

THE

# ALPHADELPHIAN

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## VAGINA MONOLOGUES HELP LOCAL & GLOBAL ORGANIZATIONS

Vaginas were the topic of conversation early this semester as Alfred joined hundreds of schools around the nation to perform Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* as part of the V-Day College Campaign.

V-Day, an organization started by Ensler, gave AU the rights to the play for a benefit production. All proceeds from three shows were donated to organizations working to stop violence against women. This project enabled AU to unite global with local activism.

On March 22, a short ceremony was held to award all V-Day proceeds to Kelly Beil of the ACCORD Corporation Domestic Violence Taskforce of Belmont, NY.

The production raised a total of \$5,000. A check for \$4,500 was presented to Beil by Angela Young, who produced the play. The organization plans to use the funds to refurbish its home for battered women.

A \$500 donation was presented by Young to the

Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan, a political/social organization of Afghan women.

Over 30 Alfred community women were on stage this past Valentine's Day participating in the production.

Although Professor of Theatre Becky Prophet took part in the performance, even she was surprised by the show.

"I said clitoris on stage for the first time, and my daughter was there," Prophet said.

Laura Randall, a senior, also found herself changed by the experience.

"Now I say vagina a lot more on a daily basis," said Randall.

Another actor, Sarah E. Haggett, said that this show is not just for women.

"People should see this show in general," said Haggett. "It is inspiring and honest, not to men-

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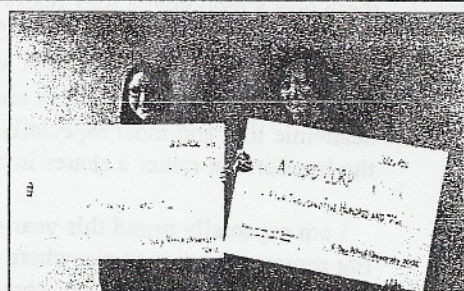


photo by Jacelyn Blank

Angela Young, producer of AU's *Vagina Monologues*, and Kelly Beil of the ACCORD Corp.

## 2002 ABIGAIL ALLEN AWARDS

"Be radical, radical to the core," said Abigail Allen, one of Alfred University's founding mothers.

Although Allen began teaching at Alfred more than 150 years ago, students, faculty and alumni are still living by her example. In her honor, the Women's Studies community recognizes individuals who promote awareness of women's issues through service and scholarship with the Abigail Allen Award.

"We consider the Abigail Allen Award to be one of the most prestigious awards that any former or current member of our Women's Studies community might ever achieve," said

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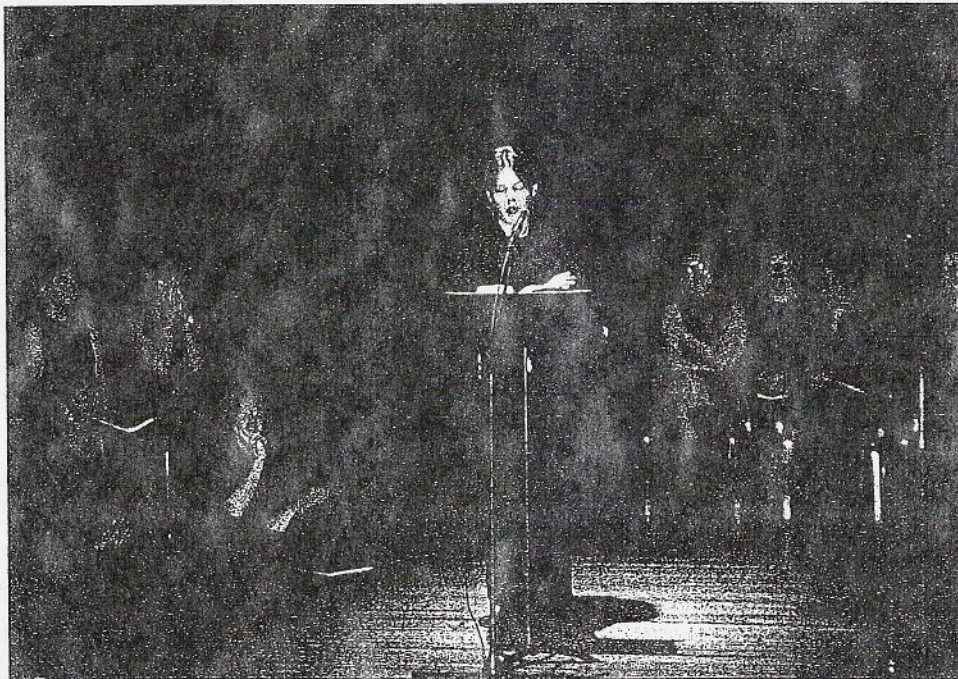


photo by Erica Robinson

Director of Women's Studies Susan Morehouse reads 'The Flood' at the first AU production of Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*.

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## FROM THE DIRECTOR OF WOMEN'S STUDIES

During one of the early rehearsals for *The Vagina Monologues*, the actresses, crew and director "warmed up" by speaking in turn about what had drawn them to participate in Alfred's first V-Day production. We were a varied group: freshman through graduate students, faculty and staff of all ages, and our responses were equally varied. Some women just loved the theatre, some liked the chance to say "vagina" frequently in a public forum, some were avowed feminists and others said that didn't "buy into it" but there was a monologue they really wanted to do, and a few women even spoke of their experiences of assault, saying this was one positive way to address that hurt. Some women were terrified to speak on stage, but there they were because this was something they wanted to speak about. As I sat in the freezing lecture hall (it was the weekend and the heat was off) listening to my students and colleagues speaking across our many differences, I realized that here was what had drawn me over twenty years ago to an academic life, and most especially to Women's Studies. This was why I had become a teacher even though in that room I was not the teacher, but rather a sharer in a collective experience that nevertheless did not make us homogeneous.

I am especially proud this year of the efforts of our Women's Studies students and friends and by the fine work of our graduating seniors (mentioned elsewhere in this edition). This has been a year of thoughtfulness and outreach. We have focused on issues of violence and power in our communities in our classrooms, our roundtables, our discussions, and across our campus. Certainly the attacks of September 11 pushed us in that direction, but what I saw were individuals and groups who used their concerns proactively both locally and globally. An anonymous donor gave 10 tickets to *The Vagina Monologues* to the personnel of ACCORD so that they might attend, producer Angie Young chose to give the bulk of our proceeds to the Allegany domestic violence task force, and another anonymous friend gave an extra \$100 to bring our total proceeds to \$5000. We gave \$500 to RAWA to help women in Afghanistan.

This was my final year as the Director of Women's Studies at Alfred. I've been thinking hard about what to say, and what I finally come up with is fairly simple. Thank you. I am proud to be a member of this faculty and this student body. I am grateful to all of the activists who made *The Vagina Monologues* happen on our campus (this was a long-time desire of mine), and I look forward to remaining active on the Women's Studies faculty and to seeing what the next years will bring.

Susan Morehouse  
Director of Women's Studies

## FROM THE ALPHADELPHIAN EDITORS

This has been a very active semester for the women's studies community. AU's production of *The Vagina Monologues* in February started the semester by raising awareness on campus about pressing issues in the women's community. In addition, distinguished guest speakers, thought-provoking lectures and activism made for an incredible last half of the 2001-2002 academic year. Dr. Lori K. Sudderth, a sociologist at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn., visited AU to deliver a powerful presentation on family violence in rural areas for the March 22<sup>nd</sup> Women's Studies Roundtable. This year's Riley lecture, given by epidemiologist Dr. Victoria Wells, discussed how women in developing countries are working to affect change in population, power and progress.

Accomplishing all of these events has required a lot of effort on the part of the community, and for this we extend our warmest thanks. We would especially like to thank Susan Morehouse for her incredible work as Director of Women's Studies over the past years, and her enthusiasm and effort towards *The Vagina Monologues*; and Robyn Goodman for her invaluable help and encouragement as faculty adviser in putting together this issue of the *Alphadelphian*. We would also like to congratulate all of this year's graduating Women's Studies students and wish them luck in their future endeavors.

Angela Young and Sarah Guariglia  
Editors of *The Alphadelphian*



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# FAMILY VIOLENCE IN RURAL AREAS: WOMEN'S STUDIES ROUNDTABLE

Family violence in rural areas requires a specialized, collaborative response, explained Dr. Lori K. Sudderth at the Women's Studies Roundtable on March 22 in the Knight Club.

Sudderth, a sociologist at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Conn., presented her research and experiences in a talk titled "An Uphill Climb: Responding to Family Violence in a Rural Area."

Spousal/partner abuse and child sexual victimization present different problems in rural areas than in urban areas, said Sudderth. She cited geographic isolation, lack of anonymity within the community, and lack of public transportation and other escape routes as obstacles that abuse victims face when seeking help.

Even law enforcement agents find themselves helpless in many cases, often due to the sheer size of the area they have to patrol and the trouble and time it can take them to find backup to handle dangerous domestic situations.

Sudderth outlined some of the solutions that rural communities are using in response to these problems. Interagency collaboration, in which different groups, such as law enforcement and victim advocacy, assist each other in handling family violence, is productive in many cases. In addition, members of these groups cross-train, or teach each other new ways of helping victims.

Sudderth noted that the collaborative pro-

grams often resulted in more effective prosecution of offenders and fewer repeat offenses.

The community partnering approach gives victims of family violence more options when trying to obtain help, which makes them more likely to seek help. By involving and informing people in diverse positions, including school superintendents and cosmetologists, "you increase the odds that when victims talk to someone about the abuse, they're talking to someone who will know what to do," said Sudderth.

Sudderth works with a community partnership team covering 21 townships in rural northeastern Connecticut. The region reports a higher number of family violence incidents than other areas in the state. It also deals with an average income below the national median with five to 10 percent of residents below the poverty line, no public transportation and no local police authorities within the towns. State police are stretched thin to adequately serve the region.

Although most of the cases of family violence reported in the region involve violence against children, the community partnership team's efforts currently focus on violence against women.

Sudderth explained that both domestic violence and child sexual victimization groups were initially part of the team, but the child-focused group backed out due to a conflict over crisis management and a change in team

leadership.

The two groups could not reach an agreement over how to handle instances of abuse where both women and children were victims; they disagreed over who was the primary victim and whether or not the women had failed to protect their children from the abuse.

"The disagreement is not a problem, but the lack of means to resolve it is a problem," said Sudderth.

Other conflicts within the team have been resolved, she noted, noting how initially the law enforcement agents and victim advocates were at odds with each other. However, once the officers realized that the advocates could help save them time and labor rather than interfering with their duties, the groups formed a good working relationship.

Despite some problems still under consideration within the group, the community partnership team in Connecticut has created a more efficient and helpful response to reported family violence.

As a sociologist, Sudderth confessed that she has hardly been able to maintain an "objective observer" stance.

"As researchers, we can give something back to the community," she said.

— Sarah Guariglia

## VAGINA MONOLOGUES

*continued from front page*

tion educational."

When asked about whether she felt men could relate, Haggett said, "It is not sexist theater."

Diana E. Moller, who also felt she grew from the experience, said she was very nervous, but also excited. "I feel that improvement is the most important part of all of this," she said.

Moller, a senior, hoped that women were more comfortable with themselves as a result of the play.

Prophet said that she is happy that so many young women got to experience such an empowering show.

"Reclaiming femaleness and not having to apologize for it" is the way that Prophet and Randall both describe *The Vagina Monologues*.

When asked about the word "vagina," Prophet said, "I think it's a taboo [of our society], and I'd rather 'vagina' enter our language through good art rather than violence or mutilation," Prophet said.

Randall added that much of the show is about the language we use.

"Hey, those are just words, and we can reclaim them," Randall said.

— Alvaro Valentin

## Domestic Violence Information & Resources

1-800-799-SAFE — National Domestic Violence Hotline for all 50 states, 24 hours a day. More info available at <http://www.ndvh.org>

<http://www.ncadv.org> — National Coalition Against Domestic Violence: dedicated to the empowerment of battered women and their children

<http://www.famvi.com> — a site devoted to helping end all forms of family violence

<http://www.nnedv.org> — National Network to End Domestic Violence

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/vawo/> — U.S. Department of Justice's Violence Against Women Office

<http://www.cavnet2.org> — Communities Against Violence resource page



## EXCERPT FROM "A RELATIVIST ANALYSIS OF FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION"

Female Genital Mutilation is the term used to describe excision of all or part of the female genitals. FGM is practiced extensively in Africa and the Middle East, as well as in immigrant communities in the Pacific, Latin America and Europe. FGM is performed most often between the ages of 4 and 8, but it is also performed on teenagers and women.

The procedure itself varies. However, it is most often performed under unsanitary conditions with rudimentary cutting implements such as broken glass, razor blades, scissors or tin can lids. Females are rarely anesthetized during this experience. An older woman in the community or a midwife often performs FGM.

The procedure is regarded as a rite of passage for young women, a necessary ritual to ensure chastity and make them marriageable. Physical side effects may include infection, painful intercourse, pregnancy complications and death.

From my research as a women's studies student, I have found that female genital mutilation, when looked at through a relativist perspective, is a problem not only in the countries where it is practiced. It is a problem within our own borders. However, because the concept is so controversial, many Westerners view it as a problem that only affects other nations, not our own.

Many Western women, and men for that matter, believe that FGM is a barbaric, tortuous act committed upon defenseless women in misogynistic, tyrannical cultures. Many view it as a horrible human rights infringement that needs to be stopped. Many Western

organizations have made it a mission to put an end to the practice. For example, ending FGM is a component of the mission of *The Vagina Monologues* to stop violence against women. Amnesty International is another example of a Western organization working to put an end to the practice of FGM.

Members of the "enlightened," humanitarian Western culture feel the need to save the women who are a part of cultures that practice FGM. However, Westerners who often concentrate on what is and is not a legitimate cultural practice often overlook atrocities being committed legally on women within our own borders.

It is all too easy for Westerners to look down on the practice of FGM because we often perceive our society as superior to others. We judge other cultures whose practices offend our ethical value system without noticing the barbaric practices toward women existing in our own culture. For example, in our society, there are few if any organizations dedicated to stopping women from getting breast implants, which due to leakage and breakage can be deadly.

Furthermore, there are few if any groups working to stop the increasingly popular procedure of "vaginal cosmetic surgery," the FGM that occurs in plastic surgery clinics across the America. This cosmetic surgery tightens one's vagina and reduces the size of its lips to make it more "attractive."

A major difference between FGM and vaginal cosmetic surgery is that those involved in the former experience have no choice about it, whereas Western women who

undergo the latter choose it, and pay for it with their own money. When you think about it, which is scarier, women who are violently oppressed by other people or women who are oppressed in their own minds? The concept of FGM, therefore, is relative.

In closing, FGM is a practice forced upon young women in many non-Western countries to make them more appealing to the opposite sex. It is painful, debilitating and also potentially life-threatening. Breast implantation and vaginal cosmetic surgery are practices women pay for in West to make themselves more appealing to the opposite sex. They are also painful, debilitating procedures that can potentially cause death. However, in the West, the former is regarded as an oppressive, barbaric practice whereas the latter is accepted as a valid choice some women make.

In both cases, bodies are mutilated in order to adhere to a cultural beauty and attractiveness standard. It is easy for Westerners to look at FGM and see it as a terrible problem because it is not their own. However, people from other cultures look at our practices and think it is disgusting that Western women pay to have their bodies mutilated. From a relativist standpoint, both sides have valid points — no one point of view should be regarded as superior to another. Therefore, both non-Western and Western practices of genital mutilation should be looked at through a relativist lens so they can be seen for what they are — symptoms of oppression.

— Angela Young

## HOW SAFE ARE WE? Perceptions of college students' safety

Did you know there is a federal law that requires the University to disclose specific and timely annual information about campus crime and security policies?

In accordance with this law, universities and colleges are only mandated only to report on certain categories of crime. Our University claims that there were only two forcible sex offenses and no non-forcible sex offenses in the 2000 school year. If you are interested in more information regarding this issue go to <http://www.campusssafety.org>.

According to a national study, more than 40% of adults are afraid to walk alone at night within one mile of their home. Overall as a society we are very much aware of our safety or lack thereof, whether we're walking down

a dark alley or on the streets on Alfred.

Typically, most people feel safer in an area that they are familiar with, and safer in rural as opposed to urban areas. In Alfred, I typically do not think about how safe I am. Perhaps it is because Alfred is a small town, so we think we are safer because we have this notion that crimes committed against a person are typically committed by strangers, but just the opposite is true.

It is ironic that the people and places the majority of us feel most comfortable with are statistically the ones that we should be even more careful about. Crimes that are perpetrated against people are typically committed by someone they know, a friend or family member.

For my Women's Studies Capstone Project, I decided to poll 250 randomly selected Alfred University undergraduates about the Sexual Assault Victims' Advocacy Program which was discontinued in the fall of 2000.

I was also interested in students' reactions to questions about where they might turn for help if they should need the very assistance that SAVAP once provided and whether students really feel safe on campus.

My study investigated issues such as the link between gender and perceptions of safety, awareness of safety concerns, and experiences with unsafe situations. I also studied how safe respondents feel on the AU campus in comparison with the Village of Alfred, the

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# FEMINISM AND ROMANCE NOVELS

Some may scoff at the lack of intellect associated with the romance genre. Some may believe that the situations are unrealistic, the characters saccharine and the writing abominable. For the most part I agree. However, I applaud the romance's campy, fairy tale plots, its unabashed employment of pathetic metaphors. I am grateful to Karen Rose Smith, Helen Bianchin and Myrna Mackenzie, if not for their laughable titles and plots, then for their ability to market these books seriously to the world. I am grateful to them because their books harbor a serious social commentary that penetrates the lacquered hair spray of the heroines and pierces through the wolfish gazes of the hunks who pursue such women.

These books reach way back and access the rhetorical devices employed by nineteenth-century women's Victorian literature. Nineteenth and twentieth-century romance novels demonstrate and reinforce supposed ideal traits of women — naiveté, gentleness, purity — and use these characteristics as weapons against the very women they idealize.

Not surprisingly, then, the romantic protagonist's purportedly intrinsic female attributes backfire and create a susceptible vulnerability that only a male love interest can defend. It is imperative that these women appeal to the male because their vulnerability and natural sensitivity are heightened through the ardor of love. Ironically, these women are turning to the very source that oppresses them. They become an inferior object of romance instead of someone with agency. The only insurance of their survival is to rely on the protection of the dominant, naturally superior, though flawed, male. Both stereotypes of these novels bait women readers to believe that the only secure path is through social conventions that romanticize male dominance through marriage and childbearing.

I've been spending the past several months dissecting romance novels, and to be completely honest, I've thoroughly enjoyed it. Romance novels are page-turners. The language is aggressive, the actions swift and the details juicy. However, I couldn't help but feel shame when I carried the novels around with me. I found myself hiding these books under copies of *Anna Karenina* or *Sisterhood is Powerful*. They were my secret read, my binge of junk food for the day. I didn't want people to think that I wasn't a serious student because I was reading a book by a woman who was so elementary that when she chose a pen name she opted for Karen Rose Smith.

While it may roll off the tongue fairly easily, it doesn't have the same literary resonance as Tolstoy.

I probably wouldn't have been so embarrassed about my growing romance collection and hidden them behind scholarly works (they're small enough to conveniently fit behind most texts) had the covers not been so blatantly ridiculous. All three twentieth-century romance novels that I studied closely happen to have almost identical cover art.

“I am grateful to them  
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heroines and pierces  
through the wolfish  
gaze of the hunks who  
pursue such women.”

Since I was raised Irish Catholic and am accordingly modest I didn't indulge in the loin throbbing, bodice buster, *I Can't Believe It's Not Butter* model books. I stuck to the fairly (sexually) tame Harlequin. Helen Bianchin's *The Husband Assignment* depicts the two main characters, Stephanie and Raoul, dancing in an ornate parlor. Stephanie's blonde mane brushes her form-fitting dress that reveals her curves and a good amount of skin. Raoul is dressed in a traditional tuxedo and seems to either be entranced by Stephanie's perfume or heavily sedated, because his eyes are closed and his head is bent towards hers. Stephanie appears to be feeling the same elation/comatose because her eyes are also closed and she appears to be leaning on his muscular body for support.

Karen Rose Smith's *Just the Husband She Chose* boasts two dark haired beauties dancing in front of what appears to be an altar. The background consists of stained glass windows and lit candles, while our lovers Eve and Hunter dance cheek to cheek in the foreground. Apparently they are at some sort of church function. Eve is wearing a turquoise backless gown and her left hand is gently rest-

ing on Hunter's breast so her sparkling wedding ring is in view. Hunter is casually dressed in a full tuxedo, complete with bow tie and cummerbund with his hands fully encircling Eve's petite waist.

Myrna Mackenzie's *Contractually His* displays the hero Logan and the heroine Rebecca in formal wear in a ballroom. Rebecca has her back turned to Logan and is playfully gazing at him. She's dressed in a low cut ball gown and Logan is wearing jeans and a paint-stained ripped t-shirt. Oh, excuse me. I switched to reality for a second. Logan is wearing -you guessed it- a formal tuxedo.

I suppose that Harlequin believes that a romantic depiction of a couple has to lean toward a pastime that is generally thought of as feminine, like dancing. It is either that, or the cover artist's imagination was severely lacking. In each of these pictures, the men remain static; they are almost interchangeable. They are traditional and classic in dress. Their hair is conservatively short and uniformly styled. However, great attention is paid to the female on each cover. These women each have a unique dress and great detail is put into their hair and body construction. The men are bigger but they are in the background, where as the women are the central figures and are drawn so that they appear closer to the reader. They are clearly supposed to be the focus of the portrait.

I found these pictures to be extraordinarily cheesy because the women were so stereotypically feminine. When I placed these novels next to the classic novels that I was also studying; *Jane Eyre*, *Wuthering Heights*, and *Northanger Abbey*, it seemed as though I was comparing permanence and impermanence. Clearly *Wuthering Heights* has stood the test of time. The text is renowned for the expanse of its literary reaches. The cover of my copy seems to reflect this thought. A conservative woman is depicted in profile. Her hair is mid-length and the only exhibition of flesh is her face and her pale neck.

The cover of *Northanger Abbey* is a bit more dramatic, though I believe this is because the text was paired in the edition with Ann Radcliffe's *The Italian*. The woman on the cover is dressed in virginal white and is literally draped across a couch that she seems to have collapsed on to. The only reason I give this picture any sort of credibility is because a gargoyle is perched on the woman's stomach. The Gothic cannot be compared to modern day romance. Sometimes spontaneous combustion, the sublime and gargoyles

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## ABIGAIL ALLEN AWARDS

*continued from front page*

Karen Porter, a member of the selection committee and professor of sociology at Alfred. "We are delighted that we have so many worthy candidates among our campus community."

Allen, the wife of AU's second president Jonathan Allen, worked to create the historically liberal, progressive environment on which the women's studies program is based. She spent her life advocating coeducation, suffrage and temperance.

Recipients of the award are chosen based on recommendations from faculty, staff and peers. The two most recent faculty recipients and a junior active within the Women's Studies program serve on the selection committee.

Since the award was established in 1999, the program has honored Professors Carol Burdick, Sharon Hoover and Porter and alumnae Megan Allen, Patricia Riley, Pamela Strother and Emilie Hardman.

This year the women's studies program honors Professor of Psychology Gail Walker and senior Angie Young for their work to promote women's issues both on campus and beyond.

Walker was the founding coordinator of the women's studies minor in 1982. She coordinated the program for several years, and continues to advise Women's Studies students. Walker teaches several women's studies courses including Psychology of Women and Non-violent Crisis Intervention.

Just as Allen is a founding mother of the university, Walker could be considered the founding mother of the Women's Studies program, Porter said.

Young, a graduating Women's Studies minor, is the co-president of the Women's Issues Coalition and the co-editor of the *Alphadelphian*. She has worked for *off our backs*, the longest continuously published feminist news journal in the country, and interned with Planned Parenthood in Hornell. In February, Young produced AU's performance of *The Vagina Monologues*.

"I am humbled by the opportunity to be among such great women," Young said.

The awards were presented at AU's Honors Convocation. Both Young and Walker received a certificate and a cash award. Also, their names will be engraved on a plaque that hangs in the Powell Campus Center.

"Every year when we celebrate the accomplishments of the recipients, we celebrate the accomplishments of Abigail Allen as a tremendous contributor to our legacy of coeducation," Porter said.

— Ashley Brenon

## HOW SAFE ARE WE? Perspectives on college students' safety

*continued from page 5*

Alfred State campus and the area in which the respondent grew up (rural, urban or suburban).

In order to get a demographic sense of my sample, I recorded variables such as age, year, gender, race/ethnicity, whether or not the respondent grew up in an urban, rural or suburban area, and how safe they considered that area to be.

The majority of my respondents (59.5%) are female. My findings have shown that men and women were equally aware of SAVAP and the escort service offered by the University. However, women were more inclined to use the escort service due to feeling unsafe. Over half the men and women would use SAVAP if needed (70% and 80% respectively). Those who did not use SAVAP offered explanations.

Women said they did not use SAVAP because they did not know everything about the program and wanted a more confidential and well-trained individual to speak to. One female even stated, "People are scared to make [the assault] known; some think it was their fault."

Men said they did not use SAVAP because "I can handle myself," and "personally I don't think I would ever get sexually assaulted." Some men also stated that they would rather talk to someone who was not a peer.

The male respondents in the study all seem to agree that they would never need SAVAP, which indicates that either men feel safer when it comes to being vulnerable to sexual assaults, or they would not seek help dealing with them from a student advocacy group.

A female respondent voiced her concerns about the dissolution of SAVAP. She said, "There needs to be a reason more valid than

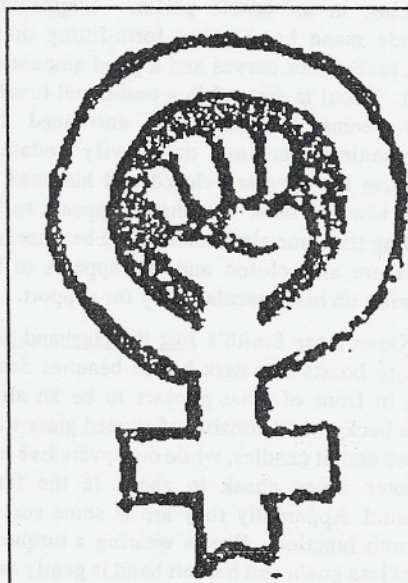
the lack of members to dissolve this program. I am very disappointed that the University did not try to help out with continuing the program, on thinking of new efficient ways of running it without having to sacrifice this outlet ... This program was the only one its kind tending to sexually assaulted incidents."

I also found that 20.5% of the female respondents do not feel safe walking anywhere on the AU campus after dark, while all of the male respondents said they do feel safe doing so. This can be attributed to the fact that men and women have different perceptions of safety. Also, men and women are different physically, and most men have the perception that they cannot be raped.

After researching the subject of safety on campus, I noticed something that made my research stand out from other similar studies. My questionnaire asked questions like, "How safe do you feel walking alone after dark on the AU campus?" and "Do you feel safe walking anywhere on the AU campus after dark?" However, other studies on my topic often asked their questions in a more biased fashion, such as "Are you afraid to walk alone after dark?"

Instead of using the word "safe," I could have chosen adjectives like "afraid" or "scared." I feel that if I had chosen less neutral adjectives, I would have gotten different answers. By using words like "fear," "afraid" and "scared," researchers imply that there is something to be worried about. I have learned that the phrasing used in questionnaires can certainly influence answers. I also found that much more research is needed on perceptions of safety.

— Lisa Dennis



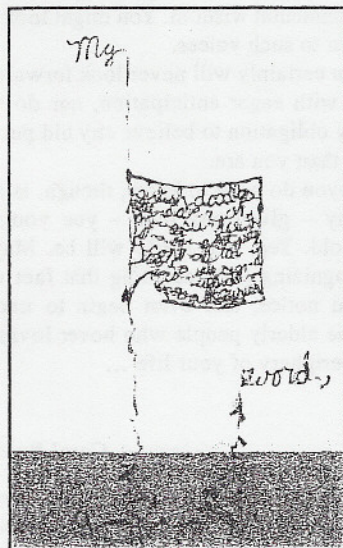
## Women's Issues Coalition

**Every Tuesday at 5:20 p.m. in the Multicultural Suite on the first floor of Powell Campus Center**

**Everyone is welcome to attend!**



# AU ART PROFESSOR'S WORK FEATURED IN NATIONAL EXHIBITION



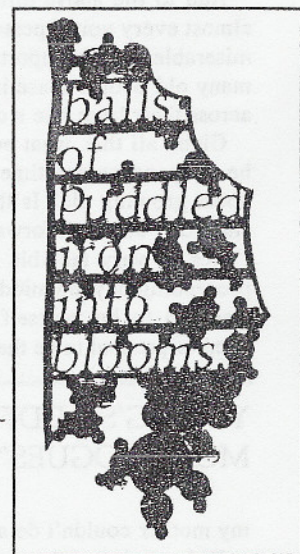
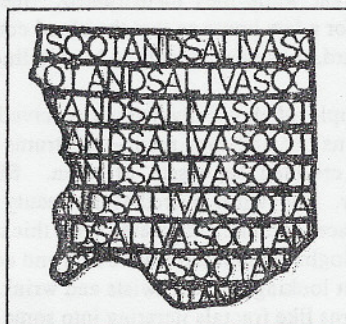
Jennifer Pepper, Assistant Professor of Fine Arts in AU's BAFA program, was one of 24 artists nationwide recently selected to participate in the 2002 College Art Association Member's Exhibition, *Hopscotch: Associative Leaps in the Construction of Narrative*.

*Hopscotch's* premise was to discuss the nature of narrative in five terms: personal reflections, popular cultural mediums, mapping, time and language.

Pepper presented three of her sculptural works in the show, including a cut patent-leather text based piece, titled "My Word, Girlish Doodles." In this piece, Pepper crochets her artist statement, dips it in sky-blue rubber and suspends it from a 50-foot ceiling. Her purpose for this piece is to emphasize the nature of language as it exits the body. Clipped texts in patent leather represent the slipperiness of language, while rubberized words twist and curl in animated space.

The medium of crochet provides Pepper with accumulated nylon-chain stitches that make reference to binary codes of zero and one. In this work, Pepper comments, "I attempt to bring forth the transitory qualities language offers while recognizing written language as a fluid and flexible system that spreads outward from the body into the world."

Shown here are "My Word, Girlish Doodles" and two other pieces that were part of the *Hopscotch* Exhibition.



— Angela Young

## ROMANCE NOVELS

*continued from page 6*

are just not comparable to weekends in a honeymoon suite with a champagne fountain.

My copy of *Jane Eyre* comes equipped with several sets of pictures, but the cover photo is one of Rochester and Jane. The artist has been kind to Rochester by omitting a large portion of his physical shortcomings and making him appear handsome in his formal dress. Jane is pictured as the petite nymph she is often referred to and is dressed in a full gown and bonnet. The couple seems to be spending a lovely afternoon in the garden.

Now why is it that I felt the need to hide the Harlequins, but I felt that the other novels were presentable? Perhaps it is because the modern day romances seem to exemplify submissiveness in a time when it does not need to be the case and the Victorians do a better job making it seem like there was not an alternative. However, my opinion is definitely a result of Harlequin's marketing strategy. Harlequin novels provide an escape from daily life. Harlequin is aware that most

at heterosexual women) are not like Eve and Hunter from *Just the Husband She Chose*. The last time the reader saw her husband in a tuxedo was most likely on their wedding day.

Harlequin is aware of this because it is a reality and so the woman's insecurities about her comparatively unromantic relationship. Harlequin even encourages its writers to avoid topics that are "too realistic" because the romance that exists in these novels is not realistic and undermines the way women should view themselves and their relationships.

As Janice Radway states in her book *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy and Popular Literature*, "To qualify as a romance, the story must chronicle not merely the events of a courtship but what it feels like to be the object of one." Let's face it. For the most part the West is a patriarchal society. We support the traditional role of men as breadwinners, providers, and protectors. Women are urged to be the rulers of the home, to be the teachers, disciplinarians, moral role models, maids and chefs. In both the nineteenth and twentieth-century romance, a woman's

clips the binding seam in the tightly woven uniform fabric of the patriarchy. The fear is that the fabric will ravel away to individual threads whose disunity will encourage social upheaval. Laundry will go unwashed, dress shirts unpressed, children left hungry and defenseless, and roasts left uncooked in cold unused ovens. Such domestic imperatives are reaffirmed by most of the literature that fills our libraries, our bookshelves and our minds. Though women may be the rulers of the home, their position is useless without a power that extends outside the home and that exists within it.

Indeed, I believe the reason that the sale of romance novels surpasses books by feminist authors like Alice Walker or Jamaica Kincaid is that feminist authors do not support these mammoth, patriarchal foundations. They discard the patriarchal fabric and weave an entirely different pattern that excludes male dominant thought and paints a very unromantic picture of the social consequences of love for women.



## GROWING DOWN

*continued from page 3*

acceptable. One nasty result of the youth cult is that the highest compliment one can be paid is to be told one looks younger than one's real age. Wrinkles and sagging flesh have never become fashionable. Pride in one's appearance becomes more difficult to achieve even though contemporary feminists have made a gallant attempt to define the looks of older women as acceptable, or even admirable.

Add to the above difficulties the fact that almost every young person – even when most miserable – feels important to someone else: many old people sense irrelevance spreading across their lives like a deadly moss.

Given all this, what possible use can there be in spending any time at all even thinking about growing old? Is there anything in that stage one can look forward to?

Yes. A very tangible benefit arising from proceeding beyond middle age is that you are freed-up to be yourself. No longer do you need to pretend to be the kind of person any-

one else thinks you should be. Your ideas, your beliefs, your schedule, your taste in clothes, or food, or companions, can be your own. (If, that is, you are lucky enough to be in fair health and have enough money to make choices – a big “if” for far too many citizens.) It doesn't matter what you say or how you behave, either. Being eccentric is quite all right when you reach a certain age – even if you do take the risk of horrifying your grandchildren!

Many minor compensations are also available. One example which comes easily is how wonderful it is to no longer be controlled by the alarm clock. Unhurried mornings allow one the chance for pleasurable contemplation: the taste of coffee, sunlight falling on the garden flowers, the softness of the cat's fur ...

Very much with me when I begin to fuss or fidget about the annoying disabilities old age brings is the antique saying every person claiming senior citizenship status knows well: Consider the alternative! Many of us do that, and whenever we do, quite often are

amazed at our good fortune in still having life.

Still, merely being alive doesn't make any of us into prophets or soothsayers. It doesn't take a genius to realize our generation didn't do well in terms of global or national welfare. Your parents' generation isn't doing much better, although there are some mature voices out there that have developed a special kind of environmental wisdom. You might look for and listen to such voices.

So you certainly will never look forward to old age with eager anticipation, nor do you have any obligation to believe any old person is wiser than you are.

What you do need to know, though, is that some day – given any luck – you yourself will be old. Yep, you really will be. Maybe just recognizing and accepting that fact will help you notice, and even begin to understand, the elderly people who hover lovingly on the periphery of your life ...

— Carol Burdick

## YOUNG'S ADDITIONS TO “THE VAGINA MONOLOGUES”

*continued from page 3*

my mother couldn't do anything about it. It was an amazing feeling.

Did you know that witches used to consider the blood of a girl's first menstruation one of the most sacred and powerful substances on earth? It's true. If you asked me, I'd say it still is because it opens a portal inside a young girl that transports her into this new universe of independence, of womanhood. Plus, the blood unzips the sexual hormones. Or at least it did in my case. Once I started menstruating, my vagina started salivating for sex. Sex became her main goal. It was so strange. Almost overnight my vagina transformed from a demure, quiet, unnoticed part of my body to a ravenous pit of lust. They say that witches had incredible sexual power despite the common images of them as green-skinned, warty hags. Their mysterious, potent sexual mystique scared the living shit out of the men back in those days and was one of the reasons they were persecuted.

I remember feeling powerful like a witch that morning when I discovered brown blood stained on my pre-teen cotton underpants, hot from the mouth of my awaking vagina. I remember feeling like my vagina came alive, brilliant. That day my vagina was a fire-breathing dragon, a screaming cauldron of witch brew. The day I first started bleeding was the day I became a witch.

## A Period Piece

My vagina is an artist, a cultivator of beauty. My vagina was looking for a way to make the world lovelier. She was searching for the collective vaginal unconscious. She saw herself as an agent of her own free will. And she needed to come up with a project that would allow her to finish her senior show.

Motivated by the rush of an approaching deadline, she came up with an idea that would transform menstruation into an art form: a blood tapestry. She got some clean white linen. She cut it into squares about six inches long. Then she called some other vaginas to see if anyone else was menstruating. Luckily, several were. My vagi-

na met her friends and gave them each a folded piece of linen to wear in their underwear while they menstruated. She told her friends to wear the linen for a few hours so that the blood could soak through the fabric. Afterward, they were to put the bloody linen into a baggie and return it to her.

Within a couple of days, my vagina received some of the most exquisite patterns she had ever seen – spectrums of reds and browns against white, crinkled canvasses of linen. She unwrapped each square carefully. My vagina purred at the beauty of blood-like-paint, thin in some places like delicate watercolor, thick and clumpy in others like a Van Gogh. The textures were rich and complicated – a vagina could get lost looking into the twists and wrinkles of the fabric, the exploding designs like fractals iterating into some infinitely wondrous place.

Once all the squares were dry, we, my vagina and I, sewed them together with thick red thread. The final product was an amazing coverlet of menstrual prints, shouting reds and browns that curled and twisted in patterns as incredible, as complicated and as spectacular as the vagina herself.

## I Call My Vagina “Mine”

I really don't have any interesting vagina stories. I don't think about it a whole lot, I guess. What would I name it? That's not the kind of thing I would think to name because it's just part of me. It's my vagina. So I guess I would call it “mine.” I mean it's not something you would really give a proper name to – it's not like an independent entity that walks around by itself. That's not how I identify myself. It's not independent of me. It's different for guys, you know – they have something hanging out – it's easier to name. Come to think of it, I could name boobs faster, I think, because they're hanging out there, and you know, people look at them. And one is bigger than the other, so it's like they already have personalities. But my vagina is not like that. It doesn't express itself like that. I don't think of it as such, anyway. It lives on the inside of me. It is me, not a separate thing. My vagina is mine.

— Angela Young



# WORDS FROM GRADUATING WST MINORS

## Shannon Cornell

I did my women's studies independent study as an intern at ACCORD Corporation, an organization that provides a variety of services to residents of Allegany county. I worked and gained experience in the Family Development division and worked with victims of domestic violence. I co-facilitated an 18-week educational program for women recovering from domestic violence. The program has a goal of safety and self-empowerment and teaches a variety of topics, such as the cycle of violence, safety planning, anger management, communication skills, and self-esteem. After ending the internship, I began working at ACCORD part-time as a crisis advocate. I enjoy this work greatly and, after graduation, I hope to continue the same kind of work in Athens, Georgia, where I will be living.

## Diana Moller

Through my experiences as a Women's Studies minor I have been exposed to a whole new world of thought and activism. I have solidified my dedication to feminist ideals and have become active in the pursuit of social justice. I have been involved in fundraising for a non-profit organization and I am currently working on a large-scale

research project. I have surveyed 400 randomly selected AU students on their attitudes toward gendered language and am currently analyzing my data. After graduation I hope to work for one or two years in the legal field or with a non-profit organization before continuing on to law school.

## Deidre Moore

This semester, I have been studying and writing about the construction of female characters in Victorian romance and modern-day romance. I just won the Fred Gertz Award for writing and was one of the top five contenders for AU's Outstanding Senior Woman. Hopefully, I'll be teaching English as a Second Language next year in Japan. I'm trying not to go clinically insane from ridiculous amounts of work.

## Angela Young

By far, my favorite project as a Women's Studies minor was to produce Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* on campus. It took a LOT of time and work, but the final project was well worth the effort: we were able to raise \$5,000 to help end violence against women. I highly encourage AU women's studies minors to continue the project in the future! After graduation, I am going to Hawaii for a week (woohoo!) and, immediately after-

wards, I am moving to Washington, D.C., to take the position of executive assistant at the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association (In my spare time, I would like to harass Bush to support my leftist political agendas).

## Carolyn Corrado

For my WST Independent Study, the title of my paper is "Don't Judge a Book by Its Caldecott: Gender Representation in Caldecott Award-Winning Picture Books." I did research on gender representation in Caldecott books, looking specifically at the prevalence of male characters in central roles, the number of male figures as compared to female figures in the story as a whole, the occupations/career goals for males and females in the central roles, and the gender of the author as a predictor of male characters being placed in central roles.

In addition, this semester I am interning at ACCORD and working with the CHANCES educational program for women who are victims of domestic violence.

After graduation I am moving to Albany, NY and will be pursuing a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University at Albany with an assistantship that covers tuition and includes a substantial stipend.

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"Be radical, radical to the core."

— Abigail Allen





# WORDS FROM GRADUATING WST MINORS

went. I am moving to Washington, D.C., to take the position of executive assistant at the Human Rights and Gay Community Development Center. I would like to thank the WST program for its support.

For my WST Independent Study, the title of my paper is "Don't Take a Walk to the Cathedral: Gender Representation in Children's Books." I did research on gender representation in children's books, looking specifically at the presence of male characters in children's books. I found that the number of male characters in children's books has increased over the years, but the number of female characters has decreased. I am grateful to the WST program for its support.

In addition, this summer I am planning to ACCORD and working with the CHANGING course. I am grateful to the WST program for its support.

research project. I have received 400 interviews with AU students on their attitudes toward gendered language and am currently analyzing my data. After graduation I hope to work for one or two years in the legal field or with a non-profit organization before continuing on to law school.

During the summer, I have been studying and writing about the construction of female characters in Victorian literature and modern-day literature. I just won the First Great Award for writing and was one of the top five candidates for AU's Outstanding Senior Woman. Hopefully, I'll be teaching English as a second language next year in Japan. I'm excited to go directly from my education to work.

By far my favorite project as a Women's Studies minor was to produce the Journal. The Journal was a lot of fun to work on, but the final project was well worth the effort. We were able to raise \$1,000 to help end violence against women. I highly encourage AU women's studies minors to continue the project in the future. After graduation, I'm going to travel for a week (weekend) and immediately after

to my women's studies independent study as an intern at ACCORD Corporation, an organization that provides a variety of services to victims of violence. I worked and gained experience in the Family Development division and worked with victims of domestic violence. I co-facilitated an 18-week educational program for women recovering from domestic violence. The program had a goal of self-reliance and self-empowerment and was a variety of topics, such as the effects of violence, self-defense, legal management, community resources, and self-esteem. After completing the program, I began working at ACCORD as a crisis advocate. I enjoy this work greatly and, after graduation, I hope to continue the same kind of work in Albany, Georgia, where I will be living.

During my experience as a Women's Studies minor, I have been exposed to a whole new world of thought and activity. I have solidified my dedication to feminist ideals and have become active in the pursuit of social justice. I have been involved in fundraising for a non-profit organization and I am currently working on a large-scale

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