

reasons for this decision, the most admirable of which is devotion to nurturing others. Yet this also comes with costs. I've never forgotten Jessica's almost plaintive confession to me late one night, years ago, after too much wine. "My husband," she said, "has done the things that I really wanted to do, and could have, but didn't." The optimist in me wanted to tell her it wasn't too late, but it was, and we both knew it.

Both the ethical imperatives I've described—"must work" and "must stay at home"—reflect noble desires, the one for talents fully used and the other for the vocation of motherhood. But I worry that both are too often promoted ideologically, prescribed as answers to the anxieties young women naturally feel about what they should do. This problem is especially pressing for those high-achieving college students I have been describing, who cannot imagine doing anything—be it career or motherhood—halfheartedly.

It's the tacit denial of the tragedy of the human condition that I've come to resent in the contemporary

literature about "balancing" career and family. This literature is full of demands for Justice and Equality, its authors motivated by ideas of social perfection: to finally place a sufficient number of women in the ranks of management and government and to effect true gender equality in the workplace as a whole. Engaged on a quest to change the world, they write with a fervor generated by a political ideal and employ the language of political advocacy, as if the divided desires of our souls can be unified by Reform and Revolution. There is a solution for everything, they imply; we just haven't found it yet.

But this simply isn't so. I know from personal experience that this conflict in the soul does not go away, no matter how pleasant and accommodating our colleagues may be, or how flexible our schedules. We are limited, embodied creatures. These limits mean that we cannot do everything to its fullest extent at once, and certain things we may not be able to do at all. The tragic aspect of this is that both excellence and nurture are real, vital goods and that the full pursuit of one often, and perhaps inevitably, forecloses fully pursuing the other. ■

MONUMENTS

You're with us still, your names engraved in stone,
 Inscribed in bronze, recited every May.
 Fresh flowers—mums, carnations, roses—say
 The pain's still fresh: our grieving's never done.
 Your serried graveyard markers—though you're gone—
 Compel reflection on Memorial Day.
 Our sculptors' art preserves your mortal clay:
 Each marble image conjures flesh and bone.

We've promised that we'll always keep you here,
 But memories etched in rock must disappear:
 The steles raised to keep you in our sight
 All fall to dust beneath the centuries' might.
 Time mocks us when we swear your fame must live:
 We feign a gift that only God can give.

—Bryce Christensen

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