Conference Honors Carolyn G. Heilbrun

Last February, IRWaG posthumously honored its founding director and former Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities Carolyn G. Heilbrun by organizing a conference in her memory. The title, "Writing a Feminist’s Life: Academics and their Memoirs" echoed that of Heilbrun's seminal book Writing a Woman's Life. As Marianne Hirsch, one of the co-organizers explained, "We decided to do a conference not on Carolyn Heilbrun’s work but on a theme that she cared deeply about." The eight invited speakers had been asked to read from their memoirs and to reflect on the genre, its suitability for feminist appropriation, its relationship to criticism and other kinds of scholarly work. "Why," Professor Jean Howard wondered, "have so many contemporary academic feminists turned to the memoir?"

Heilbrun herself was a writer of many voices. As a pioneering woman on the tenured faculty of Columbia’s English department, she wrote nine academic books and edited several others. As the detective fiction writer Amanda Cross, she published fourteen novels. While Heilbrun was a versatile writer of women's lives for different audiences, she occupied an embattled position as a feminist faculty member at Columbia. In 1992, she resigned from the university where she had completed her PhD and taught for over forty years, in protest against its treatment of women.

In her opening remarks, Heilbrun’s colleague Professor Joan Ferrante spoke of their shared efforts as activists in a department which denied women sabbatical leave, under-recruited them as junior faculty, and paid them far smaller salaries than male colleagues who had sometimes published less. Although Heilbrun became president of the Modern Language Association in 1984, in Professor Ferrante’s opinion her own department neither accorded her due recognition, nor gave other feminist scholars fair consideration for tenure. Professor Ann Douglas also spoke of her experiences as the first woman to be actively recruited to the English Department.

The story of Carolyn Heilbrun’s spirited life, which included completing a PhD when she had three small children and rising through the ranks to achieve a named chair at Columbia, came to a close in October 2003. Heilbrun had affirmed her right to end her life as she wished. Heilbrun, continued on page 8
Director’s Column

By Lila Abu-Lughod

I look back over my first year as director of IRWaG with amazement at the multiple and intersecting ways the IRWaG community worked together to make Columbia a more vibrant intellectual space for faculty and students.

We were busy all year with public events and behind the scenes work, much of which is reported in this newsletter. The highlight was our conference, co-organized by Jean Howard and Marianne Hirsch, honoring the late Carolyn G. Heilbrun, founding director of IRWaG. A day of intense intellectual engagement combined with laughter and strong emotions left a huge audience, marked by a stunning generational span, feeling they had participated in something extraordinary. With support from the Institute for Social and Economic Research and Policy we also initiated a faculty workshop on gender and international rights that similarly drew in new people from across the university and city, if in more intimate settings. Graduate students were very active at IRWaG for the first time in a while and we are delighted to have become the locus for their Gender Breakfast group, encouraged by Vicky de Grazia, who served as a wonderful director of graduate studies. We hosted a number of lectures by our senior and junior colleagues, including Elizabeth Povinelli and Patricia Dailey. I also want to note with excitement the ongoing initiatives of our undergraduates, whether the seniors who wrote theses and are all going on to future study, or the members of Pow! who organized high profile events on feminist issues. The task of advising the undergraduates was tackled with enthusiasm by Beth Povinelli who jumped right in and learned the ropes. Now that we have our new website up, you can follow all the events and activities of IRWaG.

What we can’t report on are the ongoing projects that took so much of our time and energy. We worked with Jean Howard’s office to hammer out some of the details of an initiative to increase faculty diversity; we formed working groups to rethink the undergraduate curriculum in women’s and gender studies; and we began to fantasize about creating a center for gender and race studies in global perspective. We continued to find ways to collaborate with other groups at Columbia, whether the Center for Comparative Literature and Society, the Institute for Research in African-American Studies, the Middle East Institute, or the English Department.

As I head off for the summer to try to finish a long overdue book, I wish Amalia Zarranz well; she is leaving the office, having been awarded the prestigious Cintas Fellowship to finish her screenplay. Her talents have, among other things, made the posters for IRWaG events into collectibles. I also have to say I will miss Alison Wylie, our colleague in Women’s Studies at Barnard—without her formidable commitment, vision, and organizational skills we would never have made the progress we did on curricular reform. We wish her the best at the University of Washington.

I thank everyone who participated in our projects this year and look forward to welcoming all of you back, as well as newcomers to Columbia. I’m especially excited that Sharon Marcus will step in as the new Director of Graduate Studies. As always, I encourage you to bring to us your ideas for events and projects and for ways IRWaG can facilitate feminist and queer work at Columbia.
tolerate non-liberal political difference (fundamentalism) or tolerating difference only if privatized and converted into individual belief or practice. The way that tolerance talk around multiculturalism (with all its gendered implications regarding alleged conflicts between group rights and women’s rights) remains within and confirms civilizational discourse was explored particularly in relation to Freud’s thinking about organicism. The second workshop was held on February 28. Professor Michèle Barrett from the University of London presented a paper entitled, Pacifism and Virginia Woolf. Using the work of English feminist Virginia Woolf, her talk addressed questions of gender and class in the development of the pacifist movement in Britain against World War I. Particularly interesting was her consideration of Freud’s strange relationship to World War I and her questioning of the basis on which opposition to the war occurred. Gayatri Spivak co-hosted the event, which drew a strong representation of faculty from the Department of English and Comparative Literature along with regular workshop participants. The third workshop in the series was held on March 22. Professor Rajeswari Sunder Rajan from Wolfson College, Oxford University, author most recently of The Scandal of the State presented an essay to be published in a forthcoming volume by Amnesty International. Professor Bruce Robbins from the Department of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia was an enthusiastic discussant of her paper, “Women’s Human Rights in the Third World,” in which she argues that, despite multiple criticisms about their exclusions and the taint of “Westernization,” “universality, humanity and rights—and their combination—are concepts too politically valuable for us not to make an attempt to ‘save’ them.” She

Michèle Barrett and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Workshop, continued on page 15
New Voices at Columbia: Patricia Dailey

Assistant Professor of English and Comparative Literature Patricia Dailey comes to Columbia after an adventurous trail through universities across Europe and North America. A scholar of medieval Europe, Professor Dailey received her PhD in Comparative Literature from the University of California at Irvine in 2002. Both during and after her doctoral studies, however, she has pursued interests in medieval languages, contemporary poststructuralist thought and literary approaches to theology at a diverse set of institutions. Professor Dailey brings an interdisciplinary and keenly theoretical approach to medieval studies, and particularly to her specific focus on Anglo-Saxon poetry and the texts of English, Flemish and French medieval women mystics.

Professor Dailey’s dissertation, titled “Promised Bodies: Embodiment and the Time of a Literary Text,” reveals the impact of an eclectic academic background. Her early interest in modern literature and philosophy led to a senior thesis on Jacques Lacan at Sarah Lawrence College and then to a spell of study in Paris with the philosopher Alain Badiou. When Professor Dailey began her graduate studies at Irvine, she had

![Tricia Dailey](image)

shifted her focus to medieval women mystics writing in Italian, as well as French and English. Her dissertation was supervised by a committee including the philosophers Jean-Francois Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, shaping its contemporary theoretical approach to medieval theological texts.

“The University of California system had a structure of hospitality toward visiting European scholars,” Dailey remarks of the academic system that facilitated her unusually trans-disciplinary training at Irvine. “It was not so bound by a certain historical structure of the university, and departments would often reinvent themselves with new arrivals. San Diego, for instance, abolished departments of foreign languages altogether and just has a literature program. Marcuse and De Certeau were at San Diego by the time Hillis Miller and Derrida went to Irvine, with Foucault at Berkeley.”

Professor Dailey’s January 27 lecture at IKWaG’s “In the House” series, titled “Sight Unseen: Figure, Materiality, and Language in the Visions of Medieval Women Mystics” drew upon writings by St. Augustine, Judith Butler and Jean-Francois Lyotard to examine the poetics of body and text in the medieval writing of mystical experiences. Beginning with a theoretical approach to medieval theological texts.

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By Rachel Tamar Van & Julie Golia

Last spring, IRWaG kicked off a monthly breakfast series for graduate students and faculty to discuss timely topics in gender and feminist studies. A number of graduate students in the history department began holding meetings in the Fall of 2003, but moved the program to IRWaG with the hopes of attracting a more interdisciplinary base. The breakfasts have been an enormous success, attracting participants from new disciplines each month.

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Behind the Scenes: Profile of Page Jackson

By Louise Pocock

Everyone who knows IRWaG knows Page Jackson, the Institute Administrator who has helped run IRWaG for almost a decade. But few know his history or his other talents and interests.

His time at Columbia began at the fresh age of 17 when he arrived from Glen Allen, Virginia to pursue an undergraduate degree. He stayed for several years before moving to the Pratt Institute of Art where he was one of five students selected by audition to inaugurate a new dance major. He left after one year to find work, wanting to stay in New York. After three years at an investment firm, he began a career at New York University. He eventually moved up to be an Assistant Director of Admissions and Financial Aid in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences.

Through it all, Page was actively involved in performing. During his time at Columbia he had danced in Barnard’s Dance Uptown series and also acted and sang in many Gilbert and Sullivan operas with the Barnard G&S Society. He continued in this vein, helping to found the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, which is currently in its 25th year. He was also a founding member of the New York City Gay Men’s Chorus and still sings as a bass in concerts with them at Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. For eight years, until the airline’s demise, he sang with Pan Am’s Chorus Angelorum. This group provided opportunities for him to sing all over Europe and South America.

After fifteen years working at NYU, Page returned to Columbia to finish his undergraduate degree in the School of General Studies. He chose Women’s and Gender Studies for his major and coupled that with a second major in Italian Cultural Studies. Page had never studied Italian before starting the GS degree, but became fluent, performed in nine Italian plays, was awarded the Medaglio D’Oro in Italian, chosen a Generoso Pope scholar, and inducted into Gamma Kappa Alpha—the National Italian Honor Society.

Kathleen Savage, the former IRWaG administrator, offered Page a position as secretary at the Institute once he completed his degree. He initially declined, but was lured in with the opportunity to continue taking Columbia classes and enormous freedom. He spent his first two summer vacations in Italy where he performed in Orlando Innamorato in the original castle where Boiardo wrote the epic poem. When he is not working at IRWaG or performing, Page goes to bookstores. He is an avid book collector whose personal collection is over 20,000 volumes. Many of his books are rare, first edition, or signed books, and cover a wide variety of subjects including poetry, art, drama, gay and lesbian fiction, and gender studies. Recently, besides keeping things running at IRWaG, Page has been exploring his poetic side in a class that he just completed with accomplished poet and activist Dr. Sonia Sanchez. He had his first formal reading at Columbia as part of an end-of-term activity at the Institute for Research on African-American Studies. Although retirement seems to be in the distant future, he contemplates settling down in southern Italy with his partner of almost 30 years, writing more poetry, and reading some of those 20,000 books.

IRWaG Welcomes Gender Breakfast

By Rachel Tamar Van & Julie Golia

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Last March, IRWaG invited Professor Elizabeth Povinelli, our newest arrival to a cross-appointed position, to present work from her forthcoming book in our Feminist Interventions lecture series. In her talk “Rotten Worlds: Thinking Sexuality in the Postcolony,” she tried to unravel the connections between ‘First’ and ‘Third’ worlds as they are constructed in discourses of health and sexuality in the “liberal diaspora.” This is Povinelli’s term for the instantiation of liberal political philosophies in differing and unequal contexts globally.

Proceeding from Povinelli’s reflections on the medical discourses she encountered while seeking treatment for a sore, the talk traced the relations diagrammed in these discourses between a privileged North American world and the North Australian aboriginal community in which she has lived intermittently for sixteen years. Povinelli’s provocative Foucauldian suggestion that investigating the construction of bodies in the liberal diaspora was “doomed” as a project specifically about sexuality was followed by her argument that one had to look instead at orders of “legal and cultural recognition” within which bodies are enmeshed.

Explaining the origins of a shoulder sore acquired in Australia in a Chicago emergency room, Povinelli found that bearing this mark of ill health that she shared with close indigenous friends produced dissonance for both her doctor and herself. The doctor recoiled in fear of coming into contact with a tropical epidemic unexpectedly found on the shoulder of a white woman in North America. Povinelli wondered whether she had been wrong in heeding the advice of her Australian friends or that of American doctors in seeking to treat the sore. What kind of subject did she constitute at this unexpected intersection of liberal diasporic discourses?

She framed her analysis of interpretations of the sore in a diagrammatic distinction between two broad discourses of sociality. First is liberalism’s foundations in the ideal of an autological (as opposed to genealogical) subject.
Noting that one-third of Latino-owned business in the United States are owned by women, Carolyn conducted her research among a sample of these women entrepreneurs. These women had emigrated for the long term, unlike many men who came to the United States to work and save up for their families in the Dominican Republic. They often viewed the move as liberating them from the control of others. Balancing work and family was hard, given the rigid work hours in the new country, and so they opened businesses. One woman ran a day-care center where children were taught Spanish as well as English. Another operated several businesses, including two multi-service agencies and a restaurant. In both cases, these women had enormous help from their families—mothers, sisters and husbands.

By contrast, women with skills that did not transfer from the Dominican Republic to the U.S. often found themselves working in jobs that did not match their qualifications. Carolyn interviewed one woman who worked long hours in a bodega her mother owned and found entrepreneurship hard. These women were less likely to go on to earn degrees and find ways of advancement.

Carolyn knew she wanted to major in women’s studies before she entered Columbia. Her previous professors had often commented on her “feminist analyses” and suggested she explore feminist studies. At Columbia, she recalls several courses that further inspired and engaged her. Professor Christia Mercer’s Philosophy of Feminism presented a vast knowledge of feminist history. Professor Elizabeth Bernstein’s Sociology of Gender mixed readings with practical experiences, sending students on observational assignments. She is also indebted to Professor Alice Kessler-Harris.

Women’s and Gender Studies Majors Write Senior Theses

In 2004–2005, three senior majors in women’s and gender studies wrote honors theses. The range of their topics suggests the excitement of interdisciplinarity while their future plans testify to the talent of feminist students.

Carolyn Castro’s senior thesis, “Dominican Women: Migration and Its Effects on Entrepreneurship” examined the work and lives of women in the Bronx and Manhattan who had emigrated from the Dominican Republic as teenagers and established their own businesses in New York City.

Carolyn, who lives in the Bronx, devised this research topic to remedy the lack of feminist writings on Latina women. She points out that while most existing studies focus on these women’s roles in the home, their self-worth based on marriage and children, and their social oppression, she wanted to concentrate instead on empowered women who contribute to the economy and society.

own life, and she did so at the age of 77. The example of her life as well as her reflections on women’s autobiography provided the springboard for eight presentations by women who came to American academia from a variety of backgrounds. Combining readings from their memoirs with comment, the speakers traced the relation between their memoirs and their academic writings before a capacity crowd at Philosophy Hall.

Unaccounted contradictions between the way a woman’s life was supposed to unfold and the way it did in fact, for the academic, were recurring themes. Mary Ann Caws, Distinguished Professor of English, French and Comparative Literature at the CUNY Graduate Center, asked a question she had often pondered: “What kind of feminist can a Southerner be, wherever she ends up being?” She recalled her grandmother, a painter who lived in North Carolina, letting down neither her work nor her Southernness. The difference between Caws’ own identities left a caesura that she took up in her memoir To the Boathouse. “These are not the pages I wrote for my psychoanalyst, or my diary,” she noted. The memoir emerged, instead, as “the survival of whatever you value about yourself.”

A Southern home that haunts even when it is left behind was evoked as well by Deborah McDowell’s memoir Leaving Pipe Shop: Memories of Kin. McDowell is Alice Griffin Professor of Literary Studies at the University of Virginia, a position arrived at after her journey from an Alabama childhood to universities in Indiana and Maine. The further she went, the more insistent became what she refers to as her aunt’s “late-night death angel calls,” relating gloomy news and urging her to come back. McDowell’s evolving image of home is the subject of her book, which she is reluctant to call a memoir, for it is also social history and ethnography of an Alabama African-American community. It is intended to contribute a narrative to the mostly visual archive of the civil rights period. McDowell began writing this personal history alongside an academic project on loss and mourning, and admitted that “this book would not leave me alone until I finally gave in to it.”

Disruptive interjections of personal memory are given their own narratives by some academics, while others place them at the center of their scholarly writing. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick,
Distinguished Professor of English at the CUNY Graduate Center, undertook a critical analysis of depression in her memoir *A Dialogue on Love*. Drawing upon Sylvan Tompkins’ view of the depressive position as a way of being, rather than a temporary pathology, Sedgwick’s inquiry into the depressive self explored the different spaces in which the academic produces this self. The paranoid-schizoid position is particularly evident, she noted, in activism and pedagogy, where the depressive faces the double-edged possibility of great reward and punishment. The autobiography offered a further space for exploring the academic depressive. Sedgwick conceived of it as a “specific listening space” that echoed and remapped the experience of therapy. The first-person voice that emerged in this space of “being alone, but not being alone” moved between the voice of the therapist and the self. Writing the memoir allowed this multiply-inhabited voice to speak.

“There was a void, an absence, a silence,” begins the account of trauma in Charlotte Pierce-Baker’s *Surviving the Silence: Black Women’s Stories of Rape*. Pierce-Baker, Professor of Women’s Studies and English at Duke University, spoke as “a researcher and a survivor” of the experience of rape who made it her project to evoke and collect narratives of the violent act that women are often unable to articulate. She decided to make it a non-academic book that did not “intrude upon other women’s stories with theory,” but simply listened to women who never had their day in court. Initial plans to write a study of slavery and rape, or an ethnography of rape based on interviews, were disrupted when Pierce-Baker realized that she could not deny her own experience of rape.

Recognizing that "trauma maps its own way," she traced the different ways in which women responded to rape in order to find "a language that documented the colonizing of the body." When the book was written, Pierce-Baker found it had changed her thinking about pedagogy and theory. She now uses memoirs by women in her classes in order to expand the parameters of the academic.

Shirley Geok-lin Lim’s presentation, titled “Not an Academic Memoir,” related her journey to the role of an academic as well as the form of memoir. A poet who came to the United States from Malaysia on a Fulbright, Lim is now Professor of English at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She spoke of “coming out” as a writer and a scholar, and the particular difficulty of writing a memoir when the genre ran contrary to many postcolonial understandings of the history of the self. Eventually she decided that her book *Among the White Moon Faces* was “a feminist memoir written by a poet.” It drew upon a memory of the senses, intertwining childhood’s traumas and pleasures in an evocative poetic language.

Carolyn Heilbrun’s spirited life included completing a PhD when she had three small children and rising through the ranks to achieve a named chair at Columbia.

Excavating memories of everyday violence in her childhood, whether an unexpected enema or a caning for an innocent mistake, led Lim to understand the violence that she had herself inflicted as a mother. The memoir also helped her trace the path through hate to pity by which she had learned once again to love a violent parent. Carolyn Heilbrun’s study of the memoir had helped Lim justify using the form, and she was able to conclude not only that writing could be the “worthy and legitimate pursuit” of her life, but also that her life could be the subject of writing.

The singularity of a woman’s life is the theme of genealogical study in Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s memoir-in-progress. Spivak, who occupies Carolyn Heilbrun’s former chair of Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities, interrogated her descent from singular women as a “repetition with a difference.” Reading back a family history populated by women who lived within a “general culture of reproductive normativity” as well as those made singular by widowhood or other circumstances, Spivak found puzzles rather than an orderly narrative. How did certain men and women find a place apart from conventional roles? While some Hindu caste widows suffered degradation, how did others, such as Spivak’s mother Shibani Chakravorty, enter into rewarding careers after being...
Senior, continued from page 7

for being so knowledgeable about labor history and engaged with her students.

Alongside her school work, Carolyn has undertaken volunteer work with teenage single mothers, teaching them the importance of self-worth through financial security. “Lessons vary from debt solutions, savings, the importance of creating good credit, and creating college accounts for children,” she notes.

The next step in Carolyn’s career path is a Master’s in Public Administration at Columbia’s School for International and Public Affairs. Afterwards she hopes to start a non-profit organization in her community so that she can continue her work of teaching women how to gain financial security and contribute to eradicating poverty.

Meanwhile, she thanks Lila Abu-Lughod, “a wonderful, patient professor” and her greatly helpful writing tutor Danielle di-Novelli Lang, who helped her narrow the focus of the thesis—and only wishes she had been present the entire year! She wishes class-mates Ali and Andy the best of luck.

Andrew Hao, from Moorestown, N.J., began his Columbia career intending to be a philosophy major. But after taking his first courses at IRWaG, he found this department more to his liking. As a Women’s and Gender Studies major, he could explore issues pertaining to sexuality and gender that are often obscured in other departments. He applauds the small class sizes and keen attention of professors to students. He mentioned two courses he took as especially remarkable: Sociology of Sexuality and Feminist Texts II.

Andrew’s senior thesis is titled “Feminism, Gender and Social Contract.” It examines feminist critiques of liberal contract theory and asks if this body of theory can respond to those critiques. He studied the writings of two sorts of feminists who take on the liberal theorists John Rawls, who erases gender to form abstract political subjects, and John Locke, for whom women as a collective are excluded from the political sphere. He calls one group reformists and the others rejectionists, or revolutionaries. Among the theorists he considers are Nancy Fraser, Seyla Benhabib, Melissa Butler, Wendy Brown, and Jean Elshtain. He argues that even those who claim to reject liberal social contract theory have not developed robust enough arguments. For example, he shows that even Catharine MacKinnon’s rejection of Rawls, and liberal contract theory generally, is based on her assertion that there is no ungendered reality or perspective if the sexes are unequal. A more robust attack on Rawls, Andrew argues, would not insert this conditional clause about social inequality. Andrew found more convincing Melissa Butler’s critique that whereas in some forms of liberal theory women might, with education, become political and contractual beings, men are considered naturally so. But the most convincing critique of liberal contract theory, for Andrew, could be derived from Marx’s writing on the Jewish question.

Eventually, Andrew focused his own critique on both Locke and Rawls’ treatment of family relations as natural rather than contractual. In light of the politicization of the social by feminist theorists, and the consequent reworking of divisions between public and private, he argued that liberal theory evades the question of politics in the private sphere.

During his Columbia career, Andrew worked with the ACLU on racial profiling, and with New Jersey Superior Courts through a Task Force on Minority Concerns. He is looking forward to continuing the study of gender and sexuality as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of California at Berkeley.

Alexandra (Ali) Hartman, from Vineland, N.J., majored in Women’s and Gender Studies and did a concentration in human rights. Her thesis is titled “The Beginning of the End: An Analysis of the Special Obstacles to HIV Prevention Facing Urban Adolescent Girls of Color and Critique of the HIV Prevention Programs Serving this Population.” It was based on research in New York City, supplementing her work as an HIV/AIDS activist.

Ali was initially drawn to studying the population of adolescent women of color because of the prevalence of HIV among them. Approaching HIV as a social epidemic as much as a biological one, she investigated their specific needs for prevention education. Her conclusion was the opposite of her initial hypothesis of specificity: she realized that urban adolescent women of color have the same needs as others, and must be given the AIDS education to which they are entitled.

Statistics show that 15–24 year olds account for nearly 50% of new HIV infections worldwide. Adolescent women form 57% percentage of these cases, and Latina and African American girls make up over 70% of that infected population. These marginalized and medically disadvantaged young women are placed at a high risk for HIV by poverty, sexism, and substance addiction. Moreover, HIV

Senior, continued on page 15
simply a reporting.” Dailey notes. “It is not traversed by a certain kind of testimony, it is first and foremost fact that this text is a form of event and imitation. “Despite the acts as a medium between the suffering. The carefully crafted text imitatio, or the imitation of Christ’s experience. An example is the which can impel a repetition of the experience visited upon it. Materiality and language intersected in the vision-text through a poetics of the promise of a unified body, one that gathered the identifications of the mystic in different temporalities.

The literature of “affective spirituality” to which these texts of the later Middle Ages belonged assigned text and poetics a crucial role in religious experience. “The poem or text becomes a kind of substitute body that seeks to move or touch, or even re-enact and perform a passion that riddles the mystic, remains ineffable to her,” explains Professor Dailey. The experience of the mystical event is translated into a poetic event which can impel a repetition of the experience. An example is the imitatio, or the imitation of Christ’s suffering. The carefully crafted text acts as a medium between the event and imitation. “Despite the fact that this text is a form of testimony, it is first and foremost traversed by a certain kind of poetics,” Dailey notes. “It is not simply a reporting.”

It was the intersection in medieval women’s mystical texts of theology, philosophy and literature that attracted Professor Dailey. “I liked their counter-testimonies,” she says of her interest in these mystics. “There was something very authoritative about them, but they also posited authority in a different way. They were not entirely theological and philosophical—they borrowed paradigms from literature.”

“Hadewijch borrows from courtly love poetry, the trouvère and troubadours, but also from the Song of Songs, from Augustine, and other theologians who clearly influence her work. It is as though any one given form were not completely adequate—as though of gender were operative in poetics. “There is no clear identification between gender and the speaking subject in a fixed way, in these texts,” she explains. “And in writings by Julian of Norwich, for instance, traditional hierarchies of gender like that of Augustine are rewritten in a more equal way. She subtly rewrites Augustine’s hierarchy of the soul by placing male and female parts on an equal level. What’s especially interesting is that this balance is reflected in her rhetoric. She’s constantly writing in balanced sentences, using rhetorical forms that emphasize paired repetitions or threes, the latter echoing her emphasis on the Trinity.”

Acquiring the skills necessary to studying these multi-genred texts has taken Professor Dailey on a trajectory that includes a research fellowship at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium, teaching at Paris’ Collège International de Philosophie and, most recently, completing a Licentiate at the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto. Her sojourn in Europe combined “both more and less exciting things,” such as teaching English at Université de Lille III while studying Middle Dutch. She notes that a master of theatrical banality, Samuel Beckett, had held the same teaching position at Lille.

At Columbia, Professor Dailey is teaching Literature Humanities as well as an undergraduate seminar, “The Writing of History in Medieval Literature,” which she previously taught at Northwestern University. The latter course treats inventions

Table: The Middle Ages also provided rich terrain for studying the hybridization of gender...‘gender on a sliding scale,’ including feminine men, masculine women, and the virile woman or virago...

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<th>These women had to invent new forms to fit the nature of their experiences and the way in which it would most adequately be embodied. They relied on a particular sense of experientiality in authoring voices, rather than on institutions, for the most part. The hybrid of genres which these texts created, particularly in their use of literary forms, made them intriguing subjects for an analysis focused on poetics.</th>
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<td>The Middle Ages also provided rich terrain for studying the hybridization of gender. Professor Dailey outlines the construction of “gender on a sliding scale,” including feminine men, masculine women, and the virile woman or virago, and notes that these notions of gender were operative in poetics. “There is no clear identification between gender and the speaking subject in a fixed way, in these texts,” she explains. “And in writings by Julian of Norwich, for instance, traditional hierarchies of gender like that of Augustine are rewritten in a more equal way. She subtly rewrites Augustine’s hierarchy of the soul by placing male and female parts on an equal level. What’s especially interesting is that this balance is reflected in her rhetoric. She’s constantly writing in balanced sentences, using rhetorical forms that emphasize paired repetitions or threes, the latter echoing her emphasis on the Trinity.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dailey, continued on page 4

Dailey, continued on page 14
Howard asked, why is it that the number of women and minorities on the Columbia faculty surged in the late 1980s, but slowed to stasis in the 1990s? Why are these populations outnumbered in tenure-eligible posts, even as they swell the lecturer and associate positions? And what can be done about this? Howard offered several ideas, including the following:

- Improve existing job searches by rethinking how fields are defined, how to identify talent, and the composition of search committees.
- Study special challenges, such as how to create a culture in science and engineering fields that makes people want to come to Columbia and stay and making “transitional life funds” available to allow scientists to maintain labs during maternity leave.
- Make child care available and affordable for faculty, postdoctoral fellows, graduate students; provisions for spousal hires.
- Use lecture series and visiting professorships to get to know interesting scholars.

Howard’s talk drew a diverse, interdisciplinary crowd, with attendees from the Religion Department to the School of Engineering. Most importantly, each of us left the first Gender Breakfast talking excitedly about our future plans for the upcoming breakfasts.

On March 25th, Darcy Kelley of the Biological Sciences Department continued our discussion about the Summers controversy with her talk, “Do Brains Have a Sex? Deconstructing Larry Summers.” Kelley wrote a paper answering specific assertions made by Summers in his efforts to provoke and promote scholarship. Kelley questioned the popular understanding of “biology” as destiny, biology as intrinsic, and argued that scientific assessments of sexual difference center more on experiential biological sex differences. She pointed to many of the structural issues of the academic workplace as both conducive (flexible hours) and prohibitive (for scientists, costs of maintaining a lab) to having children. Discussion centered on questions of the cultural legitimacy of “scientific research” and how the Summers controversy appeared in the news, what kinds of change can happen at the administrative level, and what’s being done about the issue of daycare at Columbia. Christia Mercer, co-chair of the Columbia Commission on the Status of Women, later confirmed that the study originally intended to examine faculty childcare needs will also look at graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The talk was particularly successful at fostering connections between scholars in the natural sciences and those in the humanities.

In our final meeting of the semester, Gender Breakfast regulars gathered to plan out the 2005-6 year. Two particularly exciting ideas emerged. First, in addition to the monthly breakfasts hosting guest faculty, two participants from different fields will host discussion groups centered on readings. We hope to develop a website with a calendar to indicate both the dates of Gender Breakfats and the articles for reading weeks. Secondly, Gender Breakfast will host a day-long workshop on the research of feminist scholars at Columbia. Papers will be distributed ahead of time so that all participants and attendees will be able to participate actively in the brainstorming and discussion process. We also created a “wish list” of professors we hope to invite to speak next year and of topics of interest.
Povinelli, continued from page 6

The “highly educated white woman” who had kinship relations with indigenous Australians did not fit into liberal discourses about their world, the ill health of which was engendered by systemic impoverishment and, by liberal standards, an excess of genealogical solidarity. Povinelli therefore glossed over the diagnoses of the sore offered by her Australian friends while dealing with North American doctors. She also remained silent about her reasons for having her bandage changed by a non-professional so as to keep her queer identity separate from the doctor’s analysis.

Povinelli notes, however, that the opportunity to construct oneself as an autological subject is not freely available. It may not even be a valued category at certain times—for instance, in the everyday sociality based on genealogical embeddedness among Povinelli’s indigenous Australian friends and kin. Here, “friendship is not based on strangers becoming intimate…but the intensification of kinship roles.” Nevertheless, this Australian community is incorporated within liberal national and transnational discourses that construct its genealogical intimacies as unhealthy ritual exchanges, in social as well as medical terms. Its subjects are not autological, in the limited liberal sense. They are subsequently treated as exceptions within liberal nationalism, and their exceptionality is both enforced through land claim laws, in which they must act as bearers of Aboriginal tradition, and cited as the cause of their impoverishment and ill health.

The subject who lives with these contradictory demands is made concrete in Povinelli’s analysis through a focus on the body, specifically “how the body as a kind of materiality extends into social and physical space.” While her own body, with its incongruous sore, could usually be self-fashioned by telling different stories in different places, the physical consequences of not belonging to liberalism’s unmarked white category were punishing for indigenous Australians. Their life expectancy and health were considerably below national averages, since their territories had been given over to capitalist projects that evaded “the economic ‘drag’ of social services such as health care.”

In her talk, …she tried to unravel the connections between ‘First’ and ‘Third’ worlds as they are constructed in discourses of health and sexuality in the “liberal diaspora.” This is Povinelli’s term for the instantiation of liberal political philosophies in differing and unequal contexts globally.

The Aboriginal subject must therefore negotiate a series of double-binds in seeking legal, medical or other care.” Situated at an intersection between conflicting discourses of subjectivity in governing systems, indigenous Australians often bear the ravages of this conflict on bodies deprived of care. Since they are consigned to a space that is governed without being cared for by the liberal state, they care for themselves through experiments with carnality. Accidental death and maiming are facts of lives lived in poverty and poor employment conditions. This death-world was creatively linked to the world of kinship by one widow who used the monetary compensation from the state for her husband’s death to perform a potlatch and thus strengthen her kin relations. The paucity of health care institutions in indigenous areas requires that children, too, are prepared for pain from an early age. A mother cuts into her child’s sore with matter-of-fact brutality and an injunction that the child should not feel sorry for herself when it hurts.

The contrast between such experiments with the body and those by less beleaguered North Americans of whom Povinelli writes is enormous. The latter dissidents against heteronormative practices of sex and kinship might mark their difference on their bodies, but their experiments with carnality presuppose a very different notion of the sovereign subject. While signalling the “dis-eased relation of persons to their real conditions of existence,” these marks are figured against the possibility of an unmarked whiteness or silence that is not available to subjects forced to speak in a “traditional” voice if they want to be recognized. The “carnal worlds” which Povinelli traversed through encounters with

Povinelli, continued on page 15
Heilbrun. continued from page 9
unverifiable.” Experiences of
women who could not be read as
representative became part of the
story. One of these was an
exceptionally intelligent tribal girl
who, for Spivak, stood in the place
of her village grandmother.
Layered readings of lives allowed
her to “contextualize and
dectextualize the other.”

The memoir was a way of
reclaiming a self othered by
Orientalist writing about Muslim
women for Leila Ahmed, Victor S.
Thomas Professor at the Harvard
Divinity School. Her story of
coming from Cairo to the U.S., A
Border Passage, is now taught in
gender studies courses at Columbia
and Barnard, noted panel
moderator Professor Lila Abu-
Lughod. Ahmed read from her
reconstruction of a peaceful
childhood in the memoir, noting its
“nostalgia for we know not quite
what.” She did not feel that the
women’s quarters of her father’s
ancestral home was a harem in
which women were inferior. When
the family moved for the summer to
the seaside, and the men only
visited on weekends, they lived in
“women’s time, women’s space,
women’s culture.” Ahmed recalled
that the women had their own
pacifist understanding of Islam,
which they taught by example. The
memoir allowed Ahmed to separate
herself from a nationalist identity,
but also from the strictures of
academic writing. After the attacks
of 9/11, however, Ahmed realized
that in America she was
“inescapably Muslim.” Her current
project on veiling among Muslim
American women thus reflects
upon the reforging of her subjects’
identity as well as her own.

Nancy K. Miller’s journey
from the Department of French
at Columbia to Women’s Studies
at Barnard and eventually to
English and Comparative
Literature at the CUNY Graduate
Center is given an autobio-
graphical reading in her memoir
Out of Breath. Her talk, titled “The
Age Difference” reflected on the
parallel narratives of her academic
and feminist trajectories. Miller
spoke of living in France and
studying French in her youth as
choices impelled by thinking of
Frenchness as an escape identity.
This story resembled a “quest
plot” in which she wrote herself
into new narratives rather than
identifying with the victimized
heroines of novels. But on
returning to the U.S., Miller found
this adopted identity inadequate.
Addressing the journey and return
in memoir form, she has at-
ttempted to re-read her France
years through the archive of
letters that she had sent her
parents from Paris. Miller
proposed that the integration of
criticism and autobiography would
show what the memoir form was
capable of.

Those who missed this
conference will have a chance to
experience some of it, and read
more. A special issue of Scholar
and Feminist Online, (http://www.
barnard.edu/sfonline) published
by the Barnard Center for
Research on Women, will be
devoted to Carolyn Heilbrun and
the conference “Writing a
Feminist’s Life.” Edited by Victoria
Rosner and Nancy K. Miller, it is
due to appear in Spring 2006. The
issue will reproduce most or all of
the papers presented at the
conference, as well as excerpts of
comments by the conference
organizers and moderators and
from question-and-answer
sessions. It will also include
papers by feminist scholars who
knew Carolyn Heilbrun, some
reprints of Heilbrun’s own work,
and a bibliography of her writings
and those of other contributors to
the issue.

Dailey, continued from page 11
of time and figurations of history
in literary texts, linking the
different time frames of history,
salvation and redemption. In the
spring, she will also teach a
graduate seminar titled “Host
Bodies,” on hospitality,
embodiment and language in the
texts of women mystics.

After completing her translation
of Giorgio Agamben’s The Time That
Remains (Stanford University
Press, 2005), Professor Dailey is
ready to begin a new research
project on the figure of the witness
in the Middle Ages. Focusing on
Anglo-Saxon texts, she will
investigate the idea of the
eyewitness as a viable authority,
whether in witnessing the Passion
of Christ or the very different form
of witnessing that produced the
travel narrative. “I’m especially
curious about the relationship of
witnessing to poetry, law, and the
structuring of authority in
narrative,” she notes. “But I’m
also interested in “virtual”
experiences, such as the imitatio
of the mystics.” She will also
examine pseudo-travel narratives
written at the time, such as The
Wonders of the East. This study will
investigate how a prefiguration of
historical time is collapsed into
experiential time, and reveal how
changing notions of the witness
were reshaping Anglo-Saxon
English subjectivity.

Breakfast. continued from page 12
interest. Finally, we discussed
developing an interdisciplinary
forum on family and the academy.
This has been an enriching
semester, and we hope to build on
this success next year. Please
direct any questions, comments, or
suggestions about Gender
Breakfast to Julie Golia
[jag2104@columbia.edu] and
Rachel Tamar Van
[rvt2101@columbia.edu].
Workshop, continued from page 3
proposed that context-specific differences had to be negotiated and focused especially on postcolonial India to illustrate negotiations in process on the ground, including around violence and divorce.

“Plans are underway for a continuation of the series in the fall semester,” says co-convenor Professor Anupama Rao of the history department at Barnard. “We will have papers from Antoinette Burton, a specialist on gender and colonialism in South Asia from the University of Illinois in September, Luise White, an Africanist historian who has worked on prostitution in Africa and whose most recent book is Speaking with Vampires, in October, and, in November, Sally Engle Merry, a legal anthropologist who has been studying CEDAW.” Check the IRWaG website for details.

Seniors, continued from page 10
 testing and condoms are often impractical or unavailable for them. Against this historical background, Ali developed a critique of three HIV prevention-education programs for her thesis. She examined the content, format and resources provided to instructors in each program. It emerged that instructors were often ordinary teachers who were not trained in HIV prevention. None of the three programs addressed poverty, a major factor in the low use of condoms and inadequate health care in this population, as well as an impetus for sex work. Substance abuse was discussed at length, but violence was only minimally touched upon. Concluding that the sample of HIV prevention-education programs do not sufficiently address why adolescent girls of color are at high risk, Ali ended with fewer expectations that education programs could be an adequate response to infection in this population. Socio-economic disadvantages were a more relevant focal point.

Ali has worked for a long time with adolescents and youth who are HIV/AIDS infected or affected. She has worked as a mentor and program coordinator, or in a preventive capacity for adolescents as a safe sex educator. Recently, she joined the New York HIV Vaccine Trial Unit as an outreach and education intern working with NIH and Columbia Presbyterian. At Columbia, she was involved in the group RSAP, which advocated a stronger sexual assault policy on campus.

Ali found that IRWaG “allowed me to be part of a thoughtful and close department while exploring social issues, philosophies, and policies that mean something to me and to the world.” Her most memorable courses include Professor Young’s Introduction to Women’s Health, Professor Romken’s International Human Rights, Gender Violence and Identity, and the seminar Gender and HIV/AIDS co-taught by Professors Young and Swarr. She says she has had an incredible experience as a major. She added, ”I want to thank my professors and advisers, classmates, and colleagues for challenging and changing me over the past three years!” After graduating, she will be traveling in Southeast Asia and then, as a prestigious Rotary Ambassadorial Scholar, will pursue further education abroad.

Povinelli, continued from page 13
North American medicine and queer practices as well as indigenous Australian lives speak of the range of possibilities of the body in mediating a social self.

The respondent, Professor Janet Jakobsen, director of the Barnard Center for Research on Women, addressed autological and genealogical subjectivity with specific regard to queer theory and sociality in North America. She said she felt unusually empowered to speak about personal experience because Professor Povinelli had. She asked if queer theory had lost its impulse to experiment with sociality, and how this might undercut its politics of autological recognition. Jakobsen offered an example from her own experience, that of a queer couple negotiating their status as family in a hospital. Within the intensive care unit, Jakobsen was allowed to see her partner because she had power of attorney, and was thus a contractual relation. However, the autological position assigned to her as a queer partner changed in the context of negotiating health care with insurance providers. When Jakobsen’s partner was in rehabilitation, the insurance company declared that it would not provide a paid health worker to care for her because she had a partner who could do so.

The shift from autological to genealogical subjectivity depending on context, as seen in this example, points to the complex politics of autonomy for queer couples. Povinelli’s call to study experiments with subjectivity outside the Hegelian dialectic of death and recognition can aptly address this complexity. Jakobsen emphasized the relevance of such an approach to “the critique of the self-governing self in queer theory and sociality.”
### Fall 2005 Undergraduate Courses

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Course #</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Call #</th>
<th>Points</th>
<th>Instructor(s)</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Day</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>V1001x</td>
<td>Introduction to Women's &amp; Gender Studies, Discussion Section.</td>
<td>02215</td>
<td>3 pts.</td>
<td>M. Hirsch, K. Bedford</td>
<td>202 Altschul</td>
<td>T</td>
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<td>BC1050x</td>
<td>Introduction to Women's Health.</td>
<td>07895</td>
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<td>WR</td>
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<td>V3112x</td>
<td>Feminist Texts II: Beauvoir to the Present.</td>
<td>78246</td>
<td>4 pts.</td>
<td>T. Sheffield</td>
<td>754 Schrhorn Ext.</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>2:10–4p</td>
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<tr>
<td>BC3121x</td>
<td>Black Women in America.</td>
<td>00517</td>
<td>4 pts.</td>
<td>L. Tiersten</td>
<td>405 Barnard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2:10–4p</td>
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<tr>
<td>V3311x</td>
<td>Colloquium in Feminist Theory.</td>
<td>82797</td>
<td>4 pts.</td>
<td>E. Povinelli</td>
<td>754 Schrhorn Ext.</td>
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<td>V3321x</td>
<td>Senior Seminar I.</td>
<td>82797</td>
<td>4 pts.</td>
<td>K. R. Van Dyck</td>
<td>754 Schrhorn Ext.</td>
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<td>11a–12:50p</td>
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<td>V3520x</td>
<td>Senior Seminar.</td>
<td>03661</td>
<td>4 pts.</td>
<td>R. Young</td>
<td>203 Barnard</td>
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### Fall 2005 Graduate Courses

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<th>W4300x</th>
<th>Advanced Topics in Women's &amp; Gender Studies</th>
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<td>SEC.001</td>
<td>20th Century Jewish American Women Writers, Part I.</td>
<td>00816</td>
<td></td>
<td>I. Klepfisz</td>
<td>227 Milbank</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEC.002</td>
<td>Sexuality and Science.</td>
<td>02994</td>
<td></td>
<td>R. M. Young</td>
<td>421 Lehman</td>
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<td>SEC.004</td>
<td>Sex, Gender, and Transgender Queries.</td>
<td>04128</td>
<td></td>
<td>B. Singer</td>
<td>405 Barnard</td>
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<td>6:10–8p</td>
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<tr>
<td>G4000</td>
<td>Genealogies of Feminism: Gender and Empire.</td>
<td>21403</td>
<td>3 pts.</td>
<td>L. Abu-Lughod</td>
<td>754 Schrhorn Ext.</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>2:10–4p</td>
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**Feminist News**

Institute for Research on **WOMEN AND GENDER**

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