Columbia University. We administer the undergraduate Women’s Studies major and help develop courses for graduate students that supplement their own disciplinary studies on gender. In addition, we organize workshops, seminars, lectures, conferences, and research projects concerning various issues in feminist scholarship and teaching.

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services and the functions that an Institute such as ours must perform for the university. This has meant offering a rich array of courses and continuing to develop our undergraduate program, with Lila Abu-Lughod now working hard as Director of Undergraduate Studies. Courses this semester were well-subscribed, and we welcomed many new colleagues into our community of instructors. We also continued to encourage and facilitate graduate research in gender studies, a task that has this year been shepherded by Elizabeth Blackmar. Professor Blackmar’s institution of a monthly social meeting for graduate students (First Thursdays) both helped to create an interdisciplinary group of dissertation writers, and to make IRWaG a center to which those seeking community after September 11 could turn for solace, support and solidarity.

Events and lectures, intellectual exchanges and debates shaped much of IRWaG’s life, as is always the case. We hosted two events in our annual series, Feminist Interventions, including a lecture by Professor Martha Howell (see story this issue), and poetry readings by Reetika Vazirani and Marilyn Hacker. We welcomed visiting scholars to lecture on topics as diverse as female factory workers in China, Medieval historiography in Spain, biotechnology’s effects on the body, and women and AIDS in South Africa. As the list suggests, we insisted on thinking about things beyond our own immediate experience, about the struggles that preceded September 11 and that continue even though the media crowds them out with tales of a singular war.

In addition to these typical and typically diverse kinds of activities, however, the Autumn semester was filled with events of a more timely and contextual nature. We worked especially diligently to provide venues and contexts in which members of the university community and the city at large could obtain information, hear different perspectives, and engage in debate about possible courses of action in response to the events of September 11—without fear of reprisal and without prejudice regarding the positions taken. Perhaps our most successful intervention in this domain consisted in a series of screenings of the Iranian filmmaker Mohsen Makhmalbaf’s surreal film about a woman in search of her sister in Afghanistan. Entitled Qandehar, and shot on location only a year ago, the film permitted audiences to have a visceral encounter with life in the war-savaged landscape of a desert nation that has been utterly unforgiven by history. But its enigmatic narrative and overwhelming beauty also allowed us to escape the literalism that would have explained this world away as the mere effect of war.

Prompted to think differently by a film whose editing style privileges juxtaposition rather than linear movement, audience members were enabled to raise questions about the complex world in which the film was shot. The fact that, in addition to the more than 400 people seated for the occasion, several hundred were disappointed on the first night, and had to return on subsequent evenings to get admission, suggests much about how eager people were for such a context and for such conversation—even when they disagreed with the sentiments of the speakers, as they sometimes did. For nearly three hours following the screening, people conversed, asked questions, argued the virtues of one understanding or another, and learned how much they still had to learn about Afghanistan—especially with regard to the predicament of women. It was a valuable lesson! (See story this issue.)

For, few wars have been fought with a rationale that staked so
In Fall 2000, Professor Farah Griffin joined the Columbia faculty as Professor of English and Comparative Literature and African-American Studies. She comes to Columbia from the University of Pennsylvania where she taught from 1994-2000 as Associate Professor of English. Professor Griffin received her Ph.D. in American Studies from Yale University in 1992 where she wrote her dissertation entitled “Who Set You Flowin’?: Migration, Urbanization and African American Culture.” The dissertation was the origin of her first book: *Who Set You Flowin’: The African American Migration Narrative* (1995), and is a study of the literary, musical, and visual works created by African Americans during the great migrations from the South to urban centers of the North during the 1920s and ’30s. The book examines how artistic expression makes tangible the events and experiences that acted as catalysts for the journey northward, and how the confrontation with the possibilities and limitations of the urban landscape are reflected through art. Her second book, *Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African American Travel Writing* (1998), co-edited with Cheryl Fish, is an anthology that takes as its theme narratives of African Americans who wrote about their experiences as adventurers, missionaries, tourists, statesmen, scholars, and journalists. She is also editor of *Beloved Sisters and Loving Friends: Letters from Addie Brown and Rebecca Primus* (1999), a book that received an NAACP Image Award nomination for Best Non-Fiction Literary Work. The correspondence between the two women that lasted from 1854 to 1868, supplemented with a running commentary of historical background and contextual details, reveals a picture of the lives and activities of black women that defies common 19th century stereotypes.

Her most recent work, *If You Can’t Be Free Be a Mystery: In Search of Billie Holiday* (2001), is an exploration of the myths that surround Billie Holiday, and the way in which these myths are revealing both of their creators and of the audiences that hold to them. The book was intended to address a broad audience. “There is a way that the subject matter seemed to demand that I speak more personally,” she explains, “that I give up the illusion of an ‘objective’ analysis and that I take the risk of investing my own autobiographical musings in the way I presented my argument and my concerns.” Indeed, Professor Griffin’s objective is not to reveal the “real” or “authentic” woman, but to examine the implications and dangers of the myths that weave together, with seeming inexorability, Holiday’s talent, her sensuality, and her stature as a black woman artist, with addiction, stormy and problematic romantic relationships, and an early tragic death. “I wanted to do this without sacrificing intellectual rigor,” she states; “In other words, I wanted the book to follow the models of some of the most important writings on jazz and on African American culture, such as Du Bois’s *The Souls of Black Folk*, Ralph Ellison’s *Shadow and Act*, or Amiri Baraka’s *Blues People*, among others, that are thoughtful and deep, but not academic in their tone.”

Along with literature, history, and politics, music is among Professor Griffin’s chief areas of scholarly interest. Her lecture “Bluenotes and Butterflies: Thoughts on ‘The’ Black Singing Voice,” given at St. Paul’s Chapel in March 2001 as part of IKWAG’s *Feminist Interventions* series, co-sponsored by the Center for Jazz Studies and featuring the remarkable voice and talent of Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagon, was one of the most widely acclaimed and well received lectures of the year.

*New Voices at Columbia: Introducing Farah Griffin*

Farah Griffin

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Professor Martha Howell opened the 2001 Feminist Interventions lecture series this fall with a talk entitled “The Properties of Marriage in Late Medieval Europe: Commercial Wealth and the Creation of the Modern Marriage.” Professor Howell is renowned for her work on early modern social history and women’s history in the Burgundian Netherlands, northern France, and Germany. She is the author of Women’s Work in Urban Economies of Late Medieval Northwestern Europe: Female Labor Status in Male Economic Institutions (1979); Women, Production and Patriarchy in Late Medieval Cities (1986); The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place, and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550 (1998); and, with Walter Prevenier, From Reliable Sources: An Introduction to Historical Methods (2001). Recently returned from a year-long leave during which she conducted research in France, Professor Howell delivered her lecture on the emergence of the concept of companionate marriage in northern Europe to a full house and a rapt and enthusiastic audience.

Responding to the talk was Sherry Ortner, Professor of Anthropology and author of numerous works including Sexual Meanings, the Cultural Construction of Gender and Sexuality (1981); Making Gender: The Politics and Erotics of Culture (1996); and the famous and ground-breaking article “Is Female to Male as Nature is to Culture?” in Woman, Culture, and Society (1974).

Introducing the lecture were Provost Jonathan Cole, who in his monograph Fair Science: Women in the Scientific Community (1979) discusses the place of women in relation to science, and Associate Professor Rosalind Morris, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the Institute for Research for Women and Gender.

Professor Howell’s lecture addressed the modern notion of marriage that, during the 500 years between 1200-1700, helped to form and define the emerging middle class. Two paintings, Jan van Eyck’s famous “Arnolfini Wedding” (1434) and Lucas van Leyden’s portrait, painted one hundred years later, of two lovers privately sealing their romantic pact with the exchange of a ring, exemplify the shift from a notion of marriage conceived on a model of kinship and sociopolitical advantage to one of free union based on spiritual affinity, sexual fulfillment, and companionship. Professor Howell poses the question as to the chronology of this transformation, its geographical and social location, and indeed its significance and scope.

The sacramental nature of marriage, its indissolubility, its moral and spiritual value, as well as its basis in free mutual consent of the marrying couple are ideals that have their origin in the teachings of the medieval church of the 12th to the 15th centuries, and these teachings were accepted, though not without resistance, by the landed aristocracy. But the question as to how and why these ideals were embraced by Europe’s newly emerging “middling sorts,” and how the middle classes came to be identified with, and formed by this modern notion of companionate marriage is one that, according to Professor Howell, remains to be answered satisfactorily.

Companionate marriage, based on the model of the closed conjugal unit or “ménage” that could accumulate property through inheritance from generation to generation of senior males, originated in the aristocracy. Why this model came, in the course of time, to be imitated by the middle classes leaves open the question as to why it was not the aristocracy but the middle class that not only best exemplified, but also derived its very identity from the notion of companionate marriage.

In addressing this issue, Professor Howell examines the role of the exchange of property in the marriage transaction, arguing that the shift from the marriage of kinship to companionate marriage is attributable to the change in the nature of wealth itself during the late middle ages. The medieval marriage exchange had been based on an economy of land: a source of stability, security and social standing that could neither be sold, nor transported, nor hidden or misplaced. Under the dotal system, lands and chattels transferred to the husband in the form of dowry were returned to the wife’s family in case of her widowhood. With the rise of commercialism and the emergence of the middle classes, however, the marriage exchange was based on movable wealth such as clothing, furniture, equipment for trade, inventories, raw materials and the like: wealth that was mobile, insecure, and difficult to locate. Furthermore, the wealth that was the product of the commercial revolution was fungible, associated with marketability, and subject to the fluctuation of prices, and even loss. Professor Howell argues that under these conditions of risk, instability, and anxiety, the exchange of property in marriage was no longer able to perform its social function. Hence marriage had to be reconfigured as an intimate union based on choice, desire, and affection alone, setting the stage by the 18th century for the legitimate love match.

Professor Ortner, responding to the lecture, remarked on the methodological shifts in the discipline of anthropology from exoticism, to the scientific pretensions of mathematical cycles of social exchange, to Claude Levi-Strauss’s structuralism, and the more recent studies of the institutional structures of marriage in the context of contemporary feminist, gay and lesbian studies. She responded to Professor Howell’s description of marriage and intimacy in the context of large-scale
structures of commerce and property law by posing the question of hegemony and agency. Professor Ortner drew attention to issues of gender, sexuality, and social stratification in 18th century Polynesian marriages as an exemplary comparison, pointing out that though the alliances among the nobility involved transactions of land, the marriages of commoners were informal. People who liked each other could set up house together; thus companionate marriage, though it coexisted with the aristocratic model, was simply more invisible and did not entail a shift of hegemonies. She raised the issue of agency, however, in the context of the decline of the aristocracy. As was the case in northern Europe, in Polynesia, “excess” sons inherited no land, and sought their fortunes in warfare and amorous adventures. Younger brothers thus formed a pool of cultural and political dissidents who sided with British interests, and became the agents for change, ushering in a new era. In this change, many elite women also played a significant role.

Responding to Ortner’s comments, Professor Howell noted that though individual choice did exist in a limited way in European marriages across the social spectrum—excluding of course people without property interests of any kind—the family remained deeply involved and invested in the making of marriage matches. The junior males of the landed aristocracy, however, often married urban women, and the issue of agency, particularly with respect to junior males, was one deserving of further thought.

The audience raised many interesting questions after the lecture. One of the first questions was about the role and agency of women in bringing about companionate marriage in Europe. Women, Professor Howell replied, appear to have been deeply invested in the rhetoric of companionship and love in marriage, despite its contradictions. The institution of marriage was structurally profoundly patriarchal and the early modern rhetoric about marriage, particularly among the Puritans, draws out the inner contradiction of sustaining the authority of the male in a hierarchical relationship while at the same time holding to ideals of companionship, love, and friendship.

Another question arose as to whether the family among the lower strata of the middle classes tended towards the model of the family workshop, and whether the legislative shift from nation states to the city level was at all reflected in the commercial enterprises of the household. Though indeed one of the functions of cities, Professor Howell responded, was to provide protection for organized commerce, and to form not only a standardized commercial law, but also to provide court-enforced police protection for organized financial estates, the celebration of the model of the happy couple workshop engaged in a cooperative economy of common goods, often reflected in paintings of the time, is undermined both by contemporary criminal records, and by a family legal system in which wife-beating was punishable only in the event of the wife’s death.

One audience member asked about the implications of the changing urban dynamics on the rural order, as for example in the Roman world where the land continued to retain its economic centrality. Professor Howell explained that the rich peasant, belonging to an entrepreneurial class that bought and sold land and produced for the market, was both causally and temporally connected to the destabilization of the old landed economy in northern Europe.

The existence of companionate marriage in 16th century imperial China was pointed out by an audience member who asked whether marriage by individual volition reflected class differences in western Europe. In reply, Professor Howell explained that the ideals of marriage in Europe—that marriage is based on choice, and is monogamous and indissoluble—was most clearly and powerfully formulated in the teachings of the ecclesiastical church, and these characteristics of marriage were new in Europe when they were articulated by the church in the 12th century. She remarked, however, that it was the Puritans who had produced some of the richest literature on the meaning of companionate marriage. In their writings emphasis was laid neither on a duty to procreate nor on the need to be saved through marriage from the sin of fornication, but on the duty to cultivate erotic desire for the spouse. These ideas later became part of a general culture, appearing for example among the Catholics during the Counter-Reformation.

Another interesting question concerned parallels in the concept of “non-marriage” and homosexual love. Professor Howell explained that as heterosexual love came to be increasingly valorized and located in marriage as the only site of permissible sexual fulfillment, homosexuality, as sexual union outside the marriage, was delegitimized. By 1700, the notion of illegitimate unions was extended to include babies conceived out of wedlock, even if they were born after the exchange of marriage vows by their parents.

As with all events sponsored by IRWaG, the discussion continued as the lecture adjourned to a reception, given in Professor Howell’s honor.
Queerly Un-American

By Eliza Byard

In the days immediately after September 11, W.H. Auden’s poem “September 1, 1939” was suddenly everywhere. Auden wrote the poem in New York City in the wake of Hitler’s invasion of Poland, and his lines about “blind skyscrapers” and collective grief in the face of great evil seemed eerily prescient. Writing in Slate, Eric McHenry noted that the poem’s ambivalence and self-contradiction and its narrator’s uncertainty and fear made Auden’s work “the poem for our present pain.” Who was the enemy? How could this happen here? What did this horror tell us about ourselves?

Auden’s poem is marked by a deep ambiguity about where to turn for safety and succor in the midst of violence, and reflects a distrust of state authority and disregard for conventional understandings of citizenship that mark several of his major works. One stanza of “September 1, 1939” concludes: “There is no such thing as the state/and no one exists alone/We must love one another or die.” Auden, an expatriate gay Briton, wrote these lines only months after deciding to apply for American citizenship. He had fallen in love with Chester Kallman, an American, and did not want to “risk separation through international crises.” In the midst of the country’s shock and disarray, none of the ubiquitous references to the poem this fall has made mention of the life experience or philosophical convictions of the tragedy’s unofficial poet laureate.

In short order, however, much of the public retreated from the uncomfortable uncertainties raised by the terrorist attack, to firmer and familiar ground far from the ambiguous territory that Auden described. The calls for vengeance and retaliation quickly hit the 

practiced notes that so often accompany a call to arms: misogyny and homophobia deployed to denigrate and vilify the enemy. During the “Concert for New York” at Madison Square Garden, a firefighter who lost his brother in the attack called Osama Bin Laden a “bitch” on a national television broadcast. The Associated Press distributed without comment a picture of a bomb readied for Afghanistan on which an American sailor had written “Hijack this, faggots!” (The picture was withdrawn from circulation after protests by gay rights groups in the US.) In the New York City subway, fliers appeared with a picture of Bin Laden being sodomized by the World Trade Center, captioned “You like skyscrapers, bitch?”

Nor are such impulses limited to individual cris de coeur. Reports and analyses of the crisis and the perpetrators perpetuate the equation of evil impulses and pathological instability with gender and sexual deviance. The New York Times, the Post and other papers wrote at length about how Mohamed Atta’s father felt he was too much of a “girl” as a child, and his efforts to make Atta “more of a man.” Writing in The Nation, John le Carré claimed to have discovered Bin Laden’s Achilles heel: a “homoerotic narcissism,” manifest in “his barely containable male vanity, his appetite for self-drama and his closet passion for the limelight.” While the US has little hope of capturing Bin Laden, le Carré wrote, this trait could doom the fugitive, “seducing him into a final dramatic act of self destruction.”

What’s a queer citizen to do? Whatever one’s feelings and opinions about appropriate responses to terrorism, it is hard to take comfort in, or feel a part of, a national mobilization that taps into and fuels such hateful expressions. The language and mindset that our country uses to steel itself for conflict reminds women and queers that they are not assumed to be part of the national community.

Ironically, the attack’s poet laureate also put words to this piece of “our present pain.” In 1959, in the midst of America’s mobilization for the Cold War, Auden reflected on the choice made by Guy Burgess, a gay Briton and one of the twentieth-century’s most notorious spies. “I know why Burgess went to Moscow,” Auden said; “It wasn’t enough to be a queer and a drunk. He had to revolt still more.” Over forty years later, a moment of crisis has brought out the underlying biases that continue to stand between queer Americans and full participation in the life of the nation.
By Susan Boynton

Teaching a course on women and music, as I did in the Fall, always offers an opportunity to reflect on the ways in which the history of music is constructed, passed on, and constantly revised. The decision to teach a separate course on women and music must often be explained, sometimes even defended against a variety of criticisms. The course renews my own and my students’ curiosity about the place of women in the world of professional music and in the academy, while raising basic questions about qualitative values, connections between life and art, modes of knowledge, methods of inquiry, and our ever-shifting understanding of the past. Does a course on women and music constitute a ghettoization of women composers, who remain very much in the minority and on the edges of most music courses? Can one justify teaching a course on women and music rather than on gender and music—or on the confluence of gender, music, and sexuality? (I have taught courses on all three of these configurations, and I believe they all have their place in the curriculum.) Can we satisfactorily problematize our discipline and our assumptions from the perspective of gender without undermining the very principles embodied in our study of art? How does a feminist perspective affect our approach to analysis and criticism of works of art? These questions are familiar to anyone with an interest in gender and the arts.

In my own discipline, historical musicology, the study of women’s history has led to a significant reevaluation of traditional historiography and its biases. Investigating the role of women in music has, in my own experience, led to a rethinking not only of the standard outline of music history but also of scholarly methods, indeed some of the fundamental tenets of musicology that have created a master narrative of music. Here, I want to address a phenomenon that particularly exposes the boundaries and limitations of my discipline: the scholarly reception of medieval song traditions associated with performance by women.

Until the sixteenth century, most of the surviving secular songs in which the text reflects a woman’s point of view are either anonymous or attributed to male composer-poets. “Woman’s song” is the umbrella term commonly used to encompass the diverse genres of lyric poetry in which the speaker is female. While many of the songs in this corpus exhibit popular or archaic features, most are stylized products of courtly traditions probably at several removes from any individual, historical woman’s voice. In recent years, scholars of medieval literature have come to recognize the dichotomy implicit in the very notion of “woman’s song” as a body of poetry associated with performance by women, but apparently authored predominantly by men. At the same time, however, a small number of extant works of secular song have been attributed to known women of this period. As for all musicians in this period, there is relatively little specific historical information on female singers, though the representation of women in contemporary literature suggests they played a central role in medieval music culture.

Medieval song was first and foremost a performer’s art. Since composition was not entirely distinct from performance until the end of the Middle Ages, the existence of female performers implies the existence of female composers. The creation of medieval song depended on a wide variety of skills and procedures in which performance, composition, and improvisation are not easily separated. Investigating woman’s song in the Middle Ages, therefore, entails broadening the scope of the evidence beyond the musical score, according less importance to the author-function, and placing performance, and thus performers, at the center of the inquiry.

Historians of music have often assumed that medieval women performed music created by others, an assumption that resulted in a pervasive historiographic tendency to classify female musicians as “amateurs” whose craft depends on the art of professional men. In this context, definitions of professionalism tend to conform to a model established by the careers of nineteenth-century male musicians; the enduring link between the idea of professionalism and Western cultural notions of musical creativity has often led historians to deny agency in the creative process to women deemed “amateurs.” The fact that little surviving secular music from before 1500 is attributed to women, however, does not mean that women did not create music. Like other medieval musicians, women performed their own music or adapted the music of others to their own taste and requirements, making the music their own. Musical performances were inherently acts of appropriation. Moreover, the music that has survived in manuscripts represents only a fraction of what was usually transmitted orally. In the case of medieval song, then, a radical separation of performer from composer makes little sense.

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Indeed, if it is true that most people in the United States believe the situation of women in Afghanistan to be one of woeful constriction, there is no unanimity about how to rectify the matter...
Arts absolutely influenced the ways I thought about my own work and its place in the larger discourse on black music. Last semester, I taught a seminar on Gayl Jones, Toni Cade Bambara, and Ntozake Shange—students in that course helped me to streamline and define my thinking about a project on these three authors. I am greatly indebted to them.”

Professor Griffin draws our attention to the close affinity between race studies and feminist studies, maintaining that IRWaG and the Institute for Research in African-American Studies are uniquely suited for collaborations in curriculum, working groups, and programming. “Experiences of race inform gender and experiences of gender inform race,” she states; “Black feminist theorists were among the first to call our attention to this, and I think it has transformed both fields profoundly.” In addition, Professor Griffin enthusiastically supports Columbia’s new Center for Jazz Studies under the direction of Professor Robert O’Meally, which she describes as “one of the most exciting intellectual and cultural enterprises at Columbia.” The Center’s activities focus not only in the study of jazz music, but also “in the study of jazz as a culture, and of the cultures that arise around the music.” And most importantly, she adds, “it provides the context for students to learn about this important art form in a city where this music is all around them. It helps to provide a context for the Columbia community to come together with its neighbors in Harlem and in the city at large in the exploration and enjoyment of this monumental art form.”

...the role and presence of women as musicians, thinkers, and enablers of artistic development has all too often been ignored.

they imagined themselves and the world in which they live in vibrant and creative ways.” Her current project focuses on representations of black women’s singing in mainstream American culture and in black intellectual and artistic myths of origin.

Professor Griffin’s courses, other than the core courses of the English Department, include “Topics in the Black Experience: Black Women Writers,” “African-American Literature,” and the seminar, ”Black Intellectuals.” Her teaching, the intellectual ferment of the classroom, her encounters with students in independent studies and reading groups, all are activities that have been deeply rewarding and of great significance to her own work. “Students inform my thinking in everything,” she states; “My undergraduate students have been as important as my graduate students in this regard. When I was in the middle of writing the Billie Holiday project, I taught a graduate seminar here at Columbia on writings about black music; going through those readings with graduate students from the Departments of English, History, Music, and the School of the Arts absolutely influenced the ways I

Afghan Women, continued from page 1 could not be present, the two groups combined after the film to participate in the discussion, led by Professors Morris and Dabashi, that followed. The audience included not only members of the Columbia community, but also members of the press, the United Nations, and UNICEF, as well as interested people from across the tri-state area, many of whom had made the journey twice in order to take part in the event.

This enormous interest attested to the timeliness of the event and the need, as Professor Morris remarked in her opening statement, for knowledge and lucidity at a time when, in the aftermath of September 11, grief and mourning seemed to have been cut short by the demand for retribution. Decisions, she stated, need to be made with real knowledge, “and a wisdom that knows when it needs to know more. We need to know more about Afghanistan, but we are doing so only after we have commenced war on Afghanistan’s inhabitants.”

Professor Hamid Dabashi, scholar of Persian literature and the question of religious authority in Islam, and Columbia’s resident scholar of Iranian cinema, described the purpose of the evening in his opening statement as “a modest step towards the end of creating a space in which to provide, within our limits, an alternative site for discussing positions, concepts, and ideas” that have been neglected in the official sites of public debate. The newspapers, radio, and television have been dominated by the single perspective of “the official positions of our elected officials who, in our names and supposedly in our interests, have engaged in war.” He stressed a moral responsibility to recall, alongside the tragedy of September 11, the date of October 7, the day of the commencement of the carpet bombing of the major cities of Afghanistan, in an effort to alert attention to innocent civilian victims.
**Music, continued from page 7**

Female musicians in the Middle Ages came from all groups in society, including slaves, rustic women, urban women, professional minstrels, and aristocratic girls and women. While there is little evidence for women's performance of secular poetry in Western Europe before the eleventh century, one particularly suggestive clue is an intriguing Carolingian decree from 789 that forbids nuns to compose or send love songs. Much more extensive information exists regarding women musicians in the Arab world during this period. Female singers were essential to the performance, creation, and transmission of medieval Arab music. Usually among the most prized musicians in a court, they participated in all types of performances, often singing behind a curtain. Women musicians in the Arab world were renowned as composers in the strict sense as well: both slaves and princesses are known to have composed their own songs.

As elsewhere in the Arab world, female musicians were central to the musical traditions of the Arab-dominated Iberian peninsula. Female poets flourished in Al-Andalus, leaving behind them a significant lyric corpus. Singing, dancing, and proficiency in instrumental performance were among the many accomplishments expected of the most valued female slaves, who were given an extensive education before being sold. According to contemporary accounts, innovations in Andalusian musical genres were accomplished with the aid of singing slave girls.

The music performed by such singers included the *muwashshah*, a genre of classical Arabic poetry that includes a refrain in the vernacular, the *kharja*. Many of the *kharjas* are written in a woman's voice, particularly those that are in an early form of Ibero-Romance. Since the first serious attempts at deciphering the Ibero-Romance *kharjas* in the 1940s, philologists have sometimes interpreted the *kharjas* in a woman's voice as reflecting, at some remove, traditions of popular woman's song. However, as constitutive parts of classical Arabic poems, the *kharjas* are more a product of literary artifice than an authentic folk tradition. A similar statement could be made about another Iberian lyric genre, the Galician-Portuguese *cántigas de amigo*. Many of these songs are written in a woman's voice, and yet they constitute a male-authored courtly tradition in a popularizing vein.

In northern Europe, particularly in what is now northern France, we find the same coexistence of attested, historical female performers, with a profusion of anonymous songs in a woman's voice (known collectively as the *chansons de femme*). A new anthology, *Songs of the Women Trouvères* (Yale University Press, 2001), unites attributed and anonymous northern French songs in a woman's voice, thereby challenging the long-held assumption that the anonymous songs are all male-authored, and that no significant group of women poets flourished in northern France.

In some of the cultures in which women were most active as performers and composers, then, little of their contribution is preserved in writing or explicitly attributed to them. In some cases women's musical and poetic activities are attested but their works are not preserved. In other cases we have anonymous songs that could have been created by women. For most of the surviving songs that are attributed to female poet-composers, only the text survives and not the melody. The loss of most of the melodies of these songs is not surprising, since a vast amount of music was transmitted orally during the Middle Ages. The tendency of the written record to privilege the texts of medieval songs over their melodies has, however, had regrettable consequences for the historiography of music. Since scholars tend to base the broad narrative of music history more on extant musical scores than on other kinds of evidence, the contribution of female musicians in the Middle Ages is all but absent from standard textbooks and histories. Archival studies have become more important as a basis for writing the history of music, but the documentary sources on medieval women as musicians are not plentiful enough to facilitate their incorporation, in the absence of extant attested works, into the master narrative.

The Provencal *trobairitz* of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries constitute a case in point. The legacy of these poets, for all its richness, exemplifies the difficulties inherent in discussing the musical aspects of medieval woman's song. Of the entire corpus of Occitan songs attributed to female poets, or anonymous poems written in a woman's voice, only one melody survives, that of "A chantar" by the Contessa de Dia. In recent years this melody has become more familiar to music historians, in part because of its inclusion in the third edition (1996) of a canonical collection for the study of music history, the *Norton Anthology of Western Music*. Adding a *trobairitz* to the *Norton Anthology* is certainly a welcome gesture but also one that perpetuates what has been called the "add-women-and-stir" approach, without reassessing the very paradigms that have tended to exclude women from the history of medieval music. By including this single song, the editors of the anthology imply that it alone is important—because its melody is transmitted in writing. Moreover,
women played a central role, despite their limited representation as "authors" in the written record that has come down to us today. By turning to the social context of medieval musicians and their performances, we may better understand the musical dimensions of these traditions while bracketing the problematic questions of authorship and attribution that play such a dominant role in many discussions of woman's song.

The Norton Anthology provides only the first strophe of the lengthy text, followed by a brief commentary that implicitly enjoins the user of the anthology to contemplate only the musical structure of the song. The text is a notoriously rancorous tirade, often interpreted as a subversion of, and challenge to the conventions of courtly love. At the center of many a troubadour song, such as the work immediately preceding it in the Norton Anthology, Bernart de Ventadorn’s famous "Can vei la lauzeta mover" ("When I see the lark moving") is the poet’s rejection by his lady, her cruelty, and the lurking specter of female betrayal. The Contessa turns the tables, confronting her addressee with his rejection and betrayal of her. Occupying the privileged position of the abused lover, she exposes the artificiality in the image of the remote, aloof lady cultivated by the troubadours. While the Contessa’s poem positively invites comparison with Bernart’s, the Norton Anthology offers none. Indeed, any substantive comparison with Bernart’s song would entail providing the remainder of the text of "A chantar" in translation. The excerpting of "A chantar" in the Norton Anthology exemplifies the reception of the troubairitz in music history; music historians have only recently begun to take notice of these poets, even though they have occupied scholars of the Romance languages since the 1970s. By neglecting an important part of the Occitan lyric corpus because it lacks extant melodies, scholars reinscribe the boundaries of music history around the notion of the work and the author, at the cost of excluding a vibrant part of medieval music culture.

An approach to medieval woman's song grounded in cultural context, moving away from a primary focus on extant written musical works, has the advantage of treating the lyric as a predominantly oral art in which

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**The Scholar and the Feminist XXVII**

**PUBLIC SENTIMENTS:**

**TRAUMA, MEMORY, HISTORY, ACTION**

*Featuring Anna Deavere Smith*

**Saturday, 16 February**

Registration begins at 9:00 AM in Barnard Hall Lobby

For registration, please contact:

Elizabeth Budnitz (ebudnitz@barnard.edu) or call 212-654-2067

When, early last year, we began to conceptualize the twenty-seventh annual The Scholar and the Feminist Conference, we had no idea how tragically relevant the topic would be. Public Sentiments: Trauma, Memory, History, Action will continue the Center’s ongoing discussion of social justice movements by considering how emotions, so vital to the formation of our communities, help define and determine the course of these struggles.

*Trauma, Memory, History, Action* will explore such historical and national traumas as the Holocaust, American slavery, the AIDS pandemic, and military dictatorship in South America. By examining public emotional responses to such ordeals, and the efficacy of the activist movements sparked by those emotions, we will work toward an understanding of the various processes by which the experience of community injury is translated into public expression and action. Joining us will be Chilean activist Nieves Ayress; Ann Cvetkovich, Associate Professor of English at the University of Texas at Austin; Saidiya Hartman, Associate Professor of English at the University of California at Berkeley; and Marianna Hirsch, Professor of French at Dartmouth College.

In the plenary session, “Performing Affect,” we will welcome Ann Pellegrini, Associate Professor of Drama at the University of California at Irvine, author of *Performance Anxieties: Staging Race, Staging Psychoanalysis,* and co-author with Janet R. Jakobsen of *Love the Sin: Sexual Regulation and the Limits of Religious Tolerance* (forthcoming NYU Press); and playwright Anna Deavere Smith, Ann O’Day Maples Professor of the Arts at Stanford University and author of *Twilight Los Angeles* (Obie Award-winner and Tony Award nominee) and *Fires in the Mirror* (Obie Award-winner and runner-up for the 1993 Pulitzer Prize). They will discuss how art, performance and activism serve as records of and responses to trauma.
Afghan Women, continued from page 9 whether in New York City, Washington DC, Pennsylvania, or in Qandehar, Herat, Kabul, Mazar Sharif, or Jalalabad.

Qandehar is the latest film of Mohsen Makhmalbaf, a major Iranian film maker best known for such films as Gabbeh, Salam Cinema, and The Cyclist, the latter being a film about the plight of Afghan refugees in Iran. Since its original screening in Cannes in May 2001, Qandehar has assumed a "prophetic significance" not estimated during the time of its making. Professor Dabashi read a statement written by Makhmalbaf for the occasion of the Columbia screening in which he states: “During the last decade my cinema has aimed at establishing a cultural conversation in the hopes and aspirations of my homeland and the American people. In my last film, Qandehar, I have sought to address the predicament of more than 20 million Afghans who are perishing from disease, hunger, and an absence of the most basic human rights. I was shocked and deeply saddened by the terrible events of September 11 in the US. I hope that through Qandehar, Americans can see in the suffering of the Afghan people a mirror image of their own tragic loss, and reach out and help their fellow humans. Further violence can only lead to more bloodshed and suffering of innocent people. I hope that by this film, Americans and Afghans may be brought together in the simple decency of their common humanity.”

Earlier in October, Makhmalbaf was awarded the Federico Fellini Award on behalf of UNESCO in Paris. Presenting the award was Goodwill Ambassador and Artist for Peace Marissa Berenson whose sister, Berry Berenson Perkins, actress and accomplished photographer, had perished on board Flight 11 in the September 11 tragedy. Ms. Berenson, a member of the panel, appealed in her opening remarks to “a deeper understanding of the repression, suffocation, and horror under which the people of Afghanistan are living.”

Professor Margaret Mills, also a panel member, has written numerous works on the rhetorics and politics of oral narrative in Afghanistan. Her work chronicles and focuses on how people’s stories and narratives reflect their understanding of the relation between meaning and hope. Professor Mills spoke in her introductory remarks on the subject of education in Afghanistan, of the tremendous passion she had encountered among Afghans to improve their lot through education, and of the dire consequences of the removal of women from the teaching and the medical professions.

“I have always escaped from the jails which have imprisoned Afghan women. But now, I am enslaved in all of them. Just for you, my sister.”

The story of the coming into being of Qandehar is intimately bound up with the story of the star of the film, Nelofer Pazira, a young Afghan woman who grew up in Kabul, moved to Pakistan as a refugee in 1989 when Afghanistan was under Russian occupation, and now lives in Ottawa where she is a student of journalism and anthropology. During her years in exile, Ms. Pazira had maintained correspondence with a childhood friend in Afghanistan who, after the Taliban takeover in 1996, wrote increasingly of her hopelessness in a suffocating life which she no longer felt was worth living. In April 1998, while making a documentary film about Afghan refugees in Iran, Ms. Pazira visited Makhmalbaf—of whose sympathy for Afghan refugees she was aware—and proposed that they join forces in making a documentary in Taliban Afghanistan, ostensibly as a way to reach her friend and to dissuade her from attempting suicide. At the time, Makhmalbaf deferred, but two years later contacted Pazira in Canada, agreeing to make a fictional film about her journey to Afghanistan.

The childhood friend in Qandehar—transformed in the film to the protagonist’s sister—and the desire to find her before her announced suicide on the day of the solar eclipse became the narrative and symbolic leitmotifs of the film. They are crystallized in the words with which the film both begins and ends: “I have always escaped from the jails which have imprisoned Afghan women. But now, I am enslaved in all of them. Just for you, my sister.” Qandehar was made with a cast of nonprofessional actors, and was filmed over a six-month period in Afghanistan and on the Iran-Afghan border. Pazira spoke of the difficult conditions of filming, the overwhelming harshness of people’s lives even before the advent of the present war, and the constant necessity to stop filming in order to provide transportation to hospitals, and to otherwise assist people the film crew met along the way.

Though the audiences of the first and second evenings differed greatly as to their opinions and political and ideological positions, certain important themes and questions did recur. One such question concerned the extent of the humanitarian crisis, the possibility and cost of succoring the population at risk, and the involvement and activities of international organizations. Professor Mills informed us that last spring, the UN food program had estimated a need of about $160 million in order to help the 1.5 million Afghans who are perishing from disease, hunger, and an absence of the most basic human rights. Since its original screening in Cannes in May 2001, Qandehar has assumed a "prophetic significance" not estimated during the time of its making. Professor Dabashi read a statement written by Makhmalbaf for the occasion of the Columbia screening in which he states: “During the last decade my cinema has aimed at establishing a cultural conversation in the hopes and aspirations of my homeland and the American people. In my last film, Qandehar, I have sought to address the predicament of more than 20 million Afghans who are perishing from disease, hunger, and an absence of the most basic human rights. I was shocked and deeply saddened by the terrible events of September 11 in the US. I hope that through Qandehar, Americans can see in the suffering of the Afghan people a mirror image of their own tragic loss, and reach out and help their fellow humans. Further violence can only lead to more bloodshed and suffering of innocent people. I hope that by this film, Americans and Afghans may be brought together in the simple decency of their common humanity.”

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million people then considered to be at risk. They had commitments for about $40 million. The first 50 cruise missiles that were dispatched on the first day of the war cost $50 million. "We are major donors of aid," Professor Mills stated, "but even if one accepts the strategic parameters that have been explained to us by our government, the bombing will have disastrous effects on noncombatants even if we don't hit them, and given the rate of displacement since the bombing began, at least six or seven million people are at risk of death by starvation." Professor Morris drew our attention to the efforts of organizations such as UNICEF and Medecins Sans Frontieres in getting aid and medical supplies to border refugee camps. Prosthetics, in particular, are much needed for the many Afghans who are mutilated by the 10 million unexploded mines that remain from the Soviet period alone. But many people had questions about the nature of aid organizations, and the extent to which they transmit monies to needy people. Speaking about UNESCO, for which organization she has been Ambassador for the past eight years, Ms. Berenson stressed the nonpolitical identity of the organization, and its activities in 194 countries "working for education, for women's causes, for children who are victims of war, drugs, AIDS, sickness and starvation, and striving towards the elimination of hunger, misery, and poverty that are at the root of all the problems of the world." Recently, Ms. Berenson started a UNESCO fund in memory of her sister, Berry Berenson Perkins, to help needy children across the world.

There were numerous questions about the status of women in Afghanistan; about issues of education and access to professional life; about hope for the role of women in any future nation-building, as well as the cultural roots of misogyny and structural violence against women. Ms. Pazira underscored the deeply rooted cultural issues that stood in the way of ameliorating the lot of women in Afghanistan. She noted that the constitution of 1964 did in fact give Afghan women the right to vote, but at the time, only 5% of women took advantage of that right; and today, perhaps no more than 10% of the women in the country would understand the power to vote if it were given to them. Indeed, violence and the subservience of women are culturally normative in a country in which 85% of the population live in rural areas, and according to tribal customs. Pazira spoke of her own experience under the "burka" while filming in Afghanistan, stating that though at first she found it suffocating, her relation to it later changed. "I felt safe underneath it, and I began to understand the world of these women who cannot resist because they have lost their self-confidence. Within an unsafe environment, the cover of the burka gives a false sense of security that one is unwilling to give up."

Professor Mills was in Herat in 1994-95, looking into school reconstruction at a time when many refugees were returning home from Iran and from Pakistan. In the early 1970s, when she first traveled to Afghanistan, female literacy had been in the single digits, while male literacy was at about 20-30%. In 1994, about one in ten school children were girls, and the teachers were primarily women trained in teachers colleges during the Soviet period. Women also taught adult literacy courses for men; and small groups of women would meet in makeshift classrooms in their homes. "There was a great passion for education—though not necessarily for income generation. When I asked Afghan men and women why they were pursuing literacy, they had two responses: one was that they wanted to be able to pray properly, and the other was that it was not right for parents to be more ignorant than their children. People were desperate to get their children into schools, and the shutting down of the education system for women under the Taliban was a very artificial imposition on the aspirations of Afghans that I knew. It was not seen as a necessary move to reverse the effects of colonization."

The question arose as to whether any among the different clans and tribes in Afghanistan were more tolerant towards women, and what a new government composed of former Taliban leaders and members of the Northern Alliance would mean to women in Afghanistan. Professor Dabashi replied that though none of the existing political groups has any political standard for women, their plight has never been worse than under the Taliban who have categorically denied women access to public education. But the underlying problems pertain primarily to more global and deeply rooted cultural, political, and economic issues, and especially to ethnic rivalries. One audience member remarked that the problem of Afghanistan was a human, and not just a women's issue insofar as everyone, and not just women, suffered under Taliban rule. Professor Dabashi responded that though unquestionably there is truth in this statement, "when we consider the global issues of justice and democracy, the question of women and the relations of power and gender ought to be integrated from the very beginning into any political discourse of reform. It is a mistake to forestall women's issues until such time as the mechanism for democracy is already in place."

Professor Morris added, however, that women do encounter particular problems simply by virtue of their being women. She pointed to how very small the possibilities were for women who, aside from being denied civil rights or education, are denied even gynecological care or proper medical attention. She spoke of the
“When we consider the global issues of justice and democracy, it is a mistake to forestall women's issues until such time as the mechanism for democracy is already in place.”

arms and join the fighting forces. Ms. Paziza expounded on the effects of the destruction, over the course of the past twenty years of war, on the economic infrastructure of the country. “People are fighting because they have become professional fighters, and they go to religious schools to feed themselves, and there they get brainwashed because they want to survive. Some of this comes out in the film. You come to hate them, but then you come to understand their plight. In Kabul, children were collecting and selling bones, because that was a source of revenue. Because of circumstances, people have been made into beings that they otherwise would not have been.”

One audience member inquired whether the roots of Afghan misogyny, which has such serious demographic effects as to be self-defeating and unsustainable over the long term, lay precisely in the fact that so many male children, raised in the Taliban orphanages and camps in Afghanistan and Peshawar, had in effect grown up without any female presence in their lives. The panel agreed, however, that the orphanages, though they may have aggravated the problem, were not the cause. There are misogynistic aspects in every culture, including Western cultures, but as Professor Morris pointed out, the more pertinent questions to ask in this regard would be: “What allows these misogynist values that are already present to become the grounds for a militarized and militant organization?”

A large group of questions centered around the historical and political background of the current situation in Afghanistan, including the actions of the former USSR, Britain, and the US as well as Pakistan, Iran, and Saudi Arabia in the region. Professor Dabashi explained that the formation of the state of Afghanistan in the 19th century was itself a colonial decision to safeguard the western border of the Indian subcontinent. Since then, various ethnic minorities have been intermittently supported by Russian, French, or British colonial powers. During the Reagan administration and the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan, resistances were created from among the grassroots tribes and factions against the Soviet occupiers, resulting in a massive influx of refugees into Peshawar in Pakistan. “Taliban means 'seminarian,'” he explained, “and it was from the Taliban schools or 'madrasas' that the seeds of resistance were organized with massive CIA support, so that political forces in Afghanistan interlaced with resistance movements against the Soviet Union.” At this time, there was also an influx of Wahabism, an active militant branch of Sunnism, and Saudi Wahabis poured millions of dollars into Afghanistan and Central Asia. “The origin of Al Quaida and Osama Bin Laden is precisely the influx of Wahabism into Soviet-occupied Afghanistan, and occurred at a time when militant Sunnism was compatible with American political interests.” After the withdrawal of the Soviets, the war in Afghanistan continued as a civil war, fueled by the proxy ideological war that was being waged across central Asia between the Saudi- and Pakistani-supported Wahabism of the Taliban, and the groups supported by the militant Shiism of Iran. He noted that in the past twenty years, 6 million Afghans have fled the country as refugees; 2 million have been killed, and a population of 20 million remain inside Afghanistan. Such information came as news to many people in the audience, and this fact led some to ask about the state of our own media and the knowledge that it disseminates.

A key issue of the discussion concerned the accessibility of information and the quality of media coverage of the war, a concern made more piquant now that images and reports are subject to government approval. The panel emphasized the importance of exploring alternative sites of information including short-wave radio, internet video footage, and also foreign language newspapers available on the internet. Some even advocated creating communal neighborhood sites of alternative public debate and discussion. “That it comes to us as a simple report,” Professor Morris stated, “that the government will screen all images and articles of the press is something that should give us all pause for thought.” She related the events of the 1992 democratic uprising in Bangkok that was suppressed by the military junta. Within 24 hours of the May crackdown, the military government directed all newspapers to submit all news coverage of events to an overnight committee for censorship. In an act of great courage, some
Thai newspapers responded by publishing their newspapers with blank pages so that everyone knew that something was being withheld. Professor Dabashi spoke of the great tradition of responsible journalism in the US that had somehow been lost, and enjoined people not to take the rhetorics of journalism at face value. As an example, he cited President Reagan who, during the Afghan war with the Soviet Union, presented the representatives of the Taliban to the press as “the moral equivalents of our founding fathers.” “It is these same fighters,” Dabashi continued, “who have now been mutated in the political rhetoric to terrorists; and the rhetorical language sets the parameters that would seem to justify policies of exacting revenge and punishment and war.”

After this followed what was probably the most urgent group of questions in the discussion: What alternatives are there to war, given that response was imperative in the aftermath of September 11, and what can we do to start things off on a correct footing? Professor Mills’ response to this question was eloquent. Referring to the panel she said: “We may not all agree with one another, but one thing we do agree on: It is pragmatically counterproductive to engage in a bombing campaign of Afghanistan, because we have been there and feel we know something about the people who live there. I think there is a domestic issue here that Americans are demanding action. We have a task before us that is extremely difficult to make ourselves and the rest of our population understand, and that is the difference between revenge and effective intervention. The solution is not going to be a winter’s bombing. Those who think they have grievances with us have to be taken seriously—we may not see them as grievances, but they do, and that set of problems goes back at least 150 years. So the question is not how shall we fix it, but how can we start to take the anger out; how can we start establishing different bases for interaction, besides feelings of mortal grievance and lethal vengeance? That is going to take years, and it is going to take a very serious turnaround in American mentality which is extremely inward-looking and extremely isolationist. We have to find a way of turning around the polarization that is going on in this country, and it is going to be a long job.”

An audience member related having been present at a press briefing in which the presence of an Al Quaida camp of one thousand combatants had been reported on the Thai-Malaysian border and

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asked: “How do you explain to the average American that a political military response to this is not the only way?” Professor Morris responded: “The Thai state has ample means to prosecute those people who are violating international as well as local laws. They have made use of those means, good and bad, in response to acts, real and imagined, throughout history. Nonetheless, the fear of possible inadequacy of policing action lurks in the minds of even those who are most suspicious and critical of military operations. Within Thailand, the seeming failure of the police has often legitimated military action—even against civilians—and then with collaboration between police and military. But it is a vicious cycle; the police give way to the military, and only when wars end does law return.

Yet, we have often asked others to maintain a faith in law as part of an effort to forestall military conflict. And, of course, we have suggested that courts are superior to vengeance everywhere else in the world.” In response to the desire to take meaningful action in the face of the September 11 atrocity, Professor Morris stated: “Following the second world war, the Nuremberg trials provided a theatre in which ‘we’ staged our belief in the virtues of bringing people guilty of atrocity to courts of law where they would be judged by institutions that were capable of so judging. More recently we thought nothing of asking the people of Rwanda to find a means of peace and reconciliation by going to the courts in the Hague, which would prosecute crimes against humanity. We thought nothing of telling people in Sarajevo that, despite all their extraordinary losses, adequate remedy would be found in the courts. We have suffered enormous loss here, but we are running so quickly to demand just that kind of solution that we forbade to everyone else because we believed that that other solution, of an endless cycle of one violent action after another; the entrenchment of poverty, and the continued violation of those who were not party to any of these crimes, was wrong. So we need to ask ourselves why now, we repudiate for ourselves and for the world, the mechanisms of law and justice, and why, now, we invite the furies to rule the world.”

Responding to War

A one-day symposium sponsored by the Institute for Research on Women and Gender at Columbia University, and the Center for Research on Women at Barnard College.

Friday, February 1, 2002
Altschul Auditorium (417 IAB)

Keynote speaker:
Judith Butler

Four months after the United States and its Allies commenced military action in Southwest Asia, many issues remain unresolved, and the long-term effects have yet to be estimated. How can we respond to this war? How shall we know when it is over? What shall be the consequence—for the peoples of the region in which the war is fought, for the status of democracy and of civil rights in the United States, for the news media, for the women in whose name victory has been so loudly celebrated? What effects will the war have on the political economy of the region, and the world? What does feminism and gender studies have to say about war, and this war in particular?

"Responding to War," provides an occasion to examine these questions, and to join in conversations about them with scholars from Columbia University and elsewhere.

Featuring:
Lila Abu-Lughod, Columbia
Catherine Lutz, University of North Carolina
Gayatri Spivak, Columbia
Judith Butler, Berkeley

Free and open to the public.
Advance registration, call (212) 854-3277.
On-Site registration commences at 12:00 pm.
Program commences at 1:00 pm.

Feminist Interventions

Monday, February 4, 2002
Dorothy Ko, Professor of History, Barnard

The Closing of the Archive on Footbinding: China, 1934–1941
8:00 pm, 614 Schermerhorn Hall

Monday, April 8 2002
Karen Van Dyck, Professor of Hellenic Studies, Columbia

Homesickness and Other Stomach Aches
8:00 pm, 614 Schermerhorn Hall

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