

it's a girl thing!

A Proposal for a Thesis in Creative Writing

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זה קטע של בנות!

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Introduction: *A Simple Meet & Greet*

My creative writing thesis will be a collection of short stories, approximately 10-15 stories in total. Although the stories will be separate pieces, they will all be part of a larger theme. As a whole, the thesis will feature the life and experiences of women as they mature from childhood into adulthood.

Aims & General Description: *What's the Point & All That Jazz*

This thesis will consist of a collection of short stories linked by a similar motif, the motif of female maturation. My aim is to express the life cycle of a woman from a young age dealing with the funny little issues that every girl/ woman has to deal with. The stories will deal with siblings, parents (especially mothers), romantic partners, partners they despise and even contraceptives they have to suffer with. The style and tone of the stories will vary. Some will be realistic, others will be slightly absurd, and still others may have a touch of fantasy in them. I'll also be using different types of narrators including 1st, 3rd and even 2nd person narrators.

My story about birth control was influenced by the real life experiences of women I've known and of Israeli gynecologists and their true and sometimes unsettling responses to the normal issues that females experience. The absurd style was influenced by Kurt Vonnegut's novel *SlapStick*.

Another story will be a modern female retelling of the biblical story, *Cain and Abel*, which I have retitled *Candice and Abby*. I was inspired to write this story for an assignment for my Jewish Arts Seminar class. In the end I think I will be able to adapt the bible to a strange version of modern times. It will however require a much simpler style since I have decided to write it from the point of view of a 9-year-old girl.

I have one story I plan to work on which will be written in a confessional style. The narrator will speak in a sort of monologue, but she'll actually be speaking to her psychoanalyst. In a way, it could be considered as a female version of Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint* or his more recent novella, *The Dying Animal*. Both are written in this particular style and they are both my inspiration for writing this story. The story is also inspired by Erica Jong's novel, *Fear of Flying*, which similarly focuses on a Jewish woman's struggle with therapy and various relationships she's had in her life.

I will write a couple stories about the relationship between men and women. I'm particularly interested in how they act as a couple and specifically how they speak to each other. In one story you'll be able to see a couple that has a natural exchange in dialogue and how they are able to verbally play with each other even when they haven't seen each other in years. In another story, you'll see a broken

marriage between an older couple with a woman who seems terrified of her husband and it will be evident that their relationship is more based on fear. These stories are partially influenced by a course I took earlier in the year called Cinderella Stories, in which every story dealt with male and female relationships, some more perfect than others. I was especially inspired by *The Bloody Chamber* and the *Blue Beard* fairy tales.

As for the story about the family, *Ginger in the Soup*, it's heavily influenced by the dinner scene in Virginia Woolf's novel, *To the Lighthouse*. I originally read that novel for a class I took during my undergraduate degree, also in English Literature & Creative Writing. Since then I've had the idea to write a short story of a dinner scene, a seemingly normal scene with different characters' thoughts and perspectives mixed together. Every moment will provide an opportunity for tension between these characters, regardless of how simple the moment actually is.

Shape of the Project: *Apple, Banana, Hourglass, Pear...*

My project will essentially be a collection of short stories. Lengths will vary. There are some stories that will be around 6-8 pages in length, some 11-13, and perhaps even some 20 page stories or longer. The length will not affect the theme. The length will be determined for each story individually as is most natural for that particular story. And while the length has no impact on the overall theme, the order of the stories will be important. My idea is to create the order of a woman's life span and to group the stories together that relate to one another the best. For example, stories about adolescence and friendship will be strategically placed together or in a specific section of the thesis in order to emphasize a particular point.

The following stories will be part of the project: *Sessions, it's a girl thing!, Best Friends Tell Each Other Everything, Sinfully Sweet, A Chance Encounter, A Cold Israeli Winter, Candice & Abby, Who's Michael?, Waiting, Love Story, and Ginger in the Soup.*

Sessions will be a story about a 20-something woman coping with her past (her dysfunctional family) and her present (her recent engagement). Since this story will introduce the ideas that will be discussed throughout the thesis, it will be the first story in the collection. *Candice and Abby* will follow next as the story of two young sisters who are on speaking terms with Hashem. They are to represent Cain and Abel and the parents are meant to represent Adam and Eve after being thrown out of the Garden of Eden.

Best Friends Tell Each Other Everything will be the next story and I plan to write it in 2nd person. It will focus on two characters, Chloe and Jenny, aged 13. I want to show the pressures that they face as they deal with the changes in their

physical form as well as their mental maturity while growing up in American suburbia. *Waiting* is another story that will be told about teenagers, though the characters will be in their late teens, around 19 years old, and it will take place over the course of one night in Baltimore. These characters are meant to be a possible older version of the characters from *Best Friends Tell Each Other Everything* except *Waiting* is only told from a single first person point of view. *Ginger in the Soup* will be a story about a family but it deals with multiple generations of women over the course of one Shabbat dinner. The story will be written in 3rd person in order to accommodate multiple perspectives.

it's a girl thing! will come after this story. As described in the previous section, it will deal with one woman's quest to find the perfect contraceptive as she goes from unsafe methods to different types of hormonal birth control pills and then a non-hormonal IUD. The idea is to focus on the female form, the role of women, and the reproductive system, and all which are unique to the female.

The rest of the stories: *Love Story*, *A Cold Israeli Winter*, *A Chance Encounter*, *Who's Michael?*, and *Sinfully Sweet* will all deal with relationships between a man and a woman. *Love Story* will be a sort of modern gothic, a story of a young 18 year old who falls in love instantly with an older, wealthy and possibly dangerous man. *A Cold Israeli Winter* will be written in 1st person and will be the story of an early 20-something American who has recently suffered a breakup from her Israeli boyfriend. The story will take place in only one setting. Similar to that is *A Chance Encounter*, which will also tell the story of two former lovers reuniting, however this story will take place 5 years after they broke up and it will be written in 3rd person,

with narration from both the male and female characters. *Who's Michael?* will be a short short story, less than two pages. It will tell the story of a wife's possible infidelity. *Sinfully Sweet* will be about a somewhat older couple, though younger than middle age, they're still older than most of the characters in the thesis. It will tell the story of a very jealous and abusive husband and his wife's revenge.

As for setting, some stories will take place in what is American suburbia, while others will specifically state the setting as Baltimore or Bat Yam. But the majority of the stories will not define a specific city or location besides the type of place the characters are in. For example, one story will take place in a restaurant, another in a park, or a home, a doctor's office, and even a tree house. The idea is that women are everywhere so they will literally be everywhere in my thesis.

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