

Opinions

Moving forward and looking back



Andie Diemer
Editor-in-Chief

Since I first set foot on this campus three and a half years ago, The Pendulum has been an integral part of my life. I've moved from position to position on staff, but my period as editor-in-chief has been nothing short of astounding.

The work this staff has consistently pumped out is something that cannot be paralleled or appreciated enough, and the staff itself cannot merit enough gratitude for the breadth, depth and quality of content it supplies.

The community often views the news but rarely considers the hours logged at the courthouse sifting through documents or the late nights spent trying to track down sources for that breaking story.

It is no easy task to tackle stories about a dozen students or a counselor being arrested during final exam week, but many staff members have sacrificed hours of sleep, studying and relaxation to provide top-notch content to the Elon community to ensure everyone is kept informed on news, concerns, accomplishments and other happenings.

Throughout the past year, The Pendulum has been recognized by many local and national organizations for its dedication

and work ethic, including the coveted Pacemaker Award for a four-year, non-daily newspaper, which the staff received from the Associated Collegiate Press in November. This is regarded as the highest honor any college publication in the nation can receive, and it is a true testimonial to the work the 2009 Pendulum staff has completed.

But success could not be possible without assistance from countless others, including all of the Elon professors, staff members, administrators, students and Town of Elon residents that provide insight and expertise to weave into our content. Without you, this publication would not be possible or reliable, and we thank you for all of your time.

We also wouldn't be successful without the assistance and continuous support from our adviser, Colin Donohue, or our webmaster, J.D. Parsons, who has worked incessantly to provide the vital backbone to our online entity. Appreciation is also extended to professors like Janna Anderson and Glenn Scott, whose constant feedback, advice and criticism enhance the organization.

Many thanks as well to the workers at Acorn and Varsity, who may not even realize that their willingness to fill 10 cups of ice water or throw together six wraps every Monday night during production keeps the staff moving.

In a few short weeks the next editor-in-chief, Pam Richter, will usher in a new staff to drive the paper forward. Richter is

extremely talented, dedicated and ambitious and will continue to build on the foundation that she has helped to lay as well as continue to expand The Pendulum in a variety of outlets.

A massive staff turnover will also take place, all composed of individuals that pour themselves into making this product every week. Much gratitude to seniors Alexa Milan, Ashley Barnas, Margeaux Corby, Laura Smith, Morgan Little, Laura Wainman, Rachel Cieri, Amanda Kennison, Hannah Williams, Dan Rickershauser, Jennifer Clements, Jordan Frederick, David Koontz, Michelle Longo, Rebecca Wetherbee, David Wells, Caroline Matthews, Miriam Williamson and Chris Dorsey for their often thankless work.

And lastly, many, many thanks to the Elon community. Thanks for picking up the paper each Wednesday, thanks for visiting our Web site and thanks for supporting us. Without you, there wouldn't be a need for us to function, and with your feedback and support you have contributed to making a bigger and stronger Pendulum.

Remember that even though The Pendulum has come a long way, there is always potential for improvement. Don't ever hesitate to let us hear your ideas or what you would like to see in The Pendulum for the New Year. After all, this is a paper for you, made by community members like you, and it would not be possible for us to be successful without your feedback and support.

When 'Twilight' loses its sparkle



Ashley Barnas
Columnist

There he stood like the Greek Adonis. There she stood several feet away, tortured by the desire to approach him and weave her fingers through his tousled bronze hair and stare into his molten gold eyes. When his gravitational pull inevitably draws her close enough to touch him, realization hits. He's too good to be true. He does not actually exist. She crumbles on the spot.

The "Twilight" series didn't invent the concept of women existing solely to find the men to marry and begin a family with. The series just perpetuates a theme that has survived in popular culture for decades. Author Stephenie Meyer even references the classic love stories of "Wuthering Heights" and "Romeo and Juliet" in her own story.

The readership of "Twilight" is the same general audience for Disney stories where the damsel in distress spends the entire tale seeking her Prince Charming. Young girls, who have never been in love before, are reading these books and gaining a false idea of what first love is like. Edward and his ilk set a high bar for men. Who wouldn't want the mysterious man with a classically tortured soul? He's beautiful, polite, refined, listens to classical music and sparkles in the sun. Any young girl would want that.

According to Box Office Mojo, "New Moon" distributor Summit Entertainment's exit polling indicated that 80 percent of the audience was female and 50 percent was under 21 years old." No matter how appealing the "Twilight" series is, and regardless of how many times girls devour the books and watch the movies, the negative connotations the themes have regarding gender roles in the context of romantic relationships cannot be avoided.

Women in popular culture are often portrayed as weak. Bella Swan "wins" in the end by getting the guy, but what she teaches her young female audience along the way lacks empowerment. When Edward leaves her, she falls apart and loses her will to live. Because of her full devotion to Edward, she has no friends to turn to in her time of need.

From the very beginning of the "Twilight" series, it's apparent that Bella's only goal is to be with Edward forever. She doesn't want college, she doesn't want a job and she doesn't even want children.

But it's not Edward's fault. Everything that drives Bella is about him. Edward pushes her to experience all those human things she would rather not have.

Any cultural production reflects the populace as a whole, and the themes in turn influence society. In the same way, it also reinforces how we perceive gender, said Lynn Huber, assistant professor of religious studies and the women's/gender studies program coordinator at Elon.

A practicing Mormon, Meyer is writing from a particular perspective with very clear thoughts on religion and sex. Beyond the theme of abstinence, Religion Dispatches cites the Mormon values of eternal marriage and family life as the strongest themes in "Twilight."

Rebecca Pope-Ruark, assistant professor of English at Elon, taught a vampire literature Winter Term class that included "Twilight." She said one has to take Bella for who she is: a 17-year-old girl who is bound to grow unhealthily attached to her first love. If Bella had been 25 years old, then she would be considered supremely weak. Like Bella, when someone we love leaves us, we seek validation elsewhere. When Edward left, Bella ran to Jacob Blake for safety and to seek that validation.

It's a puzzle as to why popular culture is ridden with weak female characters. When it comes to the best sellers and blockbusters, a damsel in distress sells.

"New Moon" brought in a \$143 million opening weekend. Women today aren't weak, but for some reason, we relate to the weak characters in popular culture. Maybe our nurturing tendencies lend themselves to pitying characters like Bella. Or maybe those weak characters help us find that fulfillment we've been seeking in knowing we are stronger than them.

The "Twilight" series won't be the last to present its female protagonist as powerless. The themes of eternal love and finding a soul mate ring true because of what we've been taught: to be attracted to the mythical male savior figure. We want someone to take care of us and protect us while we, in turn, can take care of them. It's become so culturally engrained that it's nearly impossible to step out of it.

The wrong diagnosis

Governmental failure in cancer detection



Pam Richter
Columnist

The health care debate is at the forefront of American politics and recently the government released new guidelines that would redefine testing for various diseases.

Despite this debate, the U.S. Preventative Services task force made its position on each issue clear last month. This Task Force is an independent panel of government-appointed experts and in November they

released a report that laid out new guidelines for the screening practices for many diseases.

The most notable and most shocking element of the report regarded the guidelines for testing females. First and foremost, the task force advised most women ages 40 to 49 not to get routine mammograms.

The panel also advised that women 50 to 74 should get mammograms every other year, and self-exams should no longer be part of a doctor's instructions to female patients.

USA Today stated, "According to the American Cancer Society's Otis Brawley, population-based studies suggest that 10 percent to 33 percent of early breast cancers may not actually need to be treated."

In addition to this, the panel did provide more explanations for these new guidelines. The reasoning was that these tests cause too many false alarms and, in some cases, unnecessary treatment.

Admittedly, no woman wants to experience a false alarm with breast cancer, but even more so no women wants to be diagnosed too late with a disease like cancer.

USA Today also explained that "for many woman, however, breast cancer is an emotional

issue, not a scientific question."

Susan G. Komen for the Cure, the most influential organization across the globe for breast cancer awareness, recommends on its Web site that women should have a mammogram every year starting at the age of 40 if she is not a high-risk patient. This is a 10-year difference from what the governmental task force recommended.

The Susan G. Komen foundation is the largest breast cancer charity in the world and has raised more than \$1.3 billion since 1982. The Foundation has no hidden agendas — its mission is to simply find a cure.

According to the Komen Foundation, on average only 80 percent of breast cancer is caught through mammograms, while the other 20 percent are caught through self-exams and clinical exams.

When it comes to cancer diagnosis, our nation should err on the side of caution and not take any risks.

The Komen foundation is sticking with its recommendation for regular screenings beginning at the age of 40 and should be the trusted source, along with the American Cancer Society, on this matter.

There is no scientific need for the U.S. Preventative Services Task Force, as it is strictly a cost-cutting measure on behalf of the government.

We are in a health care crisis and the government is looking to cut as many corners as possible when it comes to decreasing insurance costs.

Health care is something we need to make room for in our national budget and different governmental panels should not be recommending guidelines for screenings.

These recommendations need to be made by independent organizations or by physicians themselves.

How much blog could a blogger blog?
www.pendulumopinions.wordpress.com

MORE
ONLINE