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The Identity Issue

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FINDING A VOICE

As a child, I dreaded speaking. A fear of eye contact and a tendency to hesitate in conversation underlay this dread. Nevertheless, I was an avid listener and contemplator, and I often felt an urge to express myself. The day I discovered the marvels of the alphabet, I felt a wave of excitement. Over the years, the written word became my essential tool of communication and self-discovery.

In a way, I learned to speak through writing.

—Melany Su, *from* "As a Child"

SAME BUT DIFFERENT

by Jessica Forbes

"Look at your hair. Can I touch it?" Leah, a recent friend of mine, asks me as I sit beside her at a round lunch table. Without waiting for an answer, she runs her fingers through my hair. "You have pretty hair. I wish I had your hair," she exclaims with a pout.

"Thank you," I mutter and give a quick, forced smile while trying not to noticeably pull away as she continues to play with my hair. Leah does have my hair. In fact, most of our physical appearances are alike. We both have brown hair and brown eyes, and are average heights. However, a couple of my attributes are noticeably different. In my home, I am accepted for them, even reprimanded if I'm caught lacking confidence, but at my high school, I am constantly reminded in the cafeteria of my "uniqueness."

"Is it real?" she blurts. I give her a sharp look and sit up properly, lifting my shoulders, straightening my back, and holding my head higher. "I mean, what's your hair naturally like? Do you, like, have a fro or somethin'? Your hair's so thick. How long does it take you to straighten it?" I cringe a bit and look down at my tray of school food, picking at the instant mashed potatoes with my spoon.

"I'm not sure," I answer for both questions. I take a quick bite of food and look around the cafeteria at the sea of white, trying to end the conversation. Leah doesn't recognize the hint and keeps talking, but I ignore her petty comments. A group of camouflage-clad, Red Wing-wearing teenagers glares at me from a table across the cafeteria. I glare back as a group of three boys suddenly plops down at our round table.

"You can't have that," Tim, the group leader, says, grabbing a food item from his best friend, Alex.

"Why not?" Alex exclaims, trying to grab his food back. "Is it 'cus I'm black?" He isn't black, but the saying seems to be popular in my segregated school. His arm is smacked quickly and all eyes turn toward me. Silence overwhelms the table for a few seconds. Then, the boys quickly turn back toward each other, snorting and cackling over their obnoxious joke.

"Sorry, Jess," Ben, the last of the three boys, says. He looks slightly embarrassed by the other two. I give another forced, tight-lipped smile. He changes the subject quickly. "Did you finish your AP Government homework?"

"Yes, I did," I reply.

Tim mimics my words, emphasizing my "yes." "Why do you talk like that?" He asks with a mouth full of food. "Why are you so…proper? What was the word she used in class today?" He looks around at his small group of friends.

"Concise?" Alex recalls. "Yeah! Concise." Cackling starts again. He slouches and rests his arms on the table, leaning toward me. "What kinda word is that? Geez, you act whiter than I am with all your…proper-ness." I stare at him, any amount of emotion washed from my face. We are all seniors sitting at the table. Words like "concise" should be familiar.

Tim looks from his best friend to me and speaks up, still chewing his food, "Why don't you talk anymore, Jess? You used to be really, like, outgoing and stuff." I

shrug and look around the cafeteria again, putting an end to another conversation. I don't talk anymore because I'm made fun of for saying words like "concise."

I think for a second and ask, "What did you mean? I act white?"

Alex answers, "Like, you don't act black, ya know?"

My face starts growing warm, and I blurt, "So how exactly is a black person supposed to act?"

He squirms in his seat a bit. "I dunno. I guess, you ain't, like, 'gangsta' or something, and you speak too good."

I roll my eyes and spring from the table, trying not to be upset by his ignorance. "I've lived in this town longer than you have. Of course I'm not going to act 'black,' but you know what? I am black, so explain to me why speaking well is unacceptable for me because of my skin color!"

I grab my tray and strut to the dumping area but am interrupted by a boy from the "redneck" group. He spits on the floor in front of me and smacks my tray from my hand as he walks past. He throws over his shoulder an obscene, slang word as everyone in the cafeteria stops and stares at the commotion. My fists clinch and I grit my teeth, my chest heaving and my face boiling hot for a minute or two. Then, I collect myself, hold my head up, let my jaw relax, and walk out of the cafeteria.

Once home, I am speaking nonstop, recounting the events of the day to my family as my white mother rushes around the kitchen, preparing chicken enchiladas with rice, and my black father drops his company vehicle keys on the kitchen table.

"I did really good on my math quiz today. You know I was struggling a bit this week, but I think I finally understand what I am learning in Trig."

"Don't say 'good,'" my mother lashes out at me. "The correct word is 'well.'" She crashes her way through the pots-and-pans cupboard, and I wonder if she heard any part of my announcement other than my grammatical error.

I restate my first sentence correctly and am reprimanded again by my father.

"Sit up straight," he commands. "Quit slouching." I sigh and remove my elbows from the dressed dining table. I think of Leah's comments in the cafeteria as I straighten my back and shoulders. I grab from the glass bowl full of freshly picked fruit sitting on the table and chomp down on a juicy, bright green apple just as my father asks me a question and looks at me expectantly for an answer. I glance at him while chewing fervently. I am making slow progress on swallowing my giant bite of apple, but I am not about to answer my father with my mouth full.

Sound Film and American Immigrant Identity in *The Jazz Singer*

by Kathryn Fossaceca

Cars, television, radio—in the 1920s, a decade of change, Americans departed from tradition and embraced modern technology. Technological innovations modernized the film industry too. The motion picture began as a silent novelty, but the advent of sound transformed the medium into a standard form of entertainment. However, modernization resulted in more losses than gains to emerging ethnic groups in the 1920s, and as mainstream America's obsession with homogenizing society increased, Hollywood's interest in sound technology exploited the trend toward assimilation. Alan Crosland's 1927 film *The Jazz Singer*, one of the first successful "talkies" of the year, reflects the identity crisis that immigrants faced during the 1920s, depicting the struggle of Jakie Rabinowintz, played by Al Jolson, to maintain his Jewish identity in American society. In the film, sound technology works as a metaphor for assimilation in that sound essentially strips Jolson of his Jewish identity and associates him with mainstream American society, suggesting that one cannot retain one's own ethnic individuality in a culture that stresses social conformity.

The Jazz Singer paved the way for the explosion of the "talkie." Considered the first successful audible picture, *The Jazz Singer* highlights Jolson singing both Jewish and American songs, and offers a portrayal of his own identity crisis. Jolson plays Jakie Rabinowitz, a first generation Jewish American torn between his Jewish and American roots; his role epitomizes an immigrant's struggle to retain his individual identity in America. Living in the Jewish side of the New York Ghetto and primarily surrounded by the Jewish people and culture, Jolson's character struggles to assimilate fully into American society. His love for "rag time Jazz tunes" and his passion for singing kindle his dream of one day performing on Broadway, but this dream clashes with his father's plan that he will become a Jewish cantor. Jakie's singing ability thrusts him into Hollywood's spotlight, and his voice, which he produces with a clear American accent, permits his acceptance into American society; as consequence, however, Jakie's begins to lose his Jewish identity as he draws away from his cultural traditions.

Many contemporary movie reviewers approved of the silent film's transition to the new media and commented positively on the movie's use of sound and Jolson's voice. In Mordant Hall's *New York Times* review of *The Jazz Singer*, he states, "Mr. Jolson's persuasive vocal efforts were received with rousing applause. In fact not since the first presentation of Vitaphone features, more than a year ago at the same playhouse has anything like the ovation been heard in a motion picture theatre." Sound film added an aspect of realism to the motion picture. Harry Geduld argues that "Jolson wasn't merely an image on the screen—he was, or seemed to be, actually there in person, speaking just the way people did when they tried to break in on conversation [. . .] when they were kidding or making small talk" (185). Jolson's famous line in *The Jazz Singer*, "Wait a minute, wait a minute, you ain't heard nothing yet," invites the audience to listen, and the line seems more natural when spoken than when written on an intertitle card.

But perhaps one of the beauties of silent film was that the medium did not restrict its audience to only one language. In *The New York Times* article "Charm of the Silent Screen," Arturo Mom provides a description of silent film's unique experience, claiming that "beings of illusion and mystery were marvelous precisely because of their silence, the profound silence of their language that allowed [. . .] the imagination to clothe them with [. . .] poetic beauty." Mom continues to criticize the talkie, pointing out that its restriction to only one language promotes an "insurmountable barrier which could only disappear if the world decided to adopt a single language." Many considered the implementation of sound into the motion picture as silent film's loss of its universal language, which had allowed the audience to imagine their own voices and sound effects for film. "Seeing" a film without sound allowed the audience to live inside a fantasy machine and make their own creative contribution to what they were viewing. Cohen argues that sound film destroyed the easy "oscillation" and fluid movements of the actors in the silent film who now memorized lines (169). In the same way that the "talkies" standardized the aesthetics of sound and deemphasized the beauty of silence, sound films also homogenized the immigrant actor's identity.

Significantly, *The Jazz Singer* is not a complete sound film; it is both a sound film and a silent film. Scott Eyman claims that "by producing a film that slides from sound to silence and back again, Warner Brothers negatively emphasized silence" (15). I would argue that, in addition to disparaging silence, *The Jazz Singer* actually associates silence with Jewish culture and sound with American culture. Moreover, the film suggests that sound wins out over silence in the end, just as Jakie begins to identify with mainstream American culture over and above his Jewish heritage.

The opening scene of the movie shows Jakie singing the jazz tunes in a bar. The environment of the bar is cheerful and relaxed as the camera cuts to a friend of

Jakie's father, Moisha Yudleson, enjoying an alcoholic beverage—a sinful American indulgence. Until Yudleson realizes that the boy singing on stage is Jakie, Jakie's voice fills the saloon with the popular American song, "My Gal Sal." But the film cuts to silence after Moisha leaves the bar to tattle about Jakie's whereabouts to Jakie's father. Outraged, Jakie's father hurries to the bar to reprimand his son. At this point the film switches back to sound, and Jakie's voice returns with a new jazz song, "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," while he dances provocatively. The camera captures the looseness with which Jakie moves his body to the music, and intercuts his performance with shots of the audience enjoying his performance, suggesting the popularity of the American song. However, the film switches back to silence when Jakie's cantor father, who rigidly holds to Jewish tradition, runs to the stage to grab Jakie. At this moment, the music immediately stops. As Mom puts it, "[t]he brusque transition from speech to silence leaves the immediate impression either that the actors suddenly have become dumb or that we have become deaf." Silence dominates the following scenes in which Jakie's father brings Jakie back home and proceeds to beat Jakie to cleanse him of contamination from having participated in mainstream American culture and, specifically, from having sung American songs.

The film portrays Jewish culture as stiff and uninviting, and American culture as loose, natural, and free. By associating silence with Jewish culture and sound with mainstream American culture, the film suggests that identifying with mainstream American culture affords a person more opportunities for self-expression whereas identifying with an immigrant or minority culture represses and silences one's voice. In this way, *The Jazz Singer* endorses assimilation and elevates mainstream American identity at the expense of Jewish heritage.

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MARGARET ATWOOD GIVES EURYDICE A VOICE

by Taraneh Bigdeli

Margaret Atwood's "Orpheus 1" is an adaptation of the myth of Orpheus told from the perspective of his bride, Eurydice. Often, the myth itself is simply titled "Orpheus"; however, in her poem Atwood reinterprets the myth to draw attention to the fact that the story involves two characters. According to *The Concise Oxford Companion to Classical Literature* and the *Oxford Dictionary of the Classical World*, the Orpheus myth is about a gifted musician whose talents are so great that all creatures are affected when he plays. He marries Eurydice, and on their wedding day, she suffers from a snakebite and dies. Orpheus retrieves her from the underworld by charming its god, Pluto, and his wife, Persephone, with his music. They give Eurydice back to Orpheus on the condition that he does not look at her until they are back amongst the living, but he turns too soon, and loses his wife forever.

In the myth, Orpheus is heartbroken by the loss of his wife. Eurydice's death—tragic, swift, and unexpected—occurs soon after her marriage. Because of Orpheus' heartbreak after the loss of his wife, we might assume that she is deeply in love with him as well. Atwood's speaker, however, tells us something different. "[T]he return...was

not my choice" (7-8), Eurydice says. This line is pivotal, forcing readers to look at the original myth in a new way. The concept that Eurydice would rather be in hell than return with her husband challenges the notion that the Orpheus myth is a love story. With this line, Atwood brings new light to an old myth. In the original myth, the only feelings expressed are those of Orpheus; he is devastated and courageously goes to hell after his wife. In the original myth, there is no mention that there are two parties involved, no suggestion that Eurydice might not love Orpheus, and no indication of whether she had a choice to return from the underworld with him. The myth tells us that, once dead, she is bound to the underworld, but Orpheus persuades Pluto to give her back to him. Atwood, however, makes it very clear that Eurydice has her own perspective and suggests that there may be more than one reason why Eurydice does not want to "return" (7) with her husband.

Atwood opens her poem with Eurydice's observation of Orpheus: "[y]ou walked in front of me/pulling me" (1-2). This motif of physical dominance is repeated throughout the poem with words like "rope" (11) and "old leash" (14). The connotation of these words is rough and abusive; they are not often associated with love. Atwood's diction reveals evidence of strain and describes the relationship "between" the couple as having been "stretched" (10). In addition, Eurydice says she is "obedient" (5). Atwood's diction here indicates that her speaker follows the rules or requests of another. Subordinates obey, not lovers. Because she has been given back to Orpheus by Pluto, she is essentially property, passed from one man to another. She obeys both her husband and her god.

When Eurydice says Orpheus "might call" (15) his love for her an "old leash" (14), she speaks directly to him, suggesting that his love for her is not authentic but is really a device to manipulate what she does, a form of control. Orpheus "held/...the image of what [he] wanted/

[Eurydice] to [be]" (17-19). It is his idea, or "image" (18), of her that is important to him. Orpheus does not see Eurydice; he sees a version of her that he has created. Atwood uses words such as "hallucination" (21) and "image" (18) to describe the way Eurydice believes Orpheus sees her. All he knows of her is what he imagines. He does not see what she wants, or who she is.

What Orpheus wants is for Eurydice to be "living again" (19). The metaphorical theme of the poem is most apparent here. It is not that Eurydice is physically dead; it is that she does not love him, and he wants to bring her love for him back to life. In the original myth, Orpheus is able to charm any and all with his music. In Atwood's version, he sings his wife into being: She "was listening/...and [Orpheus was] singing [her]" (21-22). Eurydice is charmed, and manipulated, by being the subject of his song.

In the end, though, Orpheus' charms are unpersuasive. Atwood lets Eurydice make the choice that she is not given in the original myth: to "let go" and leave her husband (37). Throughout the poem, the actions of Eurydice and her husband are very separate. Eurydice follows her husband. She speaks of her experience and narrates what he does. He "sings" her, but not *to* her, and so he loses her. In the myth, Orpheus turns to Eurydice and loses her because he does so, but in Atwood's poem, he turns because he has "already lost" her (33). In Atwood's version of the story, the first time Orpheus notices his wife and she is not an idea or part of his imagination is the moment she leaves him. It is also the first instance in the poem in which Orpheus directly engages Eurydice. It is a very physical image, and full of meaning. Orpheus' loss is described as a "failure" (36), suggesting that Orpheus' reaction is not about heartbreak but rather about his ego. Losing Eurydice does not hurt Orpheus; his "failure" does.

The final line of Atwood's poem is the most important, because it sums up the relationship and makes direct reference to the myth: "[Orpheus] could not believe [Eurydice] was more than [his] echo" (38). As his "echo,"

"hallucination," or "image," Eurydice is not a full, independent person; she is just a reflection of her husband. Orpheus is used to manipulating others with his music. He is the talent, the leader and the most important person in his world.

Ultimately, the reason Eurydice leaves is that she is no "more than [his] echo." She does not mean anything to him as a person. She is no longer an individual, and she is not seen as one by the husband who claims to love her. Eurydice is finally able to "let go" (37) and have a choice. In Atwood's adaptation, it is Eurydice's choice to go back to the underworld; she chooses death rather than life with Orpheus. In death, she is an individual. She is independent, instead of being an extension of her lover. Eurydice finally gets a voice in Atwood's "Orpheus 1," and when she expresses her feelings, readers discover they are very different from those of Orpheus.

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KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

by Lauren Roget

For nearly two months, we had practiced Handel's *Messiah*, with its forceful bow strokes and complicated fingerings, in preparation for our Winter Concert. As the fourth winter concert for most of us, it was starting to feel as if the only point of going through the redundant practices was to get the Domino's pizza Mr. Casey had promised to give us after our concert. Mr. Casey, our Santa-bellied, always-chuckling orchestra teacher, was finishing his last year of teaching; he announced in every class how many days there were until his retirement, punctuating the announcement with a different jig or joke each time. At Forest Park High School, Mr. Casey was one of three teachers in the music program, each one responsible for a different section: choir, band, or orchestra. I was in the top orchestra—the consort orchestra—with maybe twenty-five other talented students. As a group, we didn't really get along well; Forest Park was an extremely clique-ish, upper-middle class, white-dominated school. Everyone had his or her own groups of friends. All the friends had matching outfits. Half of the students took the orchestra class because it was an easy A, not because they thought the music was beautiful and not because they were

decent players. The band and chorus kids were quite the opposite. Band and chorus were two of the tightest families in Forest Park—wherever one band or chorus student was, another one was surely not too far away. Orchestra students were nothing like a family; we were too different from one another and preferred to stay with our own herds of friends outside of class. Most days playing felt mechanical and that feeling radiated off our instruments. There were some days, though, when a few of us would wiggle in our seats, consumed by the music, feeling it flow in and out of every cell our of bodies. Some days. Some of us. Sometimes.

The week before the concert, Ms. Brittan, the chorus teacher, pulled Mr. Casey aside. Everyone agreed that Ms. Brittan was somebody you just learned to put up with for your own good. Any of the chorus kids would tell you in a heartbeat how strict she was, how she was always right, how her corny dance moves were annoying as hell, how her need to control everything drove everyone batty, and how she would flip out at you at the drop of a hat. Mr. Casey came back into the room, trying to smile away his annoyance with her as he announced Ms. Brittan's grand idea to have the three music classes join forces. He said that she had heard us playing the "Hallelujah Chorus" and thought it would be wonderful for us to all play together . . . an idea none of us agreed with. We moaned, we groaned, we expressed our genuine sympathy for Mr. Casey himself, and then we played our way through an extra practice under the direction of Ms. Brittan.

That extra practice was the most painful that any of us had ever experienced. Ms. Brittan conducted awkwardly and faster than we were used to with Mr. Casey. The baton flew out of her hand repeatedly, hitting those of us who sat in the front on the head. And then she lost it. She yelled at us that with just one performance we were going to ruin everything she had worked for. Most of the students did not care what she had to say or how she felt. As for me, I was annoyed at the whole situation, and her

clumsy conducting and condescending attitude did not help any.

The day of the concert, I cursed Ms. Brittan in my head all afternoon. That night I grudgingly donned my awkwardly-cut, black consort dress complete with long, nylon sleeves that almost suffocated me any time I dared to raise my arms. Once at school, I sat through the chorus concert and watched the performance of the familiar Christmas tunes, complete with choreography that could only have been by conceived by Ms. Brittan. I remember making my way to the pit with the rest of the orchestra, most of us still grumbling and peeved. I tuned my instrument, set my violin upright on my left knee, and looked up at Ms. Brittan, waiting. Ms. Brittan turned to the audience and announced that our final piece would be Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." She reminded the audience that Handel had originally conducted *The Messiah* in front of the royal court, and, as the first sound of the trumpet vibrated through the people and against the walls, King George II himself stood up, as did the rest of the room. The audience stared back at Ms. Brittan, bewildered, so she asked them to stand, reminding them of the custom.

Then Ms. Brittan turned to us and raised her hands as she lifted herself onto her toes. We mimicked her by raising our instruments: violins and violas under chins, cellos between legs, basses upright, brasses and winds up to lips. Together we sat straight, our bows gingerly placed with the horsehair nearest the frog, in anticipation. We held our breath, the entire orchestra and chorus waiting for her to give us our first downstroke. The second her hands fell and the first few notes vibrated through my body, I knew that whatever we were going to play would be the most beautiful sound I could ever hope to hear. I had always appreciated my instrument for what it was, but on this night, in that moment, my simple violin—with its hand-carved scroll, gracious curves, vibrating strings, and taut bow—seemed bigger than anything I could ever comprehend or hope to control. The voices from those on

stage emitted a strength and grace that were not their own. The wind and brass instruments neither hid nor outdid the other sounds, and the strings vibrated more powerfully than ever before. In that moment, we were not aware of our unique skills or our specific talents—we were not even aware of our individual selves. For the first time ever, we played as one. We were one sound.

The story goes that Handel, after composing the "Hallelujah Chorus," was found one day by his assistant, crying. When the assistant asked what had happened, Handel held up the musical score he had written and said, "I thought I saw the face of God." Perhaps that is what happened at Forest Park High School that day. Perhaps what we were feeling was the strength of Handel's emotions that found their way to us and needed to be played. Perhaps we saw the face of God.

BODY AND SPIRIT

To say that suffering just leads us closer to God is unacceptable. What of natural disasters or diseases? What of cancer? Suffering through these things does not intrinsically lead us to holiness: it is despite this suffering that we grow closer to God. Cancer does not contain God's grace; it cannot contain it. Cancer is an evil. It is an organism eating away at itself, mutating into a crippling, life-ending clump of flesh. God is not cancer. God is not a tsunami, nor is God a famine.

—Brant Maggard, *from* "The Weeping Trinity"

LUPUS

by Cyndi Trang

Lupus is an incurable disease affecting over one million Americans and is more prevalent than muscular dystrophy, cystic fibrosis, and leukemia combined (Wallace, 2000, p. 3). Lupus is a non-contagious autoimmune disease affecting both sexes and all ages. The three types of lupus are discoid lupus erythematosus, drug-induced lupus erythematosus, and systemic lupus erythematosus (SLE). Over 70% of lupus patients have systemic lupus erythematosus. Two subtypes of SLE are non-organ threatening disease and organ threatening disease (Wallace, 2000, p. 7). In particular, scientists and researchers focus on lupus symptoms, causes, and treatments.

Lupus symptoms cover an extensive spectrum. Lupus' external symptoms include change in skin pigments, sudden fevers, swollen joints, sun sensitivity, hair loss, and mouth sores. The most distinctive external feature is a butterfly rash across the nose and cheekbones (Lockshin, 1994, p. 530). Internal symptoms include malaise, fatigue, joint pains, arthritis, kidney disorders, and blood abnormalities. The most perilous internal symptom is an overactive, indiscriminating immune system (Campbell & Reece, 2007, p. 949). In other words, a lupus patient's

antibodies attack both foreign and host cells, which make patients susceptible to common colds and other diseases.

Currently, the cause of lupus is unknown, but several theories exist to explain its origin. Some researchers believe lupus is a genetic disease. A UCLA study suggests a set of genes on chromosome 1 determines a 20% risk of lupus (Wallace, 2000, p. 39). However, less than a quarter of lupus patients' families are positive for lupus, which means other factors must exist. Some researchers believe lupus is an x-linked dominant inheritance because over 90% of lupus patients are females. Other researchers speculate the possibility of "forbidden clones" which is gender unbiased (Blau & Schultz, 1977, p. 89). Forbidden clones form when uncensored malfunctioning lymphocytes replicate and attack host cells. Fortunately, lupus treatments exist.

Lupus treatments include physical and oral measures. Doctors usually advise patients to wear sunscreen at all times and avoid prolong exposure to sunlight because ultraviolet radiation can incite rashes. L-canavanine, an amino acid in alfalfa sprouts, can increase inflammation; as a result, patients should not eat alfalfa sprouts (Wallace, 2000, p. 179). Many medications can treat lupus but have side effects and are not fool proof. Lupus patients usually take ibuprofen, a NSAID, to relieve pain. Unfortunately, 0.1%-10% of NSAIDs causes kidney or liver failure (Wallace, 2000, p. 204). Lupus patients typically take cortisone at short interval in low quantities at various stages of illness to suppress symptoms. Unfortunately, side effects include difficulty sleeping, hair loss, irritable moods, and obesity. Another popular treatment is antimalarials like hydroxylchloroquine and chloroquine. Antimalarials inhibit blood clotting, protect the skin from ultraviolet radiation, and alter the body's acid-base balance. One major adverse effect is eye damage, but under careful administration, the damage should be minimal (Blau & Shultz, 1997, p. 37). Although the treatments have side effects, it is better to seek treatment than not.

Overall, diagnosing lupus is a difficult task because lupus symptoms are very diverse and not everyone exhibits the same symptoms. To prevent lupus from intensifying, patients take drug and safety measures, but harmful side effects still occur. Moreover, lupus' origin remains a mystery. Scientists can only speculate and continue research. Someday the disease affecting millions may affect none.

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My Grandmother

by Arame Ndiaye

The summer of 2009— July 27, to be exact—was the last time I saw my grandmother. She passed away December 10, 2009. I remember I was in the kitchen with my mother when we received a terrible phone call from my aunt. I heard her voice through the phone, distraught and crying. My mother tried to hide the news from me, but I already knew.

My grandmother had had a pre-stroke right after we left from our vacation in Senegal, but she had recovered as if nothing had happened. She had been back to her normal activities again. Then around the end of August, she had a major stroke. She recovered from that, too, but with major consequences. She could not speak anymore, and her whole left side was paralyzed. Worst of all, she could not open her eyes, and she did not recognize anyone's voice. She could barely move and could only make noises occasionally. Terrified, my mother immediately traveled back to Senegal by herself. As soon as my mother saw my grandmother, she instantly started crying because my grandmother looked so thin. She had to fight to breathe. When she was frustrated, tears came rolling down her face, but she still could not open her eyes. My mom started

sobbing because the thought of my grandmother fighting for her life was unbearable.

My mom took care of her, bathed her, changed her clothes, and combed her hair, but she still couldn't open her eyes. Around the beginning of November, my mother came back to New York with no hope at all. I just kept telling her that things were going to get better; we just had to trust in Allah. In fact, miracles began happening, and my grandmother opened her eyes, but she still could not recognize people, not even my aunt. She could not speak, but she made sounds when she wanted something.

My grandmother was discharged from the hospital, and she went home with my aunt. All her life my grandmother had been a strong woman who fought to provide a better future for her kids who didn't have much, but now she had to rely on my aunt. I knew my grandmother hated to be dependent on people, but at least she was alive. We thought that everything was going to be perfectly fine. We did not know that her life was going to end so soon.

Looking back, I think that my grandmother knew that she was going to leave us because when the summer of 2009 came she forced us to come visit her in Senegal. At first, we weren't going to go since the tickets cost at least $1,000 a piece, and there were eight of us, including my two older sisters and brother. But price did not matter to my grandmother, so she collected all of her money and bought tickets for me and my younger sisters; my older sisters and brother paid for their own. She said that we had to come visit her that summer.

The day we were packing up to go back to New York, my grandmother started crying. I had never seen her cry before. She used to tell us, "I will see you next summer," and give us a big hug. But this time she didn't say that. Instead, she gave me a long lecture. Since I was the oldest that lived with my parents, she told me to look after my little sisters. She told me to listen to my mom and to take care of her. She told me to be respectful to

everyone since I was becoming a young lady. I started crying too because before I had always known that I was going to see my grandmother the following summer. This time it was different.

My grandmother gave me fifty dollars so that my sister and I could get something to eat on our way to the airport. I guess it was her way of saying goodbye.

My Father Will Write You a Letter

by Elizabeth Carey

My father likes to complain. A lot. One of his favorite things to do is gripe about how the world treats him unfairly; he is the metaphorical beast of burden. Apparently, people like to "screw" with him out of sheer amusement, just for the heck of it. He has held to this same belief for the twenty-six years I have known him.

His family will tell you that he has always been this way. He was born on July 1, exactly one day before his older brother. This in turn ruined his older brother's birthday party, a fact that he never let my father forget. You see, my father was even born on the wrong day. By the time he got to elementary school he would come home to find his mother sitting on the couch, reading, and he would immediately let out a half-an-hour tirade about the kids at school, the books they had been reading, and even sometimes the teacher. His mother would have to sit and listen patiently until he had divulged all the wrongs that had been inflicted upon him throughout the course of his day. The world has been picking on him his whole life.

My father thinks that people go out of their way to piss him off. He has spent the better part of his life writing letters to these people, whoever they may be, explaining just

exactly what he thinks. My mother's favorite story is the one about my father's seven-month war with the gas company. When my parents were newly married, way back when, and they moved from a tiny apartment into their brand new house, they had to have their mail forwarded to the new address. Before they moved, the gas bill came, and my dad paid it and filled out the change-of-address form on the back of the bill. For the next two months, he didn't receive a bill from them, and when he called to find out why, he was told that he was being charged extra for having a delinquent account. They had never updated his address and were making him pay for it. So my dad wrote the gas company a letter, saying that he was refusing to pay the fine. With his letter, he included a check for the amount of the gas bill for the previous two months, minus thirteen cents for the stamp; this way he was sure to get even. The conflict continued for seven months, until the gas company finally gave up and credited my dad the thirteen cents.

I can recall the first time I really understood what it was like to be completely embarrassed by my father. I was four years old and we were shopping at the hardware store for materials to build me a swing set. Walking through Hechinger's, the hardware store, the aisles seemed to be two stories high. They were really long, and the shelves were stocked with metal tools, screws, nuts and bolts, and lumber. I remember my short little legs being forced to run so I could keep up with my dad's long, lanky, Levi-clad legs as he stomped out of the store, muttering that he was going to write Hechinger's a letter complaining about their bad customer service and vowing to never shop there again.

My dad boycotts many stores and service centers because of the injustices they have inflicted upon him over the years. We can no longer shop at:

Genardi's
Giant
Home Depot
JC Penney's

Lowe's
Merchant's Tires
Staples
Walgreen's
Wal-Mart.

The list includes restaurants as well. KFC is on the top of the list. One time he went through the drive-thru and ordered a twelve-piece bucket of chicken. When he got home, my dad realized that almost every piece of chicken in that bucket was a wing. Nine wings, dammit—just to piss him off.

He even has an ongoing feud with the United States Postal Service. My dad parks his Mustang in front of the house, on the street. The mailman leaves notes on the car that say, "Do not park here postman said so." This infuriates my dad. The mailman says my dad blocks the mailbox. My dad doesn't block the mailbox, but he refuses to park elsewhere, just to prove a point. He says it is a public street and the mailman's route is a walking route. He says the mailman is lazy and wants to drive up to the mailbox instead of getting out and walking to up to it. Instead of pulling the car forward ten feet, he wrote a letter to the postal service telling them he wanted his mailbox placed on the front porch. That way the mailman would have to walk up to the house, and my dad would beat him at his own game. He considers this vendetta completely rational. Maybe it is, but writing the post office a letter, which I suppose they would deliver to themselves through their own service, is not so rational.

Recently my younger sister got a parking ticket in front of my parent's house. The house has a sort of mini-driveway on one side of the house and a long narrow driveway on the other. The mini-driveway is big enough to fit a compact car without blocking the sidewalk. My sister's car is not a compact car; it is a big, white, Pontiac, boat-type car. Her car was blocking the sidewalk, so she was given a $50 parking ticket.

I went by the house a few days after she got the ticket and was basically stopped upon entering the dining room. My dad was there at the rectangular table, sitting in his usual spot, waiting to tell me all about the ticket and getting ready to write a letter to the police about his frustration. According to my dad, the ticket was completely unfair. During the huge snowstorms this past winter the county never bothered to plow the sidewalks, not even so the little kids in the neighborhood could get to the bus stop. He had to shovel the sidewalks so those kids wouldn't have to walk in the street and get hit by a car. The county won't clear the sidewalks, but they will give a ticket to an eighteen-year-old college student who works for $9 an hour. Ridiculous. This was all going in the letter; he just needed to practice it on me first.

On weeknights, my dad will come home from work and tell my Mom about his day. Usually he asks about her day first and waits for her to finish before going into to his full blown rant about some stupid idiot coming into his office to tell him that the project he was working on has to be completely changed—as in redone—from scratch. Or about my dad's boss, Walt is his name, coming in to tell my dad about some asinine idea Walt has that my dad is supposed to incorporate into the latest project. Either way, no matter who is interrupting my dad, they are screwing with him.

I catch myself doing the thirty-minute rant to the first person I see when I get home. It doesn't matter who it is; the first person I see will do just fine. Sometimes I call someone on the way home from work, just to get the bitching out of the way before I get home. When I call my dad, we have to vie for who gets to do the ranting and raving first. I have learned that if I wait to call my dad until after 5:00pm, I get to go first because several other people have already been sucked into listening to his rant. It doesn't matter though. My dad is the first person I call when I want to complain about the financial aid office screwing up or the snotty ladies at the nail salon or my little

tyrant of a boss. My dad always understands, because the world screws with him too.

CHOICES AND EXPECTATIONS

When Massachusetts Governor Endicott, the "Puritan of Puritans," a man "wrought of iron," arrives at Merrymount, he is pleased to disrupt the wedding ceremony of Edith and Edgar, and to smash the maypole down with his sword. Endicott hardens himself—his natural reflex—and says he will whip the newly married couple, whereupon Edith offers to sacrifice herself and die for her husband. Endicott is moved, and decides that he can see good Puritan qualities in each of them. Given the chance, the young man will be pious, brave, a hard worker; the young woman will be a good mother.

Even before Endicott's arrival, Edith and Edgar have misgivings about continuing in the Merrymount lifestyle.

—Matthew Stevenson, *from* "Conflict and Resolution in Hawthorne's 'The Maypole of Merrymount'"

EXPECTATIONS OF A YOUNG LADY: MANNERS AND BELONGING IN FRANCES BURNEY'S *EVELINA*

by Yolanda McQuinn

Social behavior often mirrors a person's knowledge of societal expectations for men and women. The novel *Evelina*, by Frances Burney, takes the reader through the journey of a young lady, Evelina, who is freshly introduced to society. As a child of a dubious birth, Evelina resembles a blank canvas ready to be filled with knowledge, but her lack of understanding of the social norms expected of her sex hampers her progression on the path to becoming a polished young lady.

Burney presents the reader with several motifs for the expectations of both sexes—expectations of manners, taste, belonging, and sociability. Of the expectations mentioned, the expectation of belonging has the strongest influence on Evelina. Evelina admires and grows to loves the rich and graceful Lord Orville, and as a result, she transforms her mannerisms to reflect his. This transfer of mannerisms works to Evelina's benefit because as she learns from Lord Orville's example she enhances her own reputation in society.

Evelina's interest in Lord Orville begins when they first meet at an assembly during which Evelina declines the

advances of a foppish suitor in favor of an invitation from Lord Orville, whom she sees as a more admirable gentleman. As the fop approaches Evelina a second time, she is unable to stop herself from laughing at the sight of him. Here, Evelina's inability to control her laughter shows her ignorance of unacceptable social behavior in the assembly. Evelina states, "I interrupted him—I blush for my folly,—with laughing; yet I could not help it" (36). This form of behavior was considered inappropriate for a young lady attending an assembly, and Evelina, naive to the customs of an assembly, is forced into an awkward situation. Evelina tells the reader that

> a confused idea now for the first time entered my head, of something I had heard of the rules of an assembly, but I was never at one before,—I have only danced at school,—and so giddy and heedless I was, that I had not once considered the impropriety of refusing one partner, and afterwards accepting another. (36)

In her short discourse, Evelina scolds herself for her lacking knowledge and looking foolish to others. However, in this case, Evelina's blunder acts as the catalyst that will later aid her transformation from caterpillar to butterfly in the eyes of society. The criticism Evelina receives, especially from Mr. Lovel, who complains about her "ill-breeding" (39), prompts Lord Orville to rescue her from Mr. Lovel's attacks. Lord Orville rebukes Mr. Lovel by proclaiming, "that elegant face can never be so vile a mask!" (39). Although Evelina anticipates that her social gaffe will separate her from Lord Orville, her naiveté actually works in her favor because it evokes emotion from Lord Orville, provoking him to protect her and become her champion.

The expectations for women in Burney's eighteenth-century England are higher than the expectations for men, and this double standard makes women susceptible to vulnerable attacks. Burney illustrates

this vulnerability to the reader through another unfortunate occasion caused by Evelina's lack of experience. During an outing to a garden with her cousins, the Branghtons, Evelina becomes separated from her party after the fireworks explosion scatters the members of the group in various directions. Evelina finds herself alone and narrates the following event:

> At last, a young officer, marching fiercely up to me, said, "You are a sweet pretty creature, and I enlist you in my service;" and then, with great violence, he seized my hand. I screamed aloud with fear, and forcibly snatching it away, I ran hastily up to two ladies, and cried, "For Heaven's sake, dear ladies, afford me some protection!" (260)

Initially, Evelina is unaware that she in a dangerous area. Having been separated from her party and now alone in the company of strangers, this frightening scene forces the reader to have compassion for Evelina, who does not know how to identify and react to such danger. When Evelina sees the two women, she seeks protection from them because she finds comfort in the company of women as opposed to a strange man. However, in this company she is faced with further turmoil; as she says, "they asked me a thousand questions, accompanied by as many hallows, of who I was, what I was, and whence I came" (261). Evelina learns at this moment that she cannot let her guard down even in the company of women.

Evelina is not in the company of the two women for long before she sees the familiar face of Lord Orville. One woman says, "So that gentleman belongs to you, Miss, does he?" and Evelina responds, "Yes, Madam [. . .] I now thank you for your civility; but, as I am safe, will not give you any further trouble" (262). Once again, Burney portrays Lord Orville as Evelina's hero as he sweeps in to rescue her from an uncomfortable situation. Because Lord Orville has actively defended Evelina already, his presence

alone causes her to feel safe and her affection for him continues to grow. Evelina describes the moment, saying,

> I then looked up. He bowed. Good God, with what expressive eyes did he regard me! Never were surprise and concern so strongly marked,—yes, my dear Sir, he looked greatly concerned; and that, the remembrance of that, is the only consolation I feel, for an evening the most painful of my life. (263)

Evelina worries that Lord Orville, seeing her in the company of these women, will look down upon her. To Evelina's surprise, Lord Orville expresses his true concern for her well-being along with the rest of her party. Evelina says, "With a politeness to which I have been some time very little used, he apologized for returning, and then enquired after the health of Mrs. Mirvan, and the rest of the Howard Grove family" (263). Lord Orville's impeccable manners consistently delight Evelina. The sense of belonging that Evelina receives from Lord Orville results in her falling in love with him and later becoming his wife.

In *Evelina*, Burney crafted a sentimental novel that, besides simply evoking the emotions of the reader, acted as survival guide for young women in the eighteenth century. Women under similar circumstances could identify with Evelina, who finds her place in society despite her lack of breeding. Evelina shows women readers that with the proper influence and good company an individual can achieve a promising life. Although Evelina worries about her various social *faux pas*, fearing they will prevent Lord Orville from loving her, these mistakes draw his attention to her and her naiveté that wins his heart. Despite the fact that Evelina's blunders show how she misunderstands eighteenth-century expectations of women, her appreciation of Lord Orville's social grace and willingness to learn from him lead her to find a sense of belonging in society.

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CONTROLLING THE FEMALE PSYCHE: ASSIGNED GENDER ROLES IN "THE YELLOW WALLPAPER"

by Elizabeth Carey

"The Yellow Wallpaper," a tale of one woman's descent into madness, is Charlotte Perkins Gilman's response to the male-run medical establishment and the patriarchal structure of the nineteenth-century household. Gilman's short story is a warning to her readers about the consequences of fixed gender roles assigned by male-dominated societies: the man's role being that of the husband and rational thinker, and the woman's role being that of the dutiful wife who does not question her husband's authority. In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman depicts a marriage in which both the narrator and her husband are trapped in their assigned roles and are doomed because of this.

The story focuses on the narrator's "nervous condition" as she slowly loses sense of reality, the whole time being totally misunderstood and misdiagnosed by her husband, a doctor who is unable to understand a woman's psyche and who believes the best treatment is for her to confine herself to her room and rest. The narrator says, "If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband,

assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?" (3). Reading "The Yellow Wallpaper" in historical context, Jane Thrailkill points out that the nineteenth-century medical establishment did not understand how to deal with women's mental health issues, often misdiagnosing a whole host of disorders as female hysteria (545). Thrailkill explains that physicians employed the "rest cure" as a way to regain control over a situation they did not comprehend. The narrator's "nervous condition" is not hysteria but, rather, probably the result of having recently given birth. Contemporary medicine did not know what postpartum psychosis was, but that is clearly what the narrator is suffering from, as is evident in the passage in which she remarks, "It is fortunate Mary is so good with the baby. Such a dear baby! And yet I cannot be with him, it makes me so nervous" (6). Thrailkill claims that Gilman's push to raise awareness about misdiagnoses of women's mental health problems stems from the frustration she felt about her own treatment by Dr. Weir Mitchell when Gilman herself was diagnosed with a "nervous condition," one of the most obvious cases of a doctor disregarding a patient's words (540). In "The Yellow Wallpaper," Gilman is showing her readers that the male doctors were not listening to their female patients.

It is these patronizing attitudes that Gilman is fighting against, and she does so by illustrating the ways that rigid gender roles have a negative effect on both women and men. John, the narrator's husband, is represented as the rational, respected doctor who is always taken seriously. The narrator, on the other hand, is represented as overemotional; she is not to be taken seriously. Rather than being described as rational, she is described as being "imaginative." In his commentary, Conrad Shumaker argues that the term "imaginative" is decidedly gendered—it is seen as feminine and weak (590).

Significantly, the narrator is cautioned by her husband not to give in to her imagination and her "fancies"—such as writing—the narrator says that her husband "hates to have [her] write a word" (5)—and wallpapering her room (6). John believes that if his wife represses her creative urges she will become well again and assume the role of wife and mother. Sadly, the narrator internalizes her husband's advice, acknowledging, "I meant to be such a help to John, such a real rest and comfort, and here I am a comparative burden already" (6).

Because John believes that he is supposed to function as the thinking partner in his marriage, he won't let his wife think for herself. Most of the time when she asks John for anything or tries to tell him anything, he ignores her and calls her names, such as "blessed little goose" and "little girl." These are names for children, and that is how John treats his wife: like a child. He says to her, "I am a doctor, dear, and I know" (12). Because he identifies himself as the more rational, and therefore more intelligent, partner in the marriage, John assumes that he knows more than his wife does about her condition.

Conrad Shumaker argues that imaginative thinking undermines John's universe. By defining his wife's temperament as a danger, he can control the part of the world that opposes his materialistic view (592). But by repressing his wife's artistic impulses and imagination, John leads her into the exact state that he is trying to avoid. She unravels and loses her grip on reality (590). Their marriage falls apart, and John loses his wife to madness, the very thing he had tried to avoid.

Janice Haney-Peritz argues that "The Yellow Wallpaper" ultimately shows that in a patriarchal society we are all doomed; no one can survive the rigid gender expectations placed upon them (104). If John were not so overconfident in his own reason and authority as a doctor and husband, he might have been able to help his wife. If he had listened to her, then he might not have lost her to madness. If the narrator herself had not been so willing to

conform to John's wishes and had not assumed that he was always right, then she might have been better able to stand up for herself. She might have been able to challenge her husband and get the help that she really needed. However, the narrator thinks that it is not the woman's place to question her husband. The narrator says, "It is so hard to talk with John about my case, because he is so wise, and because he loves me so" (11). She naturally assumes that John knows what he is doing. She questions herself instead of him. Her condition worsens because both of them believe that John knows best. In the end, both husband and wife lose because they are trapped in fixed gender roles.

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MASS-PRODUCED MASCULINITY IN 1920S FILM

by Kristen Dunn

In the 1920s, Americans experienced social and economical changes that led to the development of a consumerist society. For the first time in America's history, the country was largely an urban nation. Urbanization meant that Americans could no longer provide for themselves by working the land, instead turning to stores in their new city homes. Leisure time also emerged during this era of rapid urbanization. Working only during weekdays, urbanites needed to occupy their time outside of the office. Movie production companies capitalized on America's need to entertain itself and grew in popularity during the era. Turning out stars such as Douglas Fairbanks and Rudolph Valentino, movies became a staple in American culture by advertising these masculine actors. Production companies turned actors like Valentino and Fairbanks into products—celebrities—marketed to women for the purposes of selling movies. Women would consume these movies because the production companies told them to do so through advertisements. These women believed they could choose between which version of masculinity they preferred, but their choice was a false one—it did not matter which man they chose: only that they consumed the movie.

Marketing celebrities such as Douglas Fairbanks and Rudolph Valentino involved film production companies creating a distinct image and personality for each man. The ability to sell films defined the film industry's success, and its ability to sell movies was tied to the visibility of their players. In his book *Dangerous Men*, Mick Lasalle writes, "In this world, personality became central to success" (3). To ensure the success of the actor's personality, leading cinema expert Lucy Fischer explains that production companies "could change their [actors'] names, arrange for them to undergo plastic surgery, tell them whom to date, decide what screen roles they would play, and launch publicity campaigns to control their image" (8). Movie companies spared no effort in making the actors ready for the publicity they would (hopefully) face. Publicity meant that consumers saw the celebrities and would consume their movies.

One such celebrity, Rudolph Valentino, who starred in the film *The Sheik* (1921), had dancing experience, handsome features, and an alluring Italian heritage that helped his production company create a successful marketable celebrity. Valentino's celebrity embraced a new, changing view of masculinity. The film industry portrayed this less masculine actor as almost feminine. Prominent professor of film studies Gaylyn Studlar asserts that "Valentino's emergence as an idol seemed to be the result of women's perverse search for a new model of masculinity with an erotic promise that made him much more dangerous than the physically passive mollycoddle or effeminate sissy boy" (151). Although effeminate, Valentino captured the hearts of American women with one smoldering glance. In the film *The Sheik*, the actor is robed in sumptuous fabrics and has a soft, yet handsome, face. Turning on the charm, he seduces his on screen love interest by staring at her menacingly with wide eyes and the women in the theatre fall for, what film professor Mark Lynn Anderson describes as the "Valentino mystique [. . .] the star as both sexual menace and object of erotic

contemplation" (qtd. in Fischer 66). Production companies understand this seeming paradox in Valentino's character and capitalized on it by featuring the actor in movies that would play up his primitive, vamp like qualities (Lasalle 7).

The Sheik Ahmed Ben Hassan, Rudolph Valentino, carries the protesting Lady Diana Mayo, Agnes Ayres, into his sumptuously decorated tent.

Seeking to consume a feminized portrayal of masculinity, women would pay to see Valentino seduce his on-screen love interests and hope to learn more about their own sexuality.

Conversely, the film industry marketed Douglas Fairbanks' boyish charm and chiseled physique, paired with a winning smile. Unlike Valentino, the film industry portrayed Fairbanks as a tough, free-spirited celebrity, an image more easily reconciled with traditional male roles. Starring in high action films such as *The Thief of Bagdad* (1924), Fairbanks drew women to the theatres in droves to see his toned torso. Production companies understood that women wanted to gaze at his sculpted body, and would costume him in skin baring outfits to please the women's fancy. In a review of the film *The Thief of Bagdad*, the author

notes how Fairbanks' low-rise pants and lack of shirt highlight his muscles and allow him to move freely on the set ("The Screen"). In this film, he takes full advantage of his athleticism, performing a long series of athletic tasks to prove himself a worthy prince. In doing this, "Fairbanks was a delight, and he remains delightful, an appealing figure of fantasy" (Lasalle 6). The film industry convinced women they needed an athletic version of masculinity in their lives, implying Fairbanks—"the figure of fantasy"—was one alternative women wanted.

Fairbanks and Valentino starred in movies that showcased their physical characteristics. The marketing of these movies capitalized on the image of each man's celebrity and relied on the idea that women were conditioned consumers. Film companies featured the allure of the "Valentino mystique" in all Valentino's films. The effeminate actor kept women coming to the theatres in flocks. Lasalle explains that women may have seen that "[t]he sexy moments in *The Sheik* (1921) [. . .] weren't romantic in the traditional sense, but tense with the threat of rape" (7). Intrigued by the danger of what could happen and Ahmed Ben Hassan's unpredictable actions, women escaped from the reality of their lives and entered the world of Valentino—a mysterious world with threats of violence that may have been tempered by the actor's effeminate personality.

Unlike Valentino, movies that featured Douglas Fairbanks highlighted his impressive athletic abilities made possible by his toned physique. Attracted to the advertising of his playful attitude and winning smile, women came to view Fairbanks' movies, such as *The Thief of Bagdad*. In this film, the celebrity stretches his athleticism in all directions, climbing up a rope using only his upper arm strength, swimming to the sea floor, and traveling across the desert in harsh weather conditions. His athleticism alone would leave any woman impressed, but the lowly thief that Fairbanks portrays tests his physical strength to prune himself for the princess, the woman he tries to impress. He

does all of this while wearing a winning smile that would melt his woman's heart. Women conditioned as consumers came to understand that they desired Fairbanks' youthful masculinity.

The film industry targeted women with their celebrity advertisements. Film companies understood that women were the most powerful consumers because they were the most susceptible to advertising. According to the UN Platform for Action Committee ("Women and the Economy"), women's instinctual role as nurturers and caregivers leads them out to the stores to consume goods for their families, and themselves. The UNPAC also asserts that women watch for advertisements for sales, coupons, or comparisons of different consumer goods that all perform the same function. To film companies, this meant that women actively searched for differences in the products—actors—movie companies developed. Women desired a choice between different masculinities in the movies they consumed. Production companies provided women with a choice. Presenting different masculinity models, the industry let women believe the choice they made was important. The women's discernment, though, did not matter to the companies churning out movies. It did not matter if women chose to consume Valentino's movies or Fairbanks' movies, only that they consumed the movies. By deluding women into believing their choice in consumption mattered, that the choice they made helped them understand themselves, production companies benefited greatly.

The marketing of celebrities, such as Rudolph Valentino and Douglas Fairbanks, as a consumer product had America's women flocking to the theatres to purchase a look at these men. Production companies recognized a woman's need to choose a form of masculinity that best suited her preferences. Women believed that the form of masculinity they chose taught them something about their own sexuality—what it meant to be a woman in relation to a man. The women could chose between the buff Douglas

Fairbanks and the effeminate Rudolph Valentino, but their choice ultimately was a false one. The choice they made did not matter; production companies still earned profits from women consuming any image of masculinity.

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COMMUNITY AND FAMILY

Safeway sets up the store and packages its items to remind you of your history. The bakery makes you feel like you are taking a walk down memory lane, going to the bakery to get freshly baked bread. This is not the only instance in which Safeway plays with your memories; they also have special aisles for ethnic foods and organic foods. If you want to make a dish your grandmother from Spain made, this aisle is where you would find some general ingredients. The store in designed in a way that makes you think you are purchasing items that your parents might have bought when you were a child.

—Amanda Pusey, *from* "Supermarkets that Speak"

THE BATTLE CRY OF YOUTH: CONSUMERISM AND GENERATIONAL DIFFERENCES IN *BODY AND SOUL*

by Melany Su

In the 1920s, Americans witnessed the development of modern consumerism—marked by mass production, urbanization, and new fashion trends—a development that created a sharp divide between young and old populations. The youth embraced their newfound freedom of self-expression and satisfaction of ownership. The older generation, on the other hand, did not quite welcome "The Roaring Twenties" with open arms. Parents were concerned that the youngsters whose lives they had shaped no longer seemed bound within the family unit, but rather were drifting off into the unfamiliar realm of the modern marketplace. While parents bewailed the inevitable loss of control over their children, directors produced films that would assuage their anxiety. In the 1925 film *Body and Soul*, director Oscar Micheaux assures his audience that despite the deepening divide between the young and the old created by consumerism, reconciliation is possible.

Centering on a mother-daughter relationship, *Body and Soul* depicts the generational divide within a working-class family in the small town of Tatesville, Georgia. A devout Christian, Martha toils incessantly as a laundress,

hoping to secure her daughter's dowry to Reverend Isaiah Jenkins, a supposed minister who is actually an escaped criminal. Aware of Jenkins's true identity and decidedly in love with young inventor Sylvester, Isabelle soon finds herself in a heated argument with her mother. When Jenkins forces Isabelle to give him her family savings—unbeknownst to Martha—Isabelle flees to Atlanta, where she barely survives. Martha joins Isabelle after a few months, only to witness her daughter's death. She determines to turn in Jenkins, but the impostor's earnest plea evokes her pity, and she forgives him instead. In the end, however, she wakes up from a trance and discovers, to her relief, that she was only dreaming. She not only consents to Isabelle and Sylvester's marriage, but also pays for their new home with her savings—which Jenkins has not taken hold of after all.

At the beginning of the film, Martha and Isabelle's relationship shows no evidence of any generational conflict. Before any dissension erupts between them, a few intermittent shots illustrate the peace between the mother and daughter. In one scene, feeling empathy for her mother as she works late into the night, Isabelle offers to iron clothes for her. Martha only smiles and pats her daughter on the back, insisting that she return to bed. Past midnight, however, Isabelle finds her mother asleep in her chair, too exhausted from work. Glancing at the clock, she shakes her head in concern and wakes her mother up. Caressing her fondly, she says, "It is late, mother, and you are tired. Won't you please come to bed?" Martha returns her daughter's inquiry with a smile of gratitude, and they walk back to their bed, arms around each other.

Soon, however, Martha's and Isabelle's contrasting ideas about modern consumerism provoke dissension between them, leading them to clash on other issues, including religion and marriage. Though lured by modern consumerism, Martha refuses to embrace it openly. On the one hand, Martha enjoys buying, owning, and displaying fine items, such as her dress of "genuine satin with lace

trimmings." On the other hand, her desire to buy things clashes with her obligation to save for what she deems more worthwhile: her daughter's marriage to the honorable Reverend Jenkins.

An analysis of one contemporary advertisement illustrates the type of conflicted desires that Martha's generation might have felt. Lord and Taylor's advertisement for spring dresses was targeted to the older generation who were hesitant to participate in acts of liberal consumption.


Store Closes at 5 P. M.

Lord & Taylor

38th Street —FIFTH AVENUE— 39th Street

The January Showing of New

Morning and House Dresses

A Complete Assortment of Models for Spring

DRESSES selected for their practical features and smart style touches, representing the well-known makes of "Dix," "Queen's," "La Mode," "S. E. B." and "L'Aiglon;" of serviceable and dependable materials, daintily finished—workaday dresses for the housewife or quite suitable for porch and sport wear.

Striped, figured and dotted Percale; striped, plaid and checked Ginghams; colored Chambrays, Linens, Voiles, Batistes, and white dotted Swiss, $2.95 to $14.50.

Unusual Values for This Occasion

Extra Value at $2.95

Fancy striped percale, ¾ sleeves, two pockets, collar of self material; practical and pretty models.

Extra Value at $3.85

Two models in striped Percale with ¾ sleeves; one with plain white Repp collar; one with white collar of embroidered and scalloped pique.

Extra Value at $4.95

Checked Gingham, collar, cuffs and pockets trimmed with white Organdie, Billie Burke model. Dotted Percale, white Lawn coinspot embroidered collar.

Extra Value at $5.45

Striped Gingham, long sleeves, collar and cuffs of white Poplin. Also dotted Percale, collar, vestee and cuffs of white Lawn.

Extra Value at $5.95

Three models, blue Chambray, striped Madras, plaid Gingham, with dainty white collar and cuffs in novelty designs.

Extra Value at $6.95

Colored Chambray, in plain tailored effect, with smartly braided collar and cuffs. Also figured Batiste, ¾ sleeves, collar of white Lawn.

Second Floor

Lord and Taylor's display ad features the twentieth-century ideal image of beauty.

Interestingly, the advertisement displays five models, none of whom calls to mind the typical homemaker. Rather, they epitomize the twentieth-century woman described in Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg's book *Domestic Revolutions: a Social History of American Family Life*: "A slender, boyish form [that has] replaced the large breasted, wide-hipped, nineteenth-century feminine ideal" (111). Showing off their bobbed hair and high heels, they pose majestically for their portrait, one even reclining leisurely on a bench. The advertisement describes the dresses as having been "selected for their practical features and smart style touches, representing the well-known makes of 'Dix,' 'Queen's,' 'La Mode,' 'S. E. B.,' and 'L'Aiglon.'" In showing off these brand names, Lord and Taylor anticipates the older generation's hesitation to buy them and therefore justifies the purchase by highlighting the dresses' worthwhile qualities: the dresses are described as being made "of serviceable and dependable materials, daintily finished." These are "workaday dresses for the housewife or quite suitable for porch and sport wear." Such language assures the homemaker of attractive, yet justifiable, products.

As a working-class laundress—not a homemaker—Martha's resistance to consumerism is even more extreme. Church authorities rather than store advertisements guide Martha. According to Paula S. Fass in *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s*, "the traditionalists looked to church authority to stop the world from changing, and to control, not express, human needs" (45). In *Body and Soul*, however, the figure of church authority, Reverend Jenkins, is proved a fraud, and Martha, the epitome of such traditionalists, falls prey to his deception. While her mother resorts to religion for protection from the threats of modernity, Isabelle does not rely on blind faith—especially after having been assaulted by Jenkins. Initially, her discernment fails to open her mother's eyes, for Martha perceives Isabelle's dissenting opinion as a threat to her authority, another weapon of the rebellious youth. When Isabelle identifies Jenkins as the

ultimate cause of their suffering, Martha immediately scolds her for accusing "that good, godly man," even before hearing her daughter's explanation. Micheaux exaggerates Martha's admiration of Jenkins by transforming it into idolatry. When the Reverend comes to her house, she welcomes him with complacent nods and incessant handshakes. She then makes him a comfortable seat, brushes off his coat, and even kneels down to wipe his shoes.

Isabelle, by contrast, prefers the concept of the "companionate family," in which "husbands and wives are 'friends and lovers,' and parents and children are 'pals'" (Mintz and Kellogg 115). While Martha conceives of a husband as the one who assumes sovereignty over the household, Isabelle prefers Sylvester, a timid, meek man of few words. She speaks of her fiancé as an empathetic equal: "I made myself feel that Sylvester would understand my helplessness and forgive and help me." Peering anxiously through the door, Sylvester hesitates to enter the house and steps in only after his fiancée's urging.

Isabelle introduces "companionate marriage" to her mother. Sylvester ventures a few shy glances at Martha, while she attacks him with a persistent, piercing glare.

Standing quietly next to Isabelle as she introduces him to her mother, he ventures a few shy glances at Martha, as if weighing his prospects of winning her approval. Martha, however, attacks him with a persistent, piercing glare. Instead of retaliating, Sylvester—with his head hanging—quietly leaves.

Martha's image of the husband as the superior partner epitomizes Mintz and Kellogg's description of "old style" family ideals, a set of beliefs based on "sexual repression, patriarchal authority, and hierarchical organization" (113). On the contrary, the younger generation in the early twentieth century adopted the concept of the "companionate family," in which "husbands and wives would be 'friends and lovers' and parents and children would be 'pals'" (115). No longer would "rigid social pressures or religious conceptions of moral duty" unify couples, but rather "mutual affection, sexual attraction, and equal rights" (115). Positioning herself between her mother and her fiancé, Isabelle introduces the new ideal of companionate marriage to her mother. Martha, however, rejects Sylvester (and therefore companionate marriage) outright.

Although their clash of opinions creates an inevitable chasm between them, Martha and Isabelle find that they depend upon each other. The ambitious youth lacks self-sufficiency—she is unable to survive on her own in Atlanta—but more importantly, the stubborn mother lacks discernment. When Isabelle bursts into tears after her tête-à-tête with the reverend, Martha convinces herself, without suspecting Jenkins, that eating the same food every day must have exhausted her "baby." Unable to find her savings after returning from the grocery store, Martha falsely blames Isabelle for hiding it. Her failure to detect the overarching predicament shows her shallow understanding of her child and blind faith in a man she does not know well. Micheaux suggests that ignorant, resolute parents who hold to outdated traditions severely handicap their youngsters. When the elder acts indiscriminately and

fails to recognize the dangers of blind faith, the child suffers the consequences.

At the same time that it illustrates the younger generation's dependence on their elders, *Body and Soul* urges its older audience members to break away from their traditional customs. Eventually, Martha reconciles her belief that the ideal husband must be a man of religion. Instead, she accepts a modern hero: Sylvester the inventor. Furthermore, when she no longer perceives consumerism as a threat, Martha gives in to her desires and buys a new home. With Isabelle's help, Martha becomes reconciled to modernity, as she reveals to the audience by wrapping her arm around Sylvester within the last second of the film.

While acknowledging a generational divide, *Body and Soul* assures its audience that the young and the old can restore their relationship. Interestingly, the same inquisitive, innovative nature that leads young Isabelle to rebel against authority also liberates her mother from her rigid mindset. Only under the influence of her daughter's discernment does Martha realize her flawed judgment. Ultimately, Martha embraces consumer culture, a tendency one would more likely expect from the youth. Thus, *Body and Soul* suggests that the rise of consumerism that initially divides the young and the old also has the potential to unite them in the end.

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LESSON SEVEN: THE GUZMAN-SAENZ CASE

by Cyndi Trang

On January 19, 2009, Dennis Alfredo Guzman-Saenz's body was found in a stream two blocks from Fields Road Elementary School in Gaithersburg, MD. The 15-year-old from High Point High School was stabbed 72 times (Montgomery County Government, 2009). Since Guzman-Saenz's death, 11 people have been arrested for suspected involvement. The 8 males and 3 females are all Hispanics and members or affiliates of the 18th street gang (Montes, 2010). The Montgomery County Police Department states the motive for the crime is gang-related. Detectives believe the 18th street gang members spotted, forcibly abducted, and killed Guzman-Saenz because they thought he was a member of MS-13, a rival gang. Whether Guzman-Saenz was an official gang member or not is unclear; however, it is clear that the 18th street gang were "planning to find a member of rival gang MS-13 to harm"

(Montgomery County Government, 2010). Guzman-Saenz just happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Travis Hirschi's social control theory helps explain why juveniles, like members of the 18th street gang, engage in acts of delinquency like gang formation and violence. The social control theory proposes "that people engage in delinquency or crime when they are free of intimate attachments to the family, the school, and the peer group" and when they have little aspiration to bind them to a conventional way of life (Conklin, 2010, p. 196). Essentially, social control theory explains the correlation between attachments to three different institutions and how these attachments, or lack thereof, affect delinquency.

The first institution is family. A critical primary group can influence morals, beliefs, behavior, and expectations of an individual. According to Hirschi, the presence or absence of attachment is closely associated with acts of delinquency (Conklin, 2010). Psychologist Diana Baumrind classifies parenting styles into authoritative, authoritarian, and permissive. Authoritative parenting is the most successful form of parenting because it is a combination of moderately high control, warmth, acceptance, and encouragement of autonomy (Grace & Dunn, 2010). Overall, children raised in an authoritative way tend to be nondelinquent, "self-reliant, self-controlled, and socially competent" (Grace & Dunn, 2010, p. 192). Authoritarian parenting is characterized by highly controlling parents who exhibit little warmth and adhere to rigid rules. This limit compromises a child's autonomy and causes them to become "dependent, moody, unassertive, and irritable" (Grace & Dunn, 2010, p. 192). Permissive parents exhibit high levels of warmth but little control. As a result, the child may become "self-indulgent, impulsive, and socially inept" (Grace & Dunn, 2010, p. 192). Social control theorists would be interested in whether the 18th street gang members were reared under either an authoritarian or a permissive parenting style. If so, social

control theory would correlate the weak bond to their family with gang membership and violence.

Another factor that may have affected their family attachment is immigration. Physical separation from family members can lead to criminal activities, especially during adolescence and young adulthood. If an intimate family member is not present to discourage deviant behavior, more bad decisions may occur (Conklin, 2010). One of the murderers in the Guzman-Saenz case is 22-year-old Joel Yonathan Ventura-Quintanilla, who is an illegal immigrant. He admitted to escaping from an El Salvador prison in 2008 (Montes, 2009). Social control theory would explain that the absence of familial bond is why Ventura-Quintanilla bonded more with the gang and committed crimes.

Peers are another institution that can influence delinquency. Typically, most adolescents want to be socially accepted by their peers. While some may talk in the same way or wear similar outfits as their friends, there are those who go to extremes for social acceptance. One extreme is gang violence. In order to be accepted into a gang, some people may have to go through initiation rites like pick pocketing. Once they are part of the gang, they have constantly to prove their loyalty. In the Guzman-Saenz case, only five individuals initially accosted the 15-year-old, but by the next day, at least 11 people were involved in his murder. The additional six were called in to fulfill their obligations to the gang, by beating the MS-13 member (Montgomery County Government, 2009). The members may have committed the crime because they wanted the acceptance of their peers. This gang may have even rationalized the murder by appealing to higher loyalties. In other words, they placed greater loyalty to their gang than the laws of the state (Conklin, 2010).

Another important institution in Hirschi's social control theory of delinquency is the school. According to Hirschi, high or moderate success in academics can help an individual bond with the school and behave according to

accepted morals. Conversely, a lack of academic success can be discouraging and result in acts of delinquency (Conklin, 2010). An older illegal immigrant like Ventura-Quintanilla was most likely not educated in the U.S. Therefore, he may not speak English well and not be academically successful in America. The other 18th street gang members may also not understand English that well. Perhaps, they only had Spanish-speaking parents, thus were at a disadvantage in school compared to others who had English-speaking parents. This cultural and language barrier can affect their academic success in school. Thus, they may feel disadvantaged and resort to gang membership to feel acceptance.

Overall, social control theory would suggest that the 18th street members might have weak ties to their families and schools and a strong attachment to their peers, who are gang members. Consequently, they devote their time to gang activities. However, the social control theory does not decidedly explain the murder of Guzman-Saenz. The theory stresses correlations between attachment and the likelihood of delinquency, but correlation does not prove causation. This theory also does not take into consideration that delinquent behavior may cause weak attachments to the family and school, and not the other way around (Conklin, 2010). Nonetheless, although the social control theory may have its flaws, it is still a useful theory to for explaining the Guzman-Saenz case.

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THE FAVORITES

by Elizabeth Carey

Walking into their home, the first thing you notice is that there are three of them, three in this family; three sisters, that is. There is the oldest, Elizabeth; the one in the middle, Maddy; and the one they call The Baby; her name is Kathy. They still call her The Baby even though she is nineteen years old. As you would expect they are bickering. The oldest is yelling at the middle one about stealing a gray shirt. The Baby is laughing at them because she took the shirt. This is the typical scene.

I will begin with the oldest one, because she seems never to be at a loss for words. She is loud, a bit domineering even. She appears to be the director of the show, organizing the other two. The Baby doesn't seem to mind this; the middle one, however, fights it tooth and nail. They have the type of dynamic you would expect from three sisters. There is the bossy one, the one who has to be different, and the easygoing one.

The oldest one will tell you that she is their parent's favorite. She knows this, of course, because she has spent the most time with them. She reminds her sisters of this often. She was born seven years before the second sister came along, so she says this makes her the expert on

her parents. She is the one who plans and organizes Mother's Day brunch and Father's Day barbecue, and who tells her sisters what gifts to buy for their parents and Grandma. She gives this direction in order to make their lives easier; this is what she says. She knows how things are supposed to be.

The oldest has long, strawberry blonde hair. She is shorter than the other two. She dresses simply, in jeans and a tank top. The oldest complains that the other two always take her things, use up the last of the shampoo, and eat all the food in the house. The middle always answers that she didn't take the stuff or eat the food. She doesn't like the eldest's shampoo and doesn't borrow her clothes because they are too big. The oldest lives by a regimented schedule and cannot be separated from her Filofax day planner. She runs 6-10 miles a day; her sisters think she's insane. The middle one says the oldest is a classic Type A personality.

The middle one is different in comparison to her sisters. She likes to read Edgar Allen Poe and take long walks. She spends a lot of time in solitude. The oldest one says she's weird, the middle one says she's contemplative, and The Baby doesn't care. The middle one is a Psychology major at VCU. Her older sister says this is very fitting, seeing as the middle one is crazy (the oldest one likes to interject her opinions quite often). The middle one didn't choose a school close to home, like her sisters did, she wanted to move away, but not too far. She dresses differently as well. Her style is more gothic rag-doll, and she dyes her naturally blonde hair a dark brown color. She wears dark eye makeup and stays out of the sun. She says she likes to be pale; she isn't going to die of skin cancer like the other two will. She has her own sense of style and doesn't want to look like an American Eagle ad, as the other two and all of their friends do. The middle one isn't cookie cutter. She listens to the oldest one give her orders about this and that, and ignores her. She has her own ideas about Grandma's birthday present. She knows what Grandma likes too, and doesn't have to listen to the oldest one. The

middle one says she is their parent's favorite because she is the "good" daughter and doesn't get into trouble like the other two. She says the oldest stays out all night and talks back to the parents and The Baby smokes pot all the time. The middle one is the "good" daughter.

The Baby is calmer and more relaxed than the other two (probably due to all the pot). The oldest is a bit demanding and the middle one is a bit blunt. The Baby, however, just seems to go with the flow. This is apparent in her attire and general appearance as well. She wears cut-off shorts and loose, hippy-like flowing tops. Her hair is long and red, worn straight down and in her face. She doesn't wear much makeup. She likes to lie around at the pool or the beach, and her favorite thing to do is go to barbecues. I notice that she laughs at the other two as they argue back and forth. The Baby thinks she is their parent's favorite. She says that she is the only one who isn't "bitching" all the time and bossing everyone around. She is the only "sane" daughter they have. She doesn't cause any fights or scream and yell. She doesn't become anxious or controlling. Mostly she sits back and laughs at the other two. The oldest one and the middle one each confide in The Baby. They think that she is the best listener and never stop to wonder if she might just be daydreaming.

The oldest complains about how easy the other two have it. When she was in high school, she was grounded all the time. There was the incident where she got caught sneaking out of her second story window to see her boyfriend at 2:00am. There were numerous times when she got in trouble for skipping school or breaking curfew. One time a police officer brought her home because, apparently, if you are under eighteen in Prince William County, there is a midnight curfew. Her parents thought she was at a slumber party, not a keg party. The oldest says she spent almost her entire waking life grounded and it isn't fair because the other two never get in trouble for anything.

The middle one says she never got in trouble because she was the good one and didn't disobey. The

oldest says the middle one was a nerd. The middle one says she was the smart one, and now that she's away at college, she can do whatever she wants; she's the smart one.

The Baby says she didn't have to sneak out of the house; she never had a curfew. She also never had to skip school; their mother would write a note to excuse her from school. The Baby laughs as she talks about being able to get away with all these things. She says it's because she is the responsible one, and her parents trust her.

This issue of who is the favorite seems to be of some contention. Each of the sisters says her parents have told her that she is the favorite and that this has happened on numerous occasions. Each sister is very firm in her belief that she is the favorite, and each has a justifiable argument for her case. This is an ongoing dispute, which their parents will not settle.

All of the bickering subsides when they discuss someone they mutually disdain. The Baby's last boyfriend, for example: That Guy. When the subject comes up, the three sisters are like a pack of wolves tearing apart a deer.

That Guy cheated on The Baby. All three sisters are equally disgusted with this low-life creature, and they sit at the table and discuss ways to get back at him. The oldest suggests egging his house. The middle one contemplates psychological warfare, something to make him think he's gone crazy. The Baby says she hopes he gets some horrible flesh-eating disease. They insult That Guy for over an hour. The oldest one and the middle one explain to The Baby what a jerk That Guy is and how much better off she is without him. They tell The Baby that she was too good for That Guy in the first place. Then they analyze all the jerks they have dated between the three of them. They go through a list, badgering each guy on the list: That Guy, Dumb Guy, Loser Guy. It is a long list. After the sisters get it all out of their systems, The Baby says, "See, that's why you're my favorites."

Reed Award

The Reed Award is given annually to the best revised essay published in *Magnificat*, as selected by the Faculty Advisors. This year, we are pleased to present the Reed Award to Kristen Dunn and her work in "Mass-Produced Masculinity in 1920s Film."

BOARD OF STUDENT EDITORS

Walter! Bottlick is a sophomore at Marymount University majoring in both English and History. He is interested in ancient and North African history, and wants to write historical fiction and be an editor. Walter's involvement with *Magnificat* began last year when his essay on celebrity endorsement was published in the journal. This year he joined the *Magnificat* editorial board in order to become more adept in particular at being able to distinguish between strong and weak arguments. Walter looks forward to the time when he can use his editorial skills in his future profession. He wears custom-made t-shirts with his first name and trademark exclamation mark on them.

Cristal Gonzalez attended Texas State University and University of Texas at El Paso before studying at Emerson College, where she earned a B.A. in Writing, Publishing, and Literature. At Marymount University, she is pursuing both a B.A. in History and an M.A. in English and Humanities. She hopes to go on to earn a Ph.D..

Katlyn Manka has always had a healthy passion for the written word and reading. As a child, she wanted to become a writer because she wanted to make her own contribution to the world of literature, but as she grew up, she found that she would rather spend her efforts helping others improve their writing. Joining the *Magnificat* team has been very rewarding for Katlyn because it gives her experience polishing works for publication and working with writers to make their pieces shine. As a sophomore and English major, she hopes to continue to work with *Magnificat* and learn as much as she can about the editorial process.

Ariel Marie McManus is a freshman at Marymount University. She currently majors in Communications with aspirations of working in one of the Smithsonian's publications departments or even possibly working on the editorial board for Marvel Comics. Currently she volunteers at the National Air and Space Museum. Working on the editorial board of *Magnificat* for the first time this year has helped her to learn more about what it will be like to be a professional editor.

Born and raised in Taiwan, **Melany Su** came to the United States in fall 2010 as a college freshman and biology major at Marymount University. Innately quiet, she rarely feels completely at ease expressing herself through speech, and her Taiwanese childhood education reinforced her silence. It was not until Melany learned English that she discovered the thrill of writing. Pen and paper opened the door for her to express herself freely, and since then she has been writing essays, short stories, novellas, and poetry. Living one hemisphere away from home and family has been both insightful and daunting, but as a member of *Magnificat*'s editorial board, she has found many writers and editors who share her passion.