In Memoriam: Magda Al-Nowaihi

Anyone who knew Professor Magda Al-Nowaihi feels that Columbia University has been diminished since her death on June 4th of this year. She was a light on campus, a bright and shining presence whose teaching and scholarship managed to combine those rare qualities of brilliance and compassion, rigor and tenderness. The Institute for Research on Women and Gender joins the many other institutions and individuals now mourning the commencement of a year in Magda’s absence, and offers this tribute to her memory.

Professor Al-Nowaihi was a member of the Department of Middle Eastern and Asian Languages and Cultures, where she taught Arabic languages and literature. She came to Columbia in 1995, having received her Ph.D. from Harvard in 1988 with a distinguished dissertation about the work of Andalusian poet, Ibn Khafajah. She had been top of her class at Victoria’s College in Cairo, and graduated from the American University in Cairo with a degree in English literature.

She wrote widely, on women’s autobiographies, on the novel form and the elegy in Arabic, on literature and postcoloniality, on questions of masculine sexuality, and on the pedagogical imperatives that confront a teacher of Arabic. Recently she took up the topic of remembrance, writing about memory and imagination in Edward Al-Kharrat’s Turabuha Za’Faran and about forgetting in Mohamed Berrada’s work, and commencing what now appears to us to be a painfully prescient book on the issue of loss in the Classical Arabic elegy. Nor was she limited to the language of her childhood.

Hamid Dabashi, Chair of MEALAC, recently remarked that, “Professor Al-Nowaihi’s command of Medieval and Modern Arabic literature was simply rare and exemplary among her contemporaries. After the decline of classical Orientalism and the rise of neo-Orientalism, the field of Arabic literature forever lost scholars with a solid command of classical literature. Younger scholars became increasingly attracted to modern literature. Professor Al-Nowaihi was chief among very few scholars who could freely move between classical and modern literature, two drastically different universes of imagination. Very few people could match her simultaneous and ambidextrous command of classical and modern Arabic literature. And this quality was translated into the training of a generation of her students, many of whom are now eagerly sought by major universities here in the United States and elsewhere.”

Knowledge of that sort is usually a product of love. Magda grew up in a

Director’s Column

By Rosalind Morris

As a new academic year begins, we are probably all haunted by the specter of last September. We are perhaps also increasingly conscious that the dates which are now institutionalized as the markers of our transformation were neither the beginning nor the end-point of this momentous period. Throughout last year, the Institute for Research on Women and Gender hosted events, symposia, and public discussions about 9/11 and the consequences of war in Afghanistan. We shall continue those discussions this year, but in a deeper and more probing manner, so that what began as a response to an acute event becomes a means of thinking about the historical condition of the new millennium.

Under the thematic banner of “Empire and Knowledge,” IRWaG shall once again play host to

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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.
Karen Austrian grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and came to Columbia as part of a desire to spend her college years in New York City. She found in Women’s Studies a discipline that would draw on gender to “think critically about a wide range of issues in society, while allowing students to tailor their education to their own interests.” Austrian has worked with women on welfare since her arrival at New York City. This background made her increasingly aware of the sharp discrepancies between the experiences of women on welfare on the one hand, and the political and academic discourse surrounding welfare policies on the other. In her thesis, “Rhetoric vs. Reality: Welfare Policy, Motherhood, and Dominican-American Women” Austrian undertakes a case study of Dominican women on welfare in New York City, in the context of the New York State Welfare Reform Act of 1997, and the city’s welfare-to-work initiative, the Work Experience Program. Closely analyzing the policy and racial implications embedded in the debates that have shaped the program, she problematizes the public privileging of the work-ethic insofar as it “reveals an emphasis not on work, independence, or self-sufficiency, but on marriage.” The first two statements of Title 1 of the Act state that: 1) “Marriage is the foundation of a successful society,” and 2) “Marriage is an essential institution of a successful society which promotes the interests of children.” Thus a woman’s economic security is linked “not to her own self-sufficiency, but to her relationship with her children’s father.” Accordingly, married mothers on welfare are not mandated to work, while the same choice, of electing to stay home and care for their children is not extended to single mothers on welfare, who are indeed expected to work in order to retain their welfare benefits. On the legislative level, the social valorization of care-giving work is withheld from poor single mothers. Moreover, this withholding draws heavily on “racist presuppositions and conceptions of deserving vs. undeserving, and fit vs. unfit regarding work and motherhood.” Further complicating the discourse, Austrian explains, is the conflation, within welfare policy, of a feminist focus on women’s right to work outside the home, and the poor single mother’s obligation to do so. In her field study, Austrian attempts to give voice to the frustrations and needs of the women who are the subjects of these policies.

**Seniors, continued on page 10**

*Senior Projects*

Seven seniors shared the fruits of their year-long research projects on May 7, 2002, at the annual presentation of theses at the Institute for Research for Women and Gender. The two-semester Senior Seminar, headed by Professor Lila Abu-Lughod, Director of Undergraduate Studies, is devoted to conceptualizing, researching, writing, and presenting a major thesis project. Besides the weekly seminar meetings, students have access to a disciplinary advisor specializing in their particular area of focus. This training, an integral part of the Gender and Women’s Studies Program, is the culmination of the major. The seniors were assisted in their research by feminist librarian Sarah Witte, and by writing tutor Zoe Reiter. Recently the graduating class spoke with Feminist News about their research projects and their future plans.

From left to right: Lila Abu-Lughod, Karen Austrian, Ronit Fallek, Betty Lai, Chris Thiemann, Lauren Wynne, Claire Balassi, Zoe Reiter, and Francesca Periconi.
Feminist Interventions: Ko Lecture

In the third installment of the annual lecture series, Feminist Interventions, the IRWaG community welcomed Professor Dorothy Ko (History, Barnard) and attended her lecture entitled "The Closing of the Archive of Footbinding: China, 1934–41." Professor Ko recently joined the Department of History at Barnard, and is author of Teachers of the Inner Chambers: Women and Culture in Seventeenth-Century China, as well as Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet, on which her February 4th lecture was based. Responding to the lecture was Professor Victoria de Grazia (History, Columbia), author of The Culture of Consent: the Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy and How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922–1945, among other books. She is also the editor of the collection, The Sex of Things: Gender and Consumption in Historical Perspective.

Professor Ko began her lecture with questions about the semiotics of the object: How do things circulate? Do they circulate differently than do words, and if so, how does this distinct circulation capture or materialize the traces and memories of a bygone era. She distributed objects among the audience which were mysterious in many ways: a pair of miniature shoes carved in wood with the triangular shape of a bound foot loosely trapped inside... of miniature shoes carved in wood with the triangular shape of a bound foot loosely trapped inside; an object looking like the broken heel of a small shoe; a tiny black leather shoe with a sock-stuffed toe; and many other tokens evoking the vanished cultural world of women in China since the 16th century.

According to Ko, the late 19th and early 20th centuries saw the aura of footbinding wane with the emergence of anti-footbinding societies, vociferous in their condemnation of a cultural practice that, in reshaping female bodies, created what were said to be "worthless females who ruined the physical and financial health of their men." In this hostile climate, a two thousand page archive titled Picking Radishes was compiled by a man of letters named Yao Lingxi (serialized in 1933–34 in the tabloid Heavenly Wind, and later anthologized in six volumes between 1934–41). Yao Lingxi is purported to have collected the truth about every aspect and detail of the practice of footbinding, claiming in so doing, not to promote, but to capture for posterity the concrete presence of a practice "caught in the process of vanishing."

However, this scholarly and self-consciously objective stance of Yao and his collaborators was ironically conflicted, suggests Ko. Although they lived in a climate of forward-driving Chinese nationalism and although they actively promoted "natural feet," their work also entailed a nostalgic, erotic, and phantasmatically invested relation to an irretrievable past. The pose of the connoisseurs as traditional literati—their modes of writing, their self-identification as collectors and aficionados of the remnants of an antique tradition—was the primary subject matter of Professor Ko's lecture. However, she also addressed her thoughts to the manner of production and paradoxical nature of the archive itself, which, in China, needs to be understood as an emphatically modern construction born of treaty port culture and contact with the colonial West.

Picking Radishes (the radish is a reference to deformed feet, and the lower body in general), was compiled following an open nationwide appeal for submissions of memoirs, interviews, surveys, photographs, drawings, and stowed-away shoes from connoisseurs of the bound foot throughout China. The entries range from scholarly and scientific to autobiographical, and from erotic to comical. Though citations from older sources are numerous, many of the articles are new imitations of older material, recycled old fragments, or indeed invention. And despite its compiler’s posturing and claims for Picking Radishes as an exhaustive document containing comprehensive knowledge of footbinding (like a traditional collectanea or encyclopedia), Picking Radishes, in Professor Ko’s reading, is the product of a “backward-looking fetishism.” Insofar as it “exposes women’s bodies for pleasure and commercial gain,” it is fundamentally pornographic in nature.

Posing as ethnographers or historians, the contributors to Picking Radishes mobilized all the techniques of empiricism, from photographs to precise measurements and laborious descriptions. Yet, says Ko, their activities also invented and generated new knowledge. They were not merely recording the traces of a vanishing custom. Thus, in a complex way, “the death of footbinding as a social practice opened the door to the archive and the new kind of knowledge it produced.” Moreover, the textual record incited more claims to knowledge.

Stimulated and informed by the accounts offered in Picking Radishes, enthusiasts soon reported finding objects, sites, and proofs of the veracity of the accounts they had read. Yao capitalized on this word-to-object-to-word generative loop by founding, in 1938, the “Lotus Seeking Club” (the lotus is a euphemism for the bound foot) from whose members he solicited paintings, photographs, sculptures, and articles of clothing...
The Gerritsen Collection: Women’s History Online, 1543–1950 is based on the collection assembled by Dutch physician Aletta Jacobs and her husband C. V. Gerritsen in the early 20th century. This database makes available the contents of 265 journals and nearly five thousand books documenting all aspects of women’s history and experience. The bulk of the collection was published in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and is especially strong in suffrage journals and the anti-suffrage response; the push for political and economic equality; the education of girls; employment studies and professional publications; the physiology and psychology of women; and popular household and marriage manuals. It includes works published in English, German, French, Dutch, Italian, Spanish, and the Scandinavian and Classical languages, and may be searched in a variety of ways, or browsed page-by-page. On LibraryWeb: http://www.columbia.edu/cu/libraries/indexes/gerritsen.html

North American Women’s Letters and Diaries reproduces the published personal writings of 632 women writing between 1700 and 1950. The entries have been carefully indexed to allow full-text keyword searching as well as searching by life event (e.g., courtship, physical illness of child), occupation, race, religion, geographical location, historical event, age at marriage, number of children, etc. On LibraryWeb: http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/efts/asp/NAWLDB/


This year the Library purchased four microfilmed collections of archives and personal papers to support research in the history of African-American women. They are available in the Periodicals and Microforms Reading Room, 401 Butler:

  41 reels and printed guide.
  Call number: Fd 6160.
- Mary McLeod Bethune Papers.
  36 reels and printed guide.
  Call number: Fd 6166
- Papers of Mary Church Terrell.
  34 reels and printed guide.
  Call number: Fd 6498

Call number: Fd 6165.

To schedule a library orientation session for a class, for recommendations on books, journals, or other materials, and for general library support for research or teaching, please contact Sarah Spurgin Witte, Women’s Studies Librarian at 854-5492 or spurgin@columbia.edu.

Center for Research on Women, Barnard College
Virginia C. Gildersleeve Lecture

THE EXTRAORDINARY CHALLENGE OF RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE IN TODAY’S WORLD: BUILDING ON THE SUCCESS OF THE MINE BAN TREATY

A lecture with Nobel Laureate Jody Williams

Thursday, 24 October, 5:30 PM
Julius Held Lecture Hall, 304 Barnard Hall

In recent years, the Center has launched a concerted effort to link feminist struggles to those for racial, economic, social and global justice. We have built invaluable cooperative relationships with a far-reaching network of scholars, activists and artists who contribute to the great work of making our world more just, and the Virginia C. Gildersleeve Lectureship has allowed us to bring to campus such visionaries as South African activist Patricia Mcfadden, legal scholar Lani Guinier, and novelist Edwidge Danticat. On Thursday, 24 October, the Center adds to that distinguished roster by welcoming Jody Williams, coordinator of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines and recipient of the 1997 Nobel Peace Prize.

In her thorough examination of international efforts for disarmament and peace, Ms. Williams will help us theorize feminist responses not only to war, but to more intimate forms of violence: small arms disarmament, police brutality, hate crimes, and domestic violence. Her work has placed her in a prime position to speak to the importance of coalitions as both an effective tool for political action and a model for future international efforts for disarmament and peace. As war and various forms of violence escalate across the world, as our need grows to develop new and more comprehensive vocabularies, as well as revitalized strategies for thinking about and acting against violence, we will more and more rely on those who think and act with the wisdom, determination and creativity of Jody Williams. We hope you’ll join us for this important and timely lecture.
In the final event of this year’s Feminist Interventions series, Professor Karen Van Dyck (Classics, Columbia) presented a lecture titled “Diaspora and the Language Question.” Professor Van Dyck is Director of the Program for Hellenic Studies at Columbia University, and author of Kassandra and the Censors: Greek Poetry since 1967. She has published several translations including The Rehearsal of Misunderstanding: Three Collections of Poetry by Contemporary Greek Women Poets, an annotated translation, among numerous other works. Responding to the talk was Professor Stathis Gourgouris (Comparative Literature, Columbia), author of Dream and Nation: Enlightenment, Colonization, and the Institution of Modern Greek, and a forthcoming book for the Atopia series titled Does Literature Think? Literature as Theory for an Antimythical Era.

Since the invention of the Greek nation in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the Greek language has been the site of profound contestation and deep investment. Central to this contest has been the question of whether the official form of the language should be Demotic—the spoken and phonetically written language of the people, or Katheravousa—the language that, in order to purify spoken Greek from a supposed contamination after 400 years of Turkish rule, reintroduces elements of Ancient Greek orthography and etymology. This debate has constituted what Greeks call a ‘zitima’: a problem, a struggle, a search, and a plea. Professor Van Dyck’s lecture focused on the “particular drama of diglossia” (the state of having two competing forms of language), and the ways in which proponents of Demotic or Katheravousa each frame the language question in terms of national unity and the retrieval of Greece’s ancient past.

In Van Dyck’s reading, the history of the Greek language needs to be understood in terms of the inseparability of the goal of monolingualism from the impact of heteroglossia. It is a history in which the Greek Diaspora was utterly instrumental. The mother tongue, she argued, was produced by its dispersed children. Accordingly, Professor Van Dyck began by detailing some of the best-known elements of the struggle between the partisans of Katheravousa and the Demoticists.

In the 1820s, on the eve of the Greek War of Independence, the poet Dionysius Solomos, who was educated in Venice and Padua, and who served as personal secretary to the Italian national poet, Ugo Foscolo, returned to the Greek island of Zakynthos. There, upon hearing an old man singing folk songs in the street, he is reported to have sworn himself to relearning his mother tongue. Later, he would become Greece’s first national poet to write in Demotic.

During the same period, Adamantios Korais, who was born in Smyrna and schooled in Amsterdam and Montpellier, spelled out in prologues to his translations of Ancient Greek, the mesi odo or middle road that “paved the way for the triumph of Katheravousa as the language of government and education between 1830-1880.” In 1888, the Odessa-born and French-schooled Yannis Psycharasis, who was also the son-in-law of Ernest Renan, France’s foremost theorist of nationalism, published his classic manifesto of Demoticism, My Journey. It was a book of enormous consequence and is generally thought to have precipitated a turn away from Katheravousa, the force of which would soon be felt. Not long afterward, in 1901, nine students lost their lives in a demonstration against the translation of the Bible into Demotic.

In novels such as The Bulgarian Killer (1911), Penelope Daltis taught that Demotic was a language of invention. At issue was the connection between the ancient and the modern worlds. Three decades later, in 1941, Demoticist Kakridis “was thrown out of the academy for doing away with the accents and breathing marks that connected Modern Greek to Ancient etymology.” And the history of the twentieth century would continue to be one of vacillation and disagreement. Between 1967 and 1975, Katheravousa was reinstated as the official language, but in 1991, with Greece’s entry into the European Union, Demotic became the officially recognized language.

Even in this brief sketch, Professor Van Dyck said, “it is clear that the language question in Greece is framed in terms of the nation: a unified language will bring about a unified nation and make possible a greater Greece, more akin to the glory of ancient days.” Ironically, proponents of both sides of the language question, in their efforts to imagine a nation and a language worthy of Greece’s ancient past, made the “same equation between nation and language,” using the same imagery of mother tongue, the language of the people, and alongside it, the same political aim of a greater Greece, and on that basis, of reclaiming the Poli, Constantinople.

However, what such a history leaves out, Professor Van Dyck pointed out, is that these “architects of national language and linguistic nationalism,” these “men and women who fought for monolingualism, whether in the name of Katheravousa or Demotic,” were almost all diasporic Greeks: “irremediable polyglots” for...
whom Greek was a second language, or one of many possible languages.

Korais, the father of Katheravousa, relates national character to a "natural language" which, in his words, is "the language which he suckled with his mother’s milk and which he speaks every day." Yet, his highly Atticized syntax, which inverts the spoken Greek word order, "is the farthest thing from what a child might suckle with a mother’s milk." In his autobiography, Van Dyck points out, Korais tellingly refers to Greek "not as his mother tongue but, in a phrase resonant with diasporic displacement, [as] his step-mother tongue."

Similarly, Psychiari’s Demotic prose, in its frequent literary recourse to other languages, is revealing of his diasporic origins. In all its manifestations, Van Dyck argued, the Greek diaspora had a great impact on the very development of the language question: "As much as being an issue of nation-building and philhellenist enthusiasm for the glory of Ancient Greece, the language question is about the Greek diaspora’s heteroglossia, about constantly being caught between languages and in the act of translation." Diglossia, she states, "is in a way an effect of heteroglossia," and "needs to be seen in the historically and geographically broader terms of a heteroglossic struggle between Greek and other languages."

Van Dyck cited Theo Angelopoulos’s prize-winning film *Eternity and a Day* (Palm d’Or, Cannes, 1998) as an example of a film that emphasizes the role of the diaspora and heteroglossia in the production of culture. The film’s main inter-text, she said, the story of the poet Solomos—depicted in the film as learning Greek by "buying words from a peasant girl" in a deserted millling circle—is offered as a "national allegory of a vindicated Demoticism." Yet Solomos is not portrayed as the father of monolingualism. Rather, his story is narrated by the film’s principal protagonist in the form of a lesson, given to a Northern Epirot boy from Albania whom he had saved from a raid on immigrants on the northern border of Greece: "of how Greek poetry and culture has always been created by foreigners." In effect, the film demonstrates the language question as that which "exemplifies Greece’s position at the crossroads of East and West, North and South, where the mother tongue is always partially foreign."

However, Van Dyck argued that the film’s production ultimately undermines the heteroglossic and regional differences underscored by the film’s play of foreign languages, dialects, languages, and accents. With a cast of Greek and non-Greek actors who appear to communicate effortlessly in Greek, it works "by making everything seem translatable." The "smooth Euro-patina of the production," she stated, leaves the film with a sense of the "immateriality of its references to heteroglossia" and instead of a "model of translation as linguistic incommensurability," it gives way to multiculturalism and a "model of linguistic transparency."

By contrast, Yannis Psychiari’s classic manifesto of Demoticism, *My Journey*, is an example that "registers the complexity of heteroglossia as a problem of representation." In Van Dyck’s interpretation, its language "actually does the work of defamiliarization" and thereby shows the constructed nature of both Katheravousa and Demotic. Framed in terms of the library and the reading experience, and emphasizing the Greek language as the only European language with a non-roman alphabet, it "offers transliteration as a representational model for grappling with Greece’s exceptionalism." The heart of Psychiari’s argument is to be found in the section titled "Cabinet de lecture" (The Reading Room) in which he presents Katheravousa as "some weird transliteration" showing that, despite all its Ancient Greek etymological and orthographic pretensions, Katheravousa is actually closer to European languages than to Ancient Greek.

The scene described in "Cabinet de lecture" is that of a diasporic Greek in Constantinople who has found a reading room in which he has access to Greek newspapers. He has trouble reading the papers, and wonders whether this is because his Greek is flawed, or because the Greek of the newspaper is too much like French. “Everything came through in French,” he writes, “the type was Greek but the words were French, the meaning French . . . It was impossible, even when I understood, not to remember my French; like a ghost, like a stubborn daemon the French hunted me down . . . without wanting it, without doing it on purpose, my eyes brought out from under the Greek letters, French phrasing, foreign language!” The passage goes on in a hallucinatory scene to describe how the French alphabet seeps through between each Greek letter: “In the same line I kept seeing two typographical characters and always the French outdid the Greek,” he writes. “What becomes clear,” Van Dyck explained, “is that for Psychiari, Katheravousa, like a transliteration of French and German, doesn’t rework the material, but simply mimics its syntax in another alphabet.”

Ultimately, it is the Demotic language, with its phonetic system of writing “associated with the voice, and mother’s milk” that wins out over the orthographic system of Katheravousa. "The journey from France to Constantinople to Athens," she concludes, "and from French to Katheravousa to Demotic, is never a one way street; reading Greek, either Greek, is always a foreign affair. The story of the Greek language question asks us to think about diaspora and immigration not so much in terms of speed, transparency and perfect translations, but in terms of digression, impasse, and awkward transliterations.”

In his response, Professor Gourgouris drew attention to the paradoxical aspect of the language question that Professor Van Dyck had invited us to consider: namely, that of viewing language, which is typically associated with the “primary and primal dimensions of identity formation, from a decentered, dispersive, or diasporic standpoint.” The language question, he stated, is often “the metaphorical ground for the struggle over the significiation of what

Van Dyck, continued on page 13
Responding to War Symposium

When Rosalind Morris, Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, decided to organize the symposium, “Responding to War,” she knew that it would attract attention. The Institute’s earlier endeavors to stimulate conversation about the fallout of 9/11 had generated enormous enthusiasm and huge audiences, a fact that reflected the fear and state of uncertainty that afflicted New Yorkers in the autumn. When IRWaG had screened the Mohsen Makhmalbaf film Kandahar as part of its event, “Women and War in Afghanistan,” more than 1,200 people showed up—all eager to learn more and to speak with others who shared that desire.

Even so, the purpose of organizing a day-long symposium on the topic of the war was distinct and it wasn’t clear that audiences would still have the energy or the predilection to come out for several hours of discussion. Says Morris, “We needed to deepen our analysis, and to address the fact of the war’s likely continuation. Unlike our earlier events, and especially the film screening, this one was intended to permit patient and complex dialogue. Our desperation and sense of eventfulness had transformed itself and we were conscious of a need to explore the historical and longer-term contexts and possible implications of a new state of affairs.

The symposium, which was held at Aultschul Auditorium and which attracted several hundred individuals, many of whom stayed for the full six hours of lectures and public debate, came from all walks of life in New York City. Many were Columbia students and faculty, but people also came from as far away as New Jersey and Vermont. “We even had people drive from Ohio and Washington, D.C.,” remarks Morris with a sense of amazement. That dedication bespoke the seriousness of people’s desire to speak in terms that are not dictated entirely by the structure of the sound bite. Our visitors needed something that could not be found on the airwaves or on CNN, she adds.

In her introductory remarks, Professor Morris noted how difficult it is to sustain awareness about a war that is conducted in a remote region. “It is an odd thing,” she says upon reflection, “that although a war has profound consequences locally, it can become something akin to background noise. People are killed, of course, and bodies return home—although we rarely have a sense of the reality of other people’s deaths. But more than this, the political universe changes; policies change, forms of political discourse change, and the moral economy of a nation changes during war. Huge amounts of money are redirected from one domain to another, and the media reorients itself in both form and content because war is taken for granted as the reality on which the media have increasingly come to report.” Morris expresses deep concern about the prospect that war will become a part of our new natural world. “Awareness has become a labor. We have to be vigilant to be aware of those changes or to participate in them, as advocates or opponents.” It is for this reason, that IRWaG organized this symposium.

Morris is quick to praise the speakers for their generosity and their willingness to undertake this task without asking for remuneration or special consideration. “We had an extraordinary line-up of speakers, who all volunteered their time and labor simply because they believed in the virtue of real discussion. I can’t possibly express my gratitude enough.”

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod opened the event with a lecture entitled “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” In the aftermath of the events of 9/11 and the American war in Afghanistan, she observed, public response to the war has been dominated by a cultural mode of explanation focusing on the plight of women in Afghanistan. Her lecture addressed the reasons for mobilizing cultural icons in the popular coverage of the war, and asked how progressive feminism contends with the problem of otherness and difference.

According to Professor Abu-Lughod, the media has framed the war in a cultural mode, questioning such general issues as the meaning of Ramadan or the attitudes of Muslim women toward sex and politics. In so doing, it has avoided more pressing and relevant political issues pertaining to the history of American support for conservative groups funded to undermine the former Soviet Union, many of which now appear as enemies of the American state. In lieu of the history of US foreign policy toward the Middle East, and instead of tracing the historical development of repressive regimes in the region, “it is female symbols that are mobilized in this war against terrorism,” as regional and cultural explanations “artificially divide the world into separate spheres of Muslims and the West.”

This state of affairs was particularly evident in Laura Bush’s radio address of November 17, in which the “very separate causes of Afghan women’s continuing malnutrition, poverty, and ill health were conflated with their more recent exclusion under the Taliban from employment and schooling.”

reinforcing the divide between, in Laura Bush’s words, “civilized people throughout the world” and the Taliban “terrorists.” Equating the fight against terror with the fight for the rights of women, Laura Bush’s speech enlisted women to justify the American bombing and intervention in Afghanistan.

The cultural mode of explanation adopted by the American media, Professor Abu-Lughod pointed out, has haunting resonances with what Gayatri Spivak has called the “colonial use of the Woman Question.” This structure is materialized in the image of “white men saving brown women from brown men,” which helped to justify British colonialism in India. It was repeated by “colonial feminism” in turn-of-the-century Egypt, which, while selectively focusing on the plight of Egyptian women, tied the Westernization of the Egyptian nation to the question of Muslim women’s rights.

Colonial feminism, in turn, materialized itself in the popular coverage of the war in Afghanistan. When Rosalind Morris, Director of the Institute for Research on Women and Gender, decided to organize the symposium, “Responding to War,” she knew that it would attract attention. The Institute’s earlier endeavors to stimulate conversation about the fallout of 9/11 had generated enormous enthusiasm and huge audiences, a fact that reflected the fear and state of uncertainty that afflicted New Yorkers in the autumn. When IRWaG had screened the Mohsen Makhmalbaf film Kandahar as part of its event, “Women and War in Afghanistan,” more than 1,200 people showed up—all eager to learn more and to speak with others who shared that desire.

Even so, the purpose of organizing a day-long symposium on the topic of the war was distinct and it wasn’t clear that audiences would still have the energy or the predilection to come out for several hours of discussion. Says Morris, “We needed to deepen our analysis, and to address the fact of the war’s likely continuation. Unlike our earlier events, and especially the film screening, this one was intended to permit patient and complex dialogue. Our desperation and sense of eventfulness had transformed itself and we were conscious of a need to explore the historical and longer-term contexts and possible implications of a new state of affairs.

The symposium, which was held at Aultschul Auditorium and which attracted several hundred individuals, many of whom stayed for the full six hours of lectures and public debate, came from all walks of life in New York City. Many were Columbia students and faculty, but people also came from as far away as New Jersey and Vermont. “We even had people drive from Ohio and Washington, D.C.,” remarks Morris with a sense of amazement. That dedication bespoke the seriousness of people’s desire to speak in terms that are not dictated entirely by the structure of the sound bite. Our visitors needed something that could not be found on the airwaves or on CNN, she adds.

In her introductory remarks, Professor Morris noted how difficult it is to sustain awareness about a war that is conducted in a remote region. “It is an odd thing,” she says upon reflection, “that although a war has profound consequences locally, it can become something akin to background noise. People are killed, of course, and bodies return home—although we rarely have a sense of the reality of other people’s deaths. But more than this, the political universe changes; policies change, forms of political discourse change, and the moral economy of a nation changes during war. Huge amounts of money are redirected from one domain to another, and the media reorients itself in both form and content because war is taken for granted as the reality on which the media have now merely to report.” Morris expresses deep concern about the prospect that war will become a part of our new natural world. “Awareness has become a labor. We have to be vigilant to be aware of those changes or to participate in them, as advocates or opponents.” It is for this reason, that IRWaG organized this symposium.

Morris is quick to praise the speakers for their generosity and their willingness to undertake this task without asking for remuneration or special consideration. “We had an extraordinary line-up of speakers, who all volunteered their time and labor simply because they believed in the virtue of real discussion. I can’t possibly express my gratitude enough.”

Professor Lila Abu-Lughod opened the event with a lecture entitled “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving?” In the aftermath of the events of 9/11 and the American war in Afghanistan, she observed, public response to the war has been dominated by a cultural mode of explanation focusing on the plight of women in Afghanistan. Her lecture addressed the reasons for mobilizing cultural icons in the popular coverage of the war, and asked how progressive feminism contends with the problem of otherness and difference.

According to Professor Abu-Lughod, the media has framed the war in a cultural mode, questioning such general issues as the meaning of Ramadan or the attitudes of Muslim women toward sex and politics. In so doing, it has avoided more pressing and relevant political issues pertaining to the history of American support for conservative groups funded to undermine the former Soviet Union, many of which now appear as enemies of the American state. In lieu of the history of US foreign policy toward the Middle East, and instead of tracing the historical development of repressive regimes in the region, “it is female symbols that are mobilized in this war against terrorism,” as regional and cultural explanations “artificially divide the world into separate spheres of Muslims and the West.”

This state of affairs was particularly evident in Laura Bush’s radio address of November 17, in which the “very separate causes of Afghan women’s continuing malnutrition, poverty, and ill health were conflated with their more recent exclusion under the Taliban from employment and schooling.”

reinforcing the divide between, in Laura Bush’s words, “civilized people throughout the world” and the Taliban “terrorists.” Equating the fight against terror with the fight for the rights of women, Laura Bush’s speech enlisted women to justify the American bombing and intervention in Afghanistan.

The cultural mode of explanation adopted by the American media, Professor Abu-Lughod pointed out, has haunting resonances with what Gayatri Spivak has called the “colonial use of the Woman Question.” This structure is materialized in the image of “white men saving brown women from brown men,” which helped to justify British colonialism in India. It was repeated by “colonial feminism” in turn-of-the-century Egypt, which, while selectively focusing on the plight of Egyptian women, tied the Westernization of the Egyptian nation to the question of Muslim women’s rights.
women under the veil, nonetheless did not support women’s education. Similarly, in French Algeria, local women were enlisted to the cause of colonialism in a carefully choreographed ceremony in which a group of Algerian women were solemnly unveiled by French women. Across the world, the liberation of women was made the excuse, the rationale and the moral cause of colonial domination. But Professor Abu-Lughod cautioned audience members to consider the resonances between these examples of the “colonial appropriation of women’s voices” by a rhetoric of liberation and current media discourse—which similarly uses cultural differences as the grounds for domination. In the present moment, it is the question of veiling that performs this work. “We must be careful,” she urged, “not to reduce the attitudes and aspirations of local women to a single article of clothing.”

Veiling in Muslim countries, she explained, maintains a symbolic separation between men’s and women’s spheres, and can signify membership in a particular moral community. It is a voluntary act in the great majority of instances. Many women in Muslim countries look to Iran, where they see women making significant gains within an Islamic framework, as part of an Islamic feminist movement. Though an Islamic feminism may seem an oxymoron to feminists in the West, it is crucial that progressive feminism contend with the problem of otherness and difference. “It is strategically dangerous,” she argued, “to accept [a] cultural opposition between Islam and the West, between fundamentalism and feminism.” Many in the Muslim world refuse the divide and, rejecting the notion that to be feminist means to be Western, seek a viable third way. She concluded with an impassioned plea, calling for a language of alliance and support, one that is respectful of local traditions and difference. We need, she suggested, to resist “looking over those poor benighted people elsewhere” from an outside position. We need also to understand the aspirations of Muslim women in a language that does not echo the missionary zeal of “saving.”

**Professor Catherine Lutz.**
Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina, delivered a moving talk entitled “The Long Homefront.” Drawing on her many years of ethnographic research in the town of Fayetteville, and her recently published book, *Homefront*, Professor Lutz asked audiences to think about the war in Afghanistan as part of a culture of militarism and military preparedness within the United States. Her lecture, which was

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**Lila Abu-Lughod** is Professor of Anthropology at Columbia University. Her work has covered a range of topics, many concerned with the politics of gender in the Middle East. She has written about emotion and poetic form, ethnographic writing, the mass media and the history of nationalism in Egypt, and she is author of two prize-winning books, *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in a Bedouin Society* and *Writing Women’s Worlds: Bedouin Stories*. Her most recent volume is a jointly edited collection, entitled *Media Worlds: Anthropology in New Terrain*.

**Catherine Lutz** is Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is the author of *Homefront: a Military City and the American Twentieth Century, Reading National Geographic*, and *Unnatural Emotions: Everyday Sentiments on a Micronesian Atoll and their Challenge to Western Theory*. Professor Lutz’s work has been variously concerned with sentiment, everydayness, and the questions of violence in both daily practice and state discourse. Her work on Fort Bragg has also become the basis of a collaboration with artist elin o’Hara slavick, whose paintings of “Places the United States has Bombed” will appear in a forthcoming issue of CONNECT: art, politics, theory, practice.

**Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak**, Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities (English, CCLS), is a member of the Columbia University faculty. She is widely known for her writings on nineteenth and twentieth century literatures in English and Indian languages. A translator of Jacques Derrida’s *Of Grammatology* and of the fictions of Mahasweta Devi, she is the author of numerous books. They include: *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present, Outside in the Teaching Machine*, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics*, and *Imperatives to Re-imagine the Planet*. Forthcoming from Columbia University Press is *Death of a Discipline*. Beyond her writings, however, Professor Spivak is also an activist and supporter of radical pedagogy. She has long been involved with teacher training in rural West Bengal, and that work is intimately bound up with her theorization of education in Western academic contexts as well.

**Judith Butler** is Maxine Elliot Professor in Rhetoric and Comparative Literature at Berkeley. Professor Butler is known for her contributions to queer theory and feminist analysis, as well as her critique of Enlightenment thought. She has also written on psychoanalytic and political philosophy and, more recently, the problem of ethics. Among her many books are: *Antigone’s Claim: Kinship Between Life and Death, Subjects of Desire: Hegelian Reflections in Twentieth-Century France*, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”*, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories of Subjection*, and *Excitable Speech*. 

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“We must be careful…not to reduce the attitudes and aspirations of local women to a single article of clothing.”
"As long as the voices of women on welfare are not allowed to occupy the position of subject, and as long as the interpretation and determination of their needs are done for them and not by them, it cannot be expected that welfare policies and programs will be successful. In my study, I hope to have given these voices, opinions, interpretations, and experiences a weight equal to those of academics and politicians."

Karen Austrian benefited in the writing of her project from the advice of Professor Steven Gregory (Anthropology, Columbia). She is currently on the Henry Evans Traveling Fellowship in Kenya, working with a group of young women living in slums, and using photography to look at issues of reproductive health.

Claire Balassi is a native of Fairfield, Connecticut and came to the School of General Studies after several years of work and travel experience. Originally a pre-med. student intending to pursue a career in women’s health, she later decided to major in Women’s Studies, a discipline that “has opened up a world of history and theory that I did not know existed before.” Interested in the effects of childhood abuse on the mind and the hypothesis of the inter-generational transmission of violence, her thesis “Turning the Injury Inwards: Emotional Abuse and the Implosion of Violence,” explores the largely neglected issue of emotional abuse as a subject of psychological research within the ‘cycle of violence’ discourse. Balassi notes that in many professional writings on the subject, emotional abuse is marginalized and explored only as an adjunct or consequence of the more tangible physical abuse. “My thesis, that is based on research with women who have experienced emotional abuse, examines emotional abuse within the ‘violence-begets-violence’ discourse, exploring it not as an explosion of violence onto another person’s body (as is the case in physical abuse) but as an implosion of violence onto an already abused body.”

To give voice to the neglected subject of the cycles of emotional trauma—particularly in the absence of physical battering. Balassi conducted interviews and open-ended discussions with emotionally abused women, under the ‘Speak Out’ program sponsored by the Connecticut Women’s Consortium and the Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services. She was thus able to define emotional abuse through the testimonies of these women, tracing the violent implosion and long-term internalized effects of emotional trauma as they manifest in poor mental health, depression, deeply ingrained feelings of low self-worth, addiction, and the more externally visible manifestations of internal pain such as Trauma Reenactment Syndrome, “where the violence implodes onto the woman’s body in the form of self-inflicted physical attack.” Based on this testimony, she concludes that the internalized effects of emotional violence follow an independent process of traumatic development; violence still begets violence as the emotionally abused person “begets abuse by abusing herself.”

Claire Balassi’s disciplinary advisor for this thesis was Professor Susan Riemer Sachs (Education, Barnard). Balassi will pursue a Masters in Education degree at Teachers College at Columbia while working full time as a teacher in an under-performing school in Washington Heights through the Columbia Urban Educators Program.

Ronit Fallek is from Brooklyn, New York, and came to Columbia following studies at Oberlin College and The American University of Paris. Originally a Sociology major, she was drawn to Women’s Studies as a discipline that “encourages analytical thinking in the deconstruction and questioning of simplistic paradigms.” A student of herbal medicine, both as a philosophy of life and a medical system, Fallek wrote a thesis titled, “Herbalism and Herbal Abortion: Confronting Cultural Wounds Within the Contentious American Abortion Debates,” which explores the practical, theoretical, and ideological implications of herbal abortion in contemporary American society.

Adopting as conceptual framework Kristin Luker’s thesis that the pro-choice and pro-life debate stems “not merely from conflicting views about abortion itself, but from a clash over fundamentally divergent world-views,” Fallek examines herbal medicine as both a challenge and an alternative to dominant cultural expectations and norms. The polarized form of the abortion debate, she contends, “in which people reason in ‘either/or’ paradigms and do not conceive ‘both’ to be a rational possibility,” is the byproduct of a pervasive cultural mentality to which the philosophical ideology of herbalism, with its emphasis on the equal validity and coexistence of differences, offers a creative alternative. Herbal abortion, however, in bypassing the professional medical authority, poses a significant challenge to the prevailing view of abortion as a public procedure, monitored and judged in the public spheres of medicine, religion and politics. In seeking the assistance of an herbalist experienced in the use of abortifacient plants, a woman actively distances her action from the conventional sphere of medical influence and public scrutiny. As distinct from clinical, surgical abortion "that removes the process and responsibility of pregnancy termination..."
from women, transferring them instead to the hands of doctors, the appeal of herbal abortion to many women lies specifically in restoring a woman’s control over the abortive process, inviting her to act, and not be acted upon, and to engage in a more private and personal process in releasing a pregnancy.” This heightened sense of personal responsibility and awareness, according to Fallek, not only affords a woman the opportunity to come to terms with her decision to abort in a more profound and intimate way, it also encourages her “to place a high value on her fertility, sexual life, and choice of partners,” ultimately reducing the very occurrence of unwanted pregnancies. The world view expressed and promoted by herbalism thus “invites an inspection of the American cultural tendencies toward binary thinking, power dynamics, and strict definitions of medical authority that sustain the impasse of the abortion issue on a political level, issues that are not generally addressed in the larger abortion discourse.”

Ronit Fallek’s disciplinary advisor was Professor Maxine Weisgrau (Anthropology, Barnard). She is spending the summer in Abuja, Nigeria as a research assistant for a study on HIV/AIDS awareness and sexual health practices of female students at the University of Abuja, and their interest in developing sexual/reproductive health services on campus.

Betty Lai is a native of Dallas, Texas and Taiwan. Interested in exploring issues related to the lives of Chinese Americans in turn of the century New York, Arthur Bonner’s Alas! What Brought Thee Hither presented her with the idea for her thesis. She was also inspired by a Cornell Ph.D. dissertation on the same topic entitled “The Chinatown Trunk Mystery.” Through primary documents and press coverage, Lai’s thesis, “The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Race and Gender in Victorian New York” explores a case which was to have weighty consequences in the “suppression of race and gender in a white male patriarchy.” On June 18, 1909, the decaying body of nineteen year old Elsie Sigel, granddaughter of General Franz Sigel—a famous New York personality whose funeral in 1904 was attended by over 10,000 people, and whose statue still stands at 106th street and Riverside Drive—was found in a tightly bound steamer trunk in the rooms of a Chinese immigrant, Leon Ling. According to Elsie’s family, her passionate devotion to mission work had precipitated her demise, and it was soon revealed that she and Leon had been romantically involved in an interracial relationship, taboo in turn-of-the-century New York. Leon Ling was never found, but the immediate aftermath of the case was the shut-down of all missions in Chinatown and ultimately across America. The missions had been active in New York City since 1709, and were among the few respectable sites for upper class white women to work. Lai explains that the mission movement, with its expressed goal to educate, Americanize, and Christianize Chinese men, was transformed in the aftermath of the Sigel case into a “sign of the dangers of allowing Chinese men to work in close contact with white women.” This shift in the public perception is especially apparent in contemporary cartoons such as “The Infernal Question,” “Christianized?” and “The Real Yellow Peril,” in which racial depictions of Chinese men with sinister physical markers are coupled with images of pious, naïve, and vulnerable young white women carrying Bibles, apparently unaware of the danger that threatens them. The prevailing climate of irrational fear of being conquered, and of deeply embedded racial and sexual fantasies in the aftermath of the Sigel case, both delayed the assimilation of Chinese men into mainstream culture, and censured white women, thus “tightening the boundaries between race and gender, and reasserting white male dominance in New York society."

Betty Lai’s disciplinary advisor for this project was Professor Elizabeth Bernstein (Sociology, Barnard), and she was greatly assisted in her search for archival material by feminist librarian Sarah Witte. After graduation Lai will remain in New York City, working as a member of Teach for America.

Francesca Periconi is from Albany, New York. She decided to major in Women’s Studies after taking the introductory course to the discipline. Her thesis, “Celebrating Feminism, Punishing Feminists: The Conflict Between Narrative and Ideology in Ridley Scott’s Thelma and Louise,” examines the decisively feminist narrative which emerges in the course of the film, only to be negated by the double suicide of the film’s conclusion. Drawing on the writings of Naomi Wolf, Laura Mulvey, and Valerie Solanas, Periconi’s analysis divides the film into a thematic sequence of rape and law, beauty, voyeurism, rage, and death. She discusses individual scenes in terms of the semiotic markers that illustrate the progressive overturning of a feminine identity shackled to ideas that valorize beauty and prescribed modes of behavior. In Periconi’s reading, the film develops a scenario of inner liberation and produces a heightened sense of authentic selfhood and empowerment in the heroines that, ultimately, succumbs to patriarchal power structures. Periconi’s disciplinary advisor was Professor Kirsten Lenz (IRWAg and English, Columbia). After graduation, she hopes to pursue a career in the film production and entertainment industry.

Chris Thiemann is a native of Marietta, Georgia, and decided to

**Seniors, continued on page 12**
lesbians may be discriminated against in traditional support groups and treatment centers for injection drug users, leaving them few options for education, information, and social support.”

“...leaving them few options for education, information, and social support.”

users, the rate of HIV infection of women who identify themselves as lesbian or bisexual is higher than that of women who identify themselves as straight. In exploring the social factors that influence the risk-taking behaviors of women, social epidemiologists consider differences in the “social norms surrounding HIV prevention” between heterosexual, and lesbian and bisexual communities. For example, as pointed out in studies by Young and her colleagues, injection drug use “appears to be more stigmatized within the lesbian community than in other groups,” limiting their access to psychological and social support systems. Furthermore, “lesbians may be discriminated against in traditional support groups and treatment centers for injection drug users, leaving them with few options for education, information, and social support.” Thiemann also explores certain risk-taking behaviors such as sharing needles as possible “community building or bonding, or even exciting and subversive experiences,” a deeper understanding of which will be invaluable in developing more effective prevention and treatment programs.

After graduation, Chris Tiemann intends to enter the business world.

Lauren Wynne is a native of Cedar Grove, New Jersey. Since high school, she has taken a keen interest in issues of gender and in women’s reproductive health. After a semester of independent study in Oaxaca, Mexico investigating traditional midwives or parteras tradicionales, she decided to focus in her thesis, “Birth and the Transnational Body: The Reproductive Experiences of Mexican immigrants to New York,” on the immense differences in women’s responses to biomedicine. “In particular,” she states, “I became interested in how these women’s exposure to biomedicine and technology affected their belief systems about birth and pregnancy, and by extension, the care they gave to other women.”

In the course of her fieldwork at the Mexican Health Project of the Lutheran Medical Center in Brooklyn, during which she interviewed thirty-four women, the vast majority of them from rural areas of Puebla, south of Mexico City, she discovered that most of the women readily embraced biomedical care and hospitalized birth in what appeared to be an abandonment of a rich local legacy of care. In her thesis, Wynne probes how the experiences of these women, “in particular, the impact of their transnational existence, is instrumental in shaping expectations and opinions.” Which, she finds, are very different from those of feminist critics of biomedicine. In the early 1970s, in a climate of increasing national obsession with progress and modernization, physicians’ organizations and the Mexican government made efforts “to extinguish the tradition of la parateria, traditional midwifery,” in favor of clinical biomedical care. The medical modernization program, however, fell short of its goals, while at the same time the numbers of parteras diminished from fear of prosecution, effects of a general devaluation of their work, and blame for the very real dangers of childbirth resulting from poor living conditions. Thus though women today tend to place greater confidence in the promise of biomedical care, close to 50% of the rural population has no access to clinics, and as a last resort, must turn to the now devalued and decimated population of local parteras for care. The parateria, as it survives in present day Mexico, Wynne argues, “is a very different model from the American midwifery movement, and the concerns and anxieties rural Mexican women share about their birthing experiences are very different from those of American feminists seeking the option of a return to midwifery.” In contrast to the options available to women in America, the gaps in the Mexican reproductive health care system preclude any real possibility of choice for rural women: a crucial factor in correctly understanding and assessing the apparent rejection by Mexican women of the local parateria, and their appreciation of American biomedical care.

Lauren Wynne’s disciplinary advisor for this project was Professor Robert Smith (Sociology, Columbia). She hopes to spend the next year teaching in New York City public schools focusing on Spanish or bilingual elementary education. She plans to continue her education with graduate studies in Medical Anthropology.
The great enigma and fascination of Psycharis, however, remains his relationship to Greek via French...  

Journey emphasized a different aspect of Psycharis’s engagement with the language question than did Professor Van Dyck. Under the influence of the philologist and nationalist, Ernest Renan, Psycharis, who was not only a son-in-law to Renan but also his star pupil, made his reputation against the purists of the Greek language.

In conclusion, he reiterated the significance of transliteration, a point emphasized by Professor Van Dyck as an alternative to translation. Such an alternative is represented, said Professor Gourgouris, in Psycharis’s reading room scene, where transliteration, in aiming to defamiliarize the optical, privileges a politics of the letter, not sound. The Demoticist project of which Psycharis was part, however, had claimed to “transfer the spoken flow of the language of the people into writing.” In a final aside, Gourgouris stated that as a member of the last generation to be schooled, during the Junta years, in Katharevousa, “I find myself beleaguered by monolingualism, stubbornly using as many purist forms as I can get away with in my writing as a way of defense—a way of showing how my mother tongue is always partially foreign.”

Hence it is “not a figure of speech,” remarked Gourgouris, to assert that Renan, the father-in-law, was “the guardian” of Psycharis’s mother tongue, “because it merely confirms the traditional Greek, whose ‘mother tongue is always partially foreign.’”

The ready willingness of Solomos, the foreign intellectual, to “sacrifice the privilege of heteroglossia to the secure pleasure of nesting within the mother tongue” is nothing other than the desire to “abolish the heteroglossic ground” in favor of a “monoglossic ideal.” This gesture, Gourgouris affirmed, “is the seduction of national singularity,” and should not surprise us (audiences of the new millennium) in the least.

Professor Gourgouris also treated Psycharis’s work as part of a nationalist project, though his reading of “Cabinet de lecture” from My Journey emphasized a different aspect of Psycharis’s engagement with the language question than did Professor Van Dyck. Under the influence of the philologist and nationalist, Ernest Renan, Psycharis, who was not only a son-in-law to Renan but also his star pupil, made his reputation against the purists of the Greek language.

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**Al-Nowaihi, continued from page 1**

household dedicated to enlightened scholarship, in love with the language in which her father taught when he was Professor and Chair of the Arabic Studies Department at the American University in Cairo. Mohammad Al-Nowaihi was one of Egypt’s great twentieth century reformers, and his daughter followed in his footsteps in more than one way. She remained proud of her training at AUC. When, in 1999, a colleague and friend, Professor Samia Mehrez, was censured for teaching a sexually explicit novel by the great writer, Muhammad Choukri, Professor Al-Nowaihi wrote in defense of Professor Mehrez, but also in defense of literature, academic freedom, and the AUC. That combination of loyal commitments was everywhere visible in Magda’s work and pedagogy. She did not believe literature could change the world, but she did believe that it permitted the relentless exposure and exploration of society in such a way as to permit social engagement—including the kind that changes the world. With the image of the physician as metaphor for the writer, she demanded for the humanities the freedom that scientists are afforded, namely the freedom to assume nothing, to ask everything and to articulate the results of that critical inquiry with full and uninhibited honesty.

Such commitments impressed themselves upon her colleagues. “I do not know,” says Professor Dabashi, “how exactly it happens that in an academic culture inundated with anxiety-ridden preoccupation with one’s own writing agenda at best and career opportunism at worst, that we are suddenly graced with a scholar and a teacher who becomes the very model of what we are all meant to be. But I do know that Professor Al-Nowaihi was that model.”

Because of retirements and other obligations, says Dabashi, MEALAC had several lacunae in its curriculum when Magda arrived. Though young, she was shouldered with the responsibility of reviving the teaching of Arabic literature, and that included teaching both literature and language courses at the graduate and undergraduate levels, as well as courses in the culture curriculum. It was a daunting task, to which she responded with grace and enthusiasm—and not a little ferocity. Magda invested considerable time and energy in streamlining Arabic language instruction. She not only invested great effort and collaborated enthusiastically with her colleagues in redrafting the main outline of the first three-year instructional material, but had a major share in seeing to it that the recommendations were indeed implemented.

This is more than many faculty members are able to achieve in decades. But Professor Al-Nowaihi made her mark in other ways, and especially in her efforts to expand the interdisciplinary relationships between MEALAC and other programs at Columbia. “Before Professor Al-Nowaihi joined MEALAC,” notes Dabashi, “we had never addressed the all-important aspect of gender in any one of our varied courses. She is chiefly and single-handedly responsible for having introduced that critical component of any claim to cultural studies to our program. Here she went far beyond her gifted command of Arabic sources and through a courageous act of faculty development informed by the catholicity of her own learning incorporated materials of non-Arab cultures to give range and depth to her courses. She critically and poignantly engaged the theoretical material in feminist and postcolonial studies in a way that they had never been challenged before. The direct beneficiaries of all these were our students.”

Professor Al-Nowaihi’s dedication to her students became immediately apparent from the increase in the number of recruitments who started coming to Columbia to take her courses in Arabic literature and to study with her. Almost immediately she began to build an ever-increasing following. At one point, she was single-handedly supervising some ten graduate students, something unprecedented in a small department. Her teaching was not limited to formal contexts however. Nor were her students the only beneficiaries.

Professor Rosalind Morris remarks that “She was an invaluable colleague because she listened intently and could hear in your own, as yet unforeminded gropings toward an idea, a real potential. She could make that clear to you with probing questions, which were delivered with such enthusiasm that you could get excited about your own thought. She infected you with her delight at new knowledge, and her capacity to apprehend and appreciate beauty, just as she infected you with outrage and moral indignation by revealing some wrong that everyone else had thought could not be rectified. These are rare qualities. When she showed them to you, you felt you had received a gift. Indeed, you had.”

Magda suffered her illness with grace, never losing her capacity to give to others. Shortly after Magda had offered Professor Dabashi solace and comfort following his own open-heart surgery, she was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. She wanted desperately to live, and everyone who knew her can attest that she fought her illness with moral rectitude and awe-inspiring endurance. While on sabbatical, medical, and disability leave, and while continuing to care as a wife to a loving husband and a mother to two teenage children, she managed to continue advising her students, and even to champion their causes. Many of her colleagues believe her “leave” was simply a fiction, as instructive as any literary fiction, which is also built in the space of absence. For she was present to them even from afar, just as she is present to them now, even after her passing.

“There is,” says Professor Morris, “some consolation in the knowledge that Magda will be fiercely remembered by her students and her colleagues. She made a profound impact on the people around her, not only with her sagacity and her disciplined scholarship, but with her personal presence, which continues to emit its light even now that she is gone.” IRWaG bids Magda farewell and extends its sympathies to her surviving husband, Fernand Cohen, and their two children, Nadim and Nadia.
Ko, continued from page 4

covering the tiny foot, either in material or photographic form. He also sought information about footbound women willing to unwrap their binders, as well as the name, age, native place, and rank in brothels of tiny-footed prostitutes. Pursued “to facilitate investigation,” this collection of detail about commercially and sexually active women leaves little doubt as to the male readership of the archive, and the “cultural location of the lotus lovers in a new world of heightened circulation of news and information.”

Alongside collecting activities and self-consciously empiricist accounts, many entries in the archive are products of literary imagination. Ultimately, they are documents that attest to the sexual desire of the connoisseurs, says Ko. These documents take two forms. The first are studied stylistic imitations of the old male literati (the class of civil servants and intellectuals from the Confucian wen culture) and are typified by what might be described as two forms of regression: recollections of personal childhood in the form of voyeurism and boyness memories. Often they use embellished citation, sometimes to the extent of generating new texts out of the old by writing commentaries and sequels. “Playing” (youxi) was a style of living, and included erotic practices (such as drinking wine out of the shoe or “eating steamed dumplings,” that is, drinking the dish of water in which the bound foot had been bathed), and writing for entertainment. Wanting to “seize the present moment by looking back . . . to savor what is left of it,” the Radishes connoisseurs “were also playing with time and, in so doing, carving out a space of repose outside the purposeful march of the nation.” Ko thus understands the obsessive connoisseurs to be seeking “a form of self-as-modern-man-of-letters loving the self-as-traditional-literati; they are seduced less by the bound foot than by the word as a vehicle of representation.”

Not all was pleasure, though. The archive was also replete with female testimonials of pain. Allegedly authentic, these texts of women’s suffering bodies nonetheless leave room for doubt as to their genuine female authorship. Words of female pain did not exist before the 18th century, not because women were silenced, but because complaining about the wrongs of footbinding was a male prerogative. When women took the brush, their accounts were only of the joys and splendors of love. In Picking Radishes, by contrast, pain figures as “the predominant concern, indeed the organizational principle of purportedly ‘firsthand’ narratives of the footbinding experience: ‘it is through pain that the female body acquires its textual presence.’

Though the female voice tells nothing new about footbinding—it is painful, dated, and irreversible—the female body functions here as “an alternative birthplace for words: a source of truth and authentic experience,” ushering in the last mode of disclosure that “signifies the modern rupture in the footbinding discourse.” Affectively, it is often loud. Indeed, argues Ko, the archive should be read as a document of emotional excess, artificiality; it is a “repository of desires,” and not a neutral and disinterested collection awaiting exploration. “Connoissuership in an age of disavowal is an academic exercise: the only context that can be generated from the production and consumption of texts is more texts, not social experience.”

Against this tyranny of words, which encloses the meaning of objects, and obscures their significance, Professor Ko contrasted the testimonial power of material objects. She concluded her expansive lecture with a series of slides, around which she oriented a discussion of the semiotics of objects. Here she considered the materiality and economics of style, the gradation of textures and materials of shoes, even the histories of color and dyeing techniques. It is, in the final analysis, the objects, the shoes that, read with a different sensitivity, can be made to speak of the bodies and desires of the women who wore them, claimed Ko.

In her response, Professor de Grazia noted the problems inherent in presenting footbinding and the occulting of female desire through Western eyes. The very notion of footbinding, she explained, is disturbing to most European and American audiences; there is nothing similar in it in the West. How, then, can we understand its significance? That as texts, the Radishes entries bar access to female desire likewise has no strict counterpart in Western documents, says de Grazia; whether reading Rousseau, or Diderot, or Magnus Hirschfeld, we are accustomed to believing that we can at least detect female desire by means of those texts, and the analysis of their mediations.

Far more familiar to Western eyes, however, is the male fantasy, thought, and behavior encapsulated in the Chinese encyclopedia. The image of the Radishes connoisseurs is neither unprecedented nor unintelligible, says de Grazia. We recognize, because we have encountered our own versions of, “their desire to create an encyclopedia, their cult of totality, their fetishized desire in making the female foot the object of the gaze, their rationalizing of intellectual knowledge mediated by commodification.” She drew from Ko’s lecture a portrait of “pathetic men, engaged in an operation that seems to be the effect of their own grave ineffectualness as they try to redeem themselves by the cult of the object.”

To read the archive for traces of women and their aspirations is perhaps an impossible ambition, she suggested. For, the textual part of the archive does not reveal the desire of women, so much as it reveals the structures of male desire and male fetishism; it is, indeed, “about the gendering of men rather than an attempt to understand the desire of women.”

Professor de Grazia asked how Professor Ko would clarify the significance of the Radishes editorial team, given the absence of a real cultural location or historical context for these intellectuals posing as traditional literati while they attempt to “create a national culture that resubjectivizes women as relics of the past.” Are they dandies, occupying an ambiguous sexual position threatening to masculinity? Ko, continued on page 19
One of the most revealing aspects of American military culture, however, comes to light in examining what happened from October 7 onwards. Paradoxically the Afghans have been treated as a people with history, “each implicated in a prior chain of conspiracy that set the planes crashing into the World Trade Center—each re-coded as Taliban/terrorist.”

One of the most revealing aspects of American military culture, however, comes to light in examining what happened on that day and to domestic military bases and the local communities with which they coexist. It was to this topic that Professor Lutz directed the audience, by way of a discussion of Fayetteville. Fayetteville is an army base of about 100,000 souls, close to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, one of the over six hundred military bases in the US. Rife with pervasive child poverty, prostitution, prostitute murders, and a substantial number of homeless people, about a quarter of whom live with “horrific physical and psychological injuries,” Fayetteville is both a city of “cosmopolitan substance, and a dumping ground for the problems of the American century of war.”

Democracy is weak in Fayetteville, explained Professor Lutz, which has one of the smallest tax bases, and lowest voter registration rates in the country. Though the annual budget for Fayetteville is vast, jobs created by the base are filled not with locals, but with personnel assigned to the base from elsewhere, while jobs created off base, mainly in the retail sector, are among the lowest paying jobs and are held by people belonging to the ranks of the working poor. Thus the gap between rich and poor, the military and the civilian world, are starkly visible in Fayetteville. This difference is felt in the differential kinds of services afforded to community members as well. Although army base personnel enjoy excellent public services and health and retirement benefits, this large segment of the population is effectively “taken out of the local political arena” because they vote for leadership in their home districts and because their taxes do not go to sustain the political apparatus of Fayetteville itself.

Even so, Fayetteville is the site of profound and relatively continuous critique, some of which is directed toward the military establishment, explained Lutz. An important lesson of Fayetteville concerns the intensity of the military rebellion against war, and especially the war in Vietnam: there were “over two thousand court-martials in progress in 1968 alone.” Soldiers were regularly charged “for refusing orders
to fight and sabotaging equipment.” Unfortunately, this history is largely forgotten. The pervasive culture of militarization, and the public forgetfulness of the bloody reality of war have led to the “mass consent of US citizens who legitimated murders that began most visibly on October 7” with the war on Afghanistan.

“War and militarization are at home in the US,” Lutz concluded. They live alongside “secrecy imperatives of the national security state on the one hand, and the fear that knowledge of its doings will destroy our moral innocence.”

In commencing her lecture entitled “Terror,” Professor Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak called to question two terms of the debate shaping the symposium: namely, choice and response. Choice had become one of the terms through which the war in Afghanistan was being defended, often through reference to the alleged possibility of choice that would fall to Afghan women following an American victory, but also as the lack which defined the situation under the Taliban. Response, of course, been the term proffered by the symposium title, as the task and obligation of participants.

As common as these terms are, suggested Spivak, they are nonetheless extremely complex notions and they hide in themselves many assumptions. To begin with, she argued, choice is not simply something to be offered to victors, the enlargement of possibilities or options. Choice and the possibility of choosing differently need to be produced. Professor Spivak elaborated a notion of choice as the product of radical pedagogy, something that needs to be cultivated or taught rather than assumed. It entails what she called the “uncoercive rearrangement of desires,” but this must be produced through teaching that has behind it a “history of engagement” in a particular education.

As for the possibility of a response to war, Professor Spivak began with the conviction that there can be no response: “War is a cruel caricature of what in us can respond,” if by response we mean a relation with the other. In her lecture, she posed the questions: what have been the responses to war? to what have the responses responded? and how are we to respond? “in the face of the impossibility of response.”

A response, Professor Spivak said, constructs its object and in so doing, defines it. The undeclared war in Afghanistan cannot be seen as a response to war: the US is fighting an abstract enemy: terrorism. The detainees at Guantanamo Bay are not treated according to the Geneva Convention because, in the words of Donald Rumsfeld, “they did not fight in uniform” and the nineteen dead hijackers who perpetrated the attack have been rendered in court as “un-indicted co-conspirators.” Hence, one might say that the Afghan war is “war reduced to due process on the scale of the event of terror.”

What, then, Professor Spivak asked, is terrorism? Negotiators in Congress, posing such questions as: “Is bombing an abortion clinic an act of terror?” or, “If a boy puts a bomb in a mailbox, does that constitute an act of terror?” have been unable to agree on a definition. Yet one cannot respond without definitions, she states.

In this war, which is imagined as a response to terrorism, Afghan women have been used as an alibi, argued Spivak. Yet it must be remembered, she added, that the emancipation of women has always followed “an internal line of cultural difference within a culture.” Sending the war endlessly into the countries of former Central Asia—Pakistan, Iran, North Korea or elsewhere—“will not necessarily produce a single-issue (gender) justice in the subaltern sphere.” Here, the task of change is far greater than what can be effected by bombs.

Another response to war has been to commodify and to “museumize” it, at the extreme end of which is the marketing and sentimentalizing of September 11. The most benign form of this kind of response, she said, is that of “arresting metonyms”—a kind of pre-curatorial practice. Take, for example, the image of the remains of the bronze sculpture interpreted as a symbol of world peace through trade—the centerpiece of the World Trade Center’s ground-level plaza. Photographed against a “charred and pitted lump of fused concrete and carbonized furniture and less recognizable elements, a meteorite mass that no human force could have forged,” it has been defined for the museum as an ‘objet trouvé’ because world peace through trade cannot be edited as a lie.”

But with each dissatisfaction, or recognition of the impossibility of response, another gesture is made, suggested Spivak. One of these is that of public intellectuals describing US policy in detail. This kind of “cognitive mapping”, heavily dependent on the fieldwork of front-line investigative journalists, “legitimates the idea that knowledge is an end in itself, or that there is a straight line from knowing to doing politics.” There is no risk in this kind of responding, she states, for to respond, here, means to attempt to resonate with the reader. In avoiding to take away the “un-self-critical convenience of doing good,” it does not “just avoid the risk of response, but closes off response altogether.”

According to Professor Spivak, behind the imaginary confrontation between fundamentalism and democracy—collectively and millenially produced—is the all-encompassing word, terror. “Without the word terror, nothing could be legitimated.” Terror is the name War, continued on page 18
War continued from page 17
generally given to the flip side of social movements—it is extra-state collective action used in physical violence.” In the context of responses to terror, when terror “slides imperceptibly into terrorism as social movement, the word is perhaps no more than an antonym for war,” she stated. Yet, the same word is also an antonym for peace; “and here we have walked into a labyrinth where war and peace become interchangeable terms, although the status of war as agents and peace as objects never wavers.”

Professor Spivak pointed out, however, that terror is also an affect, and this has enormous consequences for the kinds of acts that people take. The single-course suicidal [acts of] terror in the young have not the banality of evil, but the stupidity of faith taken to the extreme of martyrdom.” Where terror is affect, she explains, “the line between agent and object wavers” the terrorist terrorizes a community, but is also numbed to terror in the “autoeroticism of killing oneself with others.” The risk of responding, according to Spivak, is being able to recognize this transcendentalized affect as sublime. “But,” she remarks, “the sublime is stupid: Kant’s argument is that we recover from the sublime because we realize that the Thing can’t think; I can.” She concludes that though violence cannot be supported rationally, nor condoned as a legitimate response to US policy abroad, “we must acknowledge the sublimity of terror—the inadequate name of a human affect beyond affect, rather than a catch-all name for any act of violence not authorized by the state.” Without this, or a comparable kind of mind-changing, she states, we cannot really respond, but only react, with “analyses of evil performed by the polity we have chosen to live in.”

If, however, our aim is actually response and responsibility, “we have to be burned by the other.” We cannot, she urged, retain “a sense of separation, whoever is the us, whoever is the them.”

Professor Judith Butler delivered the final lecture of the Symposium in a paper titled “Violence and Accountability.” Her purpose, she stated, was to address those aspects of ethical violence that emerged in the aftermath of September 11, and especially in the suspension of due process and international conventions in the treatment of the prisoners at Guantanamo Bay. Harking to the images of prisoners that had recently appeared in the news media, Professor Butler asked audience members to consider how certain forms of ethical violence “constrain and produce the very notion of the human” and, in so doing, “deselect certain populations from claims of entitlement and protection under the sign of the human.”

Insofar as the conventions that govern international treaties and conventions on warfare are organized around the idea of humanness, it becomes imperative, argued Butler to ask how it is people can be excluded from that category. In contemporary political discourse, she said, accountability for a violent act usually involves finding a person or group of persons to hold accountable. This staging of accountability, which hinges on the personification of the source of responsibility, was “both thwarted and heightened” following the events of 9/11 and during the subsequent war. The suicide of the perpetrators of the attacks, the dispersed structure and decentered figuration of power of the Al Qaeda network, and the unclear response to the attacks, sought to go to war, it did so in an unusual manner. None of the presuppositions of the framework of the just war, was enacted. Normally, she explained, a just war entails one nation declaring war on another with a rationale that promises the destruction of a leader and the liberation of a people. In the absence of these more usual processes and logics, the US had to forge “links of accountability” between network and nation, identifying Afghanistan and the Taliban with the Al Qaeda network. “The network [was] thus collapsed into the model of the nation,” as the war sought to localize [an] enemy “whose tactical strength consisted in its very ability to elude localization.”

In part, the justification of violence in the name of ethical righteousness revolves around the differential production of the human,” Professor Butler stated. In the larger-than-life photos of Bin Laden, as in the images of the shackled, goggled, and caged prisoners of Guantanamo Bay, a “permutation of the recognizably human” can be clearly discerned. In the personification of the Al Qaeda network in the figure of Bin- Laden, the human face functions as an “allegorical reduction” of evil and pure deceit. As such, he is “not rendered human by virtue of being personified.” The prisoners of Guantanamo Bay on the other hand, are figured as “suicidal killers and instruments of blind and unmitigated rage.” They are faceless in the photographs released by the Department of Defense: a “defacement [that] works in tandem with the de-realization of their...
As members of Al Qaeda or the Taliban, and as agents of Islamic extremism, they are considered to have already placed themselves outside civilization. Hence "the rules of civilization do not apply in their case."

The Geneva Convention, Professor Butler affirmed, "is itself a civilizational discourse," the provisions of which are in no way asserted as universal rights. It privileges prisoners of wars between recognizable states and in so doing enforces a "geopolitical distribution of legitimate and illegitimate violence."

The designation of 'illegal combatant,' and the use of the terms Islamic extremist or terrorist, according to Butler, "delegitimate violence committed by non-state-centered critical entities, while at the same time sanctioning violent response by established states," whose prisoners of war, as representatives of legitimate violence, are protected and defended under the Convention. "It is not just that some are treated as humans and others are dehumanized," she concludes; "it is rather that dehumanization is the condition for the production of the human, in which a self-defined Western civilization seeks to define itself over and against a population understood as definitionally illegitimate. In this sense, we can say there is no human without state violence, and no violence against the state that does not risk dehumanization in the sight of the law."

People are killed, of course, and bodies return home—although we rarely have a sense of the reality of other people's deaths.
### Feminist Interventions

**September 30, 2002**  
**GWENDOLYN WRIGHT**  
Professor of Architecture, Planning, and Preservation  
and author of  
*Moralism and the Model Home*  
*Domestic Architecture and Cultural Conflict in Chicago 1873–1913*, and  
*The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*  

speaks about  
**Modern Housing: Domination, Desire, and Domesticity**  

*KAREN VAN DYCK* responding

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**November 18, 2002**  
**WAYNE KOESTENBAUM**  
author of  
*Andy Warhol,*  
*Cleavage: Essays on Sex, Stars, and Aesthetics,*  
*The Milk of Inquiry,* and  
*The Queen’s Throat: Homosexuality and the Mystery of Desire*  
(among other books)  

reads from his poetry and prose, followed by a discussion with the audience and book signing

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