

The Personal Is Historical

By Kyle Ciani

In July 1664, an indentured servant, Elizabeth Greene, was hanged in the county seat of colonial Maryland for the crime of infanticide. A century later in colonial Florida, Juana, a slave, was punished with 200 lashes at the public pillory and was locked into a permanent iron collar for drowning her two children.

Both women killed their children as acts of protection: Elizabeth so that her child would not suffer the misery of indentured life to the age of 19, and Juana to save her children from being sold away from her to strangers. Both stood trial before a judge, a jury, and the communities in which they lived. Female midwives, slaves, and owners gave testimony, but because of the complexities of colonial law—the first trial was grounded in English Common Law, the other in the Spanish *Siete Partidas*—neither woman could speak at the trial in her own defense.

Elizabeth and Juana met different fates for similar crimes because of the legal conditions that defined Elizabeth as “white” and “free” and defined Juana as “black” and “a slave.” Elizabeth’s punishment served to caution other indentured servants.¹ Juana’s sentence reflected her usefulness as property.²

Neither of these episodes appears on the History Content Exam that all History Education majors wishing to graduate with a B.S. in History Education in the State of Illinois take before they can teach. Neither appears in high school textbooks. Instead, many adolescent learners

are asked to memorize colonial charter dates and battlefield maneuvers.

I still come in contact with folks who believe that the only relevant history of women is about the suffrage movement. Well, suffrage is on the content exam and I do cover it; but there is far more to women’s lives than understanding an organized movement of relatively well-connected white middle-class women. A full integration of women and gender into historical processes transforms the scenes in which we understand change over time. Social regulations surrounding sexuality, religious observation, property ownership and political representation help explain why communities engage in armed conflict, banishment or taxation to solve problems. These and other socially constructed factors, such as race and ethnicity, age, financial status, and home region, have defined a woman’s ability to maneuver in society; but these parameters are not considered in many students’ general education curricula.

However, when introduced to real people like Elizabeth Greene and Juana, students listen intently and wonder why these women “got away with murder.” Initially, they judge them: “How could any mother do such a thing?” As a 16-year-old poor immigrant from rural England, Elizabeth discovered that her new life in the colonies consisted of living with eight men, none of whom were related to her, and having virtually no contact with women. Isolated from social (*continued*)

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Women's and Gender Studies Staff

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networks that could protect her from abuse, Elizabeth was impregnated at a time when illegitimacy was a taxable offense. Juana had endured similar abuses from her owner and his wife, and having survived the physical and emotional pain of chattel slavery, hoped to save her children from a similar fate.

As students learn about why these women “did such a thing,” they ease up on their judgments. Elizabeth’s and Juana’s stories teach us about the messiness of history, and students can relate to that messiness. Most of them know someone who has had an unplanned pregnancy, or has been raped, or endures domestic violence. So they remember these applications of Common Law and *Siete Partidas* because they can connect them to incidents in their lives.

I have taught the histories of women in the Americas at a variety of institutions and in a variety of venues, from a 200-person lecture hall, to midsized classrooms, to 10-student seminars. No matter the space or size of the class, the course content remains eye-opening for students who have had little background in the historical lives of common people. Clearly it is appropriate for me, a Women’s and Gender Studies professor, to introduce such female-centered tragedies as those of Juana and Elizabeth, so I recognize my advantage here; but I’d like to suggest to all teachers, whatever our disciplines, that we find ways in which to make our interactions with students and our curricula relevant to their own lives.

Second Wave feminists affirmed that the “personal is political.” We also need to recognize that making such personal connections between students and curriculum is a *necessary pedagogical strategy*.

Dr. Ciani received the Stan and Sandy Rives Excellence in Undergraduate Education Award in 2007. She teaches History of Women in the United States to 1865, History of Women in the United States from 1865, and History of Women in North America.

¹“Proceedings of the Provincial Court of Maryland, 1663-66,” in *Archives of Maryland* vol. 49, J. Hall Pleasants, ed. (Baltimore: Maryland Historical Society, 1883), 232-236, cited in *Second to None: A Documentary History of American Women*, vol. 1, Ruth Barnes Moynihan, Cynthia Russett, and Laurie Cumpackers, eds. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993), 68-69.

²Jane Landers, “‘In Consideration of Her Enormous Crime’: Rape and Infanticide in Spanish St. Augustine,” in *The Devil’s Lane: Sex and Race in the Early South*, Catherine Clinton and Michele Gillespie, eds. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 205-217. ☼

Armenian-American Author Nancy Agabian Visits

By Shushan Avagyan



*Photo Courtesy of
Britten Traugher.*

Nancy Agabian is well known in the Armenian-American community for her progressive and controversial texts and performances that explore the polymorphous and elusive nature of identity and sexuality—topics that rarely surface in a culture that is overwhelmingly dominated by male and heterosexual discourses.

On February 11, Agabian spoke at the International Studies Seminar about identity and family history and read from her memoir *Me as Her Again: True Stories of an Armenian Daughter*, in which she narrates her coming to terms with a generational trauma caused by genocide, and personal struggles with sexuality and repression. Agabian’s prose is playful, as it shifts from extremely serious to almost farcical. She narrates hilarious, strange, and elegiac stories about her sister, who moves to Northampton to live in a women’s commune and comes out to her family as a lesbian; her homophobic brother, who comes out of the closet later in life; and her parents, who are clueless that their youngest daughter is writing performance pieces about their dysfunctional family.

In the second half of the memoir, Agabian commemorates her paternal grandmother, Zanik, a survivor of genocide, whose account Agabian translates and weaves through her own narrative as both mourning of loss and celebration of survival. In her talk, Agabian explained that, like thousands of other Armenian children orphaned by the genocide that took place in the Ottoman Empire during the First World War, her grandmother was forced into a seemingly interminable “death march,” losing her family members one by one, then was sold into servitude to an Arab family. Zanik finally was rescued by Near East Relief workers at the end of the war, who went door to door in various Turkish towns and cities to find and save what the Ottomans called “leftovers of the sword”—Armenian orphans. She was taken to an orphanage in Aleppo, Syria. Eventually Zanik’s brother, who was rescued by the Russian troops, found her and together they made their passage to America, where they were reunited with other family members. (*Continued*)

In addition to her memoir, Agabian is the author of *Princess Freak* (Beyond Baroque Books, 2000), a collection of autobiographical coming-of-age poems, stories, and performance-art texts. Her writing has appeared in numerous anthologies and journals, including *Birthmark: A Bilingual Anthology of Armenian-American Poetry* (Open Letter Journal, 1999), *Hers 2: Brilliant New Fiction from Lesbian Writers* (Faber and Faber, 1997), and *KGB Bar Lit Magazine* (<http://www.kgbbar.com/lit/>). From 1997-2000, Nancy Agabian collaborated with Ann Perich as the folk-punk duo Guitar Boy, writing and singing lyrics that skewered pop culture and the art world. They released a CD in 2000 entitled *Freaks Like Me*. In 2002, she founded Gartal, an Armenian literary reading series, at the Cornelia Street Cafe in New York City. A Fulbright scholar to Armenia in 2006-2007, she taught at the Yerevan State University and started the Women's Creative Nonfiction Workshop at the Women's Resource Center in Yerevan. Agabian lives in New York and teaches writing at Queens College of the City University of New York and the Gallatin School of Individualized Study at New York University. ☀

Faculty News

Prof. Howard Retires from Faculty

Jeanne Howard, Professor of Social Work and Co-Director of Illinois State University's Center for Adoption Studies, retired from the faculty of the School of Social Work in January after 28 years of service. Howard will continue to direct the Center, conducting research to inform policy and practice in adoption and child welfare. She looks forward to having more time for her own research and writing as well as continuing to enjoy being part of the Women's and Gender Studies community.



Dr. Howard received her B.S. and M.S.W. from the University of Illinois, and her Ph.D. from the University of Chicago. Her research interests are child welfare issues, particularly related to foster care and adoption, poverty and social welfare responses, and social welfare history. She is co-author of *After Adoption*, a study of over 1300 families who adopted children from the foster care system, and many other works related to child welfare, foster care, and adoption. ☀

Ressler and Chase Co-Edit *English Journal* Issue



Co-editors Dr. Becca Chase and Dr. Paula Ressler. Photo courtesy of Brandy Peak.

Dr. Paula Ressler, associate professor of English, and Dr. Becca Chase, assistant director of Women's and Gender Studies, co-guest-edited the March 2009 *English Journal*, 98:4. With a circulation of 25,000, *EJ* is the premier

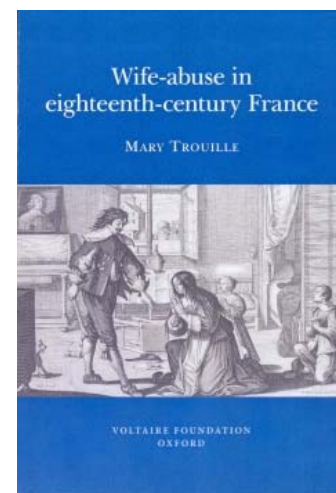
secondary English journal. This special issue on "Sexual Identity and Gender Variance" was conceptualized to respond to the National Council of Teachers of English 2007 "Resolution on Strengthening Teacher Knowledge of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender (LGBT) Issues."

The lead article, "EJ in Focus: Meeting the Educational Challenges," and "An LGBT Glossary," were written by Drs. Ressler and Chase. English faculty member Chris Breu's article "Middlesex Meditations: Understanding and Teaching Intersex" is also featured.

Members of NCTE who do not have a subscription to *English Journal* can order a copy for \$6.00. The price for non-members is \$12.00. If you would like to order a copy, call NCTE at 877-369-6283 or go to <http://www1.ncte.org/store/journals/issues/ej>. ☀

History of French Spousal Abuse Explored

Mary Trouille's book *Wife-Abuse in Eighteenth-Century France* has been published by the Voltaire Foundation. Her study compares incidents of abuse, described by actual victims in letters, diaries, and court testimonies, with depictions of such incidents in 18th-century French fiction. Trouille shows how these texts brought the traditionally private matter of spousal abuse into the public domain, shaping popular opinion and serving as an impetus for legal reform during the French Revolution. ☀



Faculty/Staff Accomplishments

Alison Bailey presented “Strategic Ignorance,” “Strategies for Student Responsibility in the Classroom,” and “Using Microessays to Teach Students How to Read Theory Carefully” at the University of Oregon.

Dawn Beichner and Cara Rabe-Hemp presented “Real Cops and Female Cops: The Exclusion of Women in Crime Fighting” at the American Society of Criminology meeting in St. Louis, Missouri.

Sherrilyn Billger presented “What Happens When the Local High School Closes? Economics of Size in Illinois” at the American Economic Association meeting in San Francisco, CA.

Lee Brasseur was named to the editorial board of Technical Communication Quarterly.

Cynthia Edmonds-Cady presented “Complicating Gender: Using an Intersectional Analysis to Examine Women’s Participation in the Welfare Rights Movement” at the 13th annual conference of the Society for Social Work and Research in New Orleans, LA.

Ann Haugo presented “Decolonizing Motherhood: Images of Mothering in First Nations Theatre” at Mount Allison University in New Brunswick, Canada.

Jessie Krienert and M.S. Fleisher wrote *The Myth of Prison Rape: Sexual Culture in American Prisons*, which was published by Roman & Littlefield Publishers.

Cynthia Kukla chaired “The Role of Classical Practices in the Digital Age” panel at the Mid America Print Council’s annual conference in Fargo, ND.

Jin Lee presented a talk about her artwork in the exhibition “Grammar of Landscape” at the Illinois State Museum Lockport Gallery.

James Pancrazio presented “La libido y la fantasia ideologica: Semejante a la noche de Alejo Carpentier” at the Congreso “Con Cuba en la Distancia” in Valencia, Spain.

Louis Perez wrote two chapters, revised nine chapters, and added a bibliography, internet advisory and timeline for *Modern Japan: A Historical Survey*, by Mikison Hane and Louis Perez, which was published by Westview Press.

Susan Sprecher, Lynn Underwood, and Beverly Fehr co-edited *The Science of Compassionate Love: Theory, Research, and Applications*, published by Wiley-Blackwell. She and Beverly Fehr wrote “Compassionate Love: Conceptual, Measurement, and Relational Issues,” which was included in the book.

Dr. Sprecher was also appointed the 2009 Illinois State University Distinguished Professor.

Roberta Trites and Betsy Hearne co-edited *A Narrative Compass: Stories that Guide Women’s Lives*, published by the University of Illinois Press.

Michelle Vought gave four performances of her show “Madame Monsieur” in Provincetown, MA, and a concert at St. Xavier University in Chicago.

Rozel White was recognized for 20 years of service at the 2009 Founder’s Day Celebration. Ms. White is the Office Support Specialist in the Women’s and Gender Studies Program.

Lynn Worsham is leaving Illinois State University to become the Martha Gano Houston Distinguished Visiting Scholar at the University of Houston. ☀



WGS faculty and friends talking at the biannual WGS Meet & Greet at Fat Jack’s. Photo courtesy of Brandy Peak.



Shakespeare behind Bars, a powerful film about an all-male Shakespeare company at a Kentucky prison, was shown at the Normal Theater on Wednesday, February 11. Artistic Director Curt L. Tofteland spoke afterward and at a colloquium at the University Galleries on Thursday. The events were sponsored by Criminal Justice Sciences, MECCPAC (A Dean of Students Diversity Initiative), SAGE Fund, School of Theatre, and Women’s Project.

Student News

Student Accomplishments

Bryan Asbury was given the Level 1 Master's University Graduate Student Teaching Award.

Jenna Goldsmith's paper "The Consequence of Gender: An Examination of Sharon Block's *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America*" was published in the 2008-09 edition of *Polyglossia*, the English Studies research journal of Illinois State University.

Jodi Hallsten was awarded the M. M. Chambers Scholarship through the Educational Administration and Foundations Department.

Brandy Peak received the Women's and Gender Studies Student Achievement Award. ☼

"Pretty Is. . ."

The current WGS gallery show opened on Wednesday, March 4, and features original paintings and sculptures by College of Fine Arts students Devin Prendergast and Jan Brandt. As artists interested in questioning what we deem "pretty" and the reasons we correlate soft images with femininity, Prendergast and Brandt evoke images specifically associated with femininity and women, using pink as the unifying color for their work. ☼

Artists Jan Brandt and Devin Prendergast at the "Pretty Is. . ." gallery opening. Photo courtesy of Brandy Peak.



Belated Congratulations, Graduate!

Susan Harsha, History

Welcome, new minor students!

Allison Mack, English Studies
Allison Hall, English Education

Welcome, new graduate student!

Kelly Smith, English

Vagina Monologues a Big Success

By Brandy Peak



Photo courtesy of Kati Cruger.

The 2009 *Vagina Monologues* was an absolute success. This year's production was held in Capen Auditorium on Friday, February 20 and Saturday, February 21.

We are pleased to announce that both performances sold out: Over 1,300 people attended. Consequently, we were able to donate the most money in the history of this production at Illinois State University. A portion of the proceeds are going to the V-Day campaign to help raise awareness about the level of sexual violence in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). For many years, women of the DRC have endured mass rapes and genital mutilations as tactics of war. The campaign is also raising funds to build the City of Joy in Bukavu, South Kivu, which is a project of Panzi Hospital in partnership with V-Day and UNICEF. City of Joy will be a refuge for healed women survivors of rape and torture in the DRC, providing them with leadership development, education, and income-generating opportunities. To learn more, visit <http://newsite.vday.org/drcongo>. ☼



The Crossroads Theatre presented Breath Boom, by Kia Corthron, on February 20-28. The play traces the life of a troubled girl, from 16-year-old gang leader to 30-year-old woman, who pursues her dream of the perfect fireworks display that will set her free. Sandra Zielinski directed this production, which featured students from the School of Theatre and community members. Pictured above, from left to right, are Marketta Wilder, Tori Allen, and Fania Bourn.

WGS Courses Summer/Fall 2009

Summer

COM/ENG /LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	Internet
CJS 307	Family Violence: Cross Cultural Perspectives	M-F 11-1:50 p.m.
CJS 339	Women in Criminal Justice	Internet
HIS 264	History of Women in North America	M-F 8-10:50 a.m.
POL 337	Lesbian and Gay Politics	MTWR 11-1:30 a.m.
POL 225	Women in Politics	MTWR 11-1:30 p.m.

Fall

Undergraduate Required Courses

WGS 120	Women, Gender, and Society	TR 11-12:15 p.m. MW 3-4:15 p.m.
ENG 160	Introduction to Studies in Women's Writing	TR 12:35-1:50 p.m.
HIS 261	History of Women in the United States to 1865	MWF 10-10:50 a.m.
PHI 246	Feminist Philosophies	MW 3-4:15 p.m.

Undergraduate Elective Courses

COM/ENG /LAN 128	Gender in the Humanities	MWF 2-2:50 p.m. TR 2-3:15 p.m.
ENG/LAN 206	Cultural Expressions in Social Contexts: Women in Asia, Latin America, and Africa	TR 9:35-10:50 a.m.
ENG 260	History of Literature by Women	TR 12:35-1:50 p.m.
ENG 261	Women's Literature in a Global Context	TR 2-3:15 p.m.
FCS/HIS/SOA 112	American Family: Change and Diversity	MWF 8-8:50 a.m. MWF 9-9:50 a.m. TR 9:35-10:50 a.m. TR 11-12:15 p.m. TR 12:35-1:50 p.m. TR 3:35-4:50 p.m.
FCS 222	Cultural Diversity in Dress	TR Noon-1:15 p.m. W 5-7:50 p.m.
FCS 233	Family Economic Resources	MW 10-11:15 a.m.
POL 225	Women in Politics	TR 12:35-1:50 p.m.
PSY/SOA 123	Human Sexuality	MWF 11-1:50 p.m.

Graduate Elective Courses

ENG 360	Studies in Women's Writing	TR 9:35-10:50 a.m.
FCS 327	Clothing and Behavior	MWF 1-1:50 p.m.
SOA 341	Sociology of Gender	TR 9:35-10:50 a.m. TR 11-12:15 p.m.

Check out these special topics courses for fall 2009!

WGS 120 Sec. 1 Women, Gender, and Society: Gender in Education

TR 11-12:15 with Becca Chase

This course will provide an overview of how gender, along with other intersecting identity factors such as race, class, ability, and sexual orientation, affects our society. In this section, the emphasis will be on how gender, intertwined with other factors, impacts children's educational experiences, with an emphasis on urban high-needs public schools. Among the topics we will study are: gender bias and gender differences in teaching and learning, arguments for and against sex-segregated schools, bullying and other forms of violence, sex education, and LGBTQ issues. For more info, contact Dr. Chase at rchase@ilstu.edu.

ENG 201.1 Specialized Knowledge and Integrative Contexts: Gay Men's English

TR 11-12:15 with K. Aaron Smith

We will study patterns of English language use among gay men by studying the pioneering work in the field of gay men's English by William Leap, observing the use of gay men's English as practice in nonfiction writing, and reading fictive works that focus on gay male characters, observing not only the use of language but also how that language can be used to support a literary reading of the text. For more info, contact Dr. Smith at kasmit3@ilstu.edu.

ENG 281 Studies in Literary Genres: Ecocriticism and Environmental Literary Theory

TR 11-12:15 with Kirstin Hotelling Zona

This course will begin with a brief exploration of early American "nature writers." From there we will focus on the birth of "ecology" and the concomitant "feminization" of the natural sciences; environmental justice writing and the core issues such texts raise concerning gender, race, ethnicity, and class; and theoretical work that will help us to simultaneously notice and challenge the most basic ideologies that underpin the current state of our (primarily Western) relationship to the environment. Each student also will participate in a community service-learning project of his/her design; in-class assignments will be crafted to accommodate these projects. For more info, contact Dr. Zona at krhotel@ilstu.edu.

ILLINOIS STATE UNIVERSITY NEW MUSIC FESTIVAL 2009: A CELEBRATION OF MUSIC BY WOMEN COMPOSERS

Artists in Residence: Dal Niente, Eric Mandat, Augusta Read Thomas, Sheila Silver, and Laura Schwendinger

MONDAY, MARCH 23

11 a.m.-1 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall Reading Session by Dal Niente of ISU student compositions
3-4 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall Violin master class with Austin Wulliman
4-5:30 p.m. CE 224 Master class with Augusta Read Thomas
8 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall **Concert I – Chicago new music ensemble Dal Niente, featuring music by Horst, Saariaho, and Thomas**

The Dal Niente ensemble has presented over 50 premieres in its brief existence. It works with established and younger composers to present forceful performances of the newest of new music. This concert will feature premieres of works by women composers Martha Horst and Augusta Read Thomas, former composer-in-residence of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. The composers will attend and will speak about their music.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

8 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall **Concert II – Michelle Vought and Friends, featuring music by Rorem, Van de Vate, and Kander**

Dr. Michelle Vought, soprano, has earned an excellent reputation throughout the country as a performer in opera, oratorio, and musical theater. She has performed with many orchestras and opera companies across the nation. Recognized for her expertise in the contemporary genre, she has performed and lectured at various conferences throughout the United States and in Limerick, Ireland; Bratislava, Slovakia; and Toronto and St. Johns, Newfoundland, Canada.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

3 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall Clarinet master class with Eric Mandat
8 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall **Concert III – Eric Mandat, featuring music of Ran and Larsen**
Eric Mandat, clarinetist, tours extensively as a soloist and chamber musician, presenting lectures and recitals featuring new American clarinet music and extended performance techniques. He also performs regularly as part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's new highly acclaimed contemporary chamber music series, MusicNow. He will perform solo clarinet works written by prominent contemporary women composers such as Shulamit Ran of the University of Chicago.

THURSDAY, MARCH 26

2:00-3:30 p.m. CE 224 Composition master class with Sheila Silver and Laura Schwendinger
8 p.m. Kemp Recital Hall **Concert IV – ISU Faculty and Guest Artists, featuring music by Schwendinger and Silver**

Sheila Silver's powerful work *To the Spirit Unconquered* – a musical response to writings on the Holocaust – will be featured. Composers Sheila Silver and Laura Schwendinger will attend.

This program is sponsored by The Fell Trust, MECCPAC – A Dean of Students Office Diversity Initiative, ISU School of Music, ISU Women's and Gender Studies Program, and a Harmon Arts Grant.

Gender Matters
Illinois State University
Women's and Gender Studies Program
Rachel Cooper 2nd Floor
Campus Box 4260
Normal, IL 61790-4260

Calendar

- April 1** "Ann Boleyn: Lessons for Modern Culture," Dr. Susan Bordo. University Galleries, 4-5:30 p.m.
- April 3** Women's and Gender Studies Symposium. University Galleries, 9 a.m. -5 p.m.
- April 3** "Beyond Eating Disorders: Why We Need To Re-think Everything We Thought We Knew," Dr. Susan Bordo. University Galleries, 1:00 p.m.
- April 4** Day of Silence Youth Summit, Illinois Safe Schools Alliance. Must RSVP to David Fischer, (312) 368-9070 x 15 or david@illinoissafeschools.org. BSC, 9:00 a.m. -4:30 p.m.
- April 4** Dance Showcase to benefit YWCA. \$15. 510 E. Washington St., Bloomington, 2nd Floor, 7 p.m.
- April 4** Charity Drag Show, ISU Pride. Bone Student Center, Brown Ballroom, 7:30-10:00 p.m.
- April 11** "Take the Stage against Violence," YWCA. 1615 East Empire St. Eastland Mall outside Aeropostale, 6-8 p.m.
- April 13-16** "It Affects Me" Campaign, sponsored by FLAME. Various times and ISU campus locations.
- April 16** "Reinventing the 'F' Word," Guerrilla Girls. Brown Ballroom in Bone Student Center, 7 p.m.
- April 28** "The Humanities in the Age of Catastrophe," Dr. Lynn Worsham. Bone Student Center, Old Main Room, 7:30 p.m.