NO HAPPY HARMONY

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 al-
most 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 press-
ing for those high-achieving college students I have
been describing, who cannot imagine doing any-
thing—be it career or motherhood—halfheartedly.

It's the tacit denial of the tragedy of the human con-
dition 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 ex-
perience that this conflict in the soul does not go away,
no matter how pleasant and accommodating our col-
leagues 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