Cathy Gallagher interview

Colleen Lye: My name is Colleen Lye; I'm an associate professor of English at Berkeley and I'm today going to be in conversation with Cathy Gallagher. Professor Cathy Gallagher is the Eggers Professor of English literature and she taught at Berkeley from 1980 until 2012. Her teaching and research have focused on the British novel and cultural history in the 18th and 19th centuries, although her most recent book, *Telling it Like it Wasn't*, runs the gamut from 19th-century alternate-history narratives to very contemporary American films and novels. Catherine Gallagher has been awarded the profession's highest distinctions, with fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), the Guggenheim Foundation, the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton, the National Humanities Center and School of Criticism and Theory. Her 1994 book "Nobody's Story" won the Modern Language Association's James Russell Lowell Prize for Outstanding Literary Study. And in 2002 she was elected a member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

So to start our conversation, it's great to be with you here, Cathy. So Cathy, you got your B.A. from Berkeley in 1972, your Ph.D. from Berkeley in 1979 and then you started teaching here in 1980. So you're a Berkeley person all the way through. So I'm wondering Whether you could just start by talking about what it's like to have been here as a student, a graduate student and then as a faculty person.

Cathy Gallagher: Well I think that there's a lot to be said for having that long a history and that varied a history with the institution. As the dean says, I bleed blue and gold. So when I came -- I'm actually kind of an antediluvian. When I first came the Free Speech Movement [FSM] hadn't happened yet. So it was a very different kind of institution for undergraduates. My first year here was ’63-’64. And that year is of course the year just before the Free Speech Movement occurred. So I was here up until the very verge of that change in the student culture. And then I left for six years. I worked mainly in the trade-union movement -- first for the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA) and then for the Committee on Political Education of the AFL-CIO, and then for AFSCME [the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees]. So I did a lot of work at student organizing -- not of students but of workers -- and came back and got my B.A. in 1972.

So when I went away you know the student life was one way, and when I came back it was a very, very different kind of student life -- much friendlier to students and much more accepting of students' different kinds of interests, much more encouraging. And I know that sometimes the history is written to say that the Free Speech Movement didn't do much for students. But If you really experienced the gap that way you'd say "No that's not true; students at Berkeley actually are much more in charge of their lives -- were much more in charge of their lives -- after the Free Speech Movement." So that was quite clear to me.

The second thing that was clear to me is that when I came back as -- after, in the early '70s -- there was a lot more, there were a lot more opportunities for students to do interdisciplinary work. Majors were not trapping their students into simply one department any longer. So I took full advantage of that; I actually did a kind of minimal major in the English Department. I took in fact as many history courses as I took English courses. And could have graduated in either and decided to graduate in English because I thought I wanted to go on to teach that subject. So I do have a long perspective on student life and the institution and I think that's a great thing for a professor to have.

Lye: What made you decide to go on to do a graduate degree in English after finishing 1972?

Gallagher: When I applied to graduate school I actually thought that I would teach probably in high school or perhaps in junior college. I thought I might leave after getting an M.A. I wasn't sure I was going to go on and do an entire dissertation; I thought I might write a thesis on -- I always knew I wanted to write a thesis on cultural change that was made by the Industrial Revolution. Of course this was an interest that started when I was a labor organizer. Because I noticed that the membership would talk one way about their lives when they were talking about their private lives, and another way about their lives when they were talking about their working lives. And I became interested in a kind of abstract way -- in the different sorts of causality that prevail in different areas in our lives, how we split ourselves up as subjects and see ourselves sometimes as determined and sometimes as free. And I became very interested in that. Just what are the -- now at the time I would just simply have said "What are the psychological rules?" but I came to see them more and more as narrative roles. And I wanted to study that in the novel itself, because I thought the novel was a kind of a record of subjectivity.

Lye: So talk about that in terms of the thesis you did write and what relationship that bore to the novel that what became your first book, on the industrial novel.

Gallagher: Right. So that was the first question I had, was what kinds of -- did causality change in the novel when the protagonists were working-class people? That was the question I had. And especially did it change in causality perhaps change for an entire culture when that culture became an industrialized culture? What happened in my career is that I realized I couldn't do that in a master's thesis and that it was a book-length project. So I then decided that no, I would go on and get my Ph.D. because I became more and more interested in that question.

So the first book is really about the change that industrialization, British industrialization, made to the novel form when the novel form picked it up as an explicit topic. And that happened to be in the mid 19th century. Of course England industrialized much earlier than that. But it was really when the questions of how industrialization was going to be organized became questions of public policy. So it really centered on the early Factory Acts, which didn't actually get passed until the early 19th century. so There were some Factory Acts that were passed in the very first decade of the 19th century. And writers as important as Coleridge wrote about those Factory Acts. So you've got a lot of important writers weighing in on the topic of things like the regulation of factory work, child-labor, regulations about women's labor, the difference between mines and factories, and things of that sort.

And a whole different sort of representation of normal people's lives began to enter the novel for the first time. And it brought with it a plethora of questions about whether or not we're really in control of our lives or how in control of our individual lives we should be. About how much of the population is getting represented in the novel, which was supposed to be about ordinary life. And just how ordinary were the middle class lives? What was that distinction between middle-class lives and working-class lives?

Lye: So that's so interesting to hear you talk about your working on this thesis in the '70s about the British 19th century. Because it's making me think how much your graduate education also took place during the 1970s as the era of deindustrialization, wildcat workers'

strikes, right? But also second-wave feminism, which was bringing up topics of everyday life and all kinds of populations that were not the traditional subjects of working-class studies. And so it makes me want to also come back to the earlier biographical question we're asking about what it was like to transition from undergraduate to graduate student to faculty person in 1980 when you started here. And so maybe you could go back to thinking about your intellectual career in the light of Berkeley in the '60s, the '70s and the '80s. Does that make sense, as a context for your work?

Gallagher: Yes it does. My undergraduate -- my last big undergraduate paper, kind of an undergraduate thesis, was actually on the thing that was at that time called "the new working class." And then this of course connected with the work for AFSCME of for AFTRA -- I worked basically for craft unions before I started working for AFSCME, which is, of course, an industrial union in the sense that it organizes an industry instead of organizing by craft unit or by what people do. So it's the employer who counts. But when I went into AFSCME, most of the leadership was drawn from the professional classes of public employees. And it was the gap between the professional classes and, say, the working [classes], the people further down in terms of their pay scale, that was really most interesting to me, in terms of who felt empowered to lead the union and talk about the direction it should take -- things like that. So I was always interested in whether or not the leadership of the union thought of itself as working class at all, or whether it had a connection to what I was interested in as the history of unionization in general.

So that was that was a question I had. And when I came in I started reading about the new working class and the mentality of the new working class. And I must say that I know that I wrote a lot about it and never really came to grips with whether or not this wasn't just a misnomer -- that these were simply.

Lye: Working class....

Gallagher: Yeah, working class, for a lot of the people that we were organizing and then it was just perhaps not the right way to think about the way the organization should be structured or the way the organization should determine itself.

So that was an interest that I had when I first came in. And again I think as a person majoring in English, I would not have been able to do that before the Free Speech Movement. This was a thing -- this was a kind of interdisciplinary topic that wasn't possible under the old dispensation and was becoming possible at that time.

Lye: Can I interrupt you for a moment and ask you to explain the connection between the Free Speech Movement and interdisciplinarity.

Gallagher: OK. You see this is a transition that was made in my absence. So I'm not actually sure exactly how it came about. But the idea became -- the idea became popular that students should have more control, should have more control over their individual course of study. It became possible then, through UGIS [Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Studies] as well and through some residential colleges -- remember this is also the time of the founding of [UC] Santa Cruz. So it became more possible for people to put together individual majors of their own, or just for majors to loosen up and let students do more work in other departments. And also it was possible to write these theses that were not in any department whatsoever. They were just sort of -- you got a thesis adviser somewhere and that person could read your work

and you'd put together a little committee, almost like a graduate student. So I think that's the connection.

There was also a lot more student activism on campus, which was sanctioned at that point. So people met more people outside of their departments and those people might have been into -- there were a Marxist study groups all over the place when I came back, [and] every department had its women's caucus. There was a lot of second-wave feminism -- which as you say was more and more interested in analyzing private life and analyzing the organization of everyday life. And we were very interested in organizing our everyday life. We were -- we had student co-ops for daycare. We had all kinds of things like that. I at that time was a single parent living with my very young daughter -- she was four, five and six while I was finishing my degree. So I was involved in the cooperative daycare program at that time.

Lye: So tell me about the day care cooperative movement that you were involved with.

Gallagher:. It was -- there were cooperative daycare institutions all over the East Bay. As a matter of fact the city of Berkeley had cooperative daycare, so that you could bring in your -- a parent would sign up for a certain number of hours of care for their child and also sign up to be a caretaker for a certain number of hours. A group of ASUC [Associated Students of the University of California] students wanted to do the same thing for student parents. And we had a little more trouble getting it organized within the university, because it turned out that the university was not so cooperative with that. That is, the students knew what they wanted and they had actually started a cooperative daycare, which was run out of the Senior Women's Hall, which is no longer on campus. It's actually been moved up to the Botanical Gardens. There's a wonderful little Maybeck building, which had been a -- belonged to the senior women and had been their club meeting house. And so we actually had a cooperative daycare center there, at the top of campus, in the very early '70s -- established I think maybe in '69. By the time I got there in '70, '71 it had been going for a while.

What we wanted from the university really was simply more spaces to have these cooperative daycare centers. And we got a little bit more space from one of the dorms; students in one of the dorms voted to allow us to have their basement during the day, as a place where you could bring our kids for this kind of cooperative daycare. We finally got a meeting with Chancellor Bowker -- who then, it turned out, was not going to meet with us. When we got up to University -- to the chancellor's house -- we were told that we were going to meet with Mrs. Bowker, who was actually herself a pretty important statistician. She was on the faculty at Columbia, but she had a certain idea about what students should be. She'd come entirely out of private universities. And so she invited us in for tea -- a small group of us -- and we sat down there for tea. And she told us in the politest way she could that she was sure that -- that a student parent could be neither a good parent nor a good student and therefore the university could not cooperate with us in our cooperative daycare. That it was something we would have to simply do on our own, that she basically disapproved of it.

So -- so then we were on our own. We thought the chancellor was -- since we didn't get to meet with the chancellor and we thought the chancellor ought to have a sense of our need for space, we decided that we would, for one afternoon, hold our cooperative daycare in the anteroom of the chancellor's office.

Lye: Was that in California Hall?

Gallagher: In California Hall. So that's what we did. We just took the operation up there, and we let it go. We were pretty sure as a sit-in that they probably wouldn't call the cops on a bunch of preschoolers. So we did that that afternoon. It got a lot of good publicity. And I think things pretty much turned around from there. I don't remember the exact time line. But after a while we found it possible, especially with the student dorms on our side, to make more and more space for student parents on campus. And of course now the university is extremely friendly to student-family life.

Lye: That's a great story. So despite your raucous behavior as a student you got hired here as a faculty person in 1980. Shall we move on to 1980?

Gallagher: Sure. I mean I think you have to understand that coming from the trade-union movement, the university was a pushover. I mean it was really -- they were not out to keep you down. They really did, most of the time, want to make life better for you. And I found that, especially as a graduate student in a department like the English department, all you had to do was propose something and they'd say yes. It was -- it blew my mind, coming from a situation where you were really bargaining against an actual adversary. So I think I probably did not seem to people on the other side of the table like some fearsome revolutionary. I think I was -- I found it easy to be a kind of good departmental citizen as a graduate student. There was lots of graduate-student activism at the time. And I think most of it was very helpful to the department. And this is also, must be admitted, the time before graduate-student unionization. So all of this was done with the understanding that you were sort of a kind of junior colleague. So it had a different tone to it altogether.

Lye: Well I could ask you infinitely about the '70s, but let's go to 1980.

Gallagher: Oh, not such interesting.... Yeah.

Lye: You came back to Berkeley in 1980, after having taught elsewhere. So what was that like?

Gallagher: Well, it was a little bit strange. I still had many friends who were still in the graduate program, for one thing. I Had not expected that this is where I would end up. As a matter of fact I've been explicitly told that it was an impossibility.

Lye: Why?

Gallagher: Because the English Department does not like to hire its own graduate students. As a matter of fact, as you know, it has a policy against doing that unless you've already been away. And the rule was, at that time, you had to have been away and you had to have published your first book. My dissertation was a pretty finished thing -- that is I didn't need to revise it much, but I did need to add a couple of chapters for it to come out as a book. So it was not absolutely finished. So when I applied to Berkeley I also applied to Yale and I applied to Davis. And so I thought I'd just better hedge my bets. I have a job already at the University of Denver. So I got the Berkeley job and I got the Yale job. So the plan was that I would probably go on to Yale and publish my first book from Yale. And then if possible maybe come back to Berkeley. But Berkeley apparently didn't -- I guess it was a weak field in Victorianist this year and they decided that they would make the exception that the -- that the dissertation was superior enough from all the other dissertations that were submitted that

year in that field from job seekers, that they could do that.

But it was -- it was strange; I have to tell you that. I think there were some people on the faculty who didn't quite like it. There were there were several women on the faculty and there was an active women's caucus on the faculty, which I had belonged to when I was a graduate student. And I felt very much supported by them. But there were still some people in the department, you know, who thought they needed to do, you know, kind of initiation rites.

Lye: Well I must ask you…

Gallagher: Like Alain Renoir, for example, you know, who was a great medievalist, the grandson of the painter and the son of the filmmaker. Alain decided -- he came to my office, knocked on my door on the fourth floor, and said that "Cathleen, would you like to see the men's bathroom and the restroom?" I said, "Alright." So we walked around the corner to the men's restroom. He said "I have a ques -- this is a quiz about this restroom." And he opened the door. And I saw this really kind of awful faculty men's pissoir. And I said "So what's the quiz?" And he said "Why is this restroom like Henry James?" And I really I can't figure it out; I'm standing there blushing like crazy. And Alain says "Well it's because it combines the sterility of America with the filth of Europe." So this was the kind of, just an example -- the most unusual example -- of the kind of thing that used to happen to young faculty women all the time. This sort of sense that you had to be impressed with the fact that you were not one of the boys and that you were going to be made to feel uncomfortable.

Lye: How many women faculty were in the department at the time that you got there?

Gallagher: OK, and I've been trying to figure that out. There were a couple of women who didn't -- who left the department. I think they both had tenure, but then decided that it wasn't for them. Of the ones who stayed, Jo Miles was still teaching in the department and [Anne] Middleton was in the department. Carolyn Porter was in the department; Carol Christ was in the department and Janet Adelman was in the department. So a very strong group of women faculty. And two of them, of course -- Carolyn Porter and Carol Christ -- we're tremendously important in the founding of Women's Studies. So English had a big role in feminist studies in general on campus.

Lye: I'm going to ask you about that in a minute. But out of how many faculty were these five women, just get a sense of the percentage. How big was the faculty then?

Gallagher: I think there were 80-some faculty in the English department.

Lye: Wow!

Gallagher: No, it was a small percentage; there's no doubt about it. And the department was very interested in hiring more women who would stay; the department was quite supportive. Now it wasn't so supportive that it would you know give you time off or anything like that. I mean, now we have policies.

Lye: You mean for parental leave...

Gallagher: Well or just simply when assistant professors come in, they get some teaching breaks. This was definitely not the case when I came in. one taught a full load and one taught

a lot of lecture courses. So I taught a lecture course every semester for all the time I was an assistant professor. And of course those were all new courses. So it's hard to be writing, every week, two lectures or three lectures for a brand new lecture course. So there was a -- I mean it was demanding. You had exactly the same kinds of work load that other professors had. And of course there were a lot of people who wanted to -- graduate students who wanted to write their dissertations with a woman faculty member. And there weren't that many. And so I had, even then, a lot of graduate student. My first graduate students got their degrees soon after I got tenure; they came up in '86 and '87.

Lye: You were starting to tell me about the founding of women's studies and the English role in that. So do you want to recount [?]on that?

Gallagher: You know I think probably Carol Christ would be the person to ask about that, because I was not that involved in it.

Lye: Was it before you were her?

Gallagher: Yes. You know it got started really during that gap time. And then the only role I played in that, at all, was as a member of the search committee that actually looked for the first faculty director. The first sort of ad hoc faculty director was Carolyn Porter. But then there was an outside search for a faculty director and out of that search a lot of great women were identified by the university as people that they would want to hire in various -- in various roles. Mary Ryan came in through that. Evelyn Fox Keller came in through that. Carol Stack came in through that. A lot of really important female faculty came in to the university through that search.

Lye: Yeah, but then in terms of your relationship to women's studies, you start teaching courses on women in literature and in the department.

Gallagher: Yes.

Lye: Your next big book -- the one that won the James Lowell Prize -- is on women writers. So you sort of shifted from the industrial novel to questions of gender.

Gallagher: Yes.

Lye: Do you think there was a connection somehow between, you know, questions of gender at the university and your next monograph?

Gallagher: Yes. And I think that that was also a part of the shift from -- the shift inside women's studies to a more critical stance regarding gender in general. There was certainly the big issue in the early '80s -- was the question of whether or not women's studies dealt with a definition of women that was already in place. And what we would -- that we then called essentialist ("We know what a woman is, and this is what a woman is and this is what we're studying") to a more flexible notion that gender is something that's socially and historically constructed

Lye: So I'm interested in the milieu of the 1980s and the questions of -- the debates around essentialism and gender and how that influence *Nobody's Story*.

Gallagher: That was a big debate of the early 1980s and it was not just a debate within, say, women's studies or feminist studies. It was a debate that spread out across the humanities. And it had a couple of different sources for the people with whom I was in conversation most of the time. One of those sources had to do obviously with gay and lesbian studies. Another one had to do with the long history of the historiography of everyday life.

So Berkeley had a number of important historians who were interested in that topic and Natalie Zemon Davis of course was certainly one of them. There were people in the French department like Howard Bloch, who was interested in that; Leo Bersani was interested in that; D.A. Miller in the English department was interested in it. The question had to do with the extent to which gender is something stable and tied to body parts. And -- or whether or not it's a much more fluid thing that people actually get acculturated into, and get acculturated differently in different historical times and places. I was very much on that side of the argument -- that gender itself and even our sexual preferences and how we think about ourselves sexually were historically as we used to say "constructed" -- so somewhat, at least, historically determined. And of course my very good friend in the history department, with whom I taught frequently, Tom Laqueur, was writing a history of that; it was the history of, a history of sex, basically.

So that was the debate. This was a debate that was sometimes not appreciated by certain people in women's studies, because they had an idea that women's solidarity was based on a typicality of experience that cut across times and places and races. And that we therefore could understand each other historically very easily -- mainly simply by identifying, yes, that experience is like my experience. That these experiences were more or less universal.

So that was a big topic and it had certain important consequences. For example there was a certain amount of money allocated to women's studies and if that was going to be allocated to gender and women's studies then it was going to have an impact on women researchers at the university. So this was something that we had to consider very carefully. And so we realized that there was a there was a politics there and there was -- you know there were practical everyday implications to the kind of thing that we were arguing. But the journal that we were founding, "Representations," was also very much involved in this kind of historicization -- the historicization of things that had not seemed historical previously. The historicization of things that had before seemed universal was one of the things that "Representations" was really interested in.

So I became interested in that, too, and I realized that I didn't actually know much about the subjective orientation of women, say, before the 19th century -- the 19th century when, after all, the idea of the separation of spheres was actually invented. And the separation of spheres, I had argued in my first book, was actually a boon to women. Because before that -- before there was a separation of spheres there was just a hierarchy. There was like men were in charge and women did what they were told. But with the separation of spheres, the idea was that women had their own sphere. And in that sphere they could exercise influence and they became kind of repositories of certain kinds of cultural value, of certain kinds of moral value.

So my first book -- the one on industrialization -- argued that this was not at all a bad thing for the actual status of women, although we now see it as somehow patriarchal. My argument was it wasn't patriarchal. It was involved with a different kind of -- it was an equalization caused by separation. And that's what it gave us. So what I realized is that I didn't understand what had gone on, say, prior to that. But I did know that there were writers who could have

made me figure that out, because I knew that at least in England professional women's writing started much earlier. That started in the late 1600s, with the restoration of the monarchy. And so I became interested in that.

So I was trying to historicize that moment when women first came into -- first became professional women. And the first profession they entered was basically the profession of theatre, which was newly opened to them. And they entered it not just as actresses but also as playwrights. And so I got very interested in that and what the, sort of -- basically what the sexuality of that was like. You know were women allowed in because they were considered morally superior? A lot of Victorian women's writing is based on the idea that the woman writer has a superior ability to sympathize and things like that. But that's not what was going on when women writers first actually professionalized.

So I got are very interested in that and I was trying to show that there is a long history to women's subjectivity. And that some of it is actually quite foreign to the sorts of things that we would consider feminist. The earliest feminists I worked with actually were from the preceding century. And what I was interested there was to show that in fact they were all rabid royalists and just why that was -- that is, this was not a kind of egalitarian feminist mentality that we kept wanting to find. So I was always partly motivated by saying no it's really -- it's historically truly variable and we can't just always assume that we're going to, you know, kind of approach these writers out of some similarity that we find.

Lye: Yeah. I mean what you're saying about the thinking that brought you to *Nobody's Story*, which took you backwards from the Victorian period to the 18th century -- also to your interests in earlier writers like Aphra Behn, and therefore doing the book on Aphra Behn, makes me think more generally also about how, well, you're interested in historical variability but also your wide-ranging interests in different kinds of topics made you a natural fit for a journal like "Representations." And so you referred to it earlier. You know everyone wants to know more about how it got started -- the kinds of conversations. You refer to co-teaching with Tom Laqueur, but you also collaborated with. Stephen Greenblatt, who works on the Renaissance. So maybe you could tell us a bit about that milieu.

Gallagher: OK yeah. "Representations" was a good example of the kind of interdisciplinary that was abroad at Berkeley -- certainly not the only interdisciplinary group. But a lot of these groups were ad hoc groups that were reading groups. And so I actually started working with Tom Laqueur and Lynn Hunt and to a lesser extent with Natalie Zemon Davis, because she was moving out at that point in the late 1970s when I was still a graduate student. And we formed a reading group which was really a historiography reading.

Lye: Who was the group?

Gallagher: In addition to the three of us -- Lynn, myself, and Tom, and Steve Greenblatt was in that group. That's really the core of the group. Some other people came in and went out.

Lye: Before "Representations"?

Gallagher: Before "Representations." Before I had my degree, when I was still working on my dissertation. And there were some other graduate students who would come in and present their work. But it was -- it was a way of, it really was, as I think about it now, really focused on historiography. On how to do history, on what a legitimate historical object is --

that kind of thing. And it was very much interested in the history of everyday life and the history of all sorts of things that, as I said earlier, were not previously thought to have histories. So -- and then the question kept arising, because there were a couple of us from the English department in that group...

Lye: You and Greenblatt?

Gallagher: Yeah. What -- what is the -- what does history give you as a window into these questions that isn't there in other documents? We became interested in the other documents. And they were interested in both the sort of literary historical skills -- have you read those documents? Know what do you what you go to them for? Are you going just for information or are you going to look at their form -- the form in which they're collected? Are you -- are you reading different layers, or are you reading for irony and maybe subterranean messages that are coming from these things, depending on how much you can say in a certain society? And those were the literary critical skills that we were -- that they were borrowing from us, just as from them we were getting a sense of you know what the archive looks like and how big it really is. And so it was not it was no longer just the history of literature -- like needing to know a lot more about all the women who wrote plays in the Restoration. It was a different kind of history from the one that one usually did. It wasn't just literary history anymore.

Lye: What was the process by which more people became involved in the ...

Gallagher: Simultaneous, right -- that was one thing that was going on while I was a graduate student and then picked up again my first year or two on the faculty. There was another reading going on, and that one and Svetlana Alpers and Natalie, sometimes, and Randy Starr and Steve Greenblatt. It was more organized toward, I would say maybe toward early modern. And it was very theoretically charged. So they were reading a lot more French theory and doing that that side of ...

Lye: Foucault?

Gallagher: They were they were reading -- we were reading Foucault, too. Everybody was reading Foucault. Because I mean Foucault was, in some ways, a historiographer, right? So we were all reading that kind of thing, but they were doing also a different side of the history. And se were doing a little bit of that, but not quite as much. They were more interested in some of the gender material that was theoretically under scrutiny, especially on the French side of things. They were more interested in maybe some psychoanalytical stuff. So Mike Rogan and Joel Fineman, who were more psychoanalytically oriented, were involved in that group. So, yeah, so there was, they were differentiated. So the two groups combined at a certain point; Steve brought us together. It was probably one of Steve's early retention cases that funded that. Steve's retention cases got progressively more and more expensive. So that's it.

So finally we were able to found a journal. But it was very clear -- then we started reading each other's work. And it was very clear, though, that -- the journal (and we said at the time that this was the case), the journal was a way of keeping these groups together, keeping these groups in conversation. And the conversations were often really heated, because as you can imagine, with all of those kinds of theoretical and practical concerns swirling through them, it was not -- there was no doctrine, there was no, there is nothing we could agree on but we knew we were all interested in the same issues. So that we could agree on; we could agree

about what the questions were they were interesting. And then we could bring lots and lots of different kinds of answers to it.

Lye: Do you remember what some of the formative debates were about, what was some of the heat about?

Gallagher: Well I think probably that -- we wanted to be theoretically open. Let's put it that way. But I -- but there was ... It meant that we didn't -- it meant that we wanted pieces that were not theoretically doctrinaire, but were at the same time theoretically informed. So we didn't want to publish a piece to which you can say "Oh you haven't taken this or that theoretical issue and into account." So that's actually what we wanted.

As I look back I can think of many pieces that we turned down because we thought that they were too doctrinaire in one way or another. But I would have to say that there was a bias against a certain kind of DeManian deconstruction. So that -- and some of us really objected to that. We thought that the pieces -- we thought that if the piece was good it didn't really matter whether or not that was its theoretical basis. And there were a couple of people who were very much influenced by Derrida, and even by DeMan's version of Derrida, on the board. Frances Ferguson, for example, was a DeManian, and Howard Block was also, I think, quite influenced by that point of view. So it's not as if that was never there. But it did seem to me often that it didn't have enough of a voice at the journal. So that the Journal then, as it came out and as Steve started using the term "new historicism," began to look as though it was really dedicated to a sort of anti-deconstructionist historicist point of view. Which I think, in fact, if you look at the contents of the journal, you wouldn't get that impression.

Lye: So on the one hand you were sort of against anti-historicism, but you were also against an old historicism.

Gallagher: Right.

Lye: So what was the old historicism that when new historicism was defined against?

Gallagher: Well the old historicism -- first of all we have to -- I think the term "historicism" was probably -- was ill chosen, partly because the thing called "historicism" is actually, has a long philosophical pedigree and brings with it a whole lot of baggage. So if we look at, you know, Herder or somebody like that, who was a historicist, you can see that there's a kind of a resemblance to what we were doing because there's an interest in cultural form. Interest in the idea that cultures change and when they change they create a sort of totality, a point of view. And most of the -- and the products inside of that are all going to be part of a whole.

So on the one hand we wanted to say "Yes there are such sort of pervasive, changing cultural atmospheres." But on the other hand we wanted to say "But if that was ever the case it certainly is no longer the case -- that cultures are too internally dynamic and too internally unstable and too internally fraught. And the rules by which you negotiate those things are constantly changing." So we didn't want to say that there was a culture that was always containing everything that it produced. We wanted to say there was plenty that would escape the confines of those various worldviews. And we also -- so we weren't really a "new historicism" in the sense then that "old historicism" would imply. And the other maybe unfortunate thing about "new" anything is that it's soon to get old no matter what it is. But it also seems to be a counter to new criticism. And I think one of the things we didn't want to

imply is that literary criticism had come to an end and now we were just doing history. And that was -- that was not our point of view at all. Indeed what we wanted to do was the history of forms in some way that was informed by larger historical forces. So that's very much what we wanted to do.

And I think unlike cultural studies -- which was another one of those sort of competitors at the time -- we were not deeply involved with the politics of the moment. We really were wanting to look at the history of things and not always to be making an intervention in cultural politics at that moment. And I think that's one of the things that we sort of got in trouble with other people in the profession for. That is we seemed to be, wait a minute, kind of depoliticized, too interested in looking backward and giving the history, not up-to-date enough. So one of the interesting things about "Representations," though is that it did make a model for lots of other interdisciplinary journals.

Lye: What do you think "Representations" influenced, what other journals?

Gallagher: I think that "Representations" influenced almost everything that came after it. I think certainly the cultural studies journals that came after it were very much influenced by "Representations." The way they organized their board, also the way they vetted their papers. The way they could both have a certain emphasis without being doctrinaire about it, without that having a sort of manifesto at the beginning of the journal. I think all of these things were really important to future journals.

Lye: It kind of makes sense, since you always thought of New Historicism as a kind of practice rather than an ism. So it's interesting that one could see it as a practical matter of how one conducted the process of submissions and vetting it as well.

I want to go back to something you said earlier about the FSM in terms of interdisciplinary -- to then also come back to your service at the university. One thing that really struck me about what you said was that you give an origin story for interdisciplinarity as something that comes from bottom up. That is, not coming from a research-driven agenda, but rather as a result of undergraduate desire for a broader education. And so that makes sense to me in terms of the range of initiatives that you have been involved in at the university that you really cared about as a faculty person. They all seem to have to do with improving undergraduate education in some way. So could you talk about some of the initiatives besides "Representations," which of course is a research endeavor. But you were involved with the honors program. You were involved with what became Berkeley Connect and also the human-rights minor.

Gallagher: Right, right. I was always interested in in making the research part of interdisciplinary studies available to undergraduates and graduate students. Tom Laqueur and I, for example, taught courses for a long time together -- graduate courses. And then we thought that it would be a good idea if we could teach undergraduate courses together. And we came up with the idea that there might be an honors program that was an interdisciplinary program across the humanities and the social sciences.

Lye: When was this?

Gallagher: This turned out to be much harder to do and I noticed that I have destroyed almost all the records because it did turn out to be so hard to do. But this was in the early

'90s. We had noticed that UCLA was getting a lot of very bright students because they had an honors program and students who were looking at both schools would say "Well Berkeley doesn't have an honors program." So we thought we could easily do a cheap honors program by getting people in different departments to teach seminars. And we would teach all of our seminars at the same time. So that even if they were scheduled for different rooms, we would be able to combine them in different ways. So we did an honors seminar on evolutionary thought and we had Kevin Padian from Integrative Biology and we had Tom doing a course in Darwin and I did a course in Victorian historicism. And then I think Evelyn Fox Keller also did a course, in the Rhetoric department, on science and evolution.

And so we, you know, we got together. And it turned out to be just incredibly difficult to get just to say "I want to teach my seminar at this time of day." It was almost -- it was really almost impossible and no one could really intervene with the various departments to get this to happen. We finally got it done it; was it took much more than any other part of the course planning to do that. And then we could get together, you know. And Kevin Padian could give a lecture on Darwin and Tom could give a lecture on Darwin and we'd get all of these different points of view. And Evelyn Fox Keller could give a lecture on Darwin in mathematics and he was just amazing. It was just great.

But at the same time the administration didn't think it was a very good idea. We were trying to do it through UGIS and that was because -- we probably shouldn't have billed it as an honors program, because they thought it was an elitist program. And so they decided -- you know, it was one of those things that had money, you have when you're starting your get a little bit of money; later you don't.

Anyway -- then, though, in the attempts to do something like that, that is to sort of break through the continuing anomie of undergraduate life, Berkeley Connect came up as one of the things. That, of course, started in the English department. And it did occur to me after the experience with that honors program that maybe something inside the department would just be so much easier to do. And of course it was Kevis Goodman who came up with that -- with the actual proposal. But the proposal was to, as you know, for the students to be able to meet and set course -- I'm sorry and -- and have some sort of unofficial meetings around various topics, to meet a lot with the people who are instructing them, to get to know the campus in very various way. It might also teach them things about their own subject. So all of that actually worked out better inside departments than between departments. I think this is -- this is just the, it's just the way Berkeley is. You know it's always going to be that way. And when I became chair of the department I could see how hard it is to schedule anything, let alone something in coordination with somebody who is also trying to coordinate -- the Rhetoric department or Integrative Biology or something like that.

So the next interdisciplinary project was a project was a human rights minor -- also the brainchild of Tom and me, with Tom's money. Tom got a very -- got a big prize, and generously shared just about, I think he shared every bit of it with the university. And one of the things he funded was the UGIS minor in human rights. And so Tom did the lecture course -- the History of Human Rights lecture course in the History department. It was a very large -- he had a very, very big enrollment. And I taught the senior-thesis writing course. And that worked out beautifully. And we had students from all over campus: we had students from out of L&S [College of Letters & Science]. We had students who were, you know, from Public Health and students who were from, you know, water-rights people in Engineering, and just students from everywhere. And in fact I learned in teaching that course how good it is to have

non-English department writing students, especially when the students are reading each other's work. Because I think English department students can learn a lot from the way other disciplines write, and vice versa. And so I was very, very happy to teach that course for several years. And that course still goes on.

The History department still has a responsibility for the Introduction to Human Rights and the History of Human Rights. And that's taught sometimes by Daniel Sargeant, who is an Americanist in the History department. And I think that the English department still has responsibility for the thesis-writing course, or thesis writers are still included in some English department course. It's also possible that UGIS has taken over the responsibility for that, but it is a much larger operation now than it was when I left it.

Lye: That's great. So knowing you over the years, you've been involved in search committees for so many administrators and leaders of the university. And yet you never became a dean or you never decided to go into administration on the departmental level.

Gallagher: No.

Lye: You chaired the department for one term plus, and have been involved in the [Academic] Senate. So maybe we can talk -- I'd like to hear about your experience as chair of the English department, your experience on Senate committees, and then maybe why you decided not to go into administration, which you so clearly could have.

Gallagher: Well, I was never asked, I have to admit that at the outset. No one ever said "Would you like to be dean?" Carol Crist told me early in my career that you don't have any power until you get to the very top. And that looks like a very long road to me. And I could also see that in fact one didn't get many books written when one took that path. And I just had a lot of -- I had a lot of questions in my mind that I wanted to write books about. So that's the simplest answer. Also my experience of chairing the English Department was not an unhappy experience, certainly. But it did really make me aware of how difficult it is to be a faculty leader. That's because every time you do take on an office like that -- any university appointed office -- you immediately find yourself facing your former colleagues in some way.

Lye: We're a very agreeable lot.

Gallagher: Yes, yes. Yes, if only that were so. But you wouldn't want it to be so. The faculty personality is not one that is easily led, and that's the way it should be, it seems to me. So there's always going to be, then, some resistance and some loneliness. Because people are not wandering, just walking into your office and telling you everything what's going on. Everybody becomes kind of circumspect with regard to you. So I was the first English department chair to be really interested in trying to build a community out toward our alumni. We have a lot of alumni, right? I mean tens of thousands of alumni in the English department. So it seemed to me that this was a source of support for the department. And so I tried -- I instituted several initiatives. Certainly a newsletter, a couple of different funds for graduate students and for undergraduates. Just lots of events getting together, so we can get together with former alums.

I myself, as a former alum, always got along very well with alumni groups whenever I was sent out to them, because I was a local girl, and you know I can talk about them about the

high schools they went to and the high school I went to. And so it was -- I felt one of them. And since I was both a graduate and an undergraduate alumnus, I thought that worked well. That's actually how Berkeley Connect got started. They got started because we invited some people -- some Hollywood people who had been alums -- back and talked to them. These were big producers, you know. So they talked to the students about the kinds of skills they were getting and how they could use those in the media world, and all that sort of stuff. And so that that's really how Berkeley Connect got going. So the department was ambivalent about that effort, although the effort is still ongoing and we got a certain amount of support from the university for our efforts, and we certainly were able to set up a couple of different graduate funds from it.

Lye: And the Chernin Program became a university model.

Gallagher: And the Chernin Program became a university model, right. And the Chernin Program always had that -- and I think still does have those days when alumni come back, and we have job fairs and things like that for majors. So I thought that was important.

Lye: You also did a lot of service outside the department, for example on the Budget Committee of the Senate.

Gallagher: Right. The Budget Committee was very hard work. And at the same time I think one of the best experiences that you can have the honor to have at Berkeley.

Lye: Why is that?

Gallagher: Because you really are inside the Panopticon, as it were. You have to -- you look at every [faculty personnel] case from every part of the university you. You listen to what the people who know that field well have to tell you about that person who is being hired, or that person who's been promoted. You -- I mean you often feel unequal to judging much of this work. But at the same time you get a strong sense of what standards prevail throughout the university. You really are in charge of a certain kind of equity when you're on the Budget Committee. You don't want to be giving this group a break when that group is not getting a break -- that sort of thing.

So it's the view from -- it's not so much the view from the top, because you're beside, after all, the administration when you do this work. But it's the input of nine extremely smart people from all over the campus on each one of these cases, that you come to really value. And it's the most intense experience of, you know, sort of Heideggerian idea of in-the-roomness that you will ever have. In my day, in fact, all the work was actually done in that room. You could not take anything out of the Budget Committee. I and that now things are online. You can sit at home and look at a case. I'm not so sure I approve it. I think it was a good idea that you sat in that room, hour after hour, day after day, and read your cases there and wrote your memos there. All of that.

So that was quite interesting. It's unique. There's no such thing at any other university -- even at any other campus. Other campuses have smaller-unit semi-Budget Committees. But nobody has one that goes university wide or one that is given as much responsibility as the Budget Committee is given here. The Budget Committee, after all, decides the distribution of FTEs -- which other campuses do not do. And these are things that have been ceded to the Budget Committee, and that is to the Academic Senate, little by little by the administration.

So the administration could always take some of these things back, but they don't. First of all, they get a lot of free labor out of the Budget Committee. I mean the distribution of FTE is a months' long, very difficult negotiation that goes on first on the Budget Committee and then with the administration.

So I value it for the for the collegiality, and the high level of discourse, and the sense of dedication of everybody really doing their very best. Nobody wants to seem a slacker. In the old days, when Tien was in charge of the university, if you arrived late for a meeting in California Hall, you'd get fined five bucks.

Lye: No!

Gallagher: Yes. The Budget Committee door was locked at nine o'clock. You had to knock to get in. I mean it was really -- it was kind of terrifying.

Lye: So you were on the Budget Committee when Tien was chancellor?

Gallagher: Yeah, Tien was chancellor the first time I was on the Budget Committee.

Lye: And you were on the Budget Committee twice? Is that correct?

Gallagher: Yes. I was on the Budget Committee twice. And then I did one callback, actually, when one of humanities people got sick for a semester.

Lye: Were there any other service terms or activities that are memorable to you?

Gallagher: I think that working on the search committee for Chancellor Birgeneau was also very interesting. Because in a search committee like, you learn to work with the University [of California systemwide] administration, which is whole different thing. And I don't -- it seems to me that there should be a University administration.

Lye: Yes.

Gallagher: have to say I don't believe -- I don't believe Berkeley is always treated fairly by the statewide administration. I think there's always a competition going on -- between, you know, who's really at the top of the university system. And so I think -- and I think that continues to this day.

Lye: Well there's so much more to talk about but we're out of time. Thank you so much for this conversation. I learned a lot.

Gallagher: Thank you, Colleen. It was really wonderful to have you here interviewing me.