

2008

Origyns: Reclaiming our feminist voices

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ORIGYNS



Reclaiming Our Feminist Voices

2008

Publication Team

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Anna Orchard

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, articles, and short stories. Some were specifically written for this publication; others were written for class or for personal expression. In addition to written works, *origyns* publishes original artwork. 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 and editors

all submissions may be directed to the Lehigh University Women's Center: inwnc@lehigh.edu

note from the editors: biographical notes were written by the authors

front cover artwork: "Blacklove" by Teniece Divya Johnson
back cover image from Dean's Premier Book for Girls, 1961

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Women's Center
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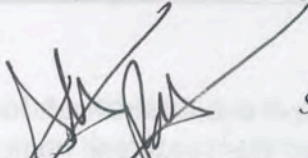
Spring Run

The air has begun its warming,
reminding the tree I lean against
that it is time to awaken. And so,
young tips of green reach out from their
brown blanket of slumber while my blood
moves quicker through my body as I look upon
a little boy who catches so much more of this
spring sunlight than the yesterday
that fell upon him four years earlier. I notice
his blood brought quick under the skin of his cheeks.

Blood that ran with my time when we were one.
Blood that ran through my mother, my grandmother,
and so on, within our line.

I run my finger gently along the rough
skin of this tree, skin that holds its lives within rings,
and wonder if the sap moving now has touched all.

I watch the life from mine
running in its own time, and am
encompassed by his laughter which draws
forth my own until we become one again as
our voices dance and his small hand rests
within mine in this world awash in watercolor.



Stephanie Palmieri

[Editor's Note: For further information on the research and sources used in this essay, please contact the Women's Center at inwnc@lehigh.edu]

Female Sexuality: The Medical Phenomenon

In recent decades there has been an interesting shift in the way our society views female sexuality. The standards set forth by the media and pop culture have been binding and repressive to women, and most importantly have sent out extremely confusing messages about what is and is not appropriate sexual behavior for women of all ages. In short, the media sends messages that women should be extremely sexy and go to great lengths to attract men, but that they should also be pure and wholesome. They are supposed to be passive objects for men's "raging and uncontrollable" sexual appetite rather than active partners in sexual activity. A woman's desire for sex is really only valid and acceptable if it is for the greater purpose of serving a man. It is interesting to see female sexuality receive so much attention since it has been overwhelmingly ignored, subdued and condemned for an incredibly long time. What is even more fascinating about this shift is that while female sexuality is discussed more and more in a public forum, it is still being oppressed, and both men and women are still receiving very clear signals about women's sexuality— what it is "supposed" to be, and how it functions. Female sexuality, now more than ever, is being treated as a medical malady rather than as a combination of the spiritual, emotional, mental, and physical aspects of a woman. Women are told that if they do not experience sex in a way that brings them to orgasm, then they are not only deficient, but they must seek a medical cure rather than try to understand the dynamics of their sexual relationships as well as their current emotional, mental and spiritual states.

One of the drugs that currently seek to solve the alleged problem of female sexual dysfunction (FSD) is called Intrinsa, and is manufactured by a company called Proctor and Gamble. Intrinsa is a transdermal patch that is applied to the abdomen, and transmits testosterone in increments. The main objective of the patch is to compensate for low levels of testosterone, which in women is pro-

duced by the ovaries and adrenal glands, and is associated with low levels of sexual desire. The target group for this product is women who are menopausal and who have had ovary removal surgery. The component of female sexual dysfunction that this product seeks to eliminate is the problem of desire, also sometimes more specifically called Hypoactive Sexual Desire Disorder ("About Intrinsa"). HSDD can be classified as a deficiency or absence of sexual fantasies and desire for sexual activity, and it is one component of what is termed female sexual dysfunction. The other categories of female sexual dysfunction include arousal, orgasmic, and sex pain disorders.

In searching for facts about this product, it was extremely difficult to come up with anything terribly concrete. In my mind, the information about what the drug is and what it does should be readily available and should be a component of every article or website about the drug. I still don't really know exactly what it is other than that it increases levels of testosterone in women, and that it attempts to increase a woman's desire to have sex. In the search it was a bit easier to find the kinds of side effects that were prevalent in the trials for this drug and for hormone use in general. In the trials for this product, the postmenopausal women involved were also taking estrogen, which increased the risk of heart attack, stroke, breast cancer, endometrial cancer and blood clots in the lungs or legs. Also, women who take testosterone products designed for men can experience hoarseness or deepening of the voice, unnatural hair growth or loss, acne or oily skin, decreased breast size, increase in the size of the clitoris, and irregular menstrual cycles ("About Intrinsa"). What is most troubling about the side effects of this drug is that most of them are probably unknown. The testing for this drug is in no way long term and it is impossible to account for all the unknown factors of women who would potentially take the drug. It is also impossible to predict the long term effects in general, and there would be no way of tracking the users in the real world.

Although the trials for Intrinsa seemed to show that women who were taking the drug experienced an increase in their sexual activity in a two month time period versus the placebo group who saw very little increase, there is no way to know the true effectiveness of this drug. It is extremely difficult to measure the amount of sexual pleasure each woman experienced due to the fact that the way it is

experienced is unique to each person. Also, the trials only take into account the physical markers of sexual pleasure (orgasm and amount of intercourse per period of time), which do not accurately reflect the amount of overall pleasure a woman receives from sexual activity. Also, as previously discussed, the trials for this product were extremely short term. The effectiveness of this drug may diminish over long periods of use and may also be affected by different weights, ethnic backgrounds, health status, and age of the potential users.

One of the major criticisms by opponents of this drug and other "magic bullet" cures for what is termed female sexual dysfunction is that female sexuality is far more complicated than pharmaceutical companies would have us believe. Often, drug companies largely ignore the fact that:

All women are not the same, and their sexual needs, satisfactions, and problems do not fit neatly into categories of desire, arousal, orgasm, or pain. Women differ in their values, approaches to sexuality, social and cultural backgrounds, and current situations, and these differences cannot be smoothed over into an identical notion of "dysfunction"—or an identical, one-size-fits-all treatment. ("FSD Alert")

Essentially, what drug companies exclude from their focus and efforts is the idea that female sexuality can not truly be measured only by physical standards such as orgasm or number of times of intercourse in a given period of time, and it is not comparable to men's sexuality and the problems that men may experience in relation to "sexual dysfunction." The different components of women's relationships, past experience, and current situations are completely overlooked. Women's sexual "dysfunction" is taken completely out of context and assessed purely by physical arousal and no other factor. The FSD Alert website also accounts for the mysterious lack of information about the drug as it points out that not only was the research on the drug not submitted to a peer review journal as is the usual protocol, but Proctor and Gamble did not make any of the research information publicly available. In addition, the research was not conducted by an independent research group; instead, it was funded by Proctor and Gamble.

What is most interesting about the product is that it was mysteriously absent from Proctor and Gamble's website. As I re-

searched, I literally could not find the drug anywhere on the site; I felt like a detective sleuthing for clues rather than a concerned consumer or potential buyer. There is also very interesting imagery on the Intrinsa website. In the top middle of the site is a picture of a man and a woman. They are in a state of repose that appears very sexual and intimate. Both smile as they gaze into each other's eyes and their faces almost touch. The picture seems to suggest that women who take the drug (or rather purchase the drug and take it) will get in return a great physical intimacy with their partner in their heterosexual relationship, and they will be happy as a result. What is most interesting about this picture is that the woman is on top, perhaps suggesting that women who take control of their sexual dysfunction by purchasing Intrinsa will also take charge in her relationships, and once again be happy as a result.

The company's literature is extremely troubling for a number of reasons. The first point of concern is that it was extremely difficult for me to find any information about the drug. After visiting Proctor and Gamble's official website I was left frustrated and irritated because I could not find any information on Intrinsa or any kind of link to the official website for Intrinsa. When I did finally discover the Intrinsa website, I was again left disconcerted as I saw that the site was much more focused on the idea of female sexual dysfunction and helping to identify that dysfunction than it was about explaining the drug in terms of how it works and what it is meant to do. This is extremely troubling because the site has women assessing their potential "medical condition," and then leaves them with no way to learn about the drug, the research done on it, and its possible side effects.

In general, it seems that using the words "dysfunction" and "disorder" to describe a woman's lack of sexual desire is one of the biggest problems women unknowingly face. Our society, or rather the companies that produce these types of drugs, try to create a condition that must be fixed with medicine, not for the women who are experiencing unsatisfying relationships, but for the company's own financial benefit. They tell women that they are experiencing a dysfunction, which insinuates that there is something inherently wrong with women who are sexually unsatisfied. The word "dysfunction" also insinuates that women are nothing more than purely physical

beings who are completely detached from the spiritual, emotional, and mental realms of sex. And while the official Intrinsic website does seem to invite women to think about their sexual dissatisfaction, and it does offer sex and relationship counseling as an important step in the "cure," it also seems to want to label that dissatisfaction as "dysfunction," and it offers no concrete information on the drug itself. Sadly it seems that our society is severely mis-educated about sexuality and the ways in which women experience sexual pleasure. The societal shift from suppression of female sexuality to total medical domination of it is disconcerting. Women's sexuality has become less about female sexual pleasure and more about financial gain by large companies, and the continued oppression of women.

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Awakened in Water

Women are water, sinking pools in the dirt
That make mud, or love with the men of the earth.
In the ancient aquarium, the light through the murk
The first encounter
Adam as earth
Falling through beautiful Eve.
Or as a primate climbing the far tree
Returning with fruit.
Anything to impress you.

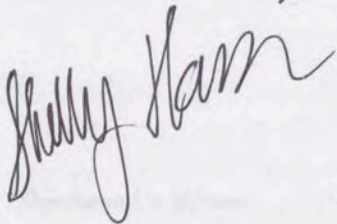
We, the male species
Stare into your eyes,
Fly into your wings,
Wink,
On purpose.

I have found a woman
And she has made more of a difference
For I can walk any path I choose
And still fall over laces
But she has tied my shoes,
Flashed pictures of all the places.
Focus once danced about my hair
Like butterflies
Until you handed me a net
And I got to catching.

Walking steadfast with a jar in my hand.

A boy
With shaking legs
And a bursting heart
When you kiss me
First.

Women are water
We wade through the depth.
I have never swam,
Gotten wet,
Until you pulled me from the bank
And then let my body go.
We both float, awakened,
And to who do I owe?
I have found myself
Through a woman
I know.



Shelly Harris

Dating a Dipshit

I started dating Craig* as a junior in high school. I was 16. It started out nice, the way most high school relationships do. Our friends were all friends, and we spent the weekends watching movies and going to parties. I started dating him about a week after he broke up with his girlfriend of over a year. He is a serial boyfriend, needing to be with someone at all times. Our relationship progressed very quickly. I had typical high school drama issues with his ex, as did all of my friends, but to be nice, I waited a month before I would become his girlfriend. A month after that, we said "I love you." Shortly after, we had sex for the first time, and he was my first. He was my first serious boyfriend, and I was so happy. I remember that Christmas, our first together, he got me presents that were very specific to my interests, not his. I thought this meant he really loved me, that he thought about *my* interests, and was very caring.

The first warning sign was in that January. On New Year's Eve, he got arrested for the first time for being drunk and fighting. I supported him through it, had to tell my parents and deal with their judgments, and so on. When we went back to school after winter break, a few days after the arrest, he stopped talking to me. He wouldn't return my calls, or meet me at school when we would usually meet. This went on for a week, until that Thursday afternoon I finally just showed up at his house. He told me he was going through things, but he did not mean to shut me out, and he loved me. I was reassured and thought everything was fine. The next day he broke up with me. I was heart-broken. After all, he was my first love. However, the next day I woke up to ten missed calls and voice messages from him, begging for me back. He said so many nice things, and bought me a "promise ring." I conceded, and a week later we were back together. A few weeks after this, he dropped out of school.

Things were good for a while, then they turned sour again. In March, I had an exchange student from Spain stay with me.

This caused a lot of tension in our relationship because Craig couldn't see me as often as he wanted. I constantly felt guilty for participating in something "optional" that was affecting our relationship. The last week that my exchange student was with me, Craig began avoiding me again. He spent every moment with his trouble-making friends, who disliked me and my friends. They were constantly pressuring him to dump me. When I finally got in touch with him, he told me that he had cheated on me with his ex-girlfriend. I had no choice but to break up with him. A few weeks later, I went to Spain to visit my exchange student. Half-way through my stay, I got an e-mail from Craig saying he missed me, wanted to be friends, and so on. I ignored it. When I got back to school, I had a new "European" hairstyle, had lost ten pounds from salmonella, and had a new sense of independence. My friends and I bridged gaps that had been made during the winter when I had spent more time with Craig than them. They forgave me, and things were great again.

After all of this progress and growth, Craig came crawling back to me. He swore that he had not cheated, but had just wanted an excuse to break up with me because he was worried about me going to Spain. At first I said no, but we began to talk more and more. One day, I was having a horrible day and ended up driving to his house. He met me in the driveway, and I collapsed into his arms. I should have noted then that the "comfort" I felt was dangerously overbearing and had control over me. I was supposed to pick up my friend Kate*, but lied, saying I'd be late at the gym, so I could see Craig. Thus began my long and complicated attempt to convince my friends and family that Craig was not bad and had not cheated. I said that if I got back together with him, it would be with the understanding that I would never fully know if he cheated or not. I convinced myself that he probably had not, because being in high school I would probably have heard about it. He was so nice and caring while he tried to regain my trust. He wrote me letters, drew me pictures (I am a softy for creative men), made me a mixed tape with love songs, and even bought me a new promise ring, since the old one was tied to our old relationship. Needless to say, despite the lack of support from friends and family, I got

back together with him that July. We were secretly together all summer.

At the start of senior year, I told everyone that we were officially back together, even though we had been for two months already. Slowly Craig gained back my parents' trust, but my friends never got used to it. They hated him, and he in turn hated them. I had to split my time between my friends and my boyfriend. Since Craig was no longer in high school, he did not spend much time with his old friends. He did not want to go out to parties because his friends had all graduated the previous year. If I wanted to go, he would guilt trip me into spending time with him. To top it all off, I worked one night a weekend, so I only had 1 ½ weekend nights to split. Usually my friends got the night that I worked until 10p.m., and Craig got the full night. I had also moved to the city and was commuting to school, which separated me from my friends even further. Listening to Craig, I began to resent my friends for pressuring me and not accepting that I had a boyfriend. Needless to say, the friendships were greatly affected, and most have not fully recovered. At this point as well, Craig was in heavy credit card debt. I paid for almost everything, and if I complained he would get really upset. He would talk about not having money, and said he wished he did so he could buy me things. Sometimes he would guilt trip me about the rings he had bought me. When he got arrested that winter for driving with a suspended license, I "lent" him \$300 for bail. He never paid back. I was convinced that when I went to college I would break up with him. I decided to go to Lehigh University, which is a six hour drive from Boston. We decided to wait and see how things went.

I continued to do senior activities, and he began to freak out and worry that I was leaving. He took me to prom where tension escalated to the point where Craig decided not to go to the after-party. He went home, and I in turn only stayed at the party for an hour before leaving it to be with him. The next day, my friend Lexi* and her boyfriend were fighting over the previous night's incidents, and Craig was dragged into the issue. For a while, Lexi and I had not really been close, mostly because we were both too far into our relationships. We were childhood

friends and had known each other all our lives. I blew up on her the morning of graduation, and we were not friends after that. A few weeks later, on vacation with my family, I decided to stay with Craig during college. I missed him so much on vacation, that I could not fathom breaking up with him.

That summer I removed myself more and more from my high school friends, and spent my time with Craig. I thought that staying with him showed my maturity because I would not break up with my boyfriend just so I could be with new guys at college. I was "above that." When I first got to Lehigh, it was really hard for Craig. I had been there a week when he called me saying that he was at my school. I did not believe him, but he was serious. I was uncomfortable with the fact that he had shown up without warning me, but I was afraid I would upset him if I said anything about it. He stayed overnight, then left the next day. He drove twelve hours total to see me for no more than twelve hours, half of which were spent sleeping. I thought this was romantic, but I should have listened to that little voice inside of me that said, "This is weird." It was not the first time that had happened, and it would not be the last. At another time, he "surprised" me a week before he was supposed to come to visit. He was supposed to come that Thursday, but showed up Monday and stayed for the whole week.

Things improved, and he became friends with my friends at school. It was a new start for us, having a relationship that was accepted by my friends. In November, I had a momentary lapse of feelings, and I broke up with him. He was making me feel overpowered, and he was too jealous. But I got back together with him the next day. I could not be apart from Craig. This was one of the key characteristics of our relationship that shows me that he was abusive. He had complete control over me. He visited often, and pretty soon we celebrated our third Christmas together. The rest of my freshman year was pretty good. We bickered a lot, which I saw as a sign of real comfortable love. Then the summer came, and we were together every day. My dad finally warmed up to him, and everything seemed great. He turned twenty-one, and we went to my house in the Cape for his birthday with my best friend and his. We had a

great weekend; however, he basically ignored me, saying that he did not want to be touchy in front of the others. He was not even talking to me after I had put a lot of effort into his birthday celebration. After this blip, the summer continued. I went back to school that fall, convinced that our relationship was stronger than ever.

It started out fine. Then he became friends with the men at his job. They were in their mid-to-late thirties, and went out partying with Craig every weekend. It began one night a weekend, then both nights, then the weekends and weeknights. He hardly called me, and I had to beg him to respond to my e-mails. His phone would "lose service," "lose battery," or "disappear," and he would go a whole weekend without calling me or answering his phone. One night I got so mad at him, and he hung up on me. I spent the whole next Sunday calling him, and freaking out that he wasn't answering. When I finally heard from him at 4p.m. that afternoon, I got some crazy story about his phone somehow being in Rhode Island and needing to go there to get it. That year, we fought constantly. I was really busy with *The Vagina Monologues* and *Break the Silence*, and he made me feel guilty about those things. For Valentine's Day we gave each other rings engraved with a quote from our song, "I wanted you to know I love the way you laugh." It was my idea, and he played along.

After spring break, things got really bad. Craig blew me off regularly. After my birthday, he finally admitted that he had been "acting weird" because he wanted to propose to me. He knew I would say no, and therefore had been pulling away. I explained to him that after four years I was seriously thinking about marriage, and the rings to me were the step before engagement; an engagement just between us, with no one else knowing. He agreed, and I thought that that was the end of the issues. Four days later he broke up with me, saying that he had cheated on me and did not love me anymore. I was a wreck. I called his mom to say goodbye and I told her what had happened. Two days later, he called me mad that I had told his mom. He threatened me with naked pictures he had of me, and he said awful things. That Monday I sent him a package of things from our

relationship that I didn't want anymore. The next day, like any power-hungry abuser who realizes he has lost control, he called and asked for me back. He said he hadn't cheated, and had freaked out because he thought I didn't want to marry him. This time I did not cave. I went through a very hard six months, during which he contacted me, told me about dates, and finally began a new relationship. I dealt with it in bad ways, mainly by cutting my arm. Finally though, I am out of the abusive cycle, and I will never go back to it.

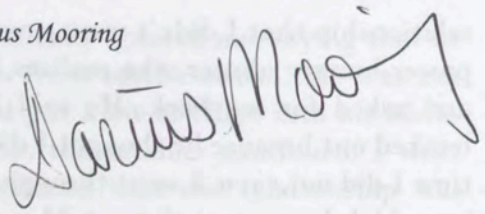
During my four years with Craig, he abused me on many levels. A list of "warning signs" or signs in general of abusive behavior is what brought my attention to this:

- Is he jealous or possessive toward you?
- Does he control you by being bossy or demanding?
- Does he try to isolate you by demanding you cut off social contacts and friendships?
- Is he violent and/or loses his temper quickly?
- Does he pressure you sexually?
- Does he claim that you are responsible for his emotional state?
- Did he have a history of bad relationships?
- Did your family and friends warn you about the person? You leave and then return to your partner repeatedly, against the advice of your friends, family and loved ones?
- Did you frequently worry about how he would react to things you say or do?
- Did you have trouble ending the relationship, even though you know inside it's the right thing to do?

I can answer "yes" to all of these. They signs can sometimes be confusing because most relationships have certain aspects of the above mentioned warnings. However, there is a big difference between a person getting mildly jealous (mostly out of insecurity), and a person being so jealous that he instills fear in his partner. That is the difference. So there it is. The story of four years of shit that broke up friendships, complicated everything, and left me the empty shell that I am now. No pun intended.

*Name has been changed

Darius Mooring

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Darius Mooring". The signature is written in a cursive style with long, sweeping lines, particularly on the 'M' and 'g'.

Erin's Song (song lyrics)

She stands at the bus stop
With nowhere to go
The tears sting the bruise on her face
But she's happy she found the courage to go
She'll be much better out of this place

She remembers she loved him
But can't remember when
The love in her heart turned to fear
It was the love for her own life
That got her standing here
And sometimes that's just the way it is
Sometimes that's just the way it is

You win some, you lose some, you get some, you give
Life's only worth living if you want to live
And sometimes that's just the way it is

A home with no father
Is how he was raised
No one to show him right from wrong
That's why when he hits her
It feels so okay
He didn't know one day she'd be gone
He didn't know one day....

She'd open her eyes
And she'd realize
She's worth more than she was told
She'd pick up her pride
Dry her weeping eyes
And she'd walk out the door

Sometimes that just the way it is
You win some, you lose some, you get some, you give
Her life was worth living, cause she wants to live
And sometimes that's just the way it is

Uncovering the True Hindu Philosophy of the Treatment of Women

"The wife and husband, being the equal halves of one substance, are equal in every respect; therefore both should join and take equal parts in all work, religious and secular." This is commentary from a portion of the Rig Veda (book 5, hymn 61, verse 8), which is among the four sacred Hindu texts cumulatively referred to as the Vedas. The treatment of women in Hinduism, as seen by this excerpt, is one of reverence and worship; no other Scripture of the world has ever given women such equality with men as the Hindu Vedas (Women in Hinduism). In her essay appearing in the 2006 edition of *Origyns* entitled, "A Woman's Worth in the Hindu Religion: Propaganda vs. Reality," Ashley Saunders attempts to show that Hinduism and its Vedic scriptures advocate the status of women as "subhuman." Furthermore, Saunders mentions that "the Vedic and Vaishnava religions...are the main culprits behind the most anti-woman system the world has ever seen. Brahmanism, is in fact, the very foundation of the evils of sati, female infanticide, and dowry." First of all, Vaishnavism is one of the principal traditions of Hinduism, and is based off of the authority of the Vedas (ReligionFacts). Stating that Vedic and Vaishnava are separate "religions" is fallacious and reflects Saunders lack of research and knowledge on the topic. Second of all, it seems outrageous and untrue—and indeed it is—that such an "anti-woman" system could exist in one of the most woman-tolerant and respecting religions.

In fact, Hinduism views all power, Shakti, as female: "Shakti is the fundamental strength of the feminine that infuses all life and is viewed as a goddess. Shakti is the divine feminine power found in everything" (*Symbolism in Hinduism*). The way in which Hinduism is seen as being "discriminatory and ghastly" as mentioned by Saunders is clearly based on false claims and a pitiable lack of sources. Her essay is not only incomplete and lacking historical background on the topics discussed, (such as

sati, female infanticide, and dowry), but it is also based on outrageous and fabricated pieces of "evidence" of whose origins are questionable and correspondingly not cited in the paper at all. Needless to say, the acts of sati and female infanticide are egregious; however, Saunders' tireless use of extended statistics and over-description of these practices do not serve as proof of "barbaric Vedic influences." Her lack of analysis reflects her ignorance regarding the actual origins and stance that Hinduism takes on these brutal practices. Furthermore, Saunders' argument carelessly blurs the distinction between cultural influences and ancient Hindu philosophy, making no sound relations between historical aspects, such as colonialism, or Indian lifestyles. Her perspective on the Vedas reflects the same type of ignorance exhibited by many who have no idea what the essence of this religion is; such people buy into the same type of Western propaganda that the author mentions in her article. The Western societies that continually denounce the face of Hinduism are the same nations that have a higher rate of violence against women than India does. A brief background on Hinduism and its history would easily prove to these anti-Hindu thinkers that Hinduism is indeed one of the most venerable religions toward women.

Since the main point of Saunders' piece is that early Vedic influence was responsible for introducing "depravity" to India, it would be useful to mention the history of Hinduism. It is imperative to know that Hinduism was formed by the people of India, and it has no date of origin or founder. Therefore, the religion's history is not clear, and is often reported by Westerners in an unfavorable light. The first society, called the Indus River Valley civilization, is thought to have originated in 7000 BC and it included regions of the Mesopotamia. Archaeologists have found icons of deities and other religious figures, indicating the presence of a religious foundation among this area's people, the Dravidians. The Aryan Invasion, as discussed by Saunders, is something that has not been scientifically proven; there is no concrete evidence that it even occurred at all.

It was around 1800 BCE that the Vedas were written. Though violence did occur during the Vedic Dark Ages, it is im-

portant to realize that war was extremely prevalent at the time; the actions exhibited by the Aryans were not based on religious rites encoded by the Vedas, as Saunders mistakenly reports. She overlooks actual evidence to the contrary, which shows that the Vedas not only do *not* promote the maltreatment of women, but they actually advocate women's worship and freedom. In fact, during Vedic times, "women and men were equal as far as education and religion was concerned. Women participated in public sacrifices alongside men, and in early Vedic times women also received the sacred thread, and could study the Vedas. The Upanishads refer to several women philosophers, who disputed with their male colleagues; the Rig Veda refers to women engaged in warfare" (Women in Hinduism). It is clear that the Vedas do not "sanction inhumane [practices]" as Saunders so describes. In attempting to search for the sources of her essay, I found that Saunders reports (without citing) the finding of anti-Hindu extremists in order to "support" her argument. There is a great difference between the message of Hinduism and the unclear actions of barbarian Aryan tribes who lived centuries ago, which should not be carelessly linked with or shown to be a cause of Hindu women's oppression.

It is important to note that there is absolutely no Hindu scripture which advocates dowry, sati, or the killing of any person, especially female children. In fact, a missionary even stated, "The doctrines of the [Hindu] religion have been singularly careful to protect the female sex and infants from violence; and it is unlawful to put a woman to death for any offense" (Peggs). In Hinduism, marriage is seen as the union of two souls, and Hindu law (Manu Smriti) even explains, "a wife is a permanent companion of the husband through all the three stages of life. Woman is regarded with high esteem." Even in the Ramayana, the Yagna [ritual] could not be performed in the absence of Sita, indicating her importance in holy rituals with her husband (Hindu Women Project). The Ramayana is the same holy text inappropriately and hastily cited in Saunders' essay as encouraging "maltreatment" of women. Though Sita did have to go through the fire ritual in order to prove her fidelity, it was not due to "barbarian customs" as Saunders misconstrues in to

mean. Rather, it was one of the many metaphorical acts which appears in this holy epic indicating Sita's piousness, and it should not be taken as a literal convention. It is clear that the Vedas and Hindu scriptures do not advocate oppressive actions toward women, and Hinduism is not to blame for these practices.

Dowry has historically been noted to be the causal link for female infanticide and the practice of bride burning, or sati. A closer historical focus must be taken in order to understand the root causes of dowry in India. In the past twelve hundred years, India has been under constant foreign invasion, and colonialism has changed much of the original Hindu lifestyle. In her book, *Dowry Murder*, Veena Oldenburg notes:

In the pre-colonial period, dowry was an institution managed by women, for women, to enable them to establish their status and have recourse in an emergency. As a consequence of the massive economic and societal upheaval brought on by British rule, women's entitlements to the precious resources obtained from land were erased and their control of the system diminished, ultimately resulting in a devaluing of their very lives.

Colonialism disturbed the traditional Hindu way of life and there was clearly a transition from tolerant Hindu customs to a struggle for survival by any means possible after foreign invasion. For example, during the Mughal era (1504-1525 AD), in which the Muslims ruled India, "women no longer enjoyed the freedom of the earlier times, and even within the family unit, their importance became nil. The pages of the history of this age are, figuratively speaking, black in color, due to the oppression meted out at this time" (Malthi Sharma). During this time period, dowry had to be paid or else the females would be faced with abduction in the face of their aggressors. Many times, female infanticide was seen as the only way of self-preservation (Menski).

Also at this time, sati became increasingly prominent. It is important to note that "there was no sati in Vedic age before the invasions. [During the Moghul Empire] women folks burnt themselves, sometimes en masse to save their honor and pre-

venting the aggressors from capturing them” (Menski). Slowly but surely, these horrible, foreign-provoked, medieval practices became the norm and infiltrated the Hindu way of life. It was only due to:

immoral male social (Hindu) leaders and people with vested interest who came up with many oppressing ‘laws’ especially for the women and the lower caste people. The society which once gave women the highest position called women the ‘gateway to hell,’ they made sati almost compulsory, widows could not marry, men of lower castes became un-touchables. (Menski)

Therefore, it should be staunchly emphasized that it was not the original Hindu Vedas which advocated sati, female infanticide, or dowry, as Saunders mistakenly claims, but rather the “barbarian” acts of foreign aggressors and colonizers which made these practices prevalent—the acts have nothing to do with the core beliefs of Hinduism.

It is clear that Hinduism and the holy Vedic scriptures do not advocate sati, female infanticide, or the system of dowry, as Saunders asserts in her essay. Hinduism is founded on equality and peace, and treats women with reverence and respect. When Saunders states that “the way women are treated is what their religion [Hinduism] and culture is grounded upon,” it reflects her misguided notions and ignorance regarding the very topic of her essay. If she were even to take one cursory look at any of the philosophies of Hinduism, then she would clearly be able to see that the Vedas and Brahmanism are not the core reasons of oppression of women. The very Vedic scriptures which Saunders cites as being “appalling,” actually gave women “more say in the choice of her mate...She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. If she was left a widow there were no restrictions upon her remarriage” (Durant). Instead, it is foreign influence and corruption that are responsible for polluting Indian culture, and it is wrong to distort the truth in order to further Western ideals and anti-Hindu propaganda. Saunders’ lack of evidentiary proof, analysis, and overall lack of knowledge regarding the topic is not only insulting toward Hindus, but further highlights the general of

Western philosophy toward Hinduism.

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Strength

It's a snowy afternoon,
and her mittens
keep her fingers warm.
She has a scarf
that she wraps around her neck
and a thick-layered coat
that she wears to keep out the cold.
Her feet march in boots,
as she crushes black snow
to leave her mark behind.
The wind tries to creep in,
to take away the warmth
she's worked so hard to preserve,
but she holds her head high,
against every flake.
Her lips are chapped,
her throat dry.
And with every breath,
she swallows another knife,
but her eyes are open,
watching her life unfold.
Sometimes she wavers
because worry is inevitable,
but come what may,
she'll make it through.
Come what may,
she'll be ready.

[Editor's Note: The following piece is a journal entry written in response to the question, "What part of your identity did you become aware of in a different way during your trip to India?"]

Womanhood

It would be unfair to say that I was previously unaware of my womanhood. I know what it means to wear a low-cut shirt, I understand the responsibility of my hips and the value of my mind, but I had never dwelled on the fact that I was a woman head to toe, inside and out. Womanhood, as I have come to know it, involves, but is not limited to, a lewd sense of anatomy, a veiled intonation of meekness and a loudly protested history of oppression. Such was not the case upon my arrival in Hyderabad. Conservatism is useful there. The most obvious difference between me and the women I saw there was how we were dressed. Sarees and niqabs abounded. Although I did not feel uncomfortable in jeans and t-shirts, I had a heightened awareness of the social and religious liberties I enjoy; oppression is not yet history in Hyderabad or many other parts of India. What I learned from the faceless women in black and traditional women in colorful sarees was that there are not only certain parts of me that are womanly, but that I am a woman all over.

Seeing that women covered head to toe are equally as womanly as those in decorated sarees or gender-neutral blue jeans, I discovered that femininity is not as physical as I had imagined. These women were equally as feminine as I, which begged the question: how could I dissociate femininity from physical attributes? Contrary to my initial impression that the result of the niqab is degradation and removal of one aspect of femininity, I realized that a woman can still be feminine without looking like it, and this could be empowering to an outsider like myself when applied at home. Although I understand that being forced to hide their bodies is not giving the Indian women stronger voices or more personal freedoms, I wonder if there is a way to translate the result, but not the intention of a niqab into the feminist school of thought? Even though it is not the case for these women, it was an interesting question for me to

answer for myself about how I can bring my own feminine perspective into daily interactions without relying on my physical attributes. I believe that women should be able to appear however they want and be treated with equal rights and given equal opportunities, but I also believe that femininity stretches beyond physical traits. Thus, jeans do not make me less feminine, and a saree does not enhance my womanly traits; the niqab does not inhibit Muslim women from being women, but from being free people. One thing I did not expect was to learn what it means to be a woman at heart and not always just in body.

Back in the United States I wonder how I can more actively assert myself as a woman in everything I do. I am not an outspoken feminist, but I am outspoken. I do not want to limit myself with labels like "woman writer," or look for the smaller community of "women for Hillary Clinton," though I am a writer and I do support Clinton. After visiting India, what I learned about myself was not that I should embrace the title of "woman," the façade of women's unity and imagined community that estrogen creates; instead, I learned that whatever I choose to do, I do as a woman, and that no matter how many other women are doing or not doing the same, it is womanly of me to do it. If this is true for all women, as I presume it to be, then how a woman chooses to dress cannot change whether or not they are perceived as being a woman. Then, what I ultimately do not understand is the stigma around women and fashion. How can an entire civilization believe that they can hide or accentuate femininity through clothing?

Hilary J. Lee

Emily M. Rojer

Emily Rojer

[Editor's Note: The following piece is a journal entry written in response to the question, "What part of your identity did you become aware of in a different way during your trip to India?"]

Femininity

While I was in India, the part of my identity that I became aware of in a different way was my femininity. In the United States, I don't really think about being a woman. Obviously, I know I'm female, but never has my gender made me feel less powerful or less important than a man. I grew up knowing that I could do whatever I put my mind to, and my parents encouraged that thinking. As a young girl I did ballet and soccer, loved Barbies and climbing trees, and read both the Nancy Drew and the Hardy Boys series. Whatever my little brother did, I tried it too. In India, however, and especially in Delhi, I definitely felt like women are not considered equal.

The first incident that sparked this new awareness happened on the very first day. At the mosque, four Indian men asked Veronica and I to take a picture with them. Unwittingly, we said yes. As we were waiting for the camera to take the picture, the men attempted to feel us up. I jumped away, shocked. How did they think they could try to feel us up in broad daylight? After this incident, I became much more wary of the men, and as I did, I noticed their lack of respect for women.

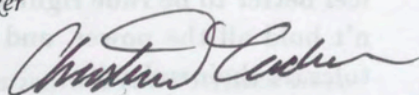
A good example of the men's disrespect for women came in the way that they looked at us. The stares men gave me while walking would be unacceptable in the United States. I always felt so uncomfortable, and sometimes violated. I could easily tell which men were staring with curiosity, and which were mentally undressing me. These lewd stares made me angry too, because firstly, I was dressed very modestly so I wasn't calling attention to myself in a sexual way; secondly, they had no right to look at me in that manner. By the end of the trip I became so frustrated with these rude men that I took to glaring at them, and if they didn't get the hint, flicking them off Indian-style. It made me

feel better to be rude right back at them, because then they didn't hold all the power, and to let them know I wasn't going to tolerate their rudeness.

A major realization happened at one of the tourist sites. We were all listening to a tour guide and some Indian men began moving closer to listen in. But instead of listening, they began looking at all the women. I just slightly edged away, but one of my male friends must have noticed because he moved to come stand between me and the men. As soon as he did, I felt a sense of relief, and a tension that I didn't even know I had disappeared. This made me realize how wary I was of the men even while in a large group, and that the men were watching over us even then. This feeling of needing to be protected is familiar in the States, but I've certainly not felt it to the degree that I did in India.

My visit to India gave me a different awareness of my femininity, which had never been a source of trouble before. Yes, I make sure to go out with a few friends at night, but I'd never felt that I needed a male (or two) to always watch out for me. The lack of respect the Indian men showed me and the other women on the trip heightened my awareness of my own vulnerability, and also the fact that women are obviously not considered equal in their eyes if they feel able to be so disrespectful in public. I am now more appreciative of the freedom and equality that I have here in the U.S., and I hope that soon the women in India will start demanding the respect they deserve.

Christine Tucker



My Belly

jiggles when I jump. So I cover it,
even among the bare-it-all women
gathered to release some inner-goddess I refuse
to meet. Half-naked, shaking women
lost in the rhythm of washing-machine-hips
quaking *a little bit faster*, and *faster*, and *faster*

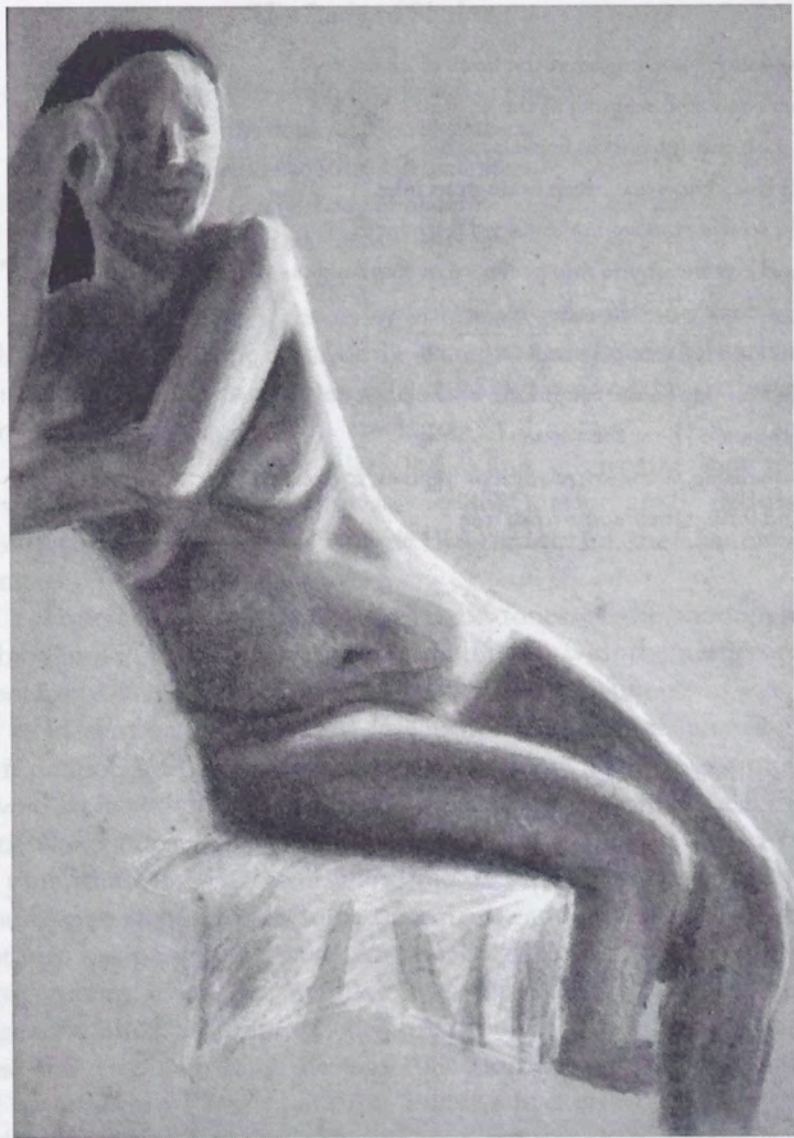
until the brain disconnects and lets
momentum do its thing. Around me,

other young, new bellies have buttons
that are too shy to dance, scared

of the swollen, sagging forms—
bodies scarred and stretched from bearing

this life—the scary notion of letting go
enough to let your stomach ripple, stripped

in room even as safe as this, this astonishing
space of acceptance and delight.

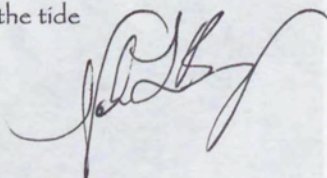


Shelley M Hull

Figure 2

Measured

I measure myself against the tides of change
I am anchored soundly at the shore
To be enough and to feel enough
Is a risk I know not often enough to take
My soul is starving in the cage | thrust it in
And I let the sound and pressure of this ruthless tide
Envelope me and swallow me whole
Yet I am still standing here
An injustice to the magnitude of the power of change
In the café I hear the women laughing
Possessing all the knowledge of bending to the tide
And letting their souls roam free



Laura Kremmel

The Lady of Shalott

*Four grey walls, and four grey towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle imbowers
The Lady of Shalott.
Alfred, Lord Tennyson*

Twelve eyes, hazel, the color of muddy grass in the rain: that she had never seen. The color of the water surging beneath her window: that she had. Ellass shivered in the loneliness of the center of the room.

Eight eyes, rimmed in black lashes and silver paint. She felt like she was staggering through water in slow motion as she fled the exposure of the open space, sought the comfort of the shadowed perimeter.

Four eyes, shaded with the subtle tones of the moonlight bobbing in the moat. Four eyes, tired and blank with the monotony of looking at one another. Four eyes close, open. Four eyes.

Elass stopped and stood in the near-darkness of her room, her nose inches from the full-wall mirror, staring at her eyes simply to avoid seeing anything else. When the sun went down, the electric lights would burst the room into daylight again, but she preferred this time when sight was sparse and the darkness clothed her like a shroud. She stepped back from the mirror, and two more mirrors leapt into her peripheral view. Another step back, and there would be two more. Every wall in this room, every corner, reflected her image, amplified and multiplied, filling the empty room with only Ellass, a three-dimensional Picasso collection of body parts. Ellass had never seen a Picasso painting, but she had heard some of the dead ones called "Picassos," the ones who were really bad, who were "deformed." No, she was not a Picasso; she didn't understand what deformed was.

"I don't want to do it," she told herself, spinning to address each one in turn, listening to her own repeated response as it

left her painted lips. She glanced up at the mirror on the ceiling, and, craning her head, she could just see out the small rectangular window above her head on the other wall. There was no one on the road now, but there would be. The doctresses would be here any minute to give her one last physical. The sun would be down within the hour. And then it would happen, the trial.

"It's complicated," they would tell her when she asked why, why, why. "You must understand that our society is so fragile, that we need to take every precaution at every step if we're ever going to get back to where we were." They would come, the women in their white lab coats, with their white clipboards and mysterious, unfriendly medical equipment. "You are so important. You are helping us to survive," they would say to her. They would be coming back, and tonight they would not be alone.

For the first time in years, she thought of her mother, wanted her to be there. "Do you look like her?" she asked the faces in the mirrors. "Do you even remember her? Really remember?" The eyes staring back at her were cold. "You remember the scars. That is all." She did not remember hiding with her mother, surviving uncontaminated after the blast that had left the earth stunned and distorted. She could not; she had not yet been born. She had never seen her mother perfect, unchanged by the radiation that killed many instantly and left everyone else horribly twisted. She had not seen the perfection that almost killed her. When her mother emerged from hiding, the others didn't want to live with one so perfect, one who reminded them of what they used to be. They wanted to erase the perfection, take measures to destroy it before it destroyed them. Those measures involved stones, sticks, and rope. Those measures nearly took Ellass's life before it had begun.

"The danger of being what used to be, of being shadows of what the world used to be," she murmured, dropping her voice into a hum as she moved absentmindedly to her loom, the only work they allowed her to do, running her fingers idly along the length of tightly woven patterns she had completed just hours before: flowers, mushrooms, and the shape of a face emerging from the synthetic threads. The tapestry lay strewn about the loom like a mass of stitched worlds layered one on top of the other, concealing the yards and yards that made up its length. "This has separated and confined

us," she spoke to her woven perfection. "Now we live in towers on the island, now we realize how poisonous the earth and the water have become, seek comfort in air and isolation. Now our lives are not our own. Now we are contained, maintained, and regulated. Now we are alive, and everyone else is dead." So she had been told by the doctresses and the other girls. So she had been told by her mother.

Nontle had spent all morning cleaning his red cape, had mended it and laid it out in the sun to dry, but when she helped him into it, she felt like ripping it to shreds. "Bastards," she muttered as he fixed the clasp around his neck. "Lance, I don't think you should go. It's not right." She snatched his silver bugle from the table and held it tightly to her chest. He swatted at it impassively.

"Give it to me, Nontle. I have to go."

She looked down and clutched it defensively. "Why do you need it?"

"Because. And why wouldn't I go? A chance to look upon the face of the living?" Ripping the bugle from her arms, he took her rough six fingers in his hand pointedly, let them drop and turned away. "Who would not go?"

"They used to call it prostitution, you know," she called after him, huddled against the doorframe for warmth. "And adultery."

"Wrong," he said over his shoulder, mounting his horse, never pausing to look back at her. "We're not married, Nontle."

The feather in his hat hung heavily over the back of his neck, grazing his back and bouncing up and down as his horse jaunted down to the waters of Shalott. He was whistling. "Only because you won't admit that we are," she muttered as he disappeared over the hill, the sun barely visible as it followed him in its invisible white arch. She stared at the empty road as it curved and plunged, feeling it trace an empty road plunging down through her stomach. Hugging herself tightly, Nontle scuffed absently at the dirt under her feet with her toes, creating craters and mounds, searching for the rare flash of green, for the crisp, thin blade that had become a lucky clover. Each time she thought she saw one, her shadow devoured it as she stooped down to see.

The approaching darkness called her inside to light the candles. As they shivered in the breeze, she dragged out the mirror she kept behind the bed and leaned it against the wall with a hollow thump. Her cold hands pulled the wool sweater over her head and let it drop to the floor. Button by button, she began to undress in front of her own image. The dappled and dancing light of the candles made her skin seem less splotched and puckered, made her figure seem softer, radiant. She raised her head up into shadow to hide the scars and blotches and put her hands behind her back, muttering, "People used to get married, and they weren't all perfect then, either. See what happens when you lose beauty and God but not the ideas behind them?" She sighed, "I might not be able to create life, but, by God, I'm still living it."

Behind her reflection, the four towers of Shalott peaked through the trees out the window, dark, distant, and menacing against the dusky sky. Lance would be there tonight, would see the face of the living. Would he come back to Nontle then, after that? Would he ever be satisfied again? She appealed to her image, her eyebrow raised in dismal skepticism. Seeing through her own eyes what Lance saw when he looked at her, she tried to clear her mind and view the image objectively. *This is someone else*, she told herself, as if making an introduction. *What do I think of this person?*

"Cursed," she whispered to the sky, pivoting to look out the window. That's what they all were. Yet, she could not imagine a life as one of the living, as a subject for the preservation of mankind. If those of the towers were truly wise, they would not cast the old living down to the dead to die, to tell their stories of what goes on there, of the rooms made of mirrors and the weaving and the trial that could decide a woman's fate. Every resource known to mankind went into the study of radiation and reproduction, of cures for cancer and environmental solutions. Everyone must contribute, some more than others.

Nontle grabbed a sheet from the bed and wrapped it around her like a robe, the folds heavy against her bare thighs. "I am living," she declared to her reflection. "I am a Lady of Shalott." She furrowed her brow at the thought. If she were living, she would do nothing but stare at herself in the mirror all day, would never leave the mirrored rooms, would never cover herself up. She would not even

wear a robe on the rare occasion that she was seen by the dead, covering every inch of her body except her face as if her body were hideous when, in reality, it would be one of the only perfect bodies left on the face of the earth. She imagined herself in a living body, considered the utter absurdity of keeping it hidden from Lance and felt a sharp pang of relief and jealousy: relief that he would not actually see what she herself did not have and jealousy of what there was to be shown.

She looked again at the mirror and caught a glimpse of her hand resting on the windowsill. The sixth finger pointed toward the towers, a mangled and crooked imitation of their erect certainty. Nontle tried to straighten it with her other hand, tugged, prodded, and twisted it. She covered the dry whispered swish of skin on skin as liquid and force entered her breathing in sharp, determined sobs. Perhaps abuse could banish it, perhaps she could rip it off and fling it into the shadow gathered around her feet. But she had tried that perhaps before. Instead, the finger remained firm, defiantly irregular, a mockery of the image that had turned its back on her.

Shrieking, she slammed her whole hand against the sill until blood flowed from a gash in the finger and tears streamed down her face. Red beads oozed against the smooth glass as she grasped the mirror's thin, rigid edges on both sides and, with a grunt, flung it back behind the bed, cracking off a corner as it rammed into the wall. She scooped it up off the floor, fingering the jagged edge made by the break gingerly with her battered finger, and buried the piece under her pillow. Hastily, she pulled on her shift and dug herself under the covers of the bed, her hand wandering thoughtlessly to the broken mirror beneath her head.

"You may stand up now, Ellass. You are ready." The doctress made several marks on her white clipboard with a red pen while Ellass scrambled to her feet and tugged her robe back onto her shoulders, drawing it around her hastily. The doctress frowned and wrote something else. "You know, I wish you wouldn't wear that all the time. We provide you with much more appropriate suits for warmth, but it is warm enough that you could go without those as well. Most of the other girls do. It is not healthy to want to hide yourself."

A breeze blew through the tiny window and disturbed the folds of her robe, and Ellass pulled them tighter around her. "It just makes me feel more comfortable," she said, trying to sound as nonchalant and simple as possible, not articulately certain of her reasons.

"You must understand how important it is for you to be aware of who and what you are, Ellass. These mirrors are here for a reason, and though only your face is visible to the dead, you are to know yourself at all times. We are working toward preservation, not concealment. We must constantly check for imperfections." When Ellass nodded in obedience, the doctress flipped through her papers and scratched something down in large letters. "Now, a man from the dead village will arrive shortly. You will wait for him here. Yes, the robe is necessary for tonight. He must not see you. The lights will not come on. When you are through, you will remain where you are, and he will leave. You are not to speak to him and not to acknowledge him if he speaks to you. This is to be objective."

"But what if I don't know what to do?"

"He'll know what to do. Relax and follow him."

"But, isn't he . . . contaminated? Will he hurt me?"

The doctress looked at her for a moment, as if not sure whether to answer yes or no. "He will be examined and prepared thoroughly when he arrives. His contamination is minimal and should not interfere. We have great hope for this trial." She turned to leave but, as an afterthought, stopped and looked at Ellass before stepping through the door. "Don't worry, Ellass. You will be fine. If you conceive, you will be one of our Ladies of Shalott. It is an honor."

Two dozen eyes watched the doctress leave, all pensive, overwrought, approaching the edge of some deeper emotion that Ellass tried to identify and couldn't. All the eyes turned to look at her reflection, at her, at one another. She staggered over to one of the walls, launching herself against it, arms up and palms out, resting her forehead against the cold, sleek surface, glaring into those eyes too closely to focus on them. "It's a curse," she muttered through gritted teeth. Without moving her head, she reached down, opened her robe, and looked at herself. "You're cursed," she spat out, roughly drawing her robe closed once again. A Lady of Shalott. Her

mother had been a Lady of Shalott. Her sister was one now, bulging with child, barely able to do anything for herself. She didn't have mirrors in her room once she started to swell. There was a story Ellass had been told when she was young about the Ladies of Shalott, how they were saving the world by providing it with healthy babies, who then also grew up to become Ladies of Shalott. How romanticized they were, like maternal princesses or mothers of the realm. She closed her eyes. "What if I don't want to be one of their Ladies of Shalott? What if I want to be my own?"

When her forehead started to throb, she stood up straight, leaving ugly moist smudges, the thick fog of her breath already wilting in on itself. One large and oval-shaped milky impression floated in the middle of her reflection, two palms that looked like beating, translucent hearts, estranged and viscous, hovering above it. Ten fingerprints like ten lily shoots, waited for the harsh light of the ceiling to wake them up into bloom. No light tonight. Already, she could barely make out the contours of her face, her eyes disappearing into a forlorn, ethereal shadow. They had never allowed it to get so dark that she could not see herself, and the anonymity of it thrilled her. She threw her arms back and let her robe slip from her shoulders. Still, she could make out nothing. Entranced by her blindness, she embraced herself, tracing her outline timidly with her fingers to make sure she was still there, fingering her solid silhouette.

The fierce flicker of shining stars, like the flames of floating candles, caught her eye as though the night sky had finally shed its gloomy haze and had come flooding into her room. She grinned when she realized that it was not celestial but human, not stars but the lights coming from the village that she had never been able to make out against the glare of the overhead lights. She imagined an elegant, exotic society, living to the glow of torch lights and bonfires, and the thought enticed and frightened her. What would this man be like? Mysterious, alluring, beautiful, passionate, sensual, sexual, rough, grotesque, menacing, primitive. What would this man be like?

A pit hit her stomach, and she reeled, arching her back and reaching out for the mirror again to steady herself. The light from above reflected and caught her skin, penetrating the darkness and

highlighting her body like a fiery phoenix edgy for flight. "It's a curse, it's a curse, it's a curse," she murmured to herself, trying to break the spell by pronouncing its existence. She closed her eyes and tried to picture herself away from here, in the village even, to block out all her expectations, but her imagination merely shuddered with anticipation instead, and she burst into tears as she bent down to pick up her robe from the floor, pulling it around her and drawing up the hood. A spasm of anger and energy ran through her and she stumbled backwards into her loom with a maddening cry. Colors she couldn't see spilled over her in dim threads, and she tugged them free of the shaft, tangling herself in the web. Choking on the ones that tangled around her neck, she pulled herself to her feet, flinging strands to the floor, fighting against the patterns she had been planning for weeks. She tried to break free of a length of tapestry that had wound its way around her knees, but the fabric held, and she toppled to the ground, tugging and scrambling at the woven alternate reality. Slapping her feet on the floor, Ellass flung it to the floor with a grunted shriek.

When she caught her image in the mirror, laden with strings that stuck out against her white robe like a web against the night sky, she gasped in fury, took three determined strides and thrust all of her weight into her fists against the mirror. To her shock, the surface gave way under her hands with a sickening crack like an egg on concrete, heightening to a metallic screech as a thin line spread from side to side. She gasped and pulled away from it as if it had burnt her, her hands wet and sticky. "Oh my god," she whispered at her disjointed image, no longer real. Cautiously, she pressed on the crack, then raised her fists again and smashed her face into splinters that flew to the ground and cut ugly red threads across her arms. The shifting fragments threw her balance, and she fell onto her hip, catching herself on her elbow.

Twisting, she sat panting in front of the broken mirror, the bare wall behind it raw and unfinished. Red flowed from her hands onto her white robe, and she watched as it saturated the fabric in spreading droplets, dribbling onto the floor in stark patterns. Her finger traced an eye in the pool, then smeared it out of existence. Gathering the blood on her fingertip, she spread her legs and wrote in blood down the inside of her thighs: *Elass, Lady of Shalott.*

Snow had ceased to fall for the season, but it was still as cold as a winter without sun, which it was. Which it had been for years. Nonetheless, Nontle found the cool, fresh air comforting, an escape from the oppressive and intoxicating heat of the house. A shiver went through her as she eased herself down on the damp grassy hill along the river. It had rained last night, and the water was higher than it had been yesterday, streaming down from the moat around the island. Her sleep had been broken last night by the shadow of Lance towering over her, dripping into their bed and on the floor with soft patters felt rather than heard. He was still wet when he lifted the blanket and slid in next to her. She was so groggy she hardly remembered that he wasn't supposed to be there, mumbling unintelligibly as he disturbed her. Cold, clammy, and wet, the touch of his skin made her flinch, and she sat up.

"Lance? What— what are you doing here?"

He shivered into the blanket. "I don't know. Something went wrong."

She stared at him, "What do you mean, wrong?"

"I don't know." He threw off the covers and tugged his soppy shirt over his head, tossing it with a wet slap in the corner. "When I arrived, they looked me over, gave me, I don't know, some kind of drug. They took me to this room high up in the tower, a dark room where the live woman was waiting. They let me in and locked the door, so I wandered around in the darkness. Nothing. There was no one there. I waited for a while, thinking that perhaps they would bring her to me. Nothing happened."

"Well, where was she?"

"I don't know. After a while, I banged on the door, and someone eventually opened it. She was so confused. And angry because I had made her confused. Bright lights lit up the room. It looked as if an animal had gotten in. The mirror was broken, there was blood on the floor, and a pile of wood was stacked up to a high window."

"What?"

"I don't know. They ushered me out, wouldn't tell me anything except that 'complications had occurred' and that I might be needed later. And that was it. I came home. When I left, there was

a long flag or something dangling from one of the windows that hadn't been there when I arrived. I guess it's some kind of code or symbol or something. God, I can't imagine what kind of animal could have caused such damage. A half-breed or a mutant maybe."

"I don't know, maybe." she whispered to him absently, getting a towel to dry him off. He kissed her unexpectedly as she rumbled his hair with it, and she could feel a tension in him beyond the cold that unnerved her until she realized that she shared it. The wet towel fell from his head as they fell onto the bed.

This morning, Nontle felt different: tired, but renewed; free, but full. Lance was the same. She was the same. But something was different. Last night had been different. The world was eerie this early in the morning, the dim haze of the sun throwing amber-embraced shadows that didn't feel real against the memory of night. Silver reflections sloshed on the rocks just below her feet, and she closed her eyes against the rhythm. The earth felt sticky and moist against her skin, swollen with the dew that fell in drops almost like rain upon the expectant earth. Nontle ran her hand along its surface and caught something long and firm and delicate in her fingers. She dug more at the spot and uncovered a silky blade of grass, green and glowing against the dark, grey monotony of the soil. She made a clearing for it with her hands, urging it to fill the space with growth. With cupped hands, she brought it water from the moat and stood at the edge to gaze across the water, letting her feet sink into the mud.

Something solid struck against Nontle's leg, and she stood up before her eyes were even open. At first, it looked like a bleached trunk of driftwood still sprouting forms of life, but when she crouched down beside it, she saw the eyes, dark and transfixed, as if spellbound. The current pulled it back, then shoved it higher onto the bank, where it stayed. Nontle reached down and gently closed the two blank, searching eyes with her hand and drew back the clinging strands of hair from the face. A door creaked open, and Nontle heard Lance's voice calling to her from the house. She didn't answer. The girl was young, not much older than herself, a white robe half-hung off her shoulders, open down the front and sodden with mud and stains, yellowed from the pus of the water, the mucus of the land. Already, burns were starting to spread down her chest and

along her legs, but only those not exposed to the radiation from birth were so drastically affected by it anymore.

The swish of Lance's footsteps quickened as he came trotting up behind her, and she was surprised to find she was fighting back tears for this dead woman who could never give life. A strip of cloth floated alongside the still body, caught in a rush of current and wind. Nontle swooped down and plucked at it, shaking off the droplets that fell onto the dead woman's chest and left yellow pocks of radiation. Pink and blue flowers poked through crosshatched strands of yellow and green, hovering above the stitched ground like pollen that had long since been replaced by debris and chemical snow. The insistent yet sickly twittering of a bird feeding its young in the naked tree above seemed inappropriate but mysteriously significant, as if it were trying to fit into the small scrap. Nontle looked from the rag to the woman at her feet and wanted to clear the area around her like the blade of grass. The sight of the dead woman made her, for the first time, feel alive. "My God," Nontle whispered to the woman, staring at her exposed body, "she has a lovely face." Hypnotized by the young woman's elegant five fingered hand thrown arbitrarily across her stomach, Nontle gingerly pressed her hands against her own stomach, a sad smile spreading across her face as Lance pressed up behind her and laced his arms gently around mother and child.

Jamey Gallagher

Selections from "Green God"

[2]

The river ran out
from her tongue

black and wild.
Above the black

wild river the sky
crawled gray and white.

The wind carried
a metallic nuclear

smell like her loins.
She lay flat on

her back and
waited for the rain.

When it came
she felt each

drop press against
her and roll off,

until she was grass
again, green green

grass that looked gray
in the darkness

but would come
back bright and

new and truly
green tomorrow.

[3]

We are ash and color.

We are incinerated,

the cult of flowers.

I overlap you overlap others.

I am you are others.

Colors run,

from our blood
and from the blood

of others, hidden,
we are flowers

at the world's
rebeginning.

Bro Rape: The Spreading Epidemic of Rape on College Campuses

Rape has been occurring since the beginning of humanity. In early Christian time periods, a woman who was raped was expected to commit suicide to preserve her honor. Little to no punishment was expressed toward the man who committed the crime. As time progressed, men committing rape were subject to more and more punishment, and in the 1960s things began to change dramatically. Second-wave feminism brought rape and its effects on women into the media spotlight in order to create change. These women felt that they should not be subordinate to men; instead, they should be socially, politically and sexually equal. They felt that women should have equal choices regarding who they have sex with, and if a man disregards a woman's decision, then he is committing a crime. In modern times, rape is committed less and less by a man on the street wearing a trench coat; it has become what is now called acquaintance rape. Three out of every four rapes that occur are committed by someone the victim knows (Rennison). Acquaintance rape is becoming more and more prevalent on college campuses, particularly in fraternities. There does not seem to be one reason that fraternities have increasing numbers of rape on college campuses, but it seems to be a combination of reasons including drug and alcohol usage, and how fraternity brothers are taught to treat women.

Due to rising rates of rape and sexual assault on college campuses, many colleges have conducted surveys to determine ways to curb the problem. Lehigh University recently conducted a climate survey with sexual assault as one of its topics. Out of the 121 sexual assaults that occurred at Lehigh, thirty-six of these were by fraternity members, and forty were by friends or acquaintances of the victim. Members of Greek societies (a group that makes up less than one third of Lehigh's population) committed nearly 44% of the sexual assaults (Rankin). This survey shows that a man who jumps out of the bushes is not committing sexual assault: men whom women know are doing it. This phenomenon, known as "acquaintance

rape" or "date rape," has been spreading across the nation in more recent years, and must be addressed along with rapes committed by fraternity brothers.

One large factor of acquaintance rape on college campuses is the use of drugs and alcohol. "Seventy-five percent of campus sexual assaults involved the consumption of alcohol by the victim and/or the perpetrator. The percentage is probably higher due to victims blaming themselves or blacking out" (Bohmer and Parrot). The use of drugs and alcohol lowers inhibitions and obstructs people's decision-making skills, making them more susceptible to rape. In fraternity settings, there are large amounts of drugs and alcohol available to people of all ages. The fact that there is no bartender to cut someone off if they are too intoxicated easily leads to binge-drinking, which leads to blacking out. Fraternities encourage binge-drinking by setting up multiple drinking games and even centering parties on such events. Games such as beer pong and flip cup can lead to a person consuming over five drinks in an hour. People play these games for hours and by the end are usually intoxicated to the point that they cannot make conscious decisions, leaving them vulnerable for sexual assault. These games seem to be a strategy by fraternity members who, "appear to engage in more the...use of drugs and alcohol as a sexual strategy than did independents" (Boeringer). In these games, men frequently put more alcohol in cups in for the sole purpose to get the girls they are playing with more intoxicated. When houses make mixed drinks they often use Everclear instead of vodka or other types of liquor. Everclear is more than twice as strong as vodka, so a girl may think she has only had four drinks that night when in reality she has consumed eight or more. By encouraging binge drinking, fraternity brothers use alcohol to coerce girls into sexual acts.

When drugs are introduced into the picture, it becomes easier and easier for men to take advantage of women. Rohypnol, more commonly known as a "roofie" or "the date rape drug," can easily be given to girls without their knowledge. These drugs increase the effects of alcohol and are likely to leave the victim with no recollection of what happened over a long pe-

riod of time. One sometimes hears about a fraternity spiking mixed drinks with date-rape drugs, and as much as it may seem like a horror story, it legitimately occurs. It is very difficult to convict a fraternity, or anyone, of using date rape drugs because they quickly metabolize in the body and are usually undetectable by the time a victim reports being raped. Use of drugs to take advantage of women is not acquaintance rape, but is just as bad as the "man in the bushes" scenario most commonly associated with the word "rape." It shows total disregard for the female involved and is a blatant attack against her. When a woman is drugged she gives no consent and she is unconscious, or barely conscious, when she is raped. How brothers in fraternities could commit such atrocities against women seems to be tied in with the mentality instilled in the brothers as they go through the initiation process to join a fraternity.

From the time pledging begins until the time that initiation has been completed, fraternity brothers are constantly taught to degrade women. In *The Law of Brothers*, Peggy Sanday interviews two fraternity brothers about the pledging process. One of the students describes how the brothers talked to them, "Look at you all, you're all a bunch of girls... pussies!" (Sanday 159). This way of talking about girls may seem harmless and merely a way to insult the pledges; however, it seems to be most harmful to the pledges' views of women. By talking about women in such disrespectful ways, it becomes unconsciously instilled in the minds of the brothers that women are nothing but meat, that they are not socially equal, but instead are just a means to sex. When men view women in this light, it becomes much easier to justify rape in the man's mind. By not thinking of women as equals, men think that gives them the right to assert dominance. This dominance is not only sexual, but encompasses all aspects of society. It is what leads to job discrimination against women as well as other types of gender discrimination. When asserted sexually, this dominance can easily lead to rape.

This type of rape is not simply of a sexual nature; rather, it is the result of a man's desire to express his dominance over the opposite gender. It is often highly detrimental to the vic-

tims' self-worth, leaving them feeling as though they are subordinate to men. For some women, this can lead to an opinion that "men's sexuality is seen as more natural, acceptable, and uncontrollable than women's sexuality, many ... women excuse acquaintance rape by affirming that men cannot control their sexual urges" (Boswell and Spade 134). Men trying to sexually assert dominance can account for this defeated attitude from some women. If women feel as though a man is merely displaying his natural instincts, she may easily excuse the rape or sexual assault that has occurred. This seems to be part of the reason that so many rapes are unreported. Women must realize that they are not subordinate to men, and that any unwanted sexual acts are rape, not a man "expressing his sexual urges." If more women went to the police about this, then men might stop using illegitimate excuses to validate the crimes they are committing.

Another reason why women are degraded at fraternities has to do with the idea of forty or more men living together. These men feel that they must find some way of displaying their masculinity to assure themselves of their own heterosexuality. The easiest way for a man to do this is by trying to have sex with as many women as possible, leading to the degradation of women. In a quest to show masculinity to fellow brothers, fraternity members completely disregard women's feelings toward having sex. A man may see going up to his room as a girl affirming that she wants to have sex with him, while in her mind it just may be to talk or kiss. Many brothers feel obligated to have sex so they can brag to the other brothers about it. This can easily lead to the man seducing an unwilling woman into sex. Even though this idea is largely associated with fraternities, it also occurs at sports houses and other places where masculinity is seen as necessary.

This sexual exploitation of women is not the reason for fraternities. Fraternities were established for groups of young men to form strong bonds that last a lifetime. Through time, fraternities have gained a reputation that they take advantage of women, and even force their own brothers to do unimaginable things. Fraternities must come to realize that their image is tarnished to the non-Greek population of schools. To restore the

image once held by fraternities, they must rework the current system which Greek life is set on. European fraternities do not have the same faults that American ones do. To emulate the structure of European fraternities, the ones in America will become stronger and more unified. As this occurs, Greek life will become a more vital role in schools, as well as a safer place for all to have fun.

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Bluebird Nesting

(Where did you go?)

Two Fridays now
since you lighted
on the peach tree's dead
branches. A flash,
darting, branch
to house, only
erected to look nice.

I never believed
someone would come
to build her nest—
a family in blue.

But you stayed for
plenty of time.

I could stare
minutes, hours,
you too busy
to sense me behind
paned glass.

If you knew I
stood there, you
didn't let on.

Puffed tawny
crest, blue-
backed. Stunning.

I haven't dared
open the house,
because I have not
seen you since.

I worry the
hawks, preying
on mice in my
neighboring field
mistook your blue
for a cranky jay
and snapped you tight
into its talons.

Two weeks now,
two weeks of waiting,
to see the dash of blue.

Colleen Clemens

Sexual Freedom and Empowerment: How Women's Self-Worth Has Impaired Feminism

*"Few women have emancipated themselves from the galling yoke of men."
- Mary Wollstonecraft, A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*

When a woman is brought up to believe she was "created to be the toy of man, his rattle" and must "jingle in his ears whenever, dismissing reason, he chooses to be amused," then her entire being becomes tied up in how to please a man before herself (Wollstonecraft 34). Constantly trying to win over a man's affections and approval leaves very little room for a woman to build up her own concept of self-worth, as her opinions are formed by men's ideals before she can form her own. Internalizing such assessments of female worth and value means that eventually women play the sex game according to the rules men designed for themselves. While women may believe they are in control of their sexuality, they are in fact the very opposite of free, as they are confined, still, by the model of self-worth that men created and that women maintain. This cycle has women trying to beat men at their own mating ritual. Should women take the time to educate themselves, and men, on their true value - which is to say, their true equality - as well as become fully conscious and aware of what degradation means and when it occurs, women would achieve sexual freedom and overall empowerment like never before.

As Laura Sessions Stepp observed, when a woman has very low self-worth she may use "sex as a means of boosting one's self-esteem" (152). Unfortunately, such acts do nothing to improve a woman's sense of self or enable her to become sexually free; she is simply trying to seek men's approval rather than consciously increase the value she places on herself. To be truly sexually free, a woman must first "make herself respectable" so that whether she is "loved or neglected" her self-worth will remain high and intact, and sex will become empowering rather than required (Wollstonecraft 28). Distancing herself from others' opinions of her self-worth enables a

woman to "look into her self for comfort" (Wollstonecraft 27). Self-worth, therefore, becomes an individual concept, rather than one created by men for women or passed on from women who internalized their sense of self-worth from men. According to Mary Wollstonecraft, should a woman be able to look after herself using reason, without a man by her side, she will not feel it necessary to "please other men" as Stepp's college women did (27).

Unfortunately, believing that women are either man's playthings or that non-committal intercourse limits women's "ability...to conceive" is a notion upheld by some women as much as it is by some men (Stepp 6). Women such as Stepp enforce women's low sense of self-worth by taking away their capability to make free, informed choices about sex. Claiming that, "getting a guy to sleep with you is just a fancy way of 'letting' a guy sleep with you" automatically takes away any power the woman might have had in choosing to sleep with a man; Stepp gives all power to the men when it comes to having casual sex (Stepp 227). Now, women not only have to contend with re-thinking their model of self-worth from men's original views, but they must fight women like Stepp who claim that educated, self-confident women who have casual sex run the risk of "potential implications for their future roles as mothers, workers, and members of a community" (16). Should women like Stepp cease imposing such judgments and opinions on genuinely sexually free women, then the rebuilding of women's sense of worth could continue past the Bridget Jones style of self-respect that sees women constantly conflicted.

On the one hand, Bridget has some sense of personal value when she chooses not to sleep with Daniel after he declares they are nothing serious; on the other, she constantly belittles herself whether she is with him or not: "Why am I so unattractive...What's wrong with me?" (Fielding 29, 24). In Bridget's case, sexual experiences neither contribute to nor destroy her self-worth, as she did not have a true concept of it to begin with, and this of course means she cannot have empowering sex freely. Women such as Bridget and the sorority girls that Stepp refers to, do "everything for men rather than for themselves" (Stepp 147). Their sense of self is so conflicted between trying to please men without being looked down on by other women that they are not empowering themselves through self-

respect, but through the desire to receive "trivial attentions" from men (Wollstonecraft 57). Women need to ask themselves: if they were not getting such positive attention from men through sexual means, would they still act in such ways? Undoubtedly, women have achieved some level of greater control over defining their sense of self-worth throughout the years. Unfortunately, the messages from men and judgmental women have combined into a false idea of self-respect that has a woman say something like, "I am a woman of substance and do not need men in order to be complete," but then she obsesses over her appearance or why the man has not called, rather than thinking she is worthy of him (or more than him) (Fielding 38).

According to Jean-Jacques Rousseau, women should be "passive and weak," "put up little resistance," and are "made specially to please man" (358). When women act docile and weak to "gratify the arrogant pride of man" or perform for fraternity brothers, they are fooling themselves if they believe this to be sexual freedom, because men like Rousseau created the rules of the game that the women now play (Wollstonecraft 29, 34; Stepp 147). Women can also take a much more promiscuous stance, as men have been apt to do, and, like Shaida, take many strangers to bed (Stepp 142). She feels that this empowers her, but in reality she is playing in a man's world by stooping to their less emotional levels without feeling any kind of physical or emotional satisfaction from her willing conquests.

Women such as Shaida and sorority girls do argue that this type of sexual freedom - freedom from the strict rules of Eliza Wharton's time, rather than freedom from men's rules, however - is empowering because they have the power to blur the more traditional gender roles. Bridget Jones and Alison from Duke University and Bridget both enjoy the looks on men's faces when they get out of bed first or resist sex, and sorority girls claim they have the power to bring popularity to whichever Greek house they choose (Fielding 29; Stepp 241, 166). But how does this represent true equality? Women may feel, temporarily, that they have increased their value purely through their interactions with men but Alison's low-self-esteem does not improve through this act, Bridget bemoans the fact that she did not give in to Daniel, and girls such as Morgan are not aware that they are being degraded by allowing themselves to be seen only

as objects, never as more than vaginas.

Feminism has not yet solved the issue of women being able to act independently of men's rules and values. As Stepp points out, feminists in the 1970s claimed that, "wanting a man for anything other than sexual pleasure meant that you had sold out to the patriarchal culture" without realizing that wanting a man only for sexual pleasure is being a part of the patriarchal culture, because this is the culture men designed for their own satisfaction (144). While "passions...open the mind," women should consciously avoid becoming a "humble dependent" of man, be it for sexual pleasure, personal validation, or a self-esteem booster (Wollstonecraft 30, 29). Of course, we should be able to act on our primal sexual appetite just as men do, but not *because* men do. If women actively engaged one another, and men, in a dialogue about where their validations of self-worth come from, why some women feel it necessary to have casual sex with many men while others are too scared to, and whether or not they have true equality when it comes to sex, then the role of feminism would not be about allowing women to have sex like men, but educating them to have sex like women. The Director of Duke's Women's Center points out that "incredibly smart women performing for men...don't see the cultural pressures they're caving in to" because they are not educated about such truths (Stepp 148). They are taught SATs not STDs, and this makes men and women susceptible to falling for out-dated rules, judgments and ideals.

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Anthem

My body sang its Ode to Joy, my mind
Let go and heard the symphony flow on
Until the darkness fell, as night shuts out
The gladness of the day. His manners gone,
Preamble of the lovelight vanished, and
Such anger in its place, for nothing I
Had done or said. The years went by, the last
Escape I won, but at what price? The nerve
I found in leaving left me empty, not
Without its lasting harm. I struggle now.
A prison left, a prison gained, and fear
Is what I suffer. Is it fair to love
With fear inside my heart? Will he who loves
Me understand, and bear the time it takes
To heal? I pray he stays, and loves, and learns
With me to let fear go, and hear the song.

Biographies

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Colleen Lutz Clemens is a graduate student and teaching fellow in the English Ph.D. program. She studies issues of gender and women's bodies in contemporary world literature. When she isn't reading or writing, she is in the woods with her dog and her husband.

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Jamey Gallagher is a graduate student interested in writing. He lives in New Jersey with his wife and two daughters.

Ian Grimes is an undergraduate student in the college of Arts and Sciences.

Shelley Harris is a junior Sociology and Women's Studies double major. She is a Women's Center staff member, involved in Spectrum, Break the Silence, and *The Vagina Monologues*. She has great interest in spreading the feminist word.

Shelley Hull is a senior Civil Engineering major. She enjoys drawing and has recently taken up painting as well. This past fall semester, she had the pleasure of taking a course called "Women in Art," which combined art history and women's studies. Art is something she loves to create and study.

Teniece Divya Johnson, born a Georgia peach, believes art is life. She followed a family tradition of basketball and earned a scholarship to Lehigh University. Graduating with a Marketing degree, she earned Lehigh's Presidential scholarship and received her M.A. in Sociology. She is an activist, actress, artist, educator, poet, and dreamer. She is currently in rehearsal for August Wilson's "The Piano Lesson," and is being recruited by graduate M.F.A. acting programs to begin studying in the fall of 2008.

Laura Kremmel is a first year graduate student in the English department. For fun, she likes to teach freshmen writing, discuss religion in Gothic novels, and hole herself in the library reading Hanif Kureishi.

Hilary Lewis is a first year student in the College of Arts and Sciences who plans to double major in International Relations and Environmental Studies, and minor in Latin American Studies. Hilary loves to travel. Her piece is a reflection on her recent intercession trip to India with the Global Citizenship Program.

Darius Mooring, or Jupiterhead, is an emerging singer/songwriter in the Lehigh Valley. He is currently working on his debut album to be released in the spring of '09. You can hear his music at www.myspace.com/jupiterhead. He is the Textbook Department Manager at the Lehigh University Bookstore.

Anna Orchard is a senior English honors major with minors in History, Classical Civilization, and Africana Studies. This is her first time working on *Origins*, and she is happy to be a part of this wonderful tradition!

Stephanie Palmieri is a graduate student getting her M.A. in Secondary Education. She graduated from Lehigh in 2007 with a B.A. in English and minors in Creative Writing and Women's Studies (and she wishes Women's Studies had been a major when she first arrived at Lehigh). She played softball and field hockey as an undergrad and is now the graduate assistant for the varsity field hockey team. She enjoys talking about feminist ideals, and bragging about the time she met Margaret Cho. She has a lot of vagina love.

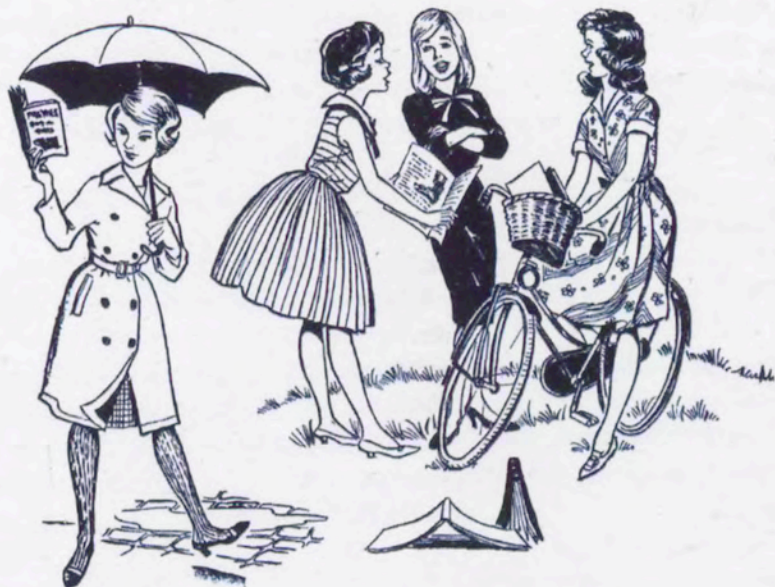
Vani Pyda is a freshman pre-med student who, since coming to college, has decided to minor in music. She absolutely adores acappella music, and is in Lehigh's all-girls acappella group, "The Echoes." And obviously, she enjoys writing.

Emily Rojer is a freshman International Relations major with a business minor, and she plans to go to graduate school for a degree in Public Health. She is a member of the Global Citizenship Program, which is how she had the opportunity to travel to India. Traveling to the other side of the world was an illuminating experience for her, and she strongly encourages everyone to travel as much as possible!

Christine Tucker is a senior English major with a minor in Sociology. Along with being an editor of Origyns, she is involved in University Productions-Arts and Excursions. Anytime she can read, write, or edit work about feminism, she's a happy woman.

LaVerne Zuk is the Bursar's Office Information Systems Manager, and a junior majoring in English. LaVerne writes poetry as a reminder of where she's been, and reads to discover places she's never been. LaVerne's other pleasures are training her miniature schnauzers, quilting, cooking, and bird-watching.

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