



French professor and novelist speaks Promotes cultural reading of the Algeria

BY CHRIS DUNSHEE
STAFF WRITER

On the eve of Hot Dog Day, Susan Howell Hall was the site of a historic presentation – an event twenty years in the making.

On that night, the esteemed Dr. Rosalia Bivonia, a professor of French at the University of Palermo (Italy), delivered a presentation on a seminal North African novel.

Her speech marked the first time in Alfred University's history that a guest speaker's presentation was delivered in a language other than English. Translating Dr. Bivonia's French into English was Dr. Zakia Robana, professor of French at Alfred University. Dr. Bivonia's speech culminated Dr. Robana's twenty-year effort to bring a European professor to Alfred.

Dr. Bivonia's presentation focused on Assia Djebar's 1999 novel *So Vast The Prison*. This critically acclaimed book is the story of an Algerian

woman's life in a male-oriented society as she searches for links to her country's past - its Berber heritage, the cultural elements lost through its colonization by the French, and the nation's search to rediscover its own identity in the wake of its successful fight for independence.

Dr. Bivonia praised Djebar's work: "[Algeria is] a reality that allows [the author] to form images which are shaped by her sensitivity, the ways of her imagination, the lights of her internal vision and that translate at the same time a great malaise: a radical ill."

Dr. Bivonia is a professor of French at the University of Palermo in Italy. An expert on North Africa (particularly the culture of the Maghreb nations), Dr. Bivonia has written four books (with a fifth to be published later this year). In addition, Dr. Bivonia has had over one hundred articles published in magazines and journals from around the world, including the CELAAN Review and Femmes écrivains en Méditerranée. ◊