

2010

# Origyns: Reclaiming our feminist voices

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*Lehigh University*

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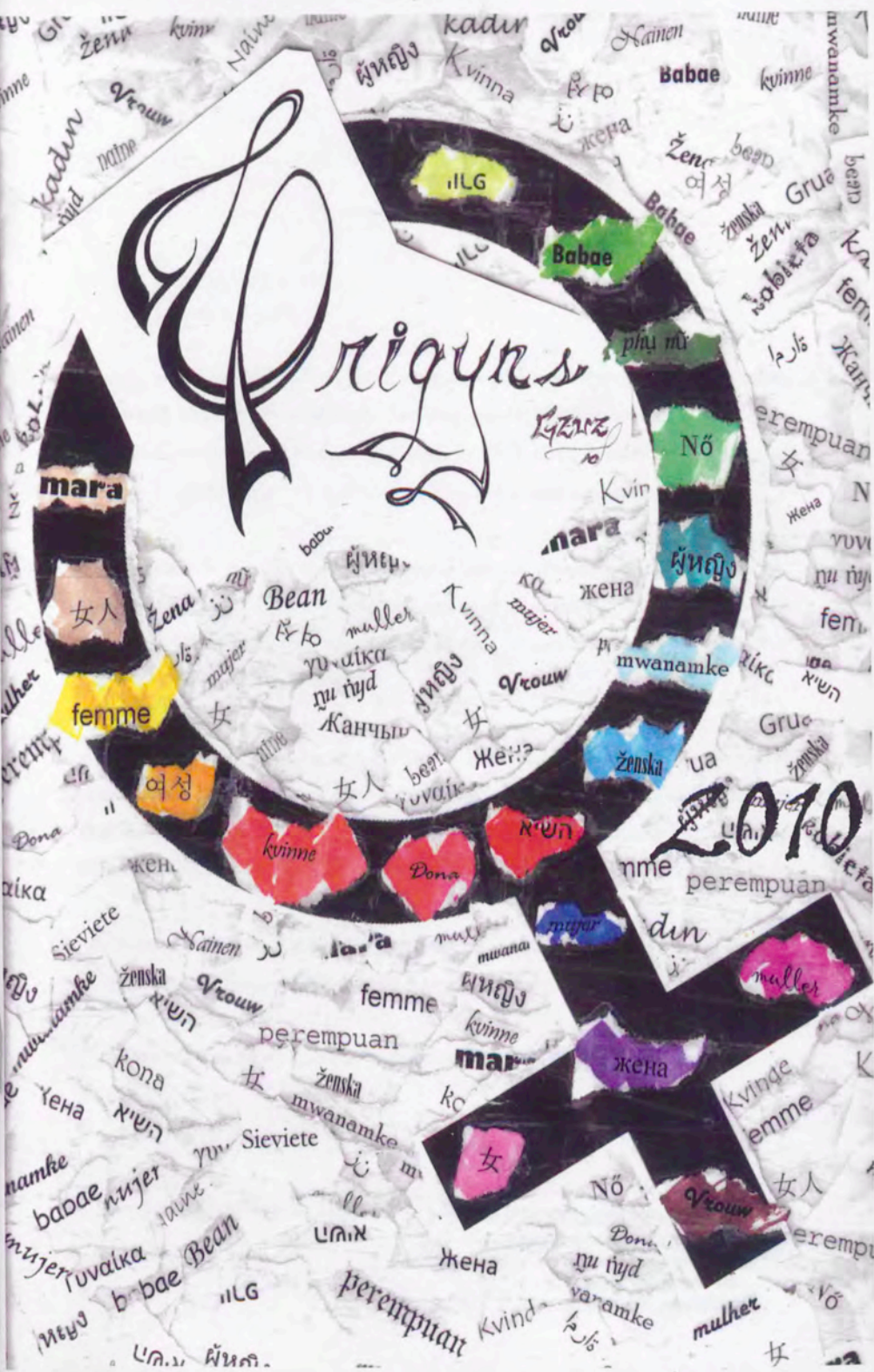
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## o r i g y n s

Publication Team

Dianna Hank

*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 original essays, poetry, articles, artwork, and short stories that explore gender and feminism. Some pieces were created specifically for this publication, others for class or personal expression.

*origyns* is funded by the Lehigh University Women's Center, but the opinions expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the center or Lehigh University. All future submissions may be directed to the Women's Center: [inwnc@lehigh.edu](mailto:inwnc@lehigh.edu).

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Front cover artwork by Jesus O. Luna

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## What is Feminism?

At the beginning of this semester, I was under the impression that feminism was no longer needed in our society. In my mind, women had reached equal status when compared to their male counterparts. Women were allowed to work in office settings, were allowed to be CEOs of big corporations, and they could even enjoy motherhood without having to give up their jobs. For me, the sky was the limit for women – they could go out and do whatever they chose without any restrictions. Women were given the freedom of choice when it came to how they wanted to live their lives. I was under the impression that we, as a society, no longer needed a women's movement because its goals and ideals had been accomplished.

However, after learning all that I have this past semester, I have come to the realization that women still have a *long* way to go before we can be considered equals in society. Without even realizing it, I was participating in the oppression of other women in our society. Before this semester, I had never thought twice about someone, especially a man, holding a door open for me. I felt that it was a polite way for a man to act – being of service to the woman. It never occurred to me that this small gesture had such a significant impact on the oppression of women. This particular act, when viewed from a feminist perspective, shows women as being the dependent sex – needing the help of a man to complete such a simple task. When you actually sit back and look at it, women truly are the subordinate sex in our society. They do not earn the same wages as men, they are forced to choose between being a mother and working in an office setting, and, in the event they choose a career, they need to act like men in order to make it to the top of their fields. How can we say this is equal and fair?

As I have said before, women still have a long way to go before they are no longer viewed as the subordinate sex

in our society. However, this upward mobility cannot only be dependent on the work of a select group of women who consider themselves to be feminists. **All** women need to work together in order to evoke a significant change. Unfortunately, many women, like myself before this semester, are under the false impression that there is no need to continue the fight towards equality. Many women today feel that those women who came before us paved the way, and that nothing more needs to be done.

While it is true that our foremothers did make great strides in the fight for women's rights, this does not mean that there is no work left to be done. Changes still need to be made in order for women to be considered equal to men in our society. Women need to become aware that they remain the subordinate sex and that they need to continue the fight that has already been started. Even though I am only one woman out of many, I hope that I can take what I have learned and educate other women about what still needs to be done in our fight for equality. Hopefully, each woman I educate will inform others, and it will lead to a spiral effect, creating great changes in the world around.

Finally, looking back on all that I have learned throughout this semester, I realize that my own perceptions and definitions of feminism have changed significantly. I still feel that feminism can come in a variety of shapes and sizes, whether it be a big group of women protesting for a cause they feel strongly about, or a single woman standing up for herself to her male boss. However, it is more than just that. Feminism requires women to take a stand for what they believe is right and just. While some feminists feel that acting like men is going to solve the problem of women being the oppressed sex, others think that women need to be better than men in order to rid themselves of this oppression. Ultimately, I believe that women simply need to take responsibility for themselves and not allow others to speak or make decisions for them. Additionally, not only should women voice their own beliefs and opinions, they also need to work



together as a group to create the change they want to see. While one voice is better than none when it comes to supporting a cause, the more voices there are, the stronger the push for a change. Ultimately, we need as many women as possible to help fight for the cause because the stronger the push for change, the better the odds are for the reformation and improvement of women's conditions within our society.



Andrea D. Espinoza

***Fem-in-IZ-ym***

I don't know what "Feminism" is,  
But I can tell you what  
My ***FeminIZym*** is.

My ***FeminIZym*** is stronger than Atlas,  
Softer than a rose,  
And sweeter than honey.

My ***FeminIZym*** is denser than wood,  
Tougher than hemp rope,  
And more valuable than money.

My ***FeminIZym*** is sugar-sweet and very kind,  
As elegant as Jackie O,  
And equally refined.

My ***FeminIZym*** is vulnerable  
But it isn't afraid to be unsure of the next step it  
takes.  
It is human – ever-changing, and ever-evolving.  
Hell, it even wears makeup, short skirts  
And high heels.

My ***FeminIZym*** loves media.  
It watches MGM musicals, George Lucas block-  
busters,  
And Nancy Meyers films.  
It dances the Bellet,  
the Mambo-on-the-2,  
And the two-step at a club.

My ***FeminIZym*** is about being one with the uni-

verse.

It's not about reading the beliefs of women  
Who were around when my grandmother  
Was doing the twist.

It's about creating my own experiences,  
Making my own mistakes,  
And knowing that I can try again tomorrow  
If I screw up badly today.

So if you ask me, what the best thing about  
My **FeminIZym** is, I'll say this:  
It just **IZ**.

*FeminIZym is 4 Everybody.*

*Judree Dantrea Eginoy*



## **"A Tale of Two Lifetimes" Excerpt**

The institutional servers begin their rounds, putting breakfasts out before the other residents and consequential clutter arrive. I also suspect that they prefer the meals to be tepid, to reduce liability of burning a client's mouth. The smells of scrambled eggs and oatmeal momentarily overpower the scents of Lysol and fear, before weaving together in a way that brings a different kind of "Last Meal" to mind. I'm almost surprised at the connection my mind makes, and I'm not sure whether I was always this morbid or if I've become darker since losing my husband and soon thereafter, my independence.

The servers ignore me, the three of them talking amongst themselves about their paltry paychecks and lonely children. I am still capable of providing sympathy but they pretend that I'm either invisible or that I have dementia like the other residents. I wonder if I ever treated people like they were less than human. A few incidents come to mind...

Linda and another nurse start wheeling the other residents into the dining room. They are all dressed impeccably, as they've just left their bedrooms and have had no chance of soiling their clothing yet through eating or excreting.

Lily and Margaret join my table. Lily is always silent, with a blank gaze and a stooped stature, as though she were a botanical lily planted in her wheelchair and shown sunlight regularly but never frequently enough to let the blossoms flourish, instead producing a contented wilt. Margaret makes a nice contrast, as she's always chattering. She's like a little bird, forever cooing and making tiny rapid movements, flittering all over yet staying in her wheelchair. Apparently, she used to call for Joseph all the time, in a manner that made every one's hearts break, but she's deeper into dementia now and words are no longer accessible.

If they notice my studying, they are apt at ignoring me. Perhaps I am invisible after all, even to my "peers." The dining room has come alive in the past few minutes, and seems cheerful with the sun slanting through the huge windows. I see other residents alternately smiling at each other and completely ignor-

ing one another, spooning oatmeal into their mouths and onto their laps, and murmuring quietly to each other and to themselves. The nurses walk from table to table, readjusting a spoon in one resident's hand, helping another bring juice to her lips, lifting a napkin to wipe the oatmeal from someone's wrinkled cheek.

"Victoria, dear, something wrong? Your tea isn't steaming anymore, I know that's the way you like it but I'm not going to have time to reheat it or fetch you more water," Linda scolds, as she helps Lily spoon oatmeal into her mouth.

"I know Linda, I'm sorry. I've just been..." I start to say, as she interrupts me.

"Good, good, we'll talk later, okay?" she says, rushing off to start toileting clients.

I sip my tea, savoring the warmth as it slides down my throat. I start to feel more normal, and am convinced that the power of tea resides in more than just the caffeine. I take a bite of the muffin, swirling my tongue to feel the texture of the poppy seeds against my upper palate. The lemon zest is sweet and doesn't make my face contort, but still has enough of a kick to wake me further. I finish the tea as the dining room empties completely.

Linda returns within a few minutes with small beads of perspiration dotting her hairline.

"Do you need to use the bathroom again yet?" she asks. She does not rush me off to the toilet without my request like she does the other clients.

"No, I'm okay for now, thank you," I say, as I see her face relax. She really does have an incredible amount of hard, physical labor in the mornings.

"Library again this morning or would you prefer the sitting area? I think they're watching *Singing in the Rain* this morning," she says.

"Library, if you please. I've seen quite enough *Singing in the Rain* to last me through this lifetime at least," I say. Plus, the library is the one place where I feel like I could be 12 or 25 or 45, where stories take me beyond the confines of age, disability, and this institution.

She nestles my wheelchair into a corner nook and fetches a copy of Charles Dickens' *David Copperfield* for me. I'm



not sure I could count how many times I've read *David Copperfield* but something about David's search for his identity is really resonating with me this time around. I remember reading another of Dickens' novels while my Charles read *David Copperfield* for the first time. I remember my disbelief at his engagement in the text; he flew through the 800 or so pages faster than he had ever read anything. I regret that I never asked why exactly he had enjoyed the book so much.

"Hey, ma'am, are you lost? Who left you here in the library, I think your friends are watching *Singing in the Rain* this morning, and I'm sure you'd be happier there," says someone.

I don't look up initially, as I'm lost in my musings about *David Copperfield* and the memories it stirs.

"Okay, you can keep the book if you want, I'll return it later for you," I hear.

Suddenly, my brakes are released and I'm moving towards the hallway.

"Excuse me, ma'am, but what do you think you're doing?" I say to whoever is pushing me. I cannot manage to turn around in my wheelchair without potentially falling forward and onto the ground.

"Oh, don't worry honey, I'll have you back in your sitting area in just a moment," a woman says.

"Why are you taking me to the sitting area? I'm supposed to be in the library," I say, somewhat confused.

"Now, now, honey, don't you worry," she says, swinging open the door to the locked ward and wheeling me through.

I decide that protesting is futile at this point and hear Gene Kelley's voice. I realize that I've pursed my lips in annoyance.

Linda is filling medicine cups, distributing clients' mid-morning pills.

"Victoria? What are you doing back so early?" she asks, dispensing small round white pills into several cups.

"I'm not sure Linda, as I had no intention of leaving the library," I say, somewhat loudly, hoping whoever is pushing me will notice.

"Linda, was she supposed to be in the library?" says the mystery wheelchair pusher.

"Of course, Jen, didn't she say so?" Linda asks, pausing

in her pill distribution.

"Well, she did, but I honestly thought she was just chattering and completely unaware. I saw the green tag on her wheelchair and know the rules about this ward so I thought I should just bring her back here..." the voice says, trailing off in embarrassment.

"You need not speak about me, as I'm right here," I say, frustrated.

She comes around in front of me. It's a short, young woman whom I've never seen before. Her ponytail is messy and her fake fingernails are covered in strange little designs.

"I told you that I was supposed to be in the library. Not everyone who lives in this ward has dementia. Even those who do are still people—adults!—with opinions and desires, and you have no right to treat us like we are lost children or naughty pets. Although I live in this ward I do not have Alzheimer's disease or any other kind of dementia and I was in the library because I wanted to be, and I would appreciate you returning me there immediately," I say, thoroughly irritated. "I understand your mistake and I forgive you, but please, listen next time."

"Yes ma'am, I will take you back. I'm sorry for my mistake," Jen says, coloring with embarrassment.

"Thanks, Jen, and you had better listen to Victoria. She knows what she's talking about," Linda says, scolding her colleague slightly. She grabs a different bottle of medicine and starts adding its contents to various cups.

I hear the "plop, plop, plop" and "shake" of the medicine as I am wheeled again through the locked doors and out to the library.

"I really am sorry, Victoria," I hear Jen say, her voice timid. "I'm new here and I thought everyone who lived in the Hugh ward had Alzheimer's, so I just thought your protests were dementia chatter."

"It's okay, Jen, just be more careful next time. You won't last long here if you continue treating all of the clients like they're inferior. It's very taxing to take care of elderly people if you neglect or forget to respect their integrity as individuals. Every single person in here has had a full and interesting life, we all just got old and some of us have other problems too. I'm only in here because I had a stroke and no longer have control



over my legs. I can't walk and need a lot of help doing many everyday things so I'm in the Hugh ward because they offer the most care," I explain.

"You're right, Victoria. It's just easy to forget everyone's past when the present is so hard to deal with," Jen says. "I'm sorry about the stroke too. My grandma had one and she couldn't talk afterwards. Strokes are really scary. Do you want to be in the same spot I found you earlier?"

"Yes, please," I say, my irritation dissolving now that I'm back in the library. I smile at Jen as she activates my wheelchair's brakes, and look down at my hands. My knuckles are white from clenching *David Copperfield* in frustration. I relax my hands and watch my poor circulation restore the skin to a more natural, reddish hue.

Esperanza Pacheco

## A Good Woman

A good woman is strong,  
but she can admit her weaknesses.

She can be vulnerable,  
but she is not ashamed of it.

She makes mistakes,  
but she learns from them.

She's proud,  
but she's not gaudy.

She is different,  
but she embraces it.

She isn't perfect,  
but she accepts it.

She believes in herself,  
but she doesn't seek superiority.

She not only knows *her* rights,  
but she considers the rights of *everyone* as well.

No matter what she's been through,  
she'll prevail because she is strong.

Esperanza  
pacheco  
30/3/10



## **Trigger Warning**

**Trigger warnings** are customary in some feminist and other spaces. They are designed to prevent people who have an extremely strong and damaging emotional response (for example, post-traumatic flashbacks or urges to harm themselves) to certain subjects from encountering them unaware. Having these responses is called "being triggered".

The following essay describes the author's sexual assault experience in detail. Please be aware before you continue reading. We wanted to include her piece for its honesty, thoughtfulness, and importance, but felt it important to give readers warning and resource information.

**If you require resources related to sexual violence,  
please contact:**

Break the Silence 24/7 anonymous, confidential sexual violence peer educators: 610-974-HOPE

Women's Center/Advocates: 610-758-5808

Counseling Center: 610-758-3880

Anonymous

## MONSTER

We had spoken for just three weeks, and you had already swept me off my feet. I had just gotten out of a long relationship and you knew how betrayed I felt. You came over when the house was as quiet as could be. I anticipated the laughter that would fill the rooms as you embraced me with a warm hug. I remember blushing as you told me how pretty I looked that day. The pit of my stomach rumbled as the butterflies collided over and over.

You led me upstairs. As you began to kiss me, I felt loved. I never wanted that moment to end. *How I wish those thoughts never crossed my mind.* But then, the pace of the evening began to change. You were no longer the guy I liked and wanted to get to know.

The Monster slowly emerged. Simply a creature that had needs to be met. The monster wasn't satisfied with kisses and embraces. It wanted *more*, more than I could give. It wanted hopes, desires, spirit, innocence, life, virginity – everything I had.

The monster took off my top and I no longer felt warm. He took off my pants and I no longer felt safe. My bra hit the ground and I felt indecent. And then, when everything was gone, I felt exposed, weak, and vulnerable. I was naked and afraid. The monster had pushed me to the very edge of my comfort zone. Yet, he still wanted more. He asked and I said "No!" He asked again and I said "No! I'm not ready." "Please leave," I begged. You pressured me saying, "Come on, come on" yet I refused.

### **The monster didn't take "No" for an answer.**

You pushed me down and didn't listen to my requests. My body shivered as your anger thrust into me over and over again. I cried for help but no one heard. I



screamed for you to stop but you didn't listen.

Every ounce of effort I used to get you off of me just wasn't enough. The monster overpowered me and got what he wanted that day. He craved my tears, my pain, my innocence and he was fed. It was as if each cry was incentive to get more, to go deeper, harder, faster.

The monster then spoke. He whispered in my ear that everything was ok. He told me to just shut up and take it, to enjoy it for God's sake. Silence overtook my body while the monster finally finished his meal.

He came, he smiled, he left.

The very moment the monster walked out that door, I knew I had just become a statistic. I was no longer a girl filled with love, imagination, and spirit. I was now a victim— just a number for someone to tally up on a spreadsheet.

The following months are filled with memories: memories of razorblades running up and down my arms, dancing with their red ribbons. Memories of hundreds of prescription pills entering my stomach. Memories of liters of Jack Daniels that burned my esophagus.

How you made me *hate* myself. Monster, you made me hit rock bottom. Yet, despite all that you put me through, the pain you caused me to feel, and all the self abuse you led me to,

**I managed to find the light.**

Despite all the hate and disgust you brought into my life, **I have found hope.** I may not know why you did this to me, Monster, or why you led me on, but what I do know is this:

I am **not** broken,

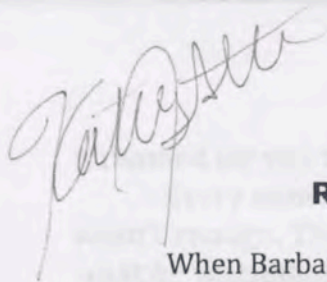
I am **not** weak,

And you sure as HELL didn't beat me that night.

Some people may not understand this, but I forgive you, Monster. You and I both thought you took everything that night but actually, you *gave* me something much more valuable instead. Monster, you gave me the ability to see all the beauty I have to offer as a woman. This gift of empowerment gives me strength every day and has enabled me to live my life like I could have never imagined.

Strength that you will **never** be able to get your filthy hands on.





Katie Johnston

## Repainting Her Nails

When Barbara Fadale shook my hand for the first time, I was surprised at her long, crimson red, acrylic nails. When I originally thought of sexual assault nurse examiners, I did not think of nail salons. As fingernails go, I thought of trimmed, unpainted nails, ones like my grandmother's, whose hands would pick me up when I fell down as a child, fingertips soft and gentle stretching the bandage over my scraped knee. I did not think of sharp, scratching nails on the tips of her fingers. In fact, I considered it kind of impractical for a nurse examiner, who performs invasive gynecological examinations on women who have just been brutally raped, to have long, potentially scratching fingernails. I winced at that thought as I led Barb to our table.

We sat down at a table in the Lehigh bookstore café. A nurse examiner with the Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners or SAFE program associated with Lehigh Valley Hospital, Barb had agreed to meet me for coffee so that I could interview her, but when I watched her pull a rape kit out of her bag, I immediately regretted asking her to meet me in such a public place. Since I am a pre-med student who is looking into gynecology as a possible future pursuit, I chose to interview a nurse examiner, mostly to see the medical side of an assault. Primarily, I wanted to understand why SAFE or SANE programs are more effective than visits to non-SANE nurses on a micro level. In class, when we read the study report "The Effectiveness of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Programs," I was amazed that only a few studies have examined the effectiveness of the programs comparing to that of the non-SANE nurses (Campbell). Although I would not be able to compare them one-on-one either, I wanted to do a study of my own and see for myself what exactly makes SANE nurses "... better medical forensic examiners than physicians and nurses who have not completed such training" (Campbell). I wondered what it was that makes the SAFE or SANE programs particularly effective in collecting evidence.

In order to obtain a full understanding of what a SANE or SAFE nurse does, when I e-mailed Barb asking about this interview, I asked her to be prepared to walk me through what would happen step-by-step from the moment a victim walks in the doors to when she walks out. Although I was prepared with questions after her explanation to fill in the cracks, most of the time, she was the one talking and I was the one listening. She answered my questions before I asked them, right there at the center table of the bookstore café, as the rape kit sat right there in the open, starkly contrasting the friendly atmosphere.

At the start, Barb explained the types of victims that they, as SANE nurses, often see and how they treat them. Permission for minors to receive the examination is not required from guardians unless the victim is under the age of twelve. However, Barb explained, she cannot treat injuries of those victims under the age of eighteen without the consent of a parent or guardian. As she said this, I realized that I often didn't even think of victims under or over the age of college students, although we had studied them in class. However, I was curious to see how vast the age difference was in a real SAFE program.

"We treat women as young as infants and as old as senior-citizens. It happens in daycare centers and in nursing homes," she answered. "I'm not pediatric trained. I don't want to be. I think I would choke someone."

Shaking that thought out of my head, I looked down at the paperwork so she could continue. Barb explained that as a SAFE nurse, she has to ask everything she can to help collect evidence. There was a list of actions that could have happened after the assault that the nurse needs to know about, including obvious questions about the removal of a tampon and consensual sex and the seemingly irrelevant questions like those concerning chewing gum and smoking.

"We cannot swab the entire body," Barb said. "But if we know what happened during the assault and after, we can narrow our options and go from there."

Partly out of curiosity, I asked, "Do victims ever feel overwhelmed by these questions?" I certainly was, and I wasn't even the victim being questioned. I could not have imagined



answering some of those questions in my current state, let alone as a rape victim only a few hours after the event.

Barb shook her head. "The victim has to know that it is all under her control. During the attack, she doesn't have that opportunity," she said. "And I want to give that back to her."

I was beginning to understand Barb's determination to feel for the victim and to help her handle the assault emotionally. "I want her to know that I won't hurt her, and that I want to give her confidence and gain her trust," she said.

Without a beat, Barb then explained that a victim has a 72-hour timeframe in which evidence can be extracted from her or his body, though the less time, the better. As nurses, they collect this evidence by using a 35 mm camera, a blacklight lamp to search for semen in the event that the rapist ejaculated, and a colposcope, which she explained to be a camera that takes pictures highlighting the skin so that microlacerations and tiny bits of evidence like semen or saliva can be seen.

"We're trained evidence collectors - that's all we are," Barb said, showing me sample colposcope pictures of her hand in which a small scratch was now visible. "Chances are when we see them, they're upset, or angry, or they don't really know what they want to do. We want to give victims the opportunity to change their minds and prosecute," she said. She then added, for emphasis, "Convictions have been based on our pictures."

While she was rustling through the rape kit, I was incredibly aware of the medical paperwork on the table facing me - a diagram of the vagina was looking up at me. Suddenly, I could not stop glancing around the room at the men in the café of whom I was suddenly aware, as well. I wanted to hide the sheet of paper in my book bag and protect the vagina from them, although the closest man in the café was a friend of mine from class, whom I trust. To me, this vagina drawing was not just a piece of paper. In Barb's hands, it symbolized a victim's body, one that had just recently been torn, almost as easily as this piece of paper, by someone else's hands. By mentally attaching this paper vagina to that of a woman who Barb sees right after her assault, I would never in a million years want even my male *friend* to see that sheet.

Barb must have seen me looking at the paper because she picked it up next. She explained that the posterior fourchette is the part of the woman's genitals that is likely to tear the easiest and would show the most damage. As she said this, Barb pointed to the diagram with her fingernail, and I thought for sure that she was going to poke through the paper. I almost reached up and snatched it from under her pointy, pokey nails. I felt protective and sensitive toward these women who come to see her, and this paper vagina was nothing less. However, if she sensed my lack of comfort, she did not make light of it: Barb finally let go of the paper and proceeded to pick up the rape kit, opening the top.

When explaining the rape kit procedure, Barb first made it clear how much effort goes into each rape examination. In the time between the breaking of the rape kit's evidence seal to when she seals it closed once more, she must be in the presence of the kit so that she can be sure that evidence cannot be contaminated. Additionally, the time it takes to complete a rape kit can range anywhere from about three to four hours. She is in charge of the evidence during that time and, if she does not take the kit with her everywhere she does (even if she goes to the restroom), it could be her fault if the evidence is not deemed credible in a courtroom. However, it is always the victim's choice as to whether she would like the physical examination part of the rape kit would be performed. If the victim chooses not to have the examination and therefore, there is no evidence collected, an explanation as to why this is must be written up to ensure that the nurse does not seem incompetent, should she appear in court. "You never want to say 'I don't know' in a courtroom," Barb explained.

Inside the box were envelopes for each type of evidence that the nurses collect for each victim, and as Barb listed them, I was beginning to see she was being entirely serious when she said, "We go from head to toe." There were vaginal swabs, anal swabs, oral swabs, and buccal swabs for clean DNA, which all have to be dried before being put into the envelopes, or the samples will rot, therefore destroying DNA. There were envelopes for hair combings with separate envelopes for both head



and pubic hair. Urine samples are taken just in case there are traces of date-rape drugs in the event that they were used, and even the toilet tissue is collected if a victim urinates. Clothes closest to the body are collected and examined, as well. Additionally, the contents of each envelope have to be thoroughly described in pen on the outside of the respective envelope, detailing each piece of clothing. For example, Barb said, "... blue denim with pink pockets."

As Barb was putting the envelopes back into the box, I saw that the last envelope was labeled "fingernail clippings," and I looked down at my own nails with blurry vision. My head was swimming. During class, the cases we talked about were foreign and far away. When I saw the work up close and personal and heard stories from a mouth that talks to survivors every day, I could not picture this rape kit without an owner.

I pictured a woman with brown hair, wearing a hospital gown and clipping her nails after having stripped her torn clothing off again yet this time, on her own terms. Maybe she was coming back from her manicure when she was raped, her perfectly painted fingernails trying to get a piece of her perpetrator before she was rendered powerless. Maybe her friends had just helped her pick the polish color before saying goodbye while the nice guy they had recently met offered to walk her home. Maybe, just maybe, she had chipped the color on her index finger on the zipper on her pants as she pulled them back on, her brown hair stuck to her cheek and wet with tears. By the time I handed the envelope back to Barb, my own fingers were shaking.

She took the envelope and closed the box. "This kit is ninety percent victim," Barb said, her hand on the kit's lid, "If I can find that ten percent perpetrator, I might be able to win the case."

I rubbed my forehead and looked at Barb. The brown-haired girl would not leave my mind. I wondered if Barb had women in her mind like this one, except that in her case, they were real victims.

"What makes you get up and go to work every day?" I asked.

Barb stared down at her hands, and after a moment, looked back up at me. "We can make things a little better for the victim. I do my best so that this person can have a piece of her life back," she said. I smiled as I thought of the girl I had pictured; leaving the SAFE program with her chipped thumbnail repainted.

As we stood up, I thanked Barb and shook her hand again. This time, her hands were warm and inviting, her nails reflecting who she was as a person and as a woman, strong and in control. At that moment, I wondered why I was so surprised in the beginning of the interview that she would have nails like that. Of course she had long, red nails – they were *her* nails, and nobody was going to tell her how to keep her manicure. This was the piece of her life she refused to give any rapists: the satisfaction of having the power over even the smallest part of a woman's life, although she was not his direct victim. Even if it was as small as her fingertips, she had control over this part of her life.

"I hate being on call," Barb had said. "It's such an intrusion. It doesn't sound pretty, it's not glamorous, but it needs to be done." Being on call was a "... pain in the ass," she said. But still, she did it with long and graceful red fingernails.

During my walk back to my apartment, I thought of my talk with Barb. I now understood why SANE nurses are more effective than doctors in emergency rooms. Barb puts all of her heart into these examinations and into her job as a whole, especially since each rape kit examination takes several hours to perform with meticulous procedures and inconvenient circumstances. Non-SANE or -SAFE nurses would not have the time Barb does to put into each rape kit. A possible reason that SAFE nurses are more effective than the nurses in emergency rooms is that rape kits are all they do, and they truly understand the importance of each procedure, each swab, and each envelope. I now realized that Barb is a living, breathing example of why women such as that brown-haired girl could have justice in the world once more.

As I reached for the key to my door, I looked down at my own fingernails once again. I saw a few long, elegant ones, but



there were a few short, stubbly ones as well, that had just been broken or bitten by me. I suddenly felt proud of my nails and my hands. They were mine, mine, **mine**.

I walked into my room and sat down at my desk. *Nobody* was going to change the fact that these were my hands and what I wanted to do with them was my choice and mine, alone.

Taking my time, I opened a bottle of nail polish, and after pushing my brown hair behind my ears, I painted my nails red.

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Megan Pendleton

Megan  
Pendleton

## Reasoning

She used to think  
that rice came from raindrops,  
hums and talks to herself  
when she thinks no one's looking,  
cooks up crazy tales  
to get herself out of trouble,  
and chews bubble gum  
like it's her job.

She was born exactly  
10 years and 1 week after I was.  
My parents chose her name  
because they found it in an African name book  
to mean "gift":  
Nina.

And since then, she's been nothing but a present  
day reminder to be grateful.

Hatefully, I often curse the sky  
for being so heavy on her shoulders  
that the ground couldn't hold her stride.  
I've tried hard not to cry in front of her,  
don't want her to think I feel sorry for her situation.  
Not just lately, but forever I've wished  
I could apologize for things  
like her never being able to run freely,

never being able to jump rope,  
or to do all the cool new dances,

for the chances she may never have.  
I mentally grab adults by the collar,  
scream and holler  
at them for staring in her face,



anyplace we may go.  
No, she doesn't always understand why,  
but when she does  
I try and click my heels like Dorothy  
if only to trade my reality for her Kansas.  
Canvas like, I want to be painted  
with the colors she's made of,  
and I would lay down my life any day  
so she could walk freely through hers.

I'm way less of a big sister role model than I should be:  
confidently inept,  
adventurously scared,  
and unprepared for adversity.  
And she, ten years younger,  
has taught me more lessons  
than any college sessions ever could.  
Should I ever doubt myself,  
I project her voice in my head.  
I'm nothing like the person I'd be  
had she not been chosen to be in my family.  
I could never imagine living without her giggle  
that stirs the blood in my veins,  
her sometimes crazy train of thought,  
or the abstract art she makes  
out of perseverance.

She is only 11 years old,  
holds hope in her cheeks like laughter  
and asks only to be loved.

Her name, Nina, means "gift"  
and she was too precious  
to be wrapped in loose paper,  
so she was adorned with acres  
of the strongest materials  
that have made her  
**perfect.**

## **Livin' & Breathin'**

"Here you are, dear," Betty passed a cup of coffee to Walter on the driver's side. Having just stopped the car in Deer Creek Park's gravel parking lot, they began their family's lazy Sunday rituals with the stuff of muck. Taking the now half-full thermos, Betty attempted to set it on the dashboard. But as Newton would have it, Betty's haphazard placement of the thermos on the edge of the dashboard had an equal and opposite reaction as it teetered off the edge, coffee splashing into her lap and onto the floor.

"God damn it, Betty! All over the upholstery and yourself, look at this mess! Use your brain a little when you're doin' somethin'. For Christ's sake, go grab the towels from the trunk!" She didn't need to look at Walter to know he was red in the face with complimentary purple veins bursting forth from beneath his skin. So instead, she occupied her eyes by looking out the windshield at the leaning cattails which lined the creek. The strength of today's wind bent some to an almost breaking point, but none she saw actually snapped, always returning to their upright position until the next gust tried to do what the last had not. Her sons sat silently in the backseat.

But it wasn't 1956 anymore, and Betty now sat in the long since paved and painted lot of Deer Creek, shaking her graying, tight perm at the memory. She gathered her picnic basket, binoculars, and afghan in her arms. It was another Sunday, and on this day, Betty would find her way to Waterloo Hiking Trail alone. Unlike the days when Walter and her boys were around, her body moved slowly and deliberately now, each step requiring conscious effort, will power, and a furrowing of the brow to succeed. The cattails beside her suffered little at the push of the tender breeze today. Betty's thoughts regressed again.

"Mommy, did you pack us fluffernutters?!"

"Yes, hon, I did," Betty answered her firstborn, Ambros.

"Yay!" Ambros ran clumsily over the rocks and tree roots of the trail and hugged her tightly around the knees. "Ho



Hos for dessert?!" he was hopeful.

"No baby, its lime Jello vegetable salad. How will you have the energy to run around on just marshmallow fluff?"

"Mommm, yucky!" Peter added his two cents. Betty smiled at her boys and ruffled her youngest on the head as they continued walking down the trail. Walter was far ahead of his family, almost out of sight. He made no attempt to slow his stride, never glancing back at his family's position. It was really of no consequence though; Betty and the kids knew where to meet up with him once they were left at his heels.

"You are my sunshines, my only sunshines, you make me happy when skies are gray..." Betty sang her modified version of the tune as they walked still further.

*Oh!* Betty's present situation returned to her consciousness as a fox squirrel jumped abruptly into her path. *Betts, Betts, Betts...* Startled, she stopped where she was and soon diverted her attention to her bird watching pastime. Lifting the binoculars for a closer look, her heavy lidded eyes smushed against the plastic while her crow's feet made a definite appearance as she squinted through the lenses. *Ahh, red-winged blackbird, what a beauty.* Her eyes followed the freedom of the winged creature as it moved through the air above the creek and settled on a reed to sing. She watched the beauty for a few minutes longer as it continued lazing about until she was inspired to continue the walk to her destination. Once there, she reasoned, she could rest her far less graceful bunioned feet, and continue her bird watching.

Betty reached the meadow around midday and began setting her things on the same slowly rotting picnic table she and her family had made their destination on those Sundays so long ago. There would be no fluffernutter sandwiches and vegetable Jello salad today, though. Betty had a much more adult picnic menu planned for herself: ham and cheese sandwich on wheat, with carrots and grapes. These were all carefully selected dietary items, not a one capable of giving her what she despicably called "the wind". Crunching on the carrots, Betty lost herself again, this time to the rhythm of her chews.

Walter sat on a limestone boulder overlooking the water as his wife and sons finally caught up with him in forest opening. Not bothering to surrender his gaze to meet Betty's as he directed her, "I want to wait a while to eat yet. Ain't no real rush and I've got to get the boys fishin'. Bring me their poles here, won't ya?"

Betty obeyed and the boys went over to their father. He started by showing them how to slide the corn kernels onto their hooks, and the boys giggled when he poked himself in the finger. Betty began to laugh too until Walter turned around, "Why don't you go set the table up? Here's the binoculars for bird watchin' when you get done with that." She retrieved the binoculars and proceeded with the beginning of Walter's plan, turned her back to the men of her family and took out her cross-stitch pattern, neglecting to watch the birds. *Happy Anniversary Happy Anniversary Happy Anniversary Happy Anniversary!*

Her adult picnic completed, Betty sauntered over to the old boulder. Someone since had carved a bit of a ledge into the side of it, and Betty was thankful in her old age for this new means to sit upon the stone. She rubbed her hands across its topography, and began to pantomime casting a hook into the creek.

"Now boys, don't get your feet all tangled up in that bunch there. That's poison ivy. See the leaves of three? Let them be! Just remember that. That there's how you know the nuisance is about ya," Walter warned. The rest of the afternoon Betty would watch Ambros and Peter carefully circumvent their paths to avoid a brush with the poisonous plant. She had to hand it to Walter; his warning had made for an effective one.

Betty looked down at the poisonous plant still growing aggressively, even now, around her limestone bench. It had been fifty years to the hour since that day, but the warning still echoed in her head, "Leaves of three, let them be!" She had lived by that mantra all of this time, but suddenly felt the recurring nostalgia of the day taking its toll on her aging mind. With and without thought, depending which millisecond was passing, she reached her hand down and grabbed a great bunch of the plant. *Leaves of three, let them be! Leaves of three, let them*



be! Her thoughts were all screams and the resistance of her consciousness battled with the buried. She felt her present self gain the advantage, and as it did, she began to furiously rub the ivy all over her left arm. In the furiousness of the moment, Betty didn't hear the rumble of the park ranger A.T.V. passing nearby.

*Poor old woman. Must think that's some sort of aloe or something.* Allison directed the A.T.V. towards the old woman foolishly rubbing poison ivy over the length of her arm. As a park ranger, Allison devoted herself not only to the protection of the wildlife and plant life of Deer Creek Park, but also to keeping the safety of its visitors. She found that many of her colleagues didn't seem to share the same affection for the visitors of the state park. She could understand this mindset. They had all become rangers to protect the natural world they were each so passionate about, but everyone's definition of the natural world is different. Allison found herself the minority in including humans as organisms that needed her protection just as much as the white-tailed deer and flora of the land.

She eased her foot down on the brake and came to a halt a few feet from where the woman still continued rubbing the poison across her skin. "Excuse me, ma'am!" Allison began.

The woman started suddenly, brought out of a trance that kept her ignorant of the noisy approach of the A.T.V. She dropped the ivy and looked down at the ground. Allison tried again.

"Excuse me, ma'am?"

"Oh, hello."

"Hi, ma'am. I noticed your rubbing those leaves on your arm. I just came over here to warn you about the toxicity of that plant. Ma'am, that's poison ivy. I'm sure you know what that is and I won't insult you by explaining its harmful nature to you," said Allison.

"What's your name, dear?" the graying woman asked.

"My name is Allison."

"Allison, honey, you must think I'm out of my conflagrant mind."

"Oh, no, ma'am! I'm sorry! Please forgive me, I didn't mean to insinuate that! It's just that you aren't the first person I've run across in the park who was playing with poison ivy without knowing what they were dealing with. I'm only trying to keep everyone safe and sound. Don't want the humans thinking they're being neglected by the park rangers," she laughed.

"Hush, dear. I understand what you came over here for, and thank you for your concern. But truth is I was more than aware that it was poison ivy I was rubbing on my arm."

Allison reacted with a quick eyebrow raise, which she quickly corrected, hoping not to offend the elderly woman. She tried at understanding, "Ma'am, I hope you don't think I'm prying here... but if you knew that was poison ivy, why were you rubbing it on your skin?"

"Are you married, hon?"

"What? Oh, uh no, ma'am. Don't even have a boyfriend."

"That's good, hon. You know, I've been coming to Deer Creek since my early twenties. Used to drive up here with my husband and the two sweetest, well-mannered sons a woman could ask for. I like to think I instilled the sweetness and good manners in um," she winked at Allison, "But I'm lookin' at you, you're probably in your twenties, yeah?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"And you're in this professional looking uniform, single as can be, watching over the safety of visitors like me in Deer Creek, driving whatever you call that piece of metal. You really seem to me the picture of a modern woman."

"Oh... thanks...?"

"All I mean, dear, is that you seem to have things together. Heck, you even had the intuition to drive past this here meadow at the exact time a kooky old woman was rubbing poison ivy all over herself! Talk about timing!" the woman laughed to herself and Allison joined in, unsure really of what the woman was getting at.

"I'm going to take that as a compliment."

"And you absolutely should! Say, do you want to know how I remember how to identify poison ivy?"

"Sure."



"When we all used to come up here, my husband, his name was Walter, Walt would tell the kids 'Leaves of three, let them be!' and that always stuck right with me. Cute little saying, smart too," said the woman.

"Your husband sounds like he might've been a Boy Scout at some point. I've heard the den moms and scout leaders teaching their boys something similar when they come to camp here."

"Is that right? No, he wasn't any Boy Scout. He just learned that from his father, I s'pose. But anyhow, do you know I never learned to drive a car until I was fifty? I'm sure a woman like you can't imagine a thing like that."

"Why did you wait so long to drive?" asked Allison.

"Oh, don't think that was the way I wanted things to be. No, never. How about this one: Before Walt passed, he never went a day without a home cooked meal prepared by yours truly. Needless to say, I make a mean pot roast."

"That takes stamina!"

"You're right about that! I also deep cleaned each room of our home once a week. Walter had allergies, but to tell you the truth, he just liked things spic and span."

"Oh?"

"When did you learn to drive, darlin'?"

"Got my permit at fifteen and my license at sixteen, just like all the other kids, I guess."

"How often do you cook for yourself?"

"I couldn't really tell you. I'll only really do it if I have any free time. Don't tell anyone though. I'm normally too lazy to do any such thing," she winked, playfully.

"I'm assuming your cleaning schedule is somethin' similar?"

"I hate to say it... especially after hearing your habits! I think I'd rather not disclose how often any deep cleaning actually happens..."

The elderly woman chuckled lightly, "I'm not trying to make you feel bad, hon, and I apologize for the question and answer session. I just find a woman like you fascinating."

"Thank you, ma'am. You've really done a number for my

self-esteem today," she laughed.

"Guess how often I do all of those things now?"

"All of what?" said Allison.

"Those things I was just asking you about. Ask me how often I do those things now."

"How often do you do those things now?"

"Why thank you for asking, dear! I only cook when I wanna, couldn't put a number on it anymore, only clean when it needs it, and my crownin' achievement is driving the seven hours both ways to visit each of my son's houses at least four times a year. You know what they call someone like me?"

"No, what?"

"One free son of a gun. I am livin' and breathin' independence. And do you know what they call someone like you?"

"I'm not sure I do..." said Allison.

"Just the way you should be," the woman replied.

The two women continued talking about everything and nothing for an hour or two longer, all the while the elder woman sprinkling Allison with flattery and Allison intrigued by the woman's interesting take on things. As their conversation progressed, the effects of the poison ivy began increasingly taking their toll on the older woman.

"The rash seems to be manifesting. You're starting to itch a lot! Can I give you a ride back to rinse off some of the oil? I'm sorry I've been so caught up in our conversation that I forgot about taking you back to start treatment. You're so tolerant! Could've fooled me that you rubbed it all over your arm. You haven't complained one time! I guess that's why I forgot we had a health situation here," Allison chuckled.

"Dear, try and understand, I told you that I knew it was poison ivy I was rubbing on my arm," said the woman.

"Yes, I know you said that, but I guess I figured that didn't mean you weren't looking to get it off of you somehow."

"You've made my Sunday so pleasant. Thank you for letting an old woman talk your head off. You're a sweetheart."

"Oh, please, don't thank me! I have really enjoyed talking with you. But please ma'am, let me at least do some part of my job here by helping you get some of that oil off. It's the least I



can do."

"That's sweet, but really, there's no need for you to go through the trouble with that," said the woman.

"Ma'am? I'm not sure I understand. Why wouldn't you want to prevent the rash from spreading or getting worse?"

"Sweetie, this itch, this itch is a good itch. It's not an itch I dislike scratching and I'd do it to myself again in the blink of an eye. I feel that discomfort on my arm, and it feels like victory to me. You understand?"

"I'm still not sure I do..."

"Let's just call this reverse-therapy. The first aid kit in this situation ain't the cold water from the hose or the ointment you could squeeze on my arm. No. The solution here is the rash. Let the rash manifest; let the rash do what it will, but the rash is only there because I wanted it there. I chose it; it didn't choose me."

## Peonies

### Introduction.

Containment of the seasons  
All four in one fist  
Balance of power  
Between the needle and my fingertip  
One slip  
And we've cut off all communication

Come, my lovers, my dreams.

### Dream Sequence One.

I am five again  
Snip-snip-snip, don't cut off too much  
They're going to bounce up  
Don't leave too much either,  
Or in no time they'll strangle me.  
Other kids played with toys,  
Strewn all over the floor  
I dreamt of the fair-haired princess  
Whose only past-time was to look at the sun  
Through a hole in a leaf.  
I swam in apple juice in winter  
Squeezed by hand, glass remembering  
The touch of hands, the smell of sweat  
I watched Robocop one night  
One night, my heart was broken into  
The TV was gone, muddy footprints on the rug  
I felt pain, then  
Nothing.

### Dream Sequence Two.

I am only five  
Naan stopped barking



Only charred rubble where the house stood  
We have to build a new house  
Should I eat some sand off the street for entertainment?  
Sweltering heat  
Wasps in my tea  
Large, beautiful, Chinese, thick-walled, glass-insulated Ther-  
mos  
Painted with peonies  
Dad's huge backpack, swallowed by the rain,  
Fading away,  
Walking away,  
Flying away,  
Gone.  
Ticklish dry grass under the birch tree  
While mom spends her days on the roof  
Hammering with colossal strength  
Up there, a fiery outline  
Working like a caterpillar,  
Body thick and pliant to the will  
And when the red eye closes for the night, a mad race  
Of two hearts across the bog,  
And chow-chow-chow-chow goes the heartbeat  
And the sinking footsteps  
And the tiny singing frogs  
As I hold onto a strong back, like an infant chimp.  
There is no one,  
No one chasing us,  
So I want to yell out  
Stop!  
But by the time my thoughts reach my mouth,  
My mouth is already busy sobbing  
Into my pillow, as I wake up –

**An eighteen-year-old.**

## Violent Prejudice

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies is a mash-up novel, a palimpsest of sorts, in which elements of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice have been replaced by a zombie sub-plot. This not only changes the tone of the novel but it also takes one of the first, canonical, feminist texts and inserts a male voice into it. The male author/editor of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, Seth Grahame-Smith, changes the text by adding elements of violence and a certain veneration of physical ability, instead of Austen's original admiration of intelligence. This makes the new novel perfect for comparison of male and female authorship.

It would be simple to compare the language of the two authors, but as Elaine Showalter says in her essay *Towards a Feminist Poetics*:

One of the problems of feminist critique is that it is male-oriented. If we study stereotypes of women, the sexism of male critics, the limited roles women play in literary history, we are not learning what women have felt and experienced, but what men have thought women should be. (148)

So would analyzing Austen's work in comparison with Grahame-Smith's be falling into the trap of feminist critique? Showalter argues that the use of gynocritics solves this problem, explaining that, "The programme of gynocritics is to construct a female framework for the analysis of women's literature, to develop new models based on the study of female experience, rather than adapt to male models and theories" (149). Pride and Prejudice and Zombies works against this theory, imposing a male viewpoint on an influential female text, adding masculine language, and distorting the work. By working against Showalter's theory, Grahame-Smith proves her point that masculine models do not serve feminist texts but rather, do them a great disservice.

The first three chapters of Pride and Prejudice and Zombies serve as introductions to the characters and the world of the novel. In accordance with the style of the original story, opinions of characters abound in this introductory section. The



compliments Austen lauds on her characters as opposed to the ones Grahame-Smith replaces them with say much about what is valued in the dissimilar worlds they create. In the original text, Mr. Bennet brags of "Lizzie's natural quickness" (7), valuing her intelligence, especially in comparison with her "silly and ignorant" (7) sisters. Grahame-Smith changes this compliment to "Lizzie, who has something more of the killer instinct than her sisters" (8). He shifts personal value in Mr. Bennet's eyes and, by proxy, the eyes of the society we're being introduced to. In this society, it is physical ability rather than intellect that is valued highly. For a story so concerned with relationships based on intellectual attraction and one that has Elizabeth Bennet as the intelligent hero, this is *not* a small change to make. The shift in value occurs throughout the novel, and is especially prevalent within the first few chapters. In the original novel, Mr. Bingley visits the Bennet household hoping to see the Bennet sisters, "of whose beauty he had heard much" (11). However, in Zombies, it is both their beauty and "fighting skills" (11) of which he has heard much about. Bingley himself is an amiable character in the original novel, but in Zombies, he is described as having "carried a French carbine rifle upon his back – quite an exotic rifle for an Englishman. However, from his clumsy wielding of it, Elizabeth becomes quite certain that he has had little training in musketry or any of the deadly arts" (11-12). His lack of fighting skills is considered a seriously negative quality. While he is a sensitive character in both novels, Austen values this trait, suggesting him as a perfect match for Jane. On the other hand, in Grahame-Smith's version, Bingley's sensitivity makes him incapable of fighting and therefore, an inferior character. This description is in sharp contrast to Mr. Darcy who "slaughtered more than a thousand unmentionables since the fall of Cambridge" (12), versus the original description of his "having ten thousand a year" (12). Both of these statements are prefaced by the suggestion that they are simply gossip at the ball, yet each description highlights what seems to be of societal importance for a man – Grahame-Smith emphasizes fighting skills, while Austen accentuates income. Bingley is praised by one character, but

Grahame-Smith is quick to remind readers that this is in spite of the fact that, "he lacked Mr. Darcy's proficiency with both sword and musket" (12). Bingley's sisters are described by Austen as "fine women, with an air of decided fashion" (12), to which Grahame-Smith adds on, "but little in the way of combat training" (12). Grahame-Smith's world has an air of equality, with similar judgments made for both men and women – those who can fight are good and those who cannot shouldn't be valued as highly. Grahame-Smith's world may be equal, but it has a distinct air of gender dichotomy, with value placed on the more masculine traits. Austen's characters, on the other hand, are not judged by equal standards. Men are often valued by their financial earnings while women are judged on their levels of intellect. However, in comparison with one another, neither gender is made out to be better or worse than the other. While women are not below men in Austen's world, the same cannot be said about the distortion Grahame-Smith creates.

The violence Grahame-Smith adds to the novel greatly shapes not only the characters, but also the world in which they live. The famous first ball scene, where Darcy scoffs at the suggestion of dancing with Elizabeth, is a microcosm for these changes. In the original novel, upon hearing Darcy's dismissal of her, Elizabeth is nearly unscathed, turning it into a funny story to for her friends. Elizabeth is strong, and not as affected by a dismissal from one man as perhaps society believes she should be. At least Grahame-Smith feels that way, because in his re-telling of the scene, upon hearing Darcy:

Elizabeth felt her blood turn cold. She had never in her life been so insulted. The warrior code demanded that she avenge her honor. Elizabeth reached down to her ankle, taking care not to draw attention. There, her hand met the dagger concealed beneath the dress. She meant to follow this proud Mr. Darcy outside and open his throat. (14)

He transforms Elizabeth from an emotionally strong woman into a physically strong one who, because of her strength, is willing to enact vengeance upon a man who has slighted her. He may be giving her physical strength which, in a masculine society, is valued above all else but, in the process, he forgets the character's true strength of intellect and self-worth.



The world in which the characters live is also destabilized by the existence of zombies at every turn. After Mrs. Bennet declares (in both novels) that, if all of her daughters were to marry she "shall have nothing to wish for" (11), in Pride and Prejudice and Zombies, Mr. Bennet responds, "And if I can see all five of them survive England's present difficulty, then neither shall I" (11). This uncertain world of hardships and insecurity is in great contrast to Austen's pastoral tale of simple country life. Even the ball, which is supposed to be full of joy and dancing, is disturbed when zombies enter the ballroom. The Bennet sisters quickly save the day by forming what their father calls the "Pentagram of Death" (14) and beheading the intrusive zombies. Graphic descriptions, including one where "she saw Mrs. Long struggle to free herself as two female dreadfuls bit into her head, cracking her skull like a walnut, and sending a shower of dark blood spouting as high as the chandeliers" (14) pervade the scene.

As Showalter says in her essay, "Gynocritics begins at the point when we free ourselves from the linear absolutes of male literary history and stop trying to fit women between the lines of the male tradition," (149). The violence that has been worked into Pride and Prejudice and Zombies took Austen's text and attempted to fit it in to the masculine literary tradition. Grahame-Smith tries to turn this story into a war tale but it doesn't work. The masculine elements change the very truth of the story, disregarding the importance placed on intelligence and the pastoral. Pride and Prejudice and Zombies illustrates the opposite of what Showalter is saying - imposing male traditions ruin the story and trying to make it masculine changes the very essence of the novel. Pride and Prejudice is a feminist tale with feminist values of intellect, emotion and love. To read it using gynocritics only adds value to its meaning. Showalter argues that with traditional feminist critique, "we are not learning what women have felt and experienced but what men have thought women should be" (148). The same goes for Pride and Prejudice and Zombies. The male co-author creates what he thinks women should be - the physically strong heroine. In this story, Elizabeth is a powerful fighter and her aggression is

her main attribute. The original story, however, shows what Austen, as a woman, feels a woman should be. She creates an intelligent, self-sufficient heroine in Elizabeth and exemplifies her aptitude and independence. This is gynocriticism – the woman who doesn't fit into the lines of male tradition because she does not idolize masculinity but instead, values femininity. Showalter is the theory, and Pride and Prejudice is the practice.

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Julie Beaulieu

## What "Being a Woman" Means to Me

Wonderfully made

Overflowing with joy

Made by God

Adventurous spirit

Never giving up hope

Julie  
Beaulieu

## Foot Binding in China

For nearly one thousand years, women living all throughout China were required to bind their feet to the ideal length of three inches. During this time, it has been estimated that nearly 4.5 billion women were required to go through this painful process. This cultural practice originated in the upper class due to the belief that if a young girl had her feet bound, it meant that her family was incredibly rich and that she was not expected to do any chores around the house.<sup>1</sup> Eventually, this cultural practice made its way into the lives of young girls who were from peasant and working class families. It is ironic that even though the process of foot binding was a symbol of the upper class – a position in society which all people aspired to achieve – it did not necessarily exempt women from performing difficult manual labor. In fact, Chinese peasant women with bound feet were expected to keep up with their male counterparts when it came to various manual labor tasks. Patricia Ebrey, who is a recent interpreter of the practice of foot binding, believes that this practice made Chinese women even more “delicate, reticent, and stationary than they already were.”

The main reason why Chinese women were subjected to foot binding was to limit the growth of their feet to three or four inches. The closer their feet were to this “perfect length”, the more desirable the women were believed to be. A foot that measured exactly three inches was known as a “golden lotus,” which was considered to be the most desirable shape for a woman’s bound feet.<sup>1</sup> Many peasant and working class families subjected their daughters to this painful process with the hope that a male from a higher social class would marry her because of her beautifully shaped feet. Mothers would constantly remind their daughters that it was necessary to have their feet bound in order to marry into a prosperous family – “...the mark of a woman’s attraction resided more in her character as revealed in the bind of her feet than in the face or physique with which nature had endowed her.”<sup>2</sup> Another thing a daughter’s bound feet represented was her family’s reputation. If a young girl’s feet were beautifully shaped, or even if they were bound,



but not to the ideal dimensions, it was a direct reflection on her family and their reputation in their community. Should a daughter's feet be criticized for not being bound properly, she could be ostracized from her family and forced to make her own living.

For a Chinese woman, beautifully bound feet were considered a necessity for marriage, which was viewed as something of incredible importance. If a woman did not marry, it was assumed that her life was not worth living. There was the belief that if a woman did not marry and have children, no one would be able to tend to her grave, and this would cause her to spend her afterlife as a "hungry ghost."<sup>1</sup> While having bound feet was viewed as a desirable characteristic by the opposite sex, this practice was a symbol of oppression of women – bound feet prohibited Chinese women from developing a sense of independence because they were constantly requiring help from men in order to perform ordinary tasks, such as walking to the local market. Thorstein Veblen, who developed theories pertaining to human behavior in the late 1800s and early 1900s, is quoted as saying, "foot-binding is an example of conspicuous waste in which women surrendered their usefulness as a gesture to signify status in a male world."<sup>2</sup> The practice of foot binding was a way to keep women in the submissive position in Chinese society because having bound feet prohibited women from enjoying the same privileges that were entitled to Chinese men.

In the novel *The Three-Inch Golden Lotus*, the author, Feng Jicai, focuses on the practice of foot binding in Tianjin, China. The main character, Fragrant Lotus, was a poor peasant girl living with her grandmother. Before the death of Fragrant Lotus' mother, she left instructions with the grandmother to make sure that Fragrant Lotus had her feet bound so that she could marry into a higher social class. The grandmother made the decision that she would bind her granddaughter's feet when she turned six years old. Even though Fragrant Lotus begged and pleaded with her grandmother to put off binding her feet, her grandmother insisted that her feet were bound to meet the ideal measurements. When she reached the age of sev-

enteen, Fragrant Lotus' boss, Master Tong Ren-An, noticed her beautifully small feet and arranged a marriage between her and his eldest son. In Tianjin, the Tong family wives were well-known for having beautifully bound feet. Within the Tong residence, there would be little competition between the wives and the female servants to determine which female had the most delicately bound feet. The last foot competition that was held at the Tong residence was won by Fragrant Lotus.

After the death of both her husband and father-in-law, Fragrant Lotus became the head of the Tong residence because she had won the most recent foot competition. This granted her the highest status among the other women. One of her major responsibilities as head of the household was to make sure that the young girls of the Tong family kept up the tradition of having the most recognizable bound feet in the area. Fragrant Lotus displayed a very strict attitude when it came to supervising the foot binding process even though these young girls were having their feet bound during a time when the practice was slowly being phased out in their area of China.<sup>3</sup>

Additionally, Fragrant Lotus she sent her own daughter, Lotus Heart, into hiding to protect her from going through the painful process. The main reason that she did this was because she didn't want her to suffer through the same hardships and oppression that she herself went through as a young girl. Instead of her daughter, Lotus Heart, growing up to be dependent on a male, Fragrant Lotus wanted her daughter to be an independent woman.

Through the process of foot binding, young girls would come to the realization that they are required to "'overcome their body' by restricting the space it fills."<sup>2</sup> Even in today's Western society, women feel, on the sub-conscious level, that they are not supposed to take up as much space as men do. For example, when observing women and men on a crowded subway train, women will be sitting with their arms and legs crossed, not taking up much space. On the other hand, men can be seen sitting with their arms uncrossed and legs spread, taking up more space than need be. In both of these instances, men are acting in the dominant role, while women are more submis-



sive. In the case of foot binding, Chinese women are perceived as being small and fragile, and not being allowed to travel long distances without the help of a man simply because the pain of their bound feet did not permit this.

One reason why Fragrant Lotus did not want to have her daughter's feet bound was because she did not want Lotus Heart to experience the agonizingly painful process that foot binding entails. However, she also may have wanted her to grow up to be an independent woman. By not having her daughter's feet bound, Fragrant Lotus significantly reduced Lotus Heart's chance of marrying a wealthy man who could provide her with anything she desired. But, in my opinion, Fragrant Lotus did this to allow her daughter the opportunity to not have to depend on a man to provide her with happiness. Instead, it taught Lotus Heart to fulfill her own wishes and desires, while not having to be submissive to a male. Also, I feel that when Fragrant Lotus looked back on her own foot binding process, she was met with sadness and despair, and this was not something she wanted for her own daughter.

When Fragrant Lotus sent her own daughter into hiding to spare her from this painful process, she was taking a stand against the ritual of foot binding as a whole. She wanted the women of China to see that they did not need to have bound feet in order to experience happiness. Also, Fragrant Lotus wanted to show that women did not need to be submissive to men's desires in order to be able to "enjoy" their lives. Women, like men, can experience independence and enjoy the ability to make a life for themselves without having to worry about whether or not they are married or have children. Women are just as capable as men when it comes to deciding their own life course.

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<sup>2</sup> Blake, Fred C., "Foot binding in Neo-Confucian China and the Appropriation of Female Labor," 1994, *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 19:3

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## The Souls of Women Folk

Money, power, and respect. Whatchu' need in life. Money, power, and respect. When you eatin' right. Money, power, and respect. Help you sleep at night. You'll see the light. It's the key to life.

- Lil' Kim "Money, Power, Respect" (1998)

In order to be successful in life, one must have money to gain power and eventually earn respect. To whom, exactly, does this apply? If a man has money, he is able to gain power and he will be respected by many. Take, for example, President Obama: a well-educated and wealthy man who, after being a senator of Illinois for a year, ran successfully for Commander-in-Chief of the United States of America. People praise Barack Obama as if he were a god. On the contrary, if Michelle Obama, who has an equal or even more prestigious career, wanted to run for a high political seat such as Commander-in-Chief, she would most likely be unsuccessful. Why? Michelle Obama has money, is well-educated, and is also a well-respected, powerful figure. However, a majority of the power and respect she possesses stems from nothing more than a gift from her husband: his last name. Please do not mistake this observation for an insult - I respect Michelle Obama very much. It's just that I believe that the idea of "Money, Power, and Respect" is completely reversed for women if they aspire to be successful. They must first earn respect to gain power and eventually, only after all of that, will they be able to make a lot of money. Women's differences from men have served as a blockade, preventing women from reaching a state of financial and academic success. Thus, if women wish to be successful, they must approach success from a different perspective than men.

Lil' Kim's song, "Money, Power, Respect" is a modern representation of one of the themes in Virginia Woolf's classic novel, A Room of One's Own. Woolf also recognized the economical inequalities between men and women and declared that the reason this large gap existed was due to women's lack

of money and personal space. She stressed, "A woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction" (Woolf 4). At that point in time, women did not have money because they were expected to take care of their children and keep the house clean instead of going to work in order to make a living from themselves. A married woman had no privacy from her husband nor did she have much freedom for herself. Therefore, the possibility of a woman ever becoming a successful fiction writer was slim to none.

Taking into account the fact that many women were so economically underprivileged at the time, wealth became the ultimate goal which they strove for. Today, women are going into more diverse and challenging academic fields instead of just staying in the kitchens of their homes. Many women are studying in male-dominated subjects at universities all over the world. While this is extremely uplifting in the women's circle, there remains one problem: women will *always* fall short of reaching their fullest potential. This is so because, for centuries, men have recognized women as being insufficient and inferior. Now, when women try to identify themselves as strong, intelligent, independent beings, they are stuck trying to fight off stereotypes and sexism from both men *and* women. I believe that, in order for women to make money, they must earn respect from their peers. This respect will allow them to gain power to make a substantial amount of money to get a room of their own and eventually, do what they want.

The first thing a woman must work on is achieving the respect of her peers. Once she had done this, it is even more important that she learn to have respect for herself. To accomplish this, she must get reacquainted with her own values and beliefs and realize what her true self really consists of. It's good to be aware of exactly where you stand on certain issues in order to be able to carry on intelligent conversations with others while staying strong in your own convictions. One must discover their own strengths and weaknesses in order to have both the best offense and the best defense in a debate. Though self-awareness is an important step towards gaining respect, it is only a portion of the process.



The next step towards gaining respect is to reevaluate one's personal definition of what it means to be a woman. In *Phaedrus*, Socrates discusses the importance of defining one's terms when writing or making a verbal argument. In a discussion with Phaedrus about love and relationships, he added, "We should agree upon a definition of love, showing what it is and what power it has. Then, we can look back at the definition and use it as a point of reference, considering whether love brings harm or benefit" (Plato 16). According to Socrates, in order to make a sound argument, one must define his or her terms and describe thoroughly how those terms contribute to the overall argument. Once those terms are established, they must remain consistent so that one can build progressively towards proving his or her theories without losing the strength or structure of the argument. The same can be applied to the demands of respect for women. A woman should decide for herself who *she* is and be consistent in the way she defines and represents herself. By doing so, women will not only receive respect from their peers but will also develop an even better sense of self-worth. This combination of self-esteem and self-respect will guide her to a position of power that many will recognize and accept. Furthermore, her peers' perceptions of her will change for the better.

Although knowing one's own values and defining oneself is a major step towards becoming successful, one must also become familiar with other souls as well. It is important to know how others think about, respond to, and feel towards women and their economic struggles. This familiarity with the soul is related to W.E.B. Du Bois' idea of African Americans having a "second sight." In *The Souls of Black Folk*, Du Bois comments:

The Negro is a sort of seventh son, born with a veil, and gifted with second sight in this American world – a world which yields him no true self consciousness, but only lets him see himself through the revelation of the other world. It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity (Du Bois 9).

This "second sight" which African Americans possess is more of a curse than a gift. Du Bois explains the second sight as a means

of seeing and measuring one's self worth through the eyes of another. For African Americans, this second sight has contributed to both spiritual and psychological torment – spiritual in the sense that one feels less than human and psychological because one believes he or she is less than American. This conflict between defining one's true self versus adopting the labels forced on one by others, has not only affected African Americans or the new "second-class citizens," but has also traveled outside the realm of ethnicity and race. This second sight curse continues to haunt women to this day. African Americans and women share a history of oppression and discrimination in America by being denied a substantial form of education and the right to vote. This proves that not even gender is invincible from patronizing and ignorant ways of thinking.

How does one cope with this "second sight"? Should one give up his or her God-given rights and value as a human being to submit to the opinions of others? Du Bois believed that life for blacks in America was a compromise. He stated, "The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife— this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self" (Du Bois 9). Just as black folks were to recognize their dual souls as Africans and Americans, women, too, must recognize their double souls. However, for women, the duality may spring from diverse sexual orientations, political views, or other factors that make up one's character. Whatever the case may be, a communion must take place between the numerous features. This will ultimately create not only a better person, but, as Du Bois states, "a truer self." This is something that money cannot buy but rather, can only be achieved through respect for one's self.

Being equally involved in the African American struggle, Booker T. Washington opposed Du Bois' arguments. He urged blacks to adjust their lives according to the standards of the white race and then work towards standing on one's own feet. Certainly, since opportunities for blacks were very rare at the time, it would make sense to submit and conform. However, there is one problem with this idea: this procedure cannot work for African Americans. Similar to how the "Money, Power,



Respect" concept is ineffective for women, this idea to submit, conform and live is not suitable for blacks, nor is it merely reserved to blacks alone. History illustrates how blacks have been systematically mistreated in America with segregated schools, restaurants, and even restrooms. The "n-word" became white America's pistol, aimed at young black children on their way to school. The bottom line is that blacks were not respected. By examining America's history, we can see that it doesn't matter how many hours you work each week or how many degrees you have hanging on your wall because if you cannot gain the respect of your peers, then there is no point in getting up every morning to do the same thing for the rest of your life. One is better off remaining in the cotton fields than becoming a slave to both capitalist America and ultimately, one's own conscious. Du Bois responded to Washington's program by stating:

Mr. Washington's programme naturally takes an economic cast, becoming gospel of Work and Money to such an extent apparently almost completely to over-shadow the higher aims of life. More advanced races are coming in closer contact with the less developed races, and the race-feeling is therefore intensified; and Mr. Washington's programme practically accepts the alleged inferiority of the Negro races (Du Bois, 41).

Washington's plan suggests that tolerance is the key to financial success in America. Basically, he claims that if America can tolerate women in the workforce, then women should not have any problems becoming just as successful as men. However, I believe that instead of simply tolerating or "putting up" with women, people should learn to respect their differences and work hand-in-hand with them, in both the workplace and in life itself.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf delivers her final thoughts by declaring:

If we have the habit of freedom and the courage to write exactly what we think; if we escape a little from the common sitting-room and see human beings not always in their relation to each other but in reality [...] for no human being should be shut out the view; if we face the fact, for it is a fact, that there is no arm to cling to, but that we go alone and that our relation is to the world of reality and not only to the world of men and women, then the opportunity will come and the dead poet who was Shakespeare's sister will put on

the body which she has so often laid down (Woolf 112). To become "co-workers in the kingdom of culture," according to Woolf, society must give up its habit of constantly labeling and judging someone based on his or her gender, race, sexuality, socioeconomic status, etc. Men and women should stop their patronizing thoughts and actions towards women and accept the fact that times have changed. We must all realize that beneath everyone's skin lies two souls that are not intended for side-by-side comparison but rather, for reconciliation and recreation of a better, whole human being, whose potential to do great things is boundless.

In conclusion, I believe that success can be obtained by anyone as one conjures up a strategy to achieve it. After much soul-searching and redefinition of our true selves, a new woman has risen who is both spiritually and intellectually capable of the doing the impossible. This new woman has reintroduced herself to the soul, and is consciously aware of her second sight and the curse that comes with this "gift." Her dual soul has become one and she has found a way to be both a woman and an American. Millions of Judith Shakespeares have returned from the grave. The mission to gain respect has been accomplished. The next mission, for power and money, will eventually lead to a room of one's own and ultimately, the opportunity to do whatever one's heart desires.

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Thanks for  
allowing me to  
share my thoughts  
- Mo ☺



## About the Contributors

**Jesus Luna** is originally from Peru but has been living here in the U.S. for about 4 years. He is a freshman Architecture and Art double major. He is very involved with his three studio classes which have his schedule full most of the time. He also works at the Women's Center where he designs anything that is needed for different events, such as logos, animated characters and things of this sort.

**Lauren Ostaszewski** is a senior, currently working on her BA in Psychology and BA in Women's Studies. She enjoys volunteering her time for American Reads/Counts, helping elementary school with their homework. Lauren wrote "Foot Binding in China" for her *Film, Fiction, and Gender in Modern China* class and "What is Feminism" for her *Feminism and Philosophy* class.

**Andrea D. Espinoza** is a junior English Major who works at the Women's Center. She is a member of the Black Student Union, WAVES, and the Umoja House Council. She is also the founder of the Libra de Feminae book club. In her spare time, she likes to read, sing, play the guitar, and explore new places.

**Rachel Dorrell** is leaving Lehigh in May with a BA in English and a minor in Health, Medicine, and Society and is moving to England in the fall to pursue a graduate degree in English Literature. She loves books, cooking, dancing tango and belly

dance, and traveling. She writes short stories and sonnets in her spare time. She wrote "A Tale of Two Lifetimes" for Beth Dolan's senior seminar on Alzheimer's disease, of which half the classes took place at Kirkland Village's Alzheimer's unit.

Esperanza Pacheco is a first-year student in the College of Arts and Sciences. She is involved in many on-campus activities, including House Council and volunteering at the Women's Center. Her interests include theatre, writing, and sciences.

Katie Johnston is a sophomore Women's Studies major on the pre-medicine track with a French minor. She is a member of Break the Silence, WAVES, and ASA, and she is the president of the Lehigh Women's Club Volleyball team. Her essay, "Repainting Her Nails," was written for Michelle Issadore's Sexual Violence class in the fall semester of 2009. Katie loves to write about social justice, to play volleyball, and to follow the sports of her beloved hometown, Pittsburgh.

Megan Pendleton is a senior pursuing her BS in Environmental Engineering. Her piece, "Reasoning" was written about her younger sister who has Cerebral Palsy. Megan is a member of the Black Student Union, Spectrum, and Break the Silence. She loves playing basketball, reading, and writing poems.

Glynn Noelle Fitzer is a junior Psychology major with a minors in English Literature and Creative Writing. She also plays for the Women's Soccer team here at Lehigh. Her short story,



"Livin' & Breathin'" was written for Professor Stephanie Watts' Introduction to Writing Fiction class last semester.

Katie Walker will receive her BA in English with honors in May. She is involved with The Vagina Monologues and theatre on campus. Off-campus, Katie writes for *Underwired Magazine* and *Organic Gardening Magazine*. Her essay was written as a part of her honors thesis on modern interpretations of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice."

Julie Ann Beaulieu is a senior in Easton High School. She volunteered at the Lehigh University Women's Center this fall. She is interested helping people and wants to pursue a career as an EMT. She hopes to become involved in Lehigh's EMT program. She enjoys doing arts and craft projects as well as playing basketball in her free time.

Monique "Too Real" Golden is a freshman in the College of Engineering. Her piece, "The Souls of Women Folk," was written for her first semester English class, titled "How To Write Good." She believes her writing is unique, and a way she can truly express her inner thoughts. She plays for the Women's Rugby Team, is an Orientation Leader for 2010, and is the Secretary for ACCC (Afro-Caribbean Culture Club). Monique's interests include writing mainly poetry, as she goes under the pen name of "Too Real," music, discussions on urban life, and of course, rugby, which she has been playing for 5 seasons.

Daria Okhrintchouk is a freshman in the College of Arts and Sciences. She immigrated to the United States at the age of eleven. She's a writer and editor for FONI, Lehigh's international literary journal, and she is also a member of the Russian club. She enjoys playing classical guitar, painting, tennis, and being outdoors. If not for the turbulent events that inspired *Peonies*, Daria wouldn't be the person she is today.



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