A few months after Natasha Trethewey became an assistant professor of creative writing at Emory in fall 2001, a friend at the University of Connecticut urged her to consider a faculty position there. “I was really happy to have arrived at Emory, and I said I wasn’t that interested in thinking about moving so soon,” Trethewey says, “but she talked me in to just checking it out.”

Trethewey visited the campus. “I became an accidental negotiator,” she says. “I still didn’t want to go there, so when they asked...
me what I wanted, I decided to ask for what I thought was the moon, thinking that would solve the problem of me having to turn them down.”

To Trethewey’s surprise, Connecticut met her requests almost exactly. Ultimately she decided to remain at Emory (and in 2007 won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry and became the Phillis Wheatley Distinguished Chair in Poetry), but she also leveraged the offer to secure a better situation for herself here.

Accidental or not, Trethewey’s experience has become routine in the academic labor market—negotiation by counteroffer. Prevailing wisdom suggests that those who move every few years from one institution to another are better compensated, thanks to national market competition. Conversely, those who stay in one place pay what some call the “loyalty tax.” For those faculty, it seems, the best raises come by going on the market and bringing back a job offer, which triggers a counteroffer. To ensure one’s “market value,” one must play the market.

To some, subtle biases in Emory’s culture complicate the issue—especially for women and minority faculty. “For years I served on the Affirmative Action Committee [of Emory College, which reviews all faculty searches],” Trethewey says. “One day we were talking to the head of a department in which women were underrepresented. There was a woman on their short list of candidates. We asked him what the ranking was for these candidates. He said the woman was the top candidate, even though she wasn’t listed as number one. The problem was, he said, that she already teaches at a neighboring institution, and they have the same difficulties we do recruiting women and minorities, and we really didn’t want to take her away from them. And I leaned across the table and said, ‘I hope you’ll let her make that decision.’”

As Trethewey’s story illustrates, the institution bears some responsibility for recognizing the literal value of academic work. But for some, the task of getting their worth is daunting. According to Women Don’t Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever (Princeton 2003), women are less likely than men to negotiate on their first job, and when they do, they ask for less than men do. Because future raises are calculated on percentages of pay, that gap is tough to close. Combined with a slower rate of promotion for women (a recent Modern Language Association study found that on average, women spend 8.2 years at the associate level, as opposed to 6.6 years for men), the result is a discrepancy that widens over a career.

How does Emory look in that national picture? Last year, the deans of Emory’s schools and colleges evaluated compensation packages across the board to determine competitiveness across disciplines against benchmark institutions. The provost’s office issued a preliminary report that examined faculty equity in terms of various diversity characteristics. Emory fared well in comparison to other institutions (though the overall picture remains unimpressive). And although evidence of university-wide gender inequity was not overwhelming, the study did not delve into possible inequities at the department or even school and unit level.

THE VALUE AND COSTS OF THE COUNTEROFFER

Does negotiating well necessitate a game of brinksmanship? The counteroffer has costs for all players, says Ajay Kohli, former Isaac Stiles Hopkins Chair in Marketing in the business school (over the summer he joined Georgia Tech’s marketing department). “There is a personal cost to the individual: not only does she or he have to go out and get an offer, it can also hurt his or her reputation in the marketplace. Should the person actually want to move to another school at a later time, a prospective school is going to say, ‘Forget that person; he or she just goes out every few years

Recommended reading


and plays the market. Then there is a cost to the [home] institution: it ends up rewarding select individuals, which can hurt institution-wide morale. In addition, the institution subliminally is saying that someone on the outside is more capable of judging an individual's value.

But the market can provide a powerful last-resort bargaining tool. “For the first time in sixteen years,” says Scott Boden, professor of orthopaedic surgery and director of the orthopaedics and spine center, “I [recently] did just that. I had tried for some time to get the attention of senior leadership on a couple of key issues that affected my constituency. I’ve always been proud of the fact that I’ve accomplished a lot at Emory in terms of building systems and centers and innovative paradigms, but I’ve never had to do it by threatening anything. It is dangerous if an institution creates a model [by which] people feel the only way they’re going to get something is if they’re on the verge of leaving. It’s a one-time strategy, and if you use it, you have to be willing to leave. Once you start to go through these motions, it’s very easy to get into a situation where you can’t turn around or back up. But there’s nothing wrong with people looking at other opportunities for the right reasons—if anything, to reinforce that they feel good about their current situation.”

What might offer the same reassurance yet help keep faculty from taking that step? Associate Professor of History Leslie Harris argues that less taboo around compensation could improve the environment. “I’ve found that faculty, particularly in private institutions, shy away from speaking frankly about it,” Harris said last May at an AE-sponsored panel discussion. “The secrecy perhaps helps the deans give some of us more of what we deserve—it works against a simplistic equality in compensation. At the same time, I wonder if we do ourselves a disservice by not talking a little more openly about what’s possible.”

Although Emory’s salaries are not public information, that kind of transparency does exist in the Department of Emergency Medicine, according to Ada Lee and Pete Correll Professor and Department Chair Kate Heilpern: “We have a tier structure that’s very clear. If you come in with zero years of experience, you’re right out of a residency program, your compensation is x. If you have y years of experience and you’ve gotten an additional degree or did subspecialty training, your compensation is increased. And there’s a third tier if you’re doing something administrative for the department—running a residency program, for example.”

That structure isn’t perfect, however. “I have lost people who have pushed me on salary because I felt it unfair to break our model for somebody’s personal compensation needs,” Heilpern concedes.

**R E N E W A L  P A C K A G E S ?**

**A s e l u s i v e i n s t i t u t i o n a l t r a i t s** like “quality of life” and “climate” become as important to faculty as money, more non-salary perquisites are on the table: lab space and equipment, administrative support, spouse and partner hires, even mortgage assistance and private school tuition support. Emory has struggled to keep up with the growing demand for employee childcare—a key issue in recruitment and retention.

Asa Griggs Candler Professor of Psychology and Emory College Senior Associate Dean for Research Patricia Bauer says she’d like to see Emory institute a kind of systemic renewal package: “Nobody thinks twice about a new faculty member getting a start-up package. Why don’t we have, for the person who has been here for ten years and whose equipment is ratty, a refresher package? [It says] we recognize that you could go elsewhere and get new equipment and resources, and we are glad you are staying here.”

**Those who move every few years are better compensated, thanks to national market competition.**

Conversely, those who stay in one place over a long time pay what some call the “loyalty tax.”

Last year, an ad hoc committee of faculty proposed a portable tuition benefit to help faculty and staff meet the cost of college tuition for dependent children pursuing undergraduate degrees at other institutions. According to their research, of the seventeen universities ranked higher than Emory by U.S. News & World Report, thirteen have a portable tuition benefit. “We found that people for whom the portable tuition benefit is important tend to be at the apex of their career—people we’d most want to keep,” says Professor of Law Bill Buzbee, a member of the ad hoc group. “It’s the one real outlier where Emory is way out of line with its competitive institutions and where it could overnight change its policy.”

The question remains whether Emory can afford to offer such a benefit, however. Executive Vice President for Finance and Administration Mike Mandl told the Faculty Council last January that the portable tuition benefit might include hidden costs such as providing peer institutions with Emory-funded financial aid. He

*Continued on page 11*
Academic Exchange: You spent sixteen years at the University of Minnesota. How does negotiation compare between private and public institutions in your experience?

Patricia Bauer: When you are a beginning assistant professor, the expectations are the same at a high-quality private institution like Emory and a Research I institution like Minnesota. The starting salaries—setting aside the Stanfords, the Harvards, the Yales—are pretty much the same across the board. Working your way up through the ranks at a public institution, however, it is more obvious what you need to do. Everybody is pretty much doing the same thing. [Another difference is that salaries at public institutions are public information.] I had friends among the faculty who as soon as they knew the salaries had been posted would go to the library and look them up to use in bargaining. But still, it is a meritocracy. One of the beauties of academia is that we are rewarded in proportion to our contribution to the institution and the discipline. Generally if someone is earning substantially more than you and you have the same years in rank, you can point to a few reasons why: she has published three more books than I have, has won that award this year, or received another grant.

AE: What about unexplained salary gaps that favor men?

PB: It is well documented that women in particular are hesitant to negotiate on their own behalf, and I think that it is probably even harder when you are negotiating with a male chair and a male dean. I was department chair at Duke for one year, and we were doing three searches with multiple candidates. The women asked for less. They did not ask for summer salary, for as much space, or for as much staff support.

AE: How do you think faculty determine their own worth in that context?

PB: I think a major way is by social comparison. We look around at

I don’t think Emory should ever concede that it will lose people to better schools. I think it has long done that, has not tried to remain competitive, and sometimes I fear that it is still just trying to be good enough.

— BILL BUZBEE, PROFESSOR OF LAW

Academic Exchange: What has kept you at Emory for fifteen years?

Bill Buzbee: It hasn’t always been an easy choice. There are many great universities out there seeking possible lateral hires and actively making their schools even stronger. But in the end, probably like most people, I chose academe not to get wealthy but to be in a dynamic environment, surrounded by smart people doing interesting things and good students who want to be challenged. Emory has many great strengths. It is a compact university with a lot of cross-campus friendships and connections. People from different departments visit each other and go to each other’s presentations. Many schools, including much better schools, don’t have that. For me that’s probably the most important factor.

That said, there are expenses to life, and obviously monetary variables matter. Every other school that calls up talks about their salary package and benefits within a short time, and they offer things like chairs. They want to attract you with a combination of the inherent strengths of another school, additional prestige, indications of achievement, and money. Sometimes those overtures are tempting. But I’ve stayed here because I like Emory personally and professionally. Also, I’m in a dual-career family, and I have kids in high school. I’d think twice about uprooting both my wife’s career and my kids’ schooling, and that’s been part of my response to schools that have made overtures.

AE: What do you think of the practice of going on the market just to leverage a counteroffer?

BB: I personally think for anyone to be disingenuous about what they are considering—to play off institutions when you’re not seriously
our peers and ask, What are they getting, what do they have, and am I better, worse, or the same? There is no question that there is a huge grapevine. There is nothing wrong with getting on email and saying, I understand that you’re also on the job market and we do similar work; what are you asking for? But I think one of the mistakes we make is not recognizing that every institution compensates differently. Some will load start-up packages with personnel but scrimp on equipment, because that is where their budgets are. It is so important to get that whole picture—yes, she’s getting two months of summer salary, but she doesn’t get a teaching release.

**AE:** What do you think of the practice of going on the market just to leverage a counteroffer?

**PB:** I think this is a very dangerous situation for individuals and institutions to find themselves in. It is very expensive; it is a very time-consuming process; it is a great deal of investment of energy. At a senior level, you are disrupting people’s life. When my lab [at Minnesota] got wind of the fact that I was looking around, there was a six-month period when not only was I upsetting my own and my husband’s life, but I was upsetting their lives. Their adviser might leave; their employer might leave. You shouldn’t be cavalier about those things. On the other hand, sometimes it seems to be the only way at an institution that you can help yourself.

**AE:** How might a school pre-empt it?

**PB:** Some institutions have nice internal recognition mechanisms, such as portable tuition benefits or chairs. Those are ways of allowing you to gauge and demonstrate your worth without having to go on the market. Nobody thinks twice about a new faculty member getting a start-up package. Why don’t we have, for the person who’s been at the institution for ten years whose equipment is all ratty, a refresher package? We recognize that you could go elsewhere and get new equipment and resources, and we are glad that you are staying here. When you think about what a counteroffer retention package costs, it is easy to make the case that we should take steps to avoid the need to put one together.

**AE:** What about other types of incentives such as portable tuition benefits?

**PB:** I think we have to be very careful with any of those incentives because you are always only hitting a subset of the population. Tuition benefit does nothing for me because I don’t have children. But I do think Emory and every other institution of its ilk should provide the most high-quality childcare that money can afford for faculty, students, and staff. And that should just be a priority; it’s a family issue that hits overwhelmingly. We could become a premier institution for support of women and families. *Ac*
I didn’t think I needed to ask; I just thought if I did my work well the system would reward me like everyone else,” one woman faculty member said to me on a rainy afternoon when I came in to tell her that she had just received a long-overdue equity raise. The situation is so commonplace that it is now the title of a book, Women Don’t Ask: Negotiation and the Gender Divide, by Linda Babcock and Sara Laschever. (Princeton University Press 2003)

After the large success of this first book, the authors realized that there was an entire socialization process for women that prevented them from playing like men in the workplace, and they wrote a follow-up, Ask For It: How Women Can Use the Power of Negotiation to Get What They Really Want (Bantam Dell 2008). It should be said that the gender divide is not absolute; there are many women who are excellent negotiators and many men who are not at all comfortable with the give-and-take of the negotiating table. Babcock and Laschever’s works are filled with statistics, however, and the gender differential is real.

What was the chord that these and other books struck? Many of us are now familiar with long-term workplace situations where men and women develop different professional habits. Men seem more frequently to cultivate alternative job offers and then negotiate for raises on the basis of those outside offers. In contrast, women think if they do their work and receive praise from their boss then they are likely to be fairly rewarded. Men tend to receive more raises, and the women tend to receive minimal, but not extra, increases.

Many of us are now familiar with long-term workplace situations where men and women develop different professional habits. Men seem more frequently to cultivate alternative job offers and then negotiate for raises on the basis of those outside offers. In contrast, women think if they do their work and receive praise from their boss then they are likely to be fairly rewarded. Men tend to receive more raises, and the women tend to receive minimal, but not extra, increases. Most of the time, people involved in these kinds of situations are neither malevolent perpetrators nor innocent victims of sexism. They are simply playing two different games. Frequently, those in positions to change such patterns simply don’t see the discrepancy. This is, I think, particularly true in academia, where the nitty-gritty labor of making a fair and equitable workplace sometimes takes second place to research and teaching. Department chairs might simply go by the percentage status quo when it comes to raises, and then, when a faculty member asks for more money or garners an outside job offer, chairs will respond in a manner they see fit. But without that extra nudge, chairs may not notice what is happening.

I would like to discuss three major underlying, perhaps unconscious, sources of the problem: 1) improper assessment of the workplace possibilities for negotiation; 2) a discomfort with the language of negotiation; and 3) academic chairs who do not feel empowered to be vigilant about discrepancies in the workplace.

Does it hurt to ask? Many women don’t properly assess the workplace situation or answer the question, Does it really hurt to ask? In fact, many people assume that it will hurt to ask in almost any situation. They feel that asking will result in punishment. To be sure, women are in many ways legitimately responding to their environment. Many studies have shown, and it is now fairly commonplace knowledge, that women have a much thinner line to walk between appearing as collegial and appearing “bitchy.” The same behavior that is understood as “assertive” for a man is perceived as “aggressive” for a woman.

Frequently there is another way of thinking about the same situation. Some workplace situations are truly punitive, where someone who asks for anything is punished. If a workplace really has those characteristics, an employee should think hard about whether...
it is right to work there at all. But in most relatively sane workplace situations, this is not the case. Employees who come in with reasonable, well-informed concerns about their compensation are given some kind of hearing.

Begin by watching other people who ask for small things, such as a different office lighting system or a better printer, and notice the response. If one discerns that it doesn’t hurt to ask, then go ahead and ask “well.” That requires comparative research. A faculty member may not have access to salary information about colleagues, but she has access to studies and salary scales in her state and the nation. She also has access to the average salaries in her professional school or college. These are usually found in dean’s reports.

**ASKING WELL**

What does it mean to ask well? Many people feel they can find no language of negotiation other than that which seems demanding and shrill. It is part of the larger dynamic, that thinner line women must walk in the workplace. But once they do work themselves up to asking, the next step becomes finding the words—words that feel right to the person asking and that will be effective enough to be heard by the person in a position to respond.

Over the years I have observed that many people feel most comfortable and are most effective in negotiation when they use inclusive, problem-solving language. Inclusive language demonstrates an understanding of the issue as a common problem that involves both the supervisor and the employee. Plopping down in a chair and, in a burst of pent up resentment, declaring, “I need a raise,” is usually not effective. (I have seen this happen more than once.)

It is far more effective to make an appointment and let the chair know the topic in advance. Then the faculty member might begin the conversation with “I’d like to talk about a better compensation package.” A common problem has been identified, inclusive language is being used, and both parties can work toward something instead of one party demanding something from another.

It sometimes helps to practice this conversation with someone else before speaking with a supervisor, and it always helps to anticipate the response and practice replies. Each time the words are spoken, one becomes more and more comfortable with the idea and language of negotiation.

**THE PROACTIVE CHAIR**

How might academic chairs help make negotiation easier and more productive? In my view, chairs have two choices: they may act as “mini-deans” and simply pass on decisions from the dean’s office, or become faculty advocates and negotiate with deans on behalf of their faculty. I believe that chairs should be advocates and be far more proactive on issues of gender, equity, and negotiation styles.

Some chairs, however, see themselves as distributors of limited financial goods, an onerous task that anyone would want to be relieved of. Some chairs might feel disempowered in the process of negotiating with the dean on behalf of another faculty member. In this case, the faculty member needs to ask the chair for help. Language such as, “I am wondering if you could act as my advocate in this situation,” is appropriate.

Chairs need to be far more creative in working with faculty members on options for recognition. A department might institute clear and fair policies about course reductions in the cases of extraordinary service, so that the chair can use such reductions if the salary budget is tight. Extra research funds are also resources chairs can use to help an undercompensated faculty member. TA help, research assistant help, and help with garnering outside research funds are also perfectly appropriate for a chair to offer. If chairs communicate clearly that there are finite funds and everyone knows the criteria upon which they make decisions, people are willing to be creative in negotiating better packages.

**THE OUTSIDE OFFER: BEYOND THE CULTURE OF RESENTMENT**

One of the more difficult moments for me at Emory was when I overheard a chair encourage a faculty member to go out on the job market, since the chair was unwilling to do anything on the faculty member’s behalf. I have been struggling for a long time with the problem of the outside offer. Many negotiation books recommend that women simply be as aggressive as men and garner outside offers as much as possible to play the game.

In the academic context this practice can be demoralizing and detrimental to intellectual community. At its best, it can be a wake-up call for chairs and colleagues to notice a colleague’s worth. At its worst, it is a waste of everyone’s emotional and financial resources, especially if the person really wants to stay where he or she is and is simply at a loss to find equitable compensation.

My own approach as chair was to try, as much as possible, to retain people before they felt compelled to go out on the job market. If a faculty member feels that a chair is doing everything possible to act on his or her behalf, their morale and larger perspective on work is usually very different indeed. But it is a very difficult issue, and one that does not have a single, neat solution.

Academia at its best is a place of civil, rigorous, and collegial exchange of ideas, a place where the people exchanging those ideas are protected for life. At its worst, academia is a place where lack of communication creates long-term,
In the musical “My Fair Lady,” Eliza Doolittle transforms from a respectable flower girl with a cockney accent into a princess of dazzling elegance and proper pronunciation. She attends a ball in the triumphant culmination of an experiment that started with a wager between Professor Henry Higgins and Colonel Pickering about her fate.

Following the ball, the two men congratulate themselves and each other for this “marvelous victory”: “By George, we did it—as sturdy as Gibraltar, not a second did we falter, there’s not doubt about it, we did it”—an ode to their own brilliance. Eliza, now separated from family and friends, hovers in the background, an object of their work—to use the language of Simone de Beauvoir in The Second Sex—rather than a subject of her own story.

For women, according to Fels, “ambition” implies egotism, self-aggrandizement, or manipulation of others for one’s own ends. Men, by contrast, consider ambition necessary and desirable.

expected careers to take off. As adults, women—to a much greater degree than men—face continuous pressures to reevaluate and reshape their lives. Fels argues for an overarching view of the process by which women create, realize, reconfigure, and abandon goals.

Dividing her book into four sections, Fels draws on interviews, biographies, autobiographies, case studies, and psychological as well as sociological studies:

- Women and Ambition;
- Recognition and Ambition in Women’s Lives;
- Women and Mastery;
- Careers, Marriage, and Family.

Women, we learn, have an ambivalent relationship to the word “ambition”—both its meaning and consequences. As a result, women are likely to undervalue their own abilities or desires for
advancement and place inordinate weight on social expectations. For women, according to Fels, “ambition” implies egotism, self-aggrandizement, or manipulation of others for one’s own ends. Men, by contrast, consider ambition a necessary and desirable part of their lives. Yet when asked about their hopes or plans for the future, young girls frequently see themselves as a Supreme Court justice, the president of the U.S., an astronaut, or a famous writer. They believe they can be anything they want to be.

Fels points out that the wish for mastery is key to ambition. And women do achieve such mastery, whether in financial planning or medical school. There is an equally important dimension of achievement, however: recognition. And attention that is specific, accurate, and positive. If the need for approval is a powerfully innate drive in humans, as Fels argues, we know it is especially important for women. Yet how many women have stepped back so that someone else, often a man, can have the full attention and recognition? When we acknowledge an ambition, we are admitting to a desire to act and be appreciated within this larger sphere. The exercise of expertise within a public arena, Fels further demonstrates, has historically been the great divide that separated the ambitions of men from those of women. And until recently virtually all types of work were forbidden to women. And even very accomplished women express fear when they are personally recognized for their achievement, deflecting attention from their work. For the attempt to reach it, thus when called upon to re-evaluate the meaning and value of their ambitions, women are more likely to conclude that their goals are not rewarding enough to justify the effort required to reach them.

Especially during our twenties and early thirties, often after leaving the educational system, when a choice must be made, women downsize their ambitions or abandon them altogether.

What does this mean for women? Fels recommends “getting ambitious about ambition”: organizing as a political constituency; don’t expect things to fall into place easily; for each woman, life must be a creation of sorts and also an assertion of values; provide for structures of recognition; blow your own horn; and realize it’s never too late.

In my experience, one of the special and challenging parts of being a woman is that we have multiple roles, competing demands, numerous narratives. The novelist Anne Tyler has said, “I write because I have more than one life to live.” Women’s lives, writers or psychologists, firefighters or schoolteachers, librarians or researchers, typically consist of a series of extended episodes of focus. We have more than one life to live.

And more than just sequential narratives, women live many stories at once. I understand that this may be true for many men as well; I would suggest it is almost universally true for women. Finding a way to interweave, to highlight, to act on these narratives—some of which may include traditional, time-honored aspects of both femininity and feminism—is a challenge. There’s hardly time to contemplate ambition.

We must also seek new models, metaphors, and mentors. The pipeline of women in academic careers, especially in the sciences is leaky, we’re told. Perhaps the pipeline is not the right way to describe our multiple lives and roles. How many of us can survive the water pressure when we have everything from aging parents to young children to volunteer activities to demanding careers to Thanksgiving dinner also pressing? And how many of us know how important and meaningful it is to be there when called upon, whether at home or at work?

In the now-famous 2000 UCLA “Study of friendship among women: beyond soothing and supporting,” we learn that friends can actually counteract such stress. Women respond to stress with a cascade of brain chemicals that cause us to make and maintain friendships with other women. Oxytocin, by buffering the fight or flight response, encourages us to gather with other women, which produces more oxytocin, which counters stress. This calming response does not occur in men because of testosterone production. On the other side of the coin, when one is in an environment without the visible, daily support of other women as peers, one feels isolated and stressed—hence the importance of critical mass.

Don’t all of us have the right to expect, to insist, that our work be not only acknowledged but also recognized? Even at the risk of feeling selfish and foolish, women have something to say. Our voices long to be heard, and so we must be prepared to be bold and true to ourselves and to each other. Can we rewrite Eliza Doolittle’s story? Can she also step forward after the ball and say publicly, “By George, (or Georgina) I did it”?

\(\text{a_e}\)
IN 1990, I delivered a talk on several U.S. campuses about an instance of Hindu-Muslim violence in Bhagalpur, north India, the year before. The incident might be described as a pogrom, a widespread and to a large extent orchestrated attack upon the Muslim minority in a district of Bihar, which spread over several weeks, left hundreds dead, and turned tens of thousands of people into refugees, hiding in camps and other comparatively protected places. It was impossible, I said, to find anything like adequate or reliable evidence: the parties to the conflict had very different, indeed completely polarized accounts, the administration had hidden and subsequently destroyed much of the evidence it collected; there were simply no neutral observers; and it was difficult even to talk or write about the violence, given its incredibly barbaric character. How do we write about such violence, I asked, without either sensationalizing it and producing a pornography of violence, or sanitizing it by reducing it to a set of abstract numbers and “underlying” causes?

The moment underlined for me how innovative academic writing must engage the risk of the “unpalatable.” That is, it must seek to open up questions, propositions, and modes of argument not normally admissible within the terms of the disciplines or discourses that we inhabit.

In response to that talk, and to my subsequent work on the violence that constituted the partition of the Indian subcontinent, I encountered two kinds of objections (although these may, in the end, have been just one). First, especially in the case of Partition, an event that occurred sixty years ago, even sympathetic colleagues questioned the focus on the violence: why not let bygones be bygones? Why dredge up the past and re-open old wounds in Indian (and Pakistani and Bangladeshi) society? Wasn’t the violence just a moment of madness, best forgotten?

Second, readers and listeners asked about both Bhagalpur and Partition: why the extraordinary detail, the barrage of disturbing, unpalatable information about what common people, ordinary folk like you and me, can do to one another—information that some found it hard to listen to or read?

At the same time, one of my colleagues remarked after hearing my 1990 talk that he liked the fact that my presentation could not easily be appropriated or hitched on to other platforms or agendas—a difficulty, I suspect, that had to do with that thicket of detail. The presentation was dense with names of places and people and debates that were unfamiliar to the audience. Part of its purpose was to suggest that these names, places, and debates—the specific location of the occurrences—could not be separated from the more general or theoretical propositions of the paper. In order to engage with these, it was necessary to engage with some of the specifics of location, to familiarize oneself with names, events, and languages that are not already one’s own.

One might put the point in terms of translation. When it comes to translation, one must not be in too much of a hurry. Words come with worlds, and sometimes their very unfamiliarity is cause for discomfort. Words and worlds are not easily translated. And sometimes it is better not to translate them, even in our academic writings. Rather, we must present them—so far as we can—as they first appear to us, and try to convey something of their sense and implication by providing context, and examples of their organizational and situational placement, unfamiliar though these might be.

Feminist writing, queer theory, minority histories, subaltern and postcolonial studies and other oppositional scholarship has undertaken precisely such work in recent times. For historians, one way of troubling received histories has been to re-examine the frame of national history, to think outside the box of the nation-state and outside the box of what is traditionally counted as history. One could extend the proposition to thinking outside the box of what is thought of as politics, or violence, or art.

The assertion, “This is not history,” or not “real” history, “merely supplemental” history, has long dogged feminist scholarship, subaltern studies, and minority histories, and it shows no signs of disappearing anytime soon.

A second move that has produced equally unpalatable results for the historical establishment has been to challenge the long-accepted chronology and linear movement of narrative, the terms of discourse, the fetishizing of the footnote and of narrative, the terms of discourse, the fetishizing of the footnote and the “fact,” the veneration of official documents and the eyewitness account, and the simple faith in a “real” history, somewhere out there, awaiting only the diligence of the researcher. More and more historians today recognize the uncertainty of much that appears
in the historical record as “fact.” In an early essay on a Hindu-Muslim riot in Banaras in 1809, the “great Banaras riots” as the British colonial description had it, I noted that the different colonial accounts of the riot, dating from 1809-1810 to the early 1900s, were not agreed even on the bare facts of the event. The identity of the parties involved, the issue(s) over which they allegedly clashed, the mode of mobilization and violence, the location and precise date of the conflict, the number of casualties—none of this was very clear. What successive writings had retailed were rumors reported as fact in earlier writings, embellished with the later writers’ own “understanding” and with additional information gained from casual conversations.

A third means of making historical writing unpalatable, or at least more messy, relates to the second: to move away from the supposedly straightforward gathering of information to provide a handy summary of the history of a people, an event, or a process. Instead, we pay attention to the interruptions in received narratives, what I call fragments, for what they tell us about the self-representation of the totalities we work with—that is, the coherence attached to particular objects of inquiry and particular historical subjects, the naturalized subjects of history, and the objects of historical inquiry. Reviewers reading my essay on the Banaras “riot” (as also my work on Partition) were able to say that the author doesn’t tell us much about what actually happened, or about its causes. In consequence, they argued, readers can take away what they like from his writing!

The assumed transparency and seamlessness of the texts we produce and work with compounds the problem. This is where the issue of the “fragment” comes in. The fragment here is not just a “bit,” the dictionary’s “piece broken off,” of a pre-constituted whole. Rather, as I have suggested elsewhere (Routine Violence: Nations, Fragments, Histories [Stanford 2006]), it is a “disturbing element, a disturbance, a rupture . . . in the self-representation of particular totalities and those who uncritically uphold them.” An outstanding example of such an interruption is found in E. Valentine Daniel’s book, Charred Lullabies (Princeton 1996), a powerful meditation on the violence Sri Lanka has lived through over the last twenty-five years. Daniel explores in detail the attempt to narrate the experience of violence and torture and stresses “the limits, the particularity, the unshareability, and the incommunicability” of its pain. “Regardless of who the witness is—the villain, the surviving victim, or you and I—” he writes, “the violent event persists like crushed glass in one’s eyes.” He reports an interview with a man who was in the crowd that killed the pantaram (or boy who makes garlands) at a village Hindu temple in 1983:

The boy was in the middle of the road. He had urinated. The crowd was going round and round him. Someone attacked him with a sword, and then “everyone” began cutting him up with knives and beating him with sticks. Someone brought a tire from the Brown and Co. garage. There was petrol . . . [T]hey piled him on the tire and set it aflame. And can you imagine, this fellow stood up with cut-up arms and all and stood like that, for a little while, then fell back into the fire.

This was in the early days of his collection of stories about the violence, says Daniel, and he did not know what to say. “So I asked [the man] a question of absolute irrelevance to the issue at hand. Heaven knows why . . . ‘What is your goal in life?’ I asked. The reply shot right back: ‘I want a video [a VCR].’”

The fragment, then: a disturbance that has much to tell us about the histories we wish to write. An unexpected, perhaps unwelcome presence, what Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser called “an answer without a question.” An answer to a question that has not been posed: just one way of pushing at the limits of academic research—and writing.

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Knowing Your Worth

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estimated that 50 percent of the expenditures associated with the benefit would not help the Emory constituency. Provost Earl Lewis and Mandl appointed a task force of faculty and senior administrators to study the issue further and report back in the fall.

Ultimately, Harris said at the May panel discussion, one’s academic worth is a blend of these considerations: “What is the combination of time, money, and location that will best serve my sense of myself as a scholar, a teacher, and someone who wants to make a difference in the many communities of which I am a part? Money is important in this mix . . . [yet] some of the most hurtful or draining or demoralizing issues that have occurred for me have not been around salary negotiations, but around other ways in which I felt, rightly or wrongly, that the university was not valuing the work that I do or the work of colleagues in the same or related fields. In those instances, the academic marketplace is very real to me: the marketplace of ideas, and how my institution supports some ideas over others.”—A. O. A.

Negotiation

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festering resentments acted out in a variety of unproductive ways. Helping more women become better negotiators can only help to make academia the first kind of workplace and not the second.

In January 2009 Laurie Patton will assume the role of director of the new Center for Faculty Development.
Wine and trade routes in ancient Egypt

Wine was not known to have been cultivated in [ancient] Egypt. It had come from the area of Turkey and the Zagros mountains and then made its way southward. It was also cultivated in Palestine, and we know about the trade routes along the northern coast of Sinai. That trade route, interestingly, is called the way of Horus. Horus is the falcon God, also the king God, and there are many speculations as to why it’s called the way of Horus. Maybe it was under the protection of the king or the God Horus. I think there’s another explanation. A fragment of a ceremonial palette shows different animals destroying city walls. I think this is a kind of historic commemoration of different kings who step-by-step conquer different cities in lower Egypt. We know that the first predynastic kingdom was established only in upper Egypt, and then this kingdom expanded step-by-step northwards. Why? I think the main reason was to safeguard the trade routes. They wanted to safeguard their wine imports, among others, but probably wine was one of the most important commodities at that time, at least for the upper class. . . . I think this ruler, Horus, really existed in the predynastic period, and he was the first one who started safeguarding that trade route by conquering settlements near that trade route.

—Guenter Dryer, director of the German Institute of Archaeology, Cairo, from his talk “Distribution to the Dynasties: How the Wine Trade created Egyptian Civilization,” April 23, 2008, sponsored by the Carlos Museum

Vigilance and prevention in bioethics and research

Regulatory law and funding policy are blunt and imperfect instruments for realizing even uncontested ethical goals [in translational research]. Human social interactions are complex far beyond our capacity to comprehend in retrospect, let alone anticipate and regulate prospectively to words and phrases on paper to achieve finely tuned ethically sound policy results. Regulatory law governing, for example, the treatment of patient information or conflicts of interest may overshoot or undershoot or misfire in our considered ethical judgment. But the law applies nonetheless and governs our conduct with significant implications for the flourishing and funding of our research programs if we misstep. One practical implication for translational research is that prospective vigilance and prevention are worthwhile investments. . . . IRBs, research compliance officers, research ethics training courses, and research ethics consultations are among the most useful resources that universities provide to researchers for ensuring the continued flourishing and funding of translational research projects.

—Roberta Berry, Associate Professor of Public Policy, Georgia Tech, from her talk “Policymaking in the Era of Translational Research: What Gets Funded? Why? How?,” May 15, 2008, sponsored by the Center for Ethics