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Origyns: Reclaiming our feminist voices

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origyns is a publication for the voices of feminists — undergraduates, graduate students, alumnae, faculty, staff, and professors emeriti. Originally published in commemoration of Thirty Years of Women at Lehigh University (1971-2001),

origyns now appears annually.

origyns is a collection of essays, poetry, and short stories. Some were specifically written for this publication, others were written for class or for personal expression, and some were written long ago. In addition to written works, **origyns** publishes original artwork. **origyns** is in its fifth year of publication. Many thanks to all the contributors.

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the opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of Lehigh University or the Women's Center, but do closely reflect the views of the authors.

all submissions may be directed to the Lehigh University Women's Center.

note from the editors: *biographical notes in italics were written by the authors.*

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SHAUN REDWOOD

What You Gon' Do With That?

To the young and disillusioned minority college student who is at a critical point in his or her life

To the student who has come to the stark realization that the choices he or she makes within the course of the next year will directly impact, immediately influence and definitively shape his moral character. And finally, to the student who is constantly asked "what you gon' do with that" after you've said what you are majoring in, this is for you.

You've heard it

If you aint here to be no engineer or work at no fortune 500 company

And you aint got shit but a bachelors of English on your college degree

Then tell me, what the fuck you fin to do with that?

I mean that's not how the question is usually posed but that's what it feel like

With real life beatin down the door and loans pilin up on this education I can barely afford

So real talk,

Pfizer pharmaceuticals or the village voice?

What I love or what I love niggas that's my choice cuz see

I looove to write, but nigga I love money

SHAUN REDWOOD

Shit I'll be the first to tell you I don't often offer revolutionary rhetoric complete w/ black power fists

Shit these jeans is Abercrombie and Fitch and I just dropped hella paper on a new wardrobe and I look fly as shit!

But I digress; see my test comes in the form of family pressures and pressure from those who came before me

Who in one way or another tell me there can be no social justice without economic justice

So I'm wondering if this "justice" can be in the form of an executive position, a six figure salary, blood on my conscience

But satisfaction at the fact knowing that on some level, I have transcended petty racism and I have single handedly raised myself into a new stratum of society. I can see this version of me laughing with other new money niggas at dinner parties with piss in my glass and pain in gut like fuck- inside I'm dying but this is my sacrifice so my kids and my kids kids can have the life that I didn't so how dare you judge this life that I'm livin, nigga? I don't got time for war protests or ideological passions when I have to be a father to my sister and my mom's health declinin faster. I done switched from Africana studies to finance classes cuz I know the chances of being some hipster starving hiphopartist slash writer and actually making it b.i.g, and I been known aint a damn thing in this world for free, i.e.,

There's no such thing as a favor no more, and everybody's out for self, so its either fall in line and go for mines in the form of a comfy cozy but mostly cutthroat corporate existence, or offer risk filled resistance with the pursuit of my art.

SHAUN REDWOOD

Shit, I gotta choose who I'm gon' be and these are the factors that come into play, and nigga this just SOME of the shit I was thinkin bout to-day.

To the young and disillusioned minority college student who is at a critical point in his or her life

To the student who has come to the stark realization that the choices he or she makes within the course of the next year will directly impact, immediately influence and definitively shape his moral character. And finally, to the student who is constantly asked "what you gon' do with that" after you've said what you are majoring in, this is for you. I see myself at 40, dead, with a tear in my eye and a smile on my lips, struck down by an assassin's bullet for becoming the largest living threat to the status quo. I see myself at 40, sipping earl grey with class and racial struggle a distant memory, with a 50 Cent-like disregard for anybody who aint my fam, in a comfortable suburban enclave, digging through rediscovered printouts of my poetry and my rhymes, finding this poem, reading this poem, and saying Shaun, what happened?

Shaun Redwood is an English major from Kingston, Jamaica by way of Brooklyn, New York. He is a member of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity, Incorporated and is a two-time New York City Teen Poetry Slam finalist.

RACHEL WALKER

Your Shoes

New shoes

New hot pink, white laced shoes.

New skirt

New blue plaid, cotton pleated skirt.

You walk

Bounce in your step.

Balancing on cement lines,

Happy the sky is blue and air warm.

This is your new day.

Time beats to your lively step.

Ponytail swaying side to side.

You hum a tune

Whimsical words a jumble in your head.

RACHEL WALKER

And then there is that familiar face.

He strides over, smiling.

But you do not smile.

He smiles a hello.

This is your fear.

You know no other way,

And now

Your shoes, feel tight and confining

Your skirt, has a tear and stain.

You walk

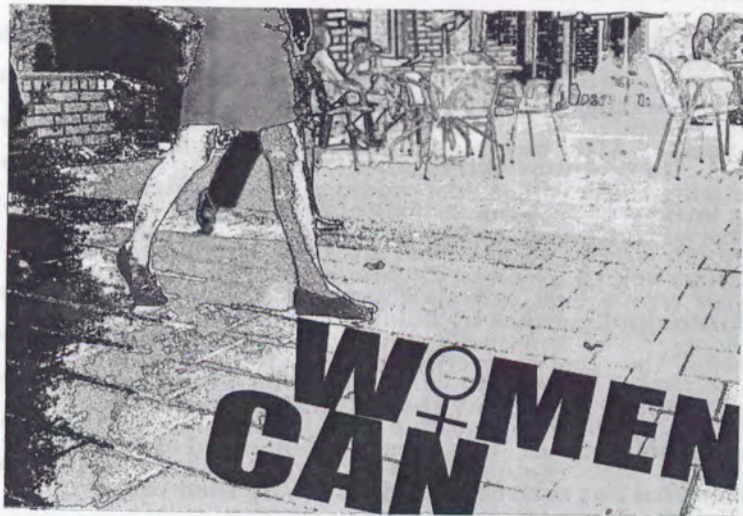
Focusing each step forward

Cheeks burning hot, embarrassed.

You are dirty and late for your first day.

This is just a day.

RACHEL WALKER



Rachel Walker, a Northern Californian, is a senior graduating with a major in Design and minors in Communications and Biology. She spends time outside of class participating in the Vagina Monologues, fighting against tobacco companies and taking advantage of the last month before the "real world."

KURT HOBERG

Freedom By Selfishness

When one discovers purpose in life, one naturally forms values. After forming values, it is then a matter of concretizing those values into practical action. Men have been free to think and act like this. Women, conversely, have been chained by society's "morals." They have been forced into thinking that by holding the title of "mother" and "wife" they had an everlasting duty to their children and husband; to silence any thought lest it interfere with household obligations. This sacrifice demanded of women was irrational but thrived regardless. Why then would women so quickly and justly gain freedom and equality? They found value in something that had always been denied of them- life, a free life, and in something that was indebted to them by the fact of existence. This denied right was the reason for the rapidity of change- it is not natural to be caged. One can gain nothing in a life of sacrifice, but a life completely devoid of a master, dictator, or husband contains infinite value.

Freedom is essential to life. There can be no restraints or pressures on a project or a book or a mind with expectations of complete success. Women could choose the safe and socially acceptable option of marriage or reject it and enter the world alone. Throughout history the snare of marriage caught enough women to convince them that to marry in order to "settle down" was right. In other words, women were bullied into relinquishing their rights and minds in order to serve others and were being convinced that this was natural and fair. If a woman's home was

KURT HOBERG

turned into a sweatshop, what chance did she have? This question was never raised, a woman never thought of connecting the word "wife" with the word "slave." She thought of the past, of precedent, of the traditions of women behind her, mop and spoon in hand, the image of Joan of Ark long removed from cognizance. Even a slave could think of a time when they were free, that is why they tried to escape; they had something to escape for. Women have always been forced into a constant state of subservience; their lives contained nary a drop of independence, thus not even necessitating one single, independent action.

A corollary to being free is living selfishly. It is a common misconception that the term selfish means a disregard for others. The true definition of selfish is a pure concern for one's self, to act according to one's own needs for sustaining life. A simple organism such as a plant is capable of this. It is a living thing because it possesses the power of motion and the ability of self-sustaining action. A plant does not have a brain. It acts automatically, naturally. A woman does possess a brain, however for thousands of years she has been unable to accomplish what comes natural to a brainless plant: the ability of self-sustaining action. Women ate and breathed and slept to keep their hearts pumping and their bodies moving. At the same, time they sacrificed themselves for their families. They were tricked into believing that life meant motion, which is true. However, no one ever instilled the value of an independent life, which would mean independent motion. The ability to act according to the needs of one's own

KURT HOBERG

mind had been taken from them and they had to act according to the needs of others' minds. Women could not have one freedom without selfishness.

Despite the centuries of oppression, women have gained freedom. This sentence has undeniably lost the effect it once carried. The reason for this is women have rapidly gained power, influence, and equality in the majority of the world (or at least in this country). There are not many lingering memories in the United States of a time when women were not equal to men. It is noble that we have finally come to an age that has eschewed the past belief that self sacrifice and enslavement is a destined path for women. But the steadfast determination and defiant actions of women fighting for equality need to be remembered. This rational and selfish thinking was rare one-hundred fifty years ago. It is even rarer today. The morally corrupt become more so, and the moral become lightning rods of oppression and hatred. In terms of women's rights, society has been morally bankrupt for centuries, until recently. Women were essentially brainwashed by the culture they could not escape. It was quite a leap to break from the mold of convention and gain independence. This is all the more reason to appreciate and emulate the integrity that women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Sojourner Truth, Susan B. Anthony, and the nameless others that fought against their smothering society displayed- the integrity to find and trust one's self and act according to that trust.

Kurt is a freshman with a double major in Finance and English. He is from Oxford, PA.

SHAUN REDWOOD

Negro Etiquette 101

There's a trend currently sweeping the grounds of college campuses, private schools, corporate buildings and all around quasi-diversified institutions nationwide.

There is a fad that is taking all of the people in your corporate office, your classroom and your quasi-diversified environment by storm:

Has anyone else noticed that when you are approached you are not approached as a human being, but more like a living cliché who cant tango but can teach the cripwalk in three easy steps, as someone who is assumed to be the guru of all things racial and as someone who cant talk English real good but is willing to be a personal guide to the ghetto???

I didn't know this before but somehow I have such supernatural strength I can somehow alter speech patterns just by walking into the room

I can make the most anglo of the Saxons feel five times blacker because my blackness has the uncanny ability to pass through all barriers- no, your North Face fleece, Abercrombie and Fitch cotton and Banana Republic denim will not protect you, muah hahahaha....

SHAUN REDWOOD

I'm sorry to disappoint you, but even though I'm from Brooklyn I don't have many crack ridden tales to entertain you with

No, I am not on the football team. Believe it or not, I'm just a regular ass student just like you

No, I have not heard the new Young Jeezy rap record, yo
(pause)

Ok I have heard the new Young Jeezy record and it's dope

But don't assume that shit next time because I'm not sure if that's racist but that's, that's something...

If you want to get to know me, talk to me as if I am a person. If you want to speak my language, speak English. If for some reason you are trying to impress me, trust that being yourself will be sufficient, because slang my friends, is supposed to be comfortable, or else it wouldn't be slang.

Furthermore, most forms of body odor can be cured by the daily shower and application of anti-perspirant; unrelated yet useful information nonetheless.

Thank you.

The MISSION of our sponsor is to foster a safe, equitable and empowering environment for women at Lehigh by:



Empowering students to create a campus culture that values all women and their differences of race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, age and socio-economic class

Providing a comprehensive University-wide sexual violence prevention program and coordination services for survivors of sexual violence

Assessing the climate for women at Lehigh and advocating for the diverse needs of women students

Maintaining a woman-friendly gathering place open to all members of the University community

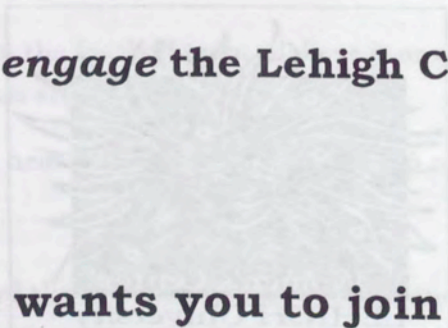
Providing information, education and referrals about issues that disproportionately affect women, such as sexual harassment, relationship violence, rape, and disordered eating

Sponsoring speakers, performers, events, and activities that address gender issues

Creating opportunities for women's voices to be heard

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at inwnc@lehigh.edu for more information**

STEPHANIE PALMIERI



Artemisia Gentileschi-“Danae”-1612

Figure 1

***Sex Doesn't Equal
Submission***

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STEPHANIE PALMIERI

Artemisia Gentileschi's portrayal of Danae in her painting entitled "Danae" (Figure 1) did not serve as a representation of female submission to a dominant male figure, but instead actively worked to embrace female sexuality through the presentation of female strength and self-possession, and worked to depict an overall tonality of female empowerment. When examining this work by Gentileschi both alone and in comparison with her other works and the works of male artists depicting the same event, it is evident that she meant to portray a positive image of female sexuality. Gentileschi's use of powerful female hands, dark calming colors, figure positioning, facial expression and background helps to convey an image of female empowerment. Gentileschi actively works to illustrate the idea that sexual intercourse does not necessarily equal submission, and a female who claims her sexuality, finds pleasure in sex, and invites sex rather than submits to it is ultimately empowered and is able to break free from the constraints of male domination. This demonstration of positive female imagery in "Danae" is not only displayed in Gentileschi's stylistic choices, but it can also be seen when in comparison to her depiction of the female figure Susanna in her painting "Susanna and the Elders", and in contrast to Titian's portrayal of the same classical illusion.

Gentileschi is able to convey meaning through Danae's

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figure. The body is positioned in a state of repose. She is reclined, neck angled back, left arm acting as a pillow that cushions her head, and her hair hangs loose and unrestrained behind her back. The figure is relaxed and her facial expression-eyes gently closed, eyebrows ever so slightly arched, lips pressed softly together-indicates that she is in a state of peaceful ecstasy. Her features are soft and the shadows and light that play off her body accentuate her breasts and neck, two erotically sensitive areas. Two of the most important points to note about this painting, which help to display the amount of pleasure Danae experiences in this sexual act, is her slightly arched back, and her crossed legs. These two features work in conjunction with each other and can be interpreted as a response to her sexual pleasure. The figure's legs are not crossed tightly towards the thigh, thus cinching the vaginal area, but they are crossed down farther at the knee. This positioning expresses the idea that Danae does not necessarily wish to expel the male figure that rests in her lap, but rather the knees come together to form a cup near the vagina that works to contain the male figure and hold it in. Along with the loosely crossed legs, the figure has a slightly arching back. The arch in the back seems to work in combination with the legs to lock in the male figure and simultaneously expresses a feeling of sexual pleasure. One might even go so far as to say that the arched back is reminiscent of a thrusting motion, which is commonly associated with men and male sexual domination. It

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serves as a means for this female figure to claim the active (masculine) role in sex rather than a passive, submissive one.

The final aspect of the figure that is of interest lies in the hands. Gentileschi's signature use of powerful female hands in her paintings is pertinent to her portrayal of Danae as a strong, self-possessing female figure. "Artemisia never painted a female figure who did not have at least one, and usually two, visible hands. In her pictorial world, where female protagonists succeed in their quests through manual dexterity and the hand is a synecdoche for female capability, women without hands would be disabled."¹ This concept by Mary D. Garrard illustrates the idea that without powerful hands, the female figure is at a disadvantage and is therefore inferior. The hands of Danae act as symbols of her power and are used to manipulate the male figure (gold) and thus empower her. Her right hand is clenched in a fist either filled with gold, which would display her dominance over the male, or it is simply tightened as a result of the pleasure she receives. It is most important to note that her hands do not hang limp at her sides, but remain active in her experience and enable her to establish a sense of self and power with in the sexual relationship.

When looking at Gentileschi's portrayal of the female figure Danae in comparison to her depiction of Susanna in the painting "Susanna and the Elders" (Figure 2) a clear juxtaposi-

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tion is established that helps to display the idea that the painting of Danae serves to empower women rather than simply to expose their weakness and inclination to submissiveness. In comparing the two female figures it is apparent that Danae is inviting and enjoying a male's sexual advances, while Susanna decidedly experiences extreme discomfort when confronted forcefully with an unwanted male gaze. While the figure of Danae, as mentioned previously, reclines in a state of calm and peaceful ecstasy, the figure of Susanna sits upright, her legs tightly drawn together at her thighs thus attempting to deny entrance of a male figure, and her neck strains at an awkward, uncomfortable angle. While Danae's hands work to lock in the male figure and contain a sense of pleasure, Susanna's work to expel the male figures and escape their grasp. Also Susanna's facial expression clearly denotes feelings of unease and discomfort. "The awkward twist and thrust of the body with its outflung arms, transforms the image into one of distress, resistance, and awkward physicality."² This image is in direct contrast to the figure portrayed in "Danae". This comparison serves as a means of illustrating the idea that in the case of Danae, Gentileschi was most certainly depicting a scene in which physical, sexual pleasure as experienced by a female can be viewed not as submissive but rather as empowering.

It is clear that Gentileschi is very deliberate in her portrayals of women in relation to men and a woman's sexual role as

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deemed appropriate by society. "The drama is played out in terms of the sexual dynamics of looking, and the interplay of male aggression and female resistance. Male possession of the female body is initiated through a look which surprises the unsuspecting and defenseless woman at her bath."³ Whitney Chadwick brings up a point about the painting of Susanna that is crucial to viewing "Danae" as a prominent piece in which female sexuality is celebrated and female submissiveness is out of the question. Chadwick mentions "female resistance", "male possession", and "defenseless". Is it important to note that none of these words apply to the depiction of Danae. While Susanna is not an active participant and is instead helpless and defenseless, Danae is actively engaging in and embracing sexual intercourse.

Gentileschi's positive female imagery can also be seen when "Danae" is placed in comparison to male paintings of the same subject. Titian's painting of Danae (Figure 3) portrays the female figure of Danae drastically different than Gentileschi. Titian's figure reclines, but unlike Gentileschi's, the figure is flaccid and slumps down in a lifeless fashion. Her arms hang limp at her sides, and the fingers of her right hand (the only hand visible) dangle, with bits of cloth loosely draped about them. Her face remains almost blank in an expression that designates passivity. Also while in Gentileschi's painting we see the entirety of Danae's face, Titian's is partially obscured and a shadow covers over the eyes. This shrouded face of Danae in Titian's painting serves to mark the female figure as faceless and thus merely

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a body that is designated for a man's sexual pleasure. Another feature of Titian's painting is that the figure's legs, which hang open, reveals a raw, reddened buttocks which is suggestive of and perhaps signifies stolen virginity, forceful penetration and rape.

Titian's portrayal of Danae, like Gentileschi's includes a nursemaid who is reaching to catch the gold as it falls from the sky. The nursemaid figures however, are radically different. In Gentileschi's the face is turned all the way toward the background so that her eyes are obscured suggesting a level of privacy and respect for Danae who is experiencing an intimate sexual moment. In Titian's the nursemaid's head is turned so that the profile is clearly visible. This would not be noteworthy except for the fact that Titian's female nursemaid is strikingly masculine. The bone structure of the face, the muscular arms, and the seeming five O'clock shadow indicates a level of masculinity. This indicates that this sexual act is not only a spectacle to be watched (since the nursemaid can plainly see it) but it is a clear representation of male domination as we see that there are two masculine figures outnumbering the sole female figure.

In this male depiction of Danae, Titian chooses to include a dog, which rests just below the hand of the female. The dog represents the ideas of loyalty and fidelity, and at the same time expresses the idea that dogs are easily controlled and reliant upon a master. These characteristics have been associated with women

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and thus bind them to a strict and repressive image that serves to constrain them in all aspects of life. These associated characteristics are forced on women by society's conventions and work to repress women in a world dominated by men. The fact that Titian includes the dog in this painting serves to reinforce the ideas that women are viewed as figures that need to be controlled, are easily controlled, and are only worthwhile if they are pure, chaste, loyal and reliant on a male master.

The most noteworthy difference between Titian and Gentileschi's paintings that set up the idea that Gentileschi empowers women lies in the background of the paintings. Gentileschi's background is calm and subdued. The whole of the section behind the figures is black, while the nursemaid wears a deep shade of blue, and the bed covers are a deep red. All three of these colors work in conjunction with each other to create a peaceful, sensuous atmosphere, which is undoubtedly conducive to the better enjoyment of an intimate sexual experience. Titian on the other hand creates a background in which dark, ominous, storm clouds loom overhead. An explosion of gold rains down forcefully upon Danae. This explosion not only represents the force with which the female figure is penetrated, but it is also reminiscent of the act of ejaculation, which is of course a symbol of male sexual dominance and conquering in that when ejaculation occurs the male is sexually satisfied while the female lays possibly unfulfilled, now a mere vessel for semen.

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Gentileschi's portrayal of Danae is in many ways an anthem of female empowerment. Through her use of figure placement, strong female hands, color selection, background, and facial expression, Gentileschi is able to display a positive female figure that is empowered by sex rather than dominated by it. Her painting of Danae is neither an account of female submissiveness nor is it a portrayal of female inferiority. Gentileschi actively works to defy gender associations and societal conventions through her painting of Danae. She does so effectively, especially in comparison to male works such as Titian's, which depict the female as a mere body that acts as a sexual plaything which men should dominate. Gentileschi's other works, such as "Susanna and the Elders" helps to put "Danae" in context by displaying Gentileschi's deliberate use of stylistic elements to indicate her inherent social meaning. The comparison of the female figures displays the ways in which "Danae" serves as a strong female figure that claims her sexuality and uses it as a means of empowerment. Gentileschi's depiction of Danae provides women with a positive vision of female sexuality and serves as a reminder that although women are subject to oppression, they can still establish a strong sense of self and therefore enable themselves to resist male suppression.

STEPHANIE PALMIERI

Endnotes

1. Broude, Norma, and Mary D. Garrard, eds. Reclaiming Female Agency. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California P, 2005. 68.
2. Chadwick, Whitney. Women, Art, and Society. 3rd ed. New York: Thames and Hudson Inc, 2002. 109.
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RACINE HENRY

Messages

My first memory of discussing sex with my mother was when the movie *Waiting to Exhale* first came into theatres. My older sisters were of age to see it but I wasn't and since they didn't want to get into trouble for sending me into a movie by myself, they allowed me to sneak into the movie with them. This was the first time I watched a sex scene without being told to cover my eyes. I remember thinking how wrong my friends at school were about two people having to be naked to have sex but mostly I remember wanting to never look as bored and unsatisfied as these women on screen did while having sex. Unfortunately my mother caught us in the theater and I was punished for watching the movie and even more for asking why I couldn't watch the movie. My mother never really sat down with me and had a conversation about sex, it was assumed I not only knew about it but also knew that I should not be having any sex until I was married. There was an unspoken lesson in my house that having sex at a young age led to pregnancy and my mother was fond of teaching my siblings and I life lessons modeled after her own hardships of being a single mother and orphan at age 16 and then a mother of 4 by age 26 as well as a newcomer to America.

When my oldest sister became pregnant at age 17, I remember over hearing several conversations between my other two sisters about how difficult her life was going to be and how much they would never put themselves in that situation. So for me, at the very young age of seven, sex was always linked to pregnancy which was also linked to a difficult and single life. At 14, I learned more about oral sex from a conversation with my oldest sister and a neighbor

RACINE HENRY

who was also my age but extremely sexually active and experienced. I had already decided that oral sex was something demeaning and not at all pleasurable for females as well as something I would never do but after this particular discussion, I was thoroughly disgusted with the idea. In this same conversation I was told that men can have sex as many times in a row as they wanted without becoming tired whereas females needed time to rest and recover between sexual episodes. Or at least this is how I interpreted things but what I think they were trying to say was that it's a lot easier for men to come than it is for women.

My stepfather never had any comments or input on the subject of sex but he also never told me to cover my eyes while watching anything on TV nor did he change the channel when things like this came on but rather he watched my reactions and warned me about how my mother would feel if she knew I was watching anything R rated. The other male resource I had growing up, my older brother, only portrayed to me that boys were after one thing and one thing only and that I was never to become "that girl". "That girl" is a female in any social setting (i.e. school, church, community) that is known for her promiscuity and her willingness to have sex with any guy who even hinted any interest. Nowhere in my family setting was love brought up in connection to sex. I never heard the terms "making love" or "lovers" or the idea of being in love or loving someone. Of course I knew and understood that my mother and stepfather were married because they loved each other but I was never encouraged to believe in love. With my brother loving a different girl every month, all of my sisters being let down, abused or left by their boyfriends, and my mother having been abused in every way by my biological father, I never got the impression that I

RACINE HENRY

was a woman capable of being loved properly or expressing my emotions in a loving way through sex or any other context.

Like I said earlier, my friends pretty much thought performing oral sex was something only “those girls” did and actually having vaginal sex was something we would do when we were much older, probably on the night of our high school prom. We actually never considered oral sex to be sex. It was thrown into the category of “other things” to do with a boy besides kissing and having sex along with groping and stroking and feeling things but still a very big deal. By the time I hit high school; I hadn’t even so much as kissed a boy or seen a penis besides that of my infant nephew while changing him. However, during this time I was involved in numerous conversations about loving and liking boys and based on things I said, I was crowned a hopeless romantic and I discovered this incredible interest and love for all things concerning love. Somewhere along the way I connected being in love with someone as the only time when you should have sex with that person. Also in high school, I had my first boyfriend and my first crush and my first kiss and my first intimate experiences. But I refused to have sex because I was waiting for a certain feeling from within that would assure me that I was ready for sex. Ironically, oral sex became less disgusting but only to receive it, to give it was still demeaning as a woman.

To me the media has always portrayed sexuality as this passionate and enjoyable thing people just have. I don’t feel as though I was told how to handle my sexuality by the media but I definitely recognize the overpowering nudge towards heterosexuality. Movies always show girls in pain or bleeding when losing their virginity, and I personally didn’t experience either. Women are supposed to know

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how to amaze and keep their men by being great at sex and I still feel as if I don't know a damn thing special to do but I wish I did. I think Cosmopolitan magazine is the best thing since sliced bread because it literally spells out every and anything you can imagine about sex. Although I feel like some of their tips I could never personally attempt, I do appreciate the fact that they take into consideration different people and circumstances when providing their advice. I have never been extremely religious or allowed things in the Bible or I hear at church regarding sex to affect my decisions and actions because I believe that there is a path laid out before me and all that I go through is because I'm pre-determined to.

I have been an athlete since age seven and I have always been immediately coined as the skinny girl which I didn't mind because I was proud of my athletic abilities and I liked eating whatever I wanted without a care in the world. There have always been comments about my butt and it's size in comparison to my body frame and all the things it looked like (i.e. an onion, an apple, a peach) and even the rudest comments I eventually became desensitized to because there was always self-confidence and a level of pride to counteract any negative effects from these incidents. I never really saw myself as sexy since I couldn't fit the "sexy" clothes because I was always too small and in a world where curves are worshipped, I fell short. But this was also at an age where being sexy wasn't important to me. Yet as I got older and saw that guys didn't want the skinny girl, I learned to portray the sexuality I was beginning to feel in different ways. And I am part of a family filled with women of different sizes and shapes who all think they're sexy so how could I not believe not only in my own, but in the potential of all women to be sexy?

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In relationships, I went through a transition. In my high school relationships, I was always told how beautiful and sexy I was even though I didn't find those things important to me. It was definitely encouraging and flattering to hear the boys I dated brag about my nice athletic body but never during my times without a boyfriend have I blamed it on my lack of sexual appeal. Thankfully, I've never felt pressure from any of my past boyfriends to be more sexual than I am but I have felt that lack of sexual know how I talked about earlier just because I haven't had much sexual experience. In my current relationship, I am blessed with the most amazing man who even finds my snoring appealing and who I find extremely sexy but it's not a pre-requisite for me, just a bonus.

Another source that I have received messages from has been music. I didn't touch on this topic in the media section because I just view it differently. There are songs degrading both sexes and there are songs that make sex and sexuality into ugly things that sometimes I don't want to have any part of. But there are also those songs that make me think, I am so damn happy and proud to be a woman who can have sex and enjoy it or not. And there are artists who capture all the aspects of sexuality in a way that allows you to appreciate men as well as women for what they are.

At this age and in a college setting, I think women are faced with the dilemma of being labeled as either uptight virgins or loose sluts. There's no middle ground and college men don't really want one or the other. We can't explore our sexuality as freely as men because there's always a stigma and title waiting for us outside of the bedroom door. The other dilemma we have to deal with is finding the right person to become sexually involved in. Does

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he love me or is he here because he wants a regular sex buddy? It's bad if I have condoms in my room but if I don't and he doesn't have one, how do I approach the topic without ruining the moment and our relationship? How in the world am I going to ask my boyfriend to get tested for STDs without offending him? All these things my friends and I have discussed and there's no class or book about this stuff. These are things that really put stress on college women and make us question ourselves in deeply personal ways. It takes a lot of courage and trust in yourself but even then, you can't predict how someone will react.

Racine is a junior with a double major in Psychology and Sociology/ Social Psychology. She is from New York City but also embraces her family's Jamaican heritage. She is in the middle of writing a novel about college relationships/love and one day hopes to be on Oprah talking about her book.

SHAUN REDWOOD

for seth moglen

I've been bored since fucking high school

Coasting through courses in a stew of stagnation
and denied ignorance

Growth stunted, stagnation is regression

Passionate muthafucka done started some shit

Challenge me

Make me make me be who I need to be

For the sake of sanity, for the sake of the cosmos

For the sake of my god's expectations

For the balance of the scale for the weight of my
soul on my day of judgment

What have you done Lehigh

Shit looks twisted, reeks like complacency

Stinks like old money, blood soaked khakis, global
business models

Shit looks weird here

Air that prevents matriculation

Climate indifferent, unwelcoming

Challenge me

SHAUN REDWOOD

Use the word nigger, make me mad cuz I aint
feelin' whiteboys usin that shit

Even when used in lyrical or historical context.
But I forgive you

Bruise my ego via embarrassment

Make me mad then make me grow

Pose profound

Digress and remind

Gesticulate funny

This shit is important ya'll, this shit is important
ya'll

Aint none of us free

Resume, done

Interview, done

I seen niggas turn from rebellious revolution rant-
ing teens to

Comfortable conformist corporate tokens

What kind of legacy will you leave behind?

Don't you think sistas had bills to pay in the six-
ties?

Don't you think niggas had families to raise?

SHAUN REDWOOD

Selflessness and sacrifice rare these days

Rare rare rare these days

What kind of legacy will you leave behind?

How will they note you in the history books?

As the generation that was silent

Because being homophobic and outrageously sexist

Is less taboo circa 2006 than being racist

I have a penis, it likes vaginas, shit don't apply

Aint none of us free if some of us aint.

Aint none of us free if some of us aint

I've been dead inside, even deader since autumn

How the fuck this whiteboy more passionate about
black shit than niggas?!

This what I'm thinking. Crazy. Bugged out. Gives
hope though.

Aint none of us free.

CLARE BURCHI

Protecting the Innocent

Pro-Life or Anti-Choice?

“Pro-life” is a very contentious term. Generally people who identify as pro-life are referring to their political stance that abortion is morally wrong, and should be illegal. Lucky for them, during the past four years President George W. Bush has passed a dangerous amount of “pro-life” or anti-choice legislation including the “Partial-Birth Abortion Ban of 2003” criminalizing a safe abortion procedure for the first time since abortion was legalized in the 1973 Supreme Court decision of *Roe v. Wade*. Bush also passed the “Unborn Victims of Violence Act of 2004”, the “Child Custody Protection Act,” and the “Abortion Non-Discrimination Act”. These measures continue to make access to a safe and legal medical procedure increasingly difficult for women across the country; particularly if they are poor. At the signing of the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban in November of 2003 Bush declared, “I’m pleased that all of you have joined us as the Partial-Birth Abortion Ban becomes the law of the land...For years a terrible form of violence has been directed against children who are inches from birth, while the law looked the other way.” The President went on to praise that this piece of “pro-life” legislation is “affirming a basic standard of humanity”, “compassion and the power of conscience” and “defending the life of the innocent.” Bush, along with many other Americans who call themselves “pro-life;” are so because they staunchly believe that a fetus deserves, from the moment of conception, basic human rights and protections. These beliefs may stem from a religious doctrine that opposes abortion, one that I might add, undoubtedly also opposes war and poverty. Pro-lifers continue to tout that abortion is a human rights issue, emanating Bushes claim that they are “protecting the innocent.”

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The question is; do these so-called basic human rights only apply to children while they are in the womb? And, if we are going to grant legal human rights to unborn fetuses shouldn't these same "basic human rights" be granted to people already living? If pro-lifers are so terribly concerned about the precious lives of children then why are there over 12 million children living in poverty? The Bush administration's stance on reproductive rights is incredibly short sighted and hypocritical, because if a person is poor and uneducated the only right to life they have been legally granted was while they were in the womb.

Abortion is a "hot-button" issue in this coming election. However, there are only about 1.3 million abortions per year in the United States. Before abortions were legalized there were about 1.2 million illegal abortions per year and a significant increase in the rate of maternal death sepsis, due to infection, and a very significant increase in morbidity illness due to the consequences of self-induced abortion. There were about additional 10,000 deaths of women in addition to the 1.2 million *illegal* abortions that occurred annually before Roe. How can it be rationalized, that as a society, we are more up in arms about the 1.3 million abortions per year than the one out of every five children currently living in poverty in the United States (the highest childhood poverty rate of any industrialized country). This is an incredibly disturbing statistic that raises fundamental questions about what it means to be "pro-life."

The respective states have a great amount of latitude in terms of restricting access to abortion, contraception, and sex education. There are incredible measures that states can take to restrict access to abortion and contraception in efforts to comply with a "pro-life"

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political stance, as well as an abstinence only sex education policy in attempt to prevent unwanted pregnancy that is not in accordance with reality. The policy the Bush administration supports of exclusively funding abstinence only sex education is absurd. It violates our personal right to privacy. How can the government tell people that they have the right to have and bear arms, and now machine guns and semi-automatic weapons but not have the right to obtain contraceptives and education regarding safe sex? Eleven states, including Pennsylvania, have legislative anti-choice declarations that declare their opposition to abortion. Some of these states are even in the process of considering "Pro-Life" license plates. To coincide with this so called pro-life legislation one would logically assume that an equal amount of legislation would be addressing the current problems of child poverty, social welfare, and sex education. Life certainly does not end once a child is born into the world, and therefore if state governments are opting to place vigorous restrictions on abortion access to protect the livelihood of fetuses they should be equally obligated to protect the lives of innocent young children by providing them with adequate healthcare, food, shelter, and education.

George W. Bush on the campaign trail has continued to say that he stands for "a culture of life, in which every person counts and every being matters." This culture of life should not apply to restricting the reproductive rights of women, but instead should apply to avoid war, secure a standard of human dignity for all citizens, and certainly oppose the death penalty. These are incredible undertakings; however in promoting a truly accurate and credible "culture of life", these are just some of our obligations as a civilized society. Instead, the state of Pennsyl-

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vania, of which for practical purposes will be the focus of this argument, has failed to pass *any* recent legislation to improve state child welfare, while it has passed an increasing number of restrictions on the reproductive rights of women, and even a "pro-life" license plate proposal.

Pennsylvania is one of nineteen states that have received a letter grade of F for access to abortion services, while the nation's overall grade is only slightly better at a D. This grading system was put together by NARAL by assessing legislation that regulates and prevents access to abortion and other reproductive services to women. Pennsylvania has enacted a number of legal barriers to abortion services for women, a right nonetheless that is protected in the constitution. Among these laws, Pennsylvania requires biased counseling and a mandatory delay of 24 hours in which the state must give biased pro-life lectures and "describe with pictures the probable anatomical and physiological characteristics of the fetus at two-week gestational increments, including the possibility of survival." The state also has restrictions on the use of public facilities for abortion procedures, public funding for abortions, along with unconstitutional and unenforceable laws including post-viability abortion restrictions, mandatory hospitalization requirements, and husband notification requirements. Pennsylvania prohibits insurance providers from covering any abortion not necessary to preserve the woman's life or to terminate pregnancies resulting from rape. Pennsylvania has implemented TRAP (targeted regulation of abortion providers) which bombards abortion providers with arduous rules and requirements, standards which are not imposed on other health care providers. Further, the state makes it incredibly difficult, if not impossible, for minors to have access to abortion due to the parental notification law,

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even in cases of incest. There is also a refusal clause which allows any employee of a health care facility, based on their own moral, religious, or individual beliefs, to deny participating or cooperating in providing abortions or even access to contraception. These laws are detrimental to the fact that the Supreme Court has granted *all* women a constitutional *right* to choose encompassed within their right to privacy protected under the 14th amendment. However, when it comes to many states and Pennsylvania in particular, this right has been legally manipulated into a limited privilege based largely on socio-economic factors. It does not help that when so much power to regulate abortion has been allocated to the respective states Senator Santorum of Pennsylvania believes that the constitutional right to privacy, which protects a woman's right to choose, "destroys the basic unit of our society."

The connection between economic policy and access to reproductive rights is obvious. Poor women, young women, and women of color make up a disproportionate amount of the number of abortions compared to white middle or upper-class women. In turn, the legal impediments enacted by states like Pennsylvania to restrict access to abortion also disproportionately affect poor women. The problem being that there is a substantial amount of aggressive legislation to restrict the reproductive rights of women, a right constitutionally protected. At the same time this "pro-life" legislation is being passed, the government has reformed (and basically disbanded) social welfare at the federal level by devolving it to the states which are not, according to the NCSL (National Conference of State Legislatures), currently pursuing aggressive legislative reforms to fix the increasing problem of child poverty. Although states seem to be doing well in restricting access to abortion

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and contraception this does not in anyway coincide with fostering a culture of life as we are allowing families to go without healthcare and other basic necessities. Pennsylvania is one of a number of states which did not enact any new state child welfare legislation between 2002 and 2003. This blatantly contradicts the state's "pro-life" declaration as well as all legislation which impedes abortion access in favor of child birth and "protecting the lives of the innocent". It is not difficult to see how a lack of reproductive rights access is coincides directly with poverty. Laurie Nsiah-Jefferson has written on the growing dichotomy of access to reproductive rights between poor minorities and privileged whites. She illustrates the connection between economic policy and abortion access:

A significantly higher percentage of nonwhite women who get abortions do so after the first trimester, or first 12 weeks of pregnancy...Financial, geographical, and other barriers to access are likely to have a greater impact on nonwhite women, whose overall abortion rate is more than twice that of whites...The enactment and implementations of the Hyde Amendment terminating federal Medicaid funding for abortions has caused many poor women to delay having abortions while they raise the necessary funds.(364)

The funds that must be raised in order to obtain an abortion include more than the cost of the actual procedure. A typical abortion procedure costs about \$300 dollars, but "by the time [women] get through the dangerously sticky red tape of Medicaid (if they are lucky enough to be in a state where Medicaid pays for procedures), it's \$500-\$2000 dollars." Pennsylvania is not one of the lucky states feminist-activist Jennifer Baumgardner mentions in her article

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“Roe in Rough Waters”. Medicaid does not cover general abortion procedures, putting poor women at an even greater disadvantage in trying to obtain abortions. Traveling expenses are another major cost of obtaining access to receive an abortion for women in Pennsylvania. Besides restrictions to access and lack of funding by the state, there is a geographic element that works against women particularly in rural areas. 75% of Pennsylvania counties have no abortion provider. Why are so many states like Pennsylvania pursuing heavy anti-abortion legislation in the name of protecting the human rights of children while 27% of families with children in Pennsylvania are low-income families, and nationally 32% of children live in low-income families? The statistics indicate that increasing poverty is a greater threat to life for children in the United States than abortion:

The poverty rate for children under age three was about 80 higher than the rate for adults or the elderly in 2000... The poverty rate for young black and Hispanic children under age three is still three times higher than that of white children... [And] over half of all young black children and nearly half of all Hispanic young children living in single-mother families are poor.

According to the NCCP (National Center for Children in Poverty), poverty among young children is the single most powerful factor that negatively influences brain development.

These children “face a greater likelihood of impaired development because of their increased exposure to a number of factors associated with poverty including, inadequate nutrition, environmental toxins, diminished interaction due

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to maternal depression, trauma and abuse, lower quality child care, and parental substance abuse.” It is apparent that poverty affecting young children puts them at a huge disadvantage and possibly life threatening situation. Pro-lifers should be pushing for basic standard human rights for children who are already alive. If the states are imposing laws that restrict abortion access in order to foster life, then the states must implement laws that allow young children in poverty to have adequate human rights outside of the womb. If the government can impose restrictions on women’s bodies and reproductive choices based on viability or any other “pro-life” or “anti-choice” argument, it must be equally obligated to provide the basic needs of food, shelter, healthcare, and education to allow the growth of that life and to provide a basic standard of human dignity. George W. Bush and many other Americans, particularly the conservative right, have hijacked the words “pro-life” and “protecting the innocent” so that they are solely associated with anti-abortion and anti-choice political stances. Pro-life is a human rights issue that applies to almost every facet of society; the death penalty, war, and social welfare of human beings. Abortion is an issue on which reasonable people, thoughtful people, and people of great faith can disagree as to whether or not it is moral or immoral under certain circumstances. The decision to use contraception or to terminate a pregnancy is an intensely private one that is ultimately between a woman and her consultation with a doctor, healthcare provider, and possibly other family members, but is ultimately between her and her doctor. There is a serious scientific and philosophical debate as to when human life begins, but is that what defines a human being? The question is metaphysical and this is a reasonable disagreement. Nonetheless, it is not a place where it is appropriate for the federal or state governments to prevent

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access to contraception or abortion. Before we can begin to provide the unborn with human rights and encroach on rights of women and the choices they have over their own bodies we must provide already living children with basic human rights. If the current Bush administration is going to fight for a "right to life" they should stop solely thinking about when life begins in the womb but rather what a right to life really means. The right to life is more than merely the right to be born, it means that every human being is entitled to food, shelter, healthcare, education, and above all, human dignity.

Clare Burchi is a senior English and Political Science major. She is from Grosse Pointe, Michigan and enjoys her work at the Women's Center, traveling, feminism, writing, and her dog izzy. She hopes to one day be the third wave Germaine Greer.

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MEERA MALIK

Eve

Can you hear the wind mill that croaks when the wind blows? Can you hear the water that drips by the wind mill? Can you hear the well getting full as the water drips?

Of course you can. You hear everything. You are the only one I talk to. Forgive me if you're asleep, but who else should I turn to?

Your father didn't mean to hurt you last night. He just had a very hard day. He wanted to be with me, but I said you will get hurt. He hit me because he was angry. Not with you of course; he was upset with me. But how could I let him in, my baby? How could I let him touch you...you might have been asleep.

Can you hear the doves cooing at the roof top? They are so pure. Like you, untouched.

Do you feel my warm hands gently stroking your shell? Can you feel how much your mama wants for you to be safe? I wish I could forever keep you within. Here I can keep you safe.

Did you hear what happened to Sarila's baby girl? Well you see, her papa wanted a baby boy. They want someone to carry on the family name. And having a boy would make life so much easier since they are so poor. Their fields were destroyed because of the flood and so Sarila's husband does not have much money for a girl's dowry. If the baby was a boy, he could have taken care of the parents when they grow old. But since girls have to be married when they start growing up...it is difficult you see. The father has to sell his fields and the mother her jewelry to get enough money for the daughter's dowry.

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Then who knows what will happen? The in-laws might ask for more after the wedding. The parents will have none left by then. The in-laws will beat the girl if they are not given more, and sometimes even burn her alive. It's only agony for the parents even after giving her away with all they ever had. It is so much easier to be blessed with a boy.

But don't be afraid. Your papa's fields were not destroyed. And his landlord did promise him a little raise at the end of this year. You will be fine my baby. No one will hurt you...No one.

We will just have to talk to grandmamma, your papa's ma. If I could just explain to her how much you mean to me, maybe...See she doesn't really like that I bore two daughters before you. She feels a deep sense of despair for us all. Your sisters are enough torture for a lifetime, she says. I can never understand her. How could she, a mother, say this to another mother about her children?

But if only you are a boy, it will make her so happy. She will forgive me for bearing two girls before you. And your father, he will love you so much.

Can you feel my tears on my face, my baby? I wish I didn't have to tell you these things so early in your life. But I wish my mother had told me. If only she had told me about the cruel outside world, maybe I would have chosen to never leave her warmth.

I can feel you moving your little legs. I guess you are wondering when we'll eat. Soon my child, soon.

Don't dislike your grandmamma my baby. She too had a hard time when she was young. She cried last night as we cleaned lentils when she told me her story for the first time. Her father's land lord bought her for ten Rupees. Then he

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took her away from her home when she was nine. Her mother cried and pleaded with her father. But there was nothing he could have done. He had to feed six other children. If he didn't sell the eldest daughter, they all would have starved to death. So she was taken away. She never saw her mother, or her father, or sisters or brothers again. She cried every night, till one night the landlord burned her feet with a hot iron. Then her tears stopped. She never cried again. She decided to never miss her mother again from that day onwards.

Her mother must have missed her so much. I know she must have missed her little baby. She must have cried by the little window every night, trying to hide her tears from everyone else. If only she could see her baby one last time...she must have prayed every night. If only she could know that her baby was alright.

But don't you worry, my little baby. No one will sell you. Your father can feed his children, and your mother will work hard in the fields. No matter if it rains or the sun scorches her back, she will work and work so her babies will be fine. I won't take a break.

So grandmamma sometimes remembers the time when she was nine. She just says she wishes she wasn't a girl. If only she was a boy, she could have plowed the fields, helped get food for the house, then she could have stayed with her mother. If only she could have seen her mother once more...she says.

So I was telling you about Sarila's baby girl. They took her away when Sarila was still unconscious after labor. She had a hard time with the delivery. The first ones are always the most painful. Your sister Aamri left me unconscious for hours. The midwife said she will love me the most, since she didn't want to leave the womb. Well,

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Sarila's father-in-law is adamant that that first child should be a boy. It has been the family tradition. He says girls bring plagues. So he took away her baby as soon as she came into the world. I wonder if she even saw her mother's face. Sarila never saw her first child's face. Her father-in-law took her to the well behind the house. He wrapped her in his turban, while the child's father cried and pleaded like a two year old boy. After he had wrapped her, he put her in the bucket and lowered her into the well till he could no longer hear her muffled cries. He left her there for a few minutes and then he pulled her out. They did not cremate her on the holy grounds since she could have cursed them. They cremated her outside the village somewhere. I wonder if her spirit watches over her poor mother.

Neighbors tell me all she does is cry. She won't even let husband near her. I hope she stops soon, or her father in law will get rid of her too. He went to look for another bride for his son you see, in case Sarila will not stop crying. But don't you worry. I'll be awake to see you come out.

Can you hear the birds going home at dusk? They must be returning to their young ones. The young ones must be hungry by now; it is getting late. Can you see the colors of the sky change from crimson to purple through my eyes?

I wish I were a bird. Then I could have made a nest for you. There I would feed you and teach you how to fly. I would protect you. One day when you had learned, I would take you for your first flight. We could both be free, under a free sky. We could fly anywhere we wanted. Don't you also wish we were birds?

Maybe in our next lives...

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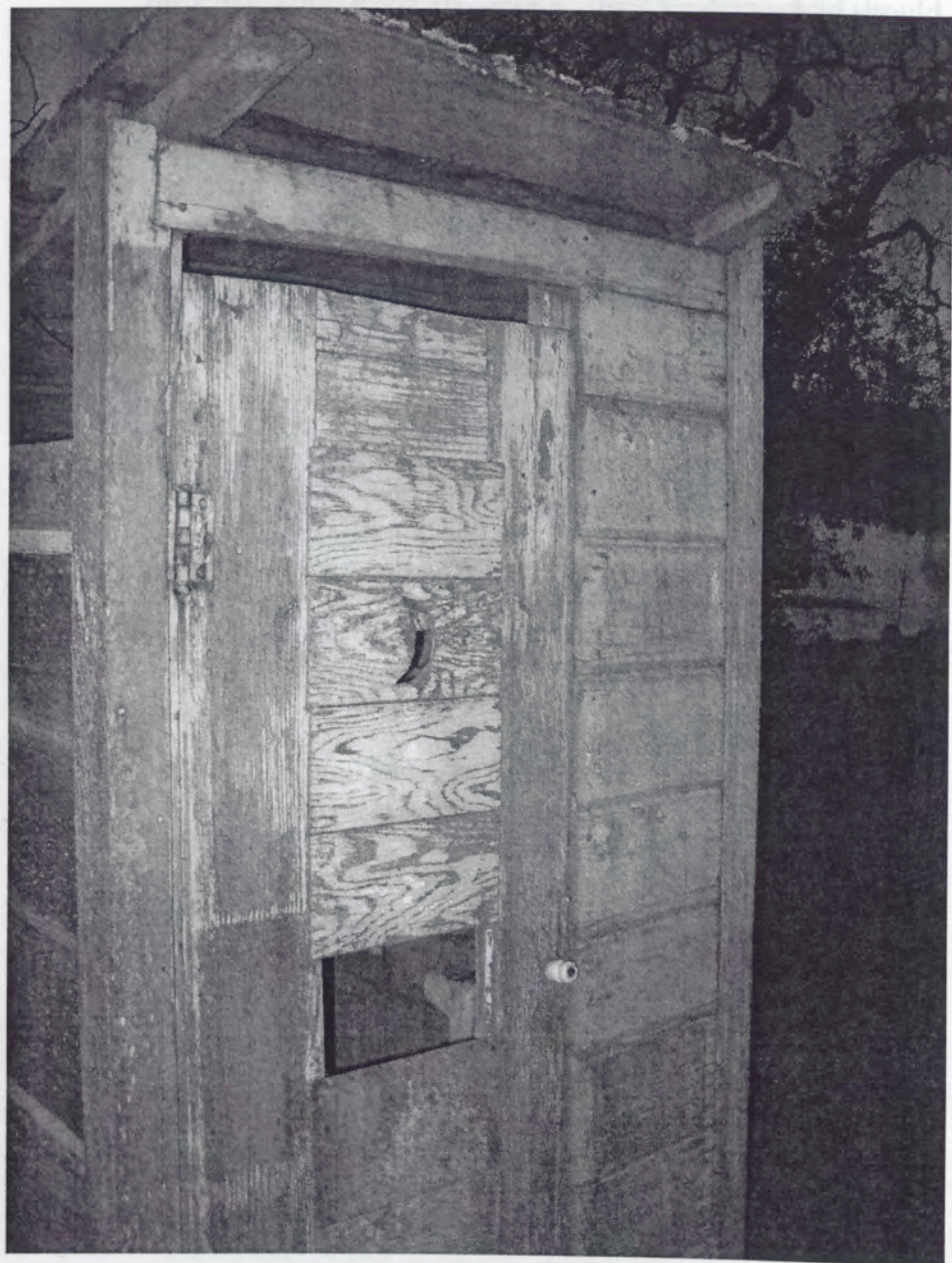
I wonder if Sarila's baby can see her mother from up there. She went to God, you see. All babies go to God. Nina's, Gauri's, Bela's, Kali's, yes, all their little girls went to heaven. There, nobody thinks they will bring plagues. There, they all have plenty of milk and warmth. Nobody shoves them around, or sells them at the age of nine, or makes them work under the scorching sun dawn to dusk, or punishes them for wanting to go to school like the boys, or marries them to a man thirty years older than themselves, or burns them alive when they don't get enough dowry. There, they are accepted.

I wish God kept all the baby girls with him. I wish he would only send baby boys down to this earth. I wish you are a boy, my child, for I don't want to lose you like Sarila lost her baby.

But don't be scared...I'll not let them take you away. I love you no matter what you are. I'll be awake to see you come out.

Meera Malik is a Finance and English major, with a minor in Communications. She is originally from India and came to the U.S. in 9th grade. She enjoys traveling and cooking. She intends to write her own cook books next year, and the following year she will attend the Culinary Institute of America.

RACHEL WALKER



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o r i g y n s

RACHEL WALKER

The Song of the Sea

