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Kate 2010

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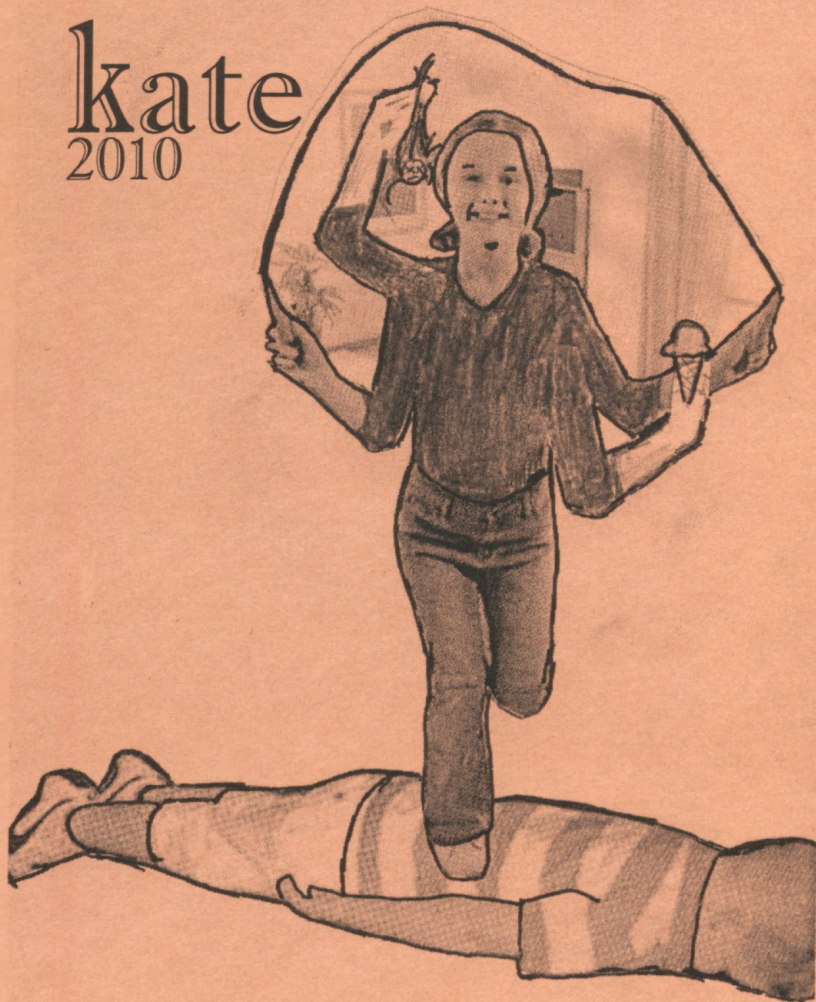
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2010



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otterbein's feminist 'zine

2010



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editor's note

Friend, you have found us because you are interested in girls -

in *mini-women*.

They are interested in you, too. Girls watch our every move. I would, in fact, assert that mini-women are some of the most tuned-in creatures on the planet.

Susan Burton, a contributor to *This American Life* on NPR, describes her own girlhood by telling a story of a move to Boulder, Colorado during some of the most influential years of her life - middle school. "By now," she admits on an episode centered on *Home Movies*,

"I had been a student of popularity for two years. I did this with the intensity and seriousness with which I'd learned the migratory patterns of the killer bee. I had cassettes full of songs I had taped off of the radio. I'd accumulated the right clothes. I applied the scientific method to wardrobe selection. I typed up a list of my outfits on the Macintosh, and posted it inside my closet. The list only applied to weekdays, and I did not deviate from the order. There were sixteen outfits, so that there would always be an irregular beat built in...the amazing thing is, the plan worked. We moved. I was popular."

She continues by admitting that in her the dream of the American nerd is realized. Except that the dream required her to be "a little ditz."

Her story is so in line with my own memories of that pivotal, pointy-breasted, *Smashing Pumpkins* time that I couldn't help tearing up from laughter - the inappropriate laughter of a woman listening to the radio in a tan cubicle.

A brief story of my own girlhood: Staci, the most popular girl in my class, loved Kraft singles – and horses. She could not get enough of them. It was my turn to make an ethnically non-specific lunch for the other students who were taking Spanish at the time. I told my mother that I wanted to make grilled cheese sandwiches. She graciously went to the grocery store, picked up the supplies I would need. I looked down at that cheese in that sad paper bag with blood-shot eyes, stressed and horrified. She had chosen a generic brand. I thought my life was over. To make up for my social indiscretion, my lack of foresight, I prepared those generic sandwiches, thirty of them, removing the crust, and cut them in the shape of horses. Staci wasn't in class the next day. People found the meticulousness with which I had carved the sandwiches to be even nerdier than had I left them alone.

Girls care so deeply about what you think, what other girls think - let alone the ways that boys perceive their oddly tribal behavior. (Why is any trip to the restroom a mass exodus?) This 'zine presents stories about this deep, abiding concern. It presents stories admitting the intimacy of which some girls are capable – intimacy beyond their years. This 'zine questions the porn culture that is imposed on adolescents, and the happily-ever-after culture that is imposed on little girls. It claims that sometimes girls, adolescents, *want* to have sex, and sometimes they don't – sometimes they want to eat a mashed potato dinner without purging – and that we should trust them to make these choices, giving them the resources and support to do so safely and with respect for their bodies. Sometimes girls play hopscotch.

I am a *Kate* – at least my parents have always called me so. This Kate, and the staff of KATE, disprove Petruchio's notion in Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, that "dainties are all Kates" (ask Jenn Johnston about this, if you take the notion – she'll tell you what's what). There is very little that feels dainty about this work. Ask Wes Jamison tonight, after he copy-edits and lays out this jewel that you hold in your hands, that you put in your pocket. Ask Morgan Ritchie, Meredith

Lum, and Kathleen Kishman as they fight on the front lines for reproductive justice. Ask Alison Kennedy after she has driven back from a weekend in Georgia. Ask Tammy Birk, our faculty advisor, or any one of Otterbein's WOST faculty members, male and female alike. There is much to be done. And the next generation of Kates need to do it. Let's give them our support, and our sidewalk chalk.

Kathlene Eleanor Elisabeth Boone

Editor



sexuality in contemporary american society and its effect on women

alison kennedy

Today's American teenagers grow up in a world bombarding them with ideas about sex. From their teachers and parents teaching sexual education, whether abstinence-only or comprehensive, to the media sending messages about what is or isn't sexy, to the merging of pornography with popular culture, both girls and boys learn from a young age how they are supposed to act with regard to sex. These mixed messages leave children with skewed views regarding sex, the opposite gender, and self-image. Young and adolescent girls face the brunt of society's demands. From every aspect of their life, different orders stretch them in thousands of directions: parents value purity and abstinence, boys want to get in their pants, society tells them to be virginal but still sexy. Adolescent girls and women everywhere struggle against the forces of society to discover themselves.

A child's basic sexual education should commence in the home. Parents, when they decide to reproduce, take on the responsibility of educating their child. While some parents take this task seriously, others leave it up to the school system and society as a whole to educate their children about sex, among other things. Sexual education begins in many schools at the age of eleven, during students' fifth grade year. Teachers divide the class into boys and girls, emphasizing the differences between the two genders. These classes focus only on the anatomy of both genders. As children age, the material taught in sexual education classes expands, but only slightly. Teachers still split the class into boys and girls. Classes cover anatomy again, sexually transmitted infections and their repercussions, and the consequences of teenage pregnancy. While most sexual education classes cover the potential consequences of adolescent sexual activity, only comprehensive sex education discusses proven ways of preventing sexually transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancies.¹ The lack of comprehensive, truth-based sex education not only leads to the inability of many teens to protect themselves from sexually

transmitted infections and unwanted pregnancy, but also to negative impacts on adolescent self worth and body image.

Current government funding only provides support to abstinence-only sexual education. Not only are these classes lacking vital information, but they also often distribute information that is outrageous and completely untrue. The federal government spends over \$170 million a year on abstinence-only based programs that "use fear, guilt, and shame to try and control young people's sexual behavior. These programs include negative messages about sexuality, distort information about condoms and STDs, and promote biases based on gender, sexual orientation, marriage, family structure, and pregnancy options."² Programs throughout the country spread untruths such as that "at the least, the chances of getting pregnant with a condom are 1 out of 6" and that "exposure to sweat and tears are risk factors for HIV transmission."³ Facts such as these are blatant lies.

By promoting unfair and untrue biases in their programs, abstinence-only sex education encourages gender stereotypes and promotes obvious dishonesty about the relationships between men and women. These classes emphasize differences between males and female, some anatomical truths, others merely encouraging age-old stereotypes of frigid women. Many of these programs deny female sexuality completely, continuing to perpetuate the ideal of an asexual, passionless woman. One abstinence-only workbook stated that "because [women] become aroused less easily, females are in a good position to help young men learn balance in a relationship by keeping intimacy in perspective."⁴ Another workshop manual declared that "men are sexually like microwaves and women sexually are like crock pots. A woman is stimulated more by touch and romantic words. She feels far more attracted by a man's personality while a man is stimulated by sight. A man is usually less discriminating about those to whom he is physically attracted."⁵ Statements such as these reject any idea of female sexuality, implying to young girls that being a sexual individual is wrong. If an adolescent does fail to fulfill the abstinence until marriage vow, abstinence-only programs tend to place the blame

completely on the girl, telling girls that they “need to be aware they may be able to tell when a kiss is leading to something else. The girl may need to put the brakes on first in order to help the boy.”⁶

Some parents also take a role in teaching abstinence-only sex education. Fathers give their daughters promise rings at a certain age, the rings symbolizing the daughter’s promise to remain pure until she gets married. Virginity cards, rings, and ceremonies are all marketed toward parents who want to maintain control of their children’s sexuality. The most well-publicized story of a father and daughter purity pledge is that of Jessica Simpson and her father, Joe: “a gossip mag reported that during a ceremony when Jessica was twelve years old, Joe made her promise to stay a virgin until married. . . . Jessica’s dad, who is also her manager, gave her a promise ring and said, ‘I’m going to tell you how beautiful you are every day . . . and I’m going to be that person until the day you find a man to do that in my place.’”⁷ According to Jessica Valenti, author of the popular blog, *Feministing.com*, “the newest trend in anti-sex weirdness is ‘purity balls,’ a prom-like event where girls as young as six pledge their chastity—to their dads!”⁸ These absolutely ridiculous standards and demands from family members lead to girls who believe that their purity and virginity is their only value. A girl’s failure to keep her virginity equals failure in life, in school, in all of her future pursuits.

While in school and at home, girls are taught to remain pure and chaste. On the other hand, current popular culture embraces and encourages girls to be sexy. Advertisements on television, in magazines, and in public display women in sexual ways and advertise products marketed towards women who feel the need to make themselves more attractive. From billboards promoting a clothing line’s latest pair of jeans to advertisements for make-up and articles on hair style how-to in *Cosmopolitan*, *Seventeen*, *CosmoGIRL*, *MarieClaire* and other similar magazines, young girls and women are constantly bombarded with the media’s obsession with sexy women. Many women base their entire worth on their hotness, their desirability. Wanting to be desired is completely understandable. However, the problem with the current hotness scale is that men, not women, define what

"hot" or "desirable" mean in today's society. Men's control of the scale leads to many women having a skewed view of body image and self-worth.

Women today have an obsession with perfecting their bodies, their personalities, their clothes—anything they think makes them more attractive to men. Cosmopolitan magazine offers advice to women on everything from make-up to the latest fashions to how to be a hot bad girl. Its sister magazine, *CosmoGIRL*, offers similar advice, but on a toned down level to younger girls. Cosmo, with headlines such as "The Six Worst Things You Can Say To A Guy," "8 Things Guys Notice Instantly," and "The Silent Clue Men Give Off When They're In Love," gives women the advice on how to catch, please, and keep a man.

In a section entitled "Cosmo's Bad Girl Bible," the magazine gives advice such as "tell a white lie—extremely well," "collect as many men as you can handle," and "turn him into your love slave."⁹ Another article in Cosmo listed reasons men love bad girls, implying that women should be aspire to be a bad girl to attract men. These reasons consist of many stereotypes and assumptions such as "there really aren't a whole lot of panties being worn," "yes, the arguments are terrible, but the makeup sex is mind-blowing," and "a bad girl is way too independent to rush a relationship, which means a guy knows he won't find himself helping her dad build a model railroad on the third date."¹⁰ The magazine uses another section about famous bad girls to validate the advice given in the magazine, almost as if saying, "see, being a bad girl worked for Megan Fox, Lily Allen, and Sarah Silverman. Don't you want to be them?"¹¹ This bad girl standard set by some stars and encouraged by magazines such as Cosmopolitan sets an unreasonable ideal for women.

Throughout history, women have longed to imitate the women seen in movies, on television, and on the covers of magazines. The women of popular culture set the standard. From Marilyn Monroe and Bette Davis of the 1950s to Kim Kardashian, Angelina Jolie, and Mariah Carey of today, Hollywood starlets give women everywhere a difficult goal: to achieve society's view of female per-

fection. The technology available today makes this goal even more stressful and demanding. Women aspire to have the toned bodies, the perfect hair, and the flawless skin of Hollywood women. They scour their copies of *Cosmo* every month, admiring their idols' perfection, while simultaneously criticizing their own perceived flaw. Women slave over exercise machines, attempt every fad diet available, and even resort to plastic surgery in the attempt to turn themselves into perfect women.

However, the everyday woman in America does not take into consideration how the women in pictures in magazines are made to look so perfect: through Photoshop. Most of the photographs shown on magazine covers, in advertisements, and on billboards have been enhanced on a computer. Some enhancing removes blemishes while some creates highlights in hair. Other computerized augmentation goes as far as to refine curves and add definition to muscling. While some stars rely on Photoshop to fulfill the ideal Hollywood starlet image, others depend on actual plastic surgery to enhance and perfect their bodies. The use of digital enhancement and medical augmentation has made it nearly impossible for average women in America to achieve the Hollywood ideal of the perfect woman. American culture has become more and more "pornified," meaning that pornography, once only found in seedy stores, on the fringes of popular culture, now can be found in mainstream pop culture. Because of the proliferation of pornography, the standards to which women aspire are no longer set only by Hollywood starlets, but by adult film stars as well.

In modern American society, a new kind of glamour exists around the pornography industry. According to Kira Cochrane, "the most obvious reason for this change of attitude would seem to be the proliferation of pornography. With hard-core porn easily accessible through the internet (33 percent of internet users regularly view such materiel) and also being marketed to mobile phones, porn imagery has inevitably become an established part of our culture. And with this proliferation, the image of those in the sex industry has changed, too."¹² Young women today see a career in the adult film industry as

a viable option, and even a genuinely attractive job opportunity. During the emergence of the porn industry, a porn star might have expected to achieve a small amount of fame, among the relatively small population of men who had access to her films. Today, a porn star can expect fame. Men and women all over the world can view films online through websites offering subscriptions, Pay-Per-View movies in the privacy of their own homes, or specialty adult film store to purchase one of thousands of titles available.

With today's use of the internet, the accessibility of camera, sound, and editing equipment, and the new attitude toward pornography, the porn industry has transformed into a multibillion dollar economic force. The practices of companies geared towards adult entertainment model their business practices after mainstream business. According to Juris Delivko, "a number of adult companies, from Hugh Hefner's Playboy Enterprises to the film production company Metro, are publicly traded on stock exchanges in the United States. . . . Erotic dancers in Germany and the United States are unionized; in 1997, the American union initiated a strike and won key demands. Adult entertainment businesses have a cadre of vocal lobbyists, must like other industries."¹³ Pornography, by merging itself with mainstream pop culture, has infiltrated the lives of American women everywhere.

Porn's ability to challenge norms of the body, of sexuality, and of societal morals has enabled porn to break into contemporary mainstream culture. Critics argue that pornography must be treated as simply another form of artistic and cultural expression. According to author Lauren Langman, "like any other popular culture genre (like romance, mystery, true crime), pornography obeys certain rules, and its primary rule is transgression. Like your boorish cousin, its greatest pleasure is to locate each and every one of society's taboos, prohibitions, and proprieties, and systematically transgress them, one by one."¹⁴ Through these transgressions, pornography has carved itself a niche in popular culture, despite opposition by those who guard virtue.

Pornography has not only merged into popular film culture,

but also into the fashion and even exercise worlds. "Porn chic" and porn inspired fashions can be seen not only on the catwalks of the high fashion world, but in everyday attire. Many women have become consumers of hooker and stripper fashioned outfits. Some of these garments are merely skimpy. Others model the styles worn by strippers to the extreme. Others are designed after lingerie. Cosmopolitan's article "Sexy New Party Dresses" included a group of three dresses inspired by lingerie, ranging from \$68 to \$199.¹⁵ Each style in the article is demonstrated by two or three dresses found for sale and one dress seen on a Hollywood starlet, validating their apparent hotness.

The pornification of modern culture has crept into exercise and health as well. Gyms, dance studios, and fitness centers now offer group classes on strippercize, including pole-dancing, strip-teasing, and erotic dancing. The emergence of sexercise is fairly new, but women everywhere are trying to lose weight, shape up, and become alluring by learning erotic dances and stripper moves. Sheila Kelley's book and workout *The S Factor: Strip Workouts for Every Woman* include moves such as the booty shake and the hair toss.¹⁶ The publisher of Kelley's book released a blurb describing the exercises as

"combining yoga, dance, and erotic movements, *The S Factor* is a program that tones muscles, firms the body, increases flexibility, promotes weight loss, and gives you a few new tricks for the bedroom. Illustrated in hundreds of photographs that show step by step how each move is done, the exercises are sensual yet demanding, requiring a balance of strength and finesse. There are slow, rounded warm-ups, the Spine Circles and Hip Circles. Strenuous motions, like the Rocking Cat-Cow. Peels and rolls, grinds, pounces, arches. And pole work, from the Firefly to Descending Angel. . . . Something else happens, too: These exercises and routines boost self-esteem and give women a new way to think about their bodies. Stripping is a liberating act, out of which comes a new look, new body, new confidence, new you."¹⁷

While pornography's merge with pop culture has affected women in positive ways, the proliferation of porn also has had negative effects on the lives of women everywhere.

While pornography has increased society's level of acceptance of nudity, it has also skewed both men's and women's views of what genitalia should look like. Men who grow up watching porn before their first experience in real life with a woman are shocked to see that not every woman's genitals look like a porn star's genitals: tiny and hairless. Women dealing with these standards become dissatisfied with their own genitalia in comparison with porn stars. This dissatisfaction has led to the emergence of plastic surgery to enhance a woman's private parts, "termed 'vaginal rejuvenation', which takes two forms, the shaved pubis and medical reconstruction, e.g. labiaplasty as a cosmetic plastic surgery."¹⁸ Women, some of whom have been rejected by men because of their genitals, turn to these extreme surgical options to make themselves more attractive to men. Jessica Valenti states,

"In Africa, they call it female genital mutilation, but in the United States, we call it designer vaginas. 'Cause we're civilized like that. Vaginal rejuvenation surgery can mean a labia trim, liposuction on your outer lips, vaginal tightening, or even hymen 'replacement.' How many times did you just say ouch in your head? All so we can have 'normal,' 'attractive' genitalia. You know, like in porn, where everyone has teeny-tiny vaginas with no hair."¹⁹

Even anal bleaching has been added to the list of vaginal rejuvenation surgeries, to enhance the look of the anus. These surgeries not only appeal to women who want "attractive" vaginas, but to those women who lost their virginity early and wish to become born-again virgins.

America's obsession with purity and the insistence that women remain virgins until marriage has led to a new fad. Women who lost their virginity before marriage but regret their decision and want to be pure for their wedding night have now begun renewing their virginity. These women take chastity pledges, wear promise rings, and truly believe that they are virgins once more. Some women even go to the extreme of vaginal rejuvenation surgery to tighten their vaginas and replace their hymens. Porn stars' use of vaginal rejuvenation surgery has led to twisted views in the minds of many

women regarding their vaginas and their promiscuity. Women and men both believe that a slack vagina equals promiscuity. Encouraging this myth,

“vaginal cosmetic surgery enables women’s vaginas to be molded and crafted to fit a norm espoused by the pornography industry, thereby paradoxically upholding a feminine ideal that women in pornography industry stereotypically do not exemplify – that tightness is equated with dainty, docile, innocent women while saggingness implies promiscuity. The pornstar standards that women hope to achieve by undergoing labiaplasty parallel findings by Braun and Kitzinger (2001) that it was men who were described as wanting their female partners to have tight vaginas.”²⁰

Women who wish to be seen as virginal, including the extreme born again virgins, stress over the state of their vaginas, often leading to these severe surgical remedies.

America’s sexualized society has had many positive impacts on the lives of American women, but has also affected their lives just as much in negative ways. While a semi-sexually liberated society seems to free women, girls still grow up believing that they are too fat, or too ugly, or that their genitalia are plain weird. The messages sent by parents, teachers, and religious institutions praising virginity and chastity conflict with the media’s “pornified” message of sexuality. A young girl’s family desire her to keep her purity, but television, advertisements, and generally society as a whole continue to bombard her with sexualized information. Whether it be naked women on television, the demands of young men, the forced promises of abstinence-only sex ed, or Playboy bunny pencil cases, adolescent girls must struggle with the forces demanding their attention and obedience to find themselves—as sexual beings, as women, as humans.

notes

- ¹ Gary Dougherty, "The Need for Comprehensive Sex Education," (Paper presented at Youth Summit 2009, Columbus, Ohio, October 17, 2009)
- ² Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, "In Their Own Words," Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States, http://www.siecus.org/_data/global/images/in_their_own_words.pdf.
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- ⁴ Colleen Kelly Mast, *Sex Respect: The Option of True Sexual Freedom*, Student Workbook (Bradley, IL: Respect Incorporated, 1997 Revised Edition), 6.
- ⁵ *Why Am I Tempted (WAIT) Training*, "Workshop Manual (Marietta, GA: Choosing The Best, Inc., 1996 Edition), 27.
- ⁶ Maureen Gallagher Duran, *Reasonable Reasons to Wait*, (Chantilly, VA: A Choice in Education, 2002-2003), 96.
- ⁷ Jessica Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism: A Young Woman's Guide to Why Feminism Matters* (Berkeley, CA: Seal Press, 2007), 29.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, 29.
- ⁹ "Cosmo's Bad Girl Bible," *Cosmopolitan*, November 2009, 178-179.
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- ¹² Kira Cochrane, "Why Porn is the New Glamour," *New Statesman*, September 12, 2005.
- ¹³ Juris Dilevko, "Deep classification: pornography, bibliographic access, and academic libraries," *Library Collections, Acquisitions, & Technical Services* 26 (2002), 113-139.
- ¹⁴ Lauren Langman, "Punk, Porn, and Resistance: Carnivalization and the Body in Popular Culture," *Current Sociology*, Vol. 56(4) (July 2008), 657-677.
- ¹⁵ "Sexy New Party Dresses," *Cosmopolitan*, November 2009,

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¹⁷

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¹⁸

ibid.

¹⁹

Valenti, *Full Frontal Feminism*, 207.

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untitled

jen powers

It's in a wet-blanket summer dusk, when the sun hurls the last of its daylight into the air and saturates the crevices nestled like spider webs in the asphalt, that I find myself immersed in the first beautiful moment of the season. Foliage bursts from roadside baskets, creeps down from branches to tap shoulders as they pass; pansies wave delicately in silent greeting to the cooler breezes of evening.

I, with my musky skin and my damp liling head, am driving my car through town. My breath spirals out of me in tiny wet circles, losing itself to the gentle pulse of melody that leaks from the back speakers.

I've been here before, wandering through the remains of a hot bright day. Some of my most well-loved memories have been born in the midst of open windows and cigarette smoke, the purr and growl of a moving vehicle. This hour is a notable one, though, because it's the first I've experienced in three-quarters of a year, and I've only just learned to appreciate the balminess of an Ohio June. I'm laden with contentment, in love with the roads that bend and shoot gently through the comfortable buildings of my hometown.

I guide my car through the narrow path between the passing traffic and a bicyclist, and ease it into stillness at the light. The truck in front of me has a bed that's fortified with walls made of tired wooden slats. A Labrador, with graying snout and soft pink tongue, rests his head in a gap through which he can experience the sensations of the teeming summer air. He catches an insect with his whisker and shakes his head to send it flying elsewhere.

The cyclist, a girl with braids that cascade in sleepy waves

down the length of her back, passes me, meandering, and approaches the truck. Her tires wobble a little as she slows her speed, and she reaches with her left arm to brush the patch of silver fur that's splashed across the old dog's brow. When her fingers find his forehead and give it a soft scratch, his eyes squint, then shut peacefully for a short moment.

The simple gesture strikes me as something pure, a kindness so natural that it had to have been committed without thought. To witness the wordless appreciation of one life for another, for the fleeting second in which they are aware that they share the same world, is a sensation more hopeful than most any other I can imagine.

By the time the light turns green, the girl has disappeared somewhere to the south, but other lives still bend and bloom and fold all around me, and the air is so kind, and the dog's happiness is unmistakable; I follow him till I arrive sweetly home.



frank sinatra's paper snowflake

kathlene e.e. boone

Natalia is five. Her classroom, like all kindergarten classrooms in the Midwest, celebrates and exonerates the winter's harsh blusters, the frosty faces and pinched toes in ice skates.

Their coat racks are in two rows. The tiny Spiderman boots are only slightly larger than those belonging to the rosy-cheeked, blonde cardstock children who are stapled to the bulletin board.

Mrs. Wallthorpe is forty seven. Her classroom is mauve and clean. Outside, it is thirty degrees. Mrs. Wallthorpe likes jazz standards and Mary-Janes. She likes the sound of snow cracking under them, like *crème brûlée*.

The assignment today is paper-cutting. Yesterday, the division stamp game. Tomorrow, polishing all of the small silver items on the tactile shelves.

Little girls attempt this happily.

Something about making things shiny does not jive with socialized men, small men who have listened. Men under four and a half feet tall.

"It's *de-masculating*," Theodore parrots, his voice several decibels too high for his adult words.

As Mrs. Wallthorpe prepares the dull scissors and the recycled paper, lining up two pieces per student, she wonders,

If I were a mother, and I had my own son, would I force him prematurely into button-down shirts? Would I make him choose window treatments? Am I a monster?

Across the room, Natalia is also thinking about prospective motherhood, but focuses, rather, on,

What color will my daughter's eyes be? I wonder if she'll like tomato soup.

It is December. Frank Sinatra has been dead for seven months. Mrs. Wallthorpe mourns his passing, compulsively producing and playing his music.

It was *her way*, she played her children *Songs for Swingin' Lovers*. Today, little voices crooned some version of *Mack the Knife*, keeping time with little toes.

Natalia's paper snowflake has eight diamond shapes in the center, created by cutting eight triangles into the folded paper. She learned this by watching.

She exchanges glances with her teacher twice, but the moments are short and stuffed with the silent, combined concerns of the two —

Did I pay the gas bill?

What kind of juice are we having with snack today?

Is my mother-in-law still on my couch? I hope not.

Does Mrs. Wallthorpe know I can count to ten in Spanish? I should tell her sometime.

Slowly the little girl rises to her feet. She, too, wears Mary-Janes. She holds the clumsily crafted paper wonderland in her fingers, and passes it to her teacher.

"What is this?" Mrs. Wallthorpe asks.

"For Frank."

They hang it from the whirring air vent above their heads, on the ceiling. It dances.



MY-TELL
a socially-
conscious toy
company

WARNING: Toys
show no facial emo-
tion. She appears
happy 100% of the
time courtesy of
the injections.



in the shadows, under the trees

anonymous

They seem to blend seamlessly in and out of one another,
through time and space, moment-to-moment, memory-to-memory.

*

Kaitlin squeals, the robin is stiff, lying in a pool of water
below a flowering crab tree.

*

The skull is white, pristine almost, wedged in between the
roots of a gnarled oak. I reach out and pick it up, holding this im-
maculate formation of bone in my hand.

*

My breath is catching in my throat, my heart beating hard as
he reaches down to unbutton his pants. His flaccid, twelve-year-old
penis peaks out between the slits of his white Fruit of the Looms.
My heel digs into the base of the tree behind me as he *tells* me to pull
down my pants.

*

1.

Kaitlin squeals, the robin is stiff, lying in a pool of water
below a flowering crab tree. His body seems perfect, dark brown
feathers; wings pressed tightly to his sides, the beak a golden yellow,
and his red breast protruding beautifully, a proud arrangement of
short, soft feathers.

Yet, for all his beauty, he is definitely dead.

Kaitlin, my closest friend in pre-school and kindergarten,
and I have been playing in my parent's front yard. It is Spring and
it has just rained. The yard and trees surrounding us take on an un-
earthly, vibrant tone of brightness, which seems to only occur directly

after a cold hard rain. Like the way one's teeth feel after biting into an ice cube or splashing one's face with cold water on a hot day, everything is hard and bright, refreshing.

I poke at the robin with a stick. It lies still. I have never touched a bird before. It seems so small, too fragile to navigate the skies and high branches of a loftier world. I reach down and touch it. The feathers are still soft, the body hard and wet from the rain. I want to hold it in my hands. Cradle it.

Kaitlin still seems squeamish about the dead bird but is beginning to relax now that she is sure it isn't going anywhere.

"What are we going to do with it?" I ask her, secretly contemplating where I would keep the beautiful bird with its vivid red breast.

"Let's leave it alone." Kaitlin crosses her arms. Furrowing her brow, her bangs so straight and long across her forehead, she takes on the appearance of a serious nun in a habit.

"Come on!" I whine. It is just too beautiful to leave there, below the crab trees.

I hear my father rustling around in the garage. If he finds this robin, I think, he will take it away. It's too beautiful for little kids to play with, like my grandmother's tiny china cups with the pretty, delicate handles. No, he will never let me have it.

I scoop the bird into my hands and run through the front door. Out of habit, Kaitlin follows me inside. I rush up our carpeted stairs into my bedroom and slam the door behind me.

I'm not sure what Kaitlin and I do with the bird up until the moment my mother knocks on my door and tells Kaitlin her mom will be here soon to pick her up. Maybe we forget about it, as sometimes happens with children, hiding the robin under my bed and going on to play with my Barbies or my dress-up clothes. But I distinctly remem-

ber the moment our thoughts turn to the robin. We both know there is something wrong with keeping a dead bird in the house, know that, if either of our parents find out we had played with a dead bird that afternoon, we would be in serious trouble.

For one reason or another, maybe we argue over who will keep the bird or we are practicing sharing like our mother's taught us, we decide we need to split the bird. I run to my mother's room where I know she keeps a pair of scissors in her bathroom drawer and, running quickly and quietly back to my room and shutting the door, I begin to divide parts of the robin between Kaitlin and me. I remember the distinctive snap of the scissors as I clip off one of his legs. One for me, one for her. Next come the wings. It takes a couple of tries but I manage to get off two section of wing. I place these pieces of the dissected robin into a discarded shoebox.

The robin lies there on the gray carpet of my bedroom floor, without legs, and pieces of his wings missing. Although, essentially, it looks the same, there is something horribly ugly about the bird now. Kaitlin begins to cry. I don't comfort her. I just sit with the scissors in my hand, surrounded by feathers and pieces of the robin. It settles on me that maybe the robin isn't ugly but that what I have done is.

I have done something very wrong.

I tell Kaitlin to stop crying, my mom might come upstairs and we both know we will be in trouble if she finds out what we, what I have done. I quickly gather up the robin, the bits of feathers floating loosely around the room and put it all in the shoebox. Kaitlin realizes what I'm trying to do and enthusiastically joins in. We are getting rid of the ugliness of our deed. If no one discovers the robin, no one discovers what we have done. Once every feather is

found, I put the lid on the shoebox and tiptoe the scissors back to my parents' room.

Not long after, Kaitlin's mom arrives and picks her up. We hug, my mom gives her a kiss, and I wave goodbye.

After she is gone, I go upstairs. There is the shoebox. Quickly, without thinking I pick it up, sneak downstairs, and throw the box away in the outside garbage. Kaitlin and I don't speak of the episode ever again.

2.

The skull is white, pristine almost, wedged in between the roots of a gnarled oak that dips into the creek. I reach out and pick it up, holding the immaculate formation of bone in my hand. I have never found anything like this in the woods around my house. Sometimes I spot a doe grazing in the meadow by the creek, watch as crawdads poke their heads from the mud and little water gliders ripple across the water, but this skull, the beautiful white skull is new and strange.

The bone is mostly smooth, with some rough patches underneath where the eyes use to be. The area where the teeth meet the jawbone is still slightly yellow, the muscle and sinew of the jaw not completely decomposed. I go through the catalogue of animals I have seen in the woods. The head seems too pointed for a raccoon's round face, much too small for a deer's skull. It looks like some large rodent, a possum most likely.

It dawns on me that I am holding something dead, that, like most things that occur in the shadows of the woods, no one should see me standing in the creek, at the base of this oak, with the skull of a long-dead possum in my hand. My mother is having enough problems convincing the neighbors that I *do* wear shoes and take

baths. I wrap my hands around the skull, trying to conceal it. I run up through the woods back to my house.

I don't remember what my parents were doing that day, most likely mowing the lawn or lying around watching golf and reading a book, but I sneak through the house and into my bathroom locking the door behind me.

In some attempt to make what I am holding more "hygienic," I grab the Ivory soap bar from the bathtub and begin scrubbing the skull in scalding hot water in our bathroom sink. As I do this, teeth left in the jaw begin to fall into the base of the sink and escape down the drain.

"Plink, plink, plink."

I stop what I am doing for fear of losing all the teeth and maybe even the jaw.

I hop onto the bathroom counter with the skull in my hand. In what I would recognize as the iconic image from Hamlet, I hold the skull in front of my face.

The blank stare of the eyeless sockets, the openings slightly rough and jagged.

The graceful curve of the jaw.

The remarkable mechanisms that fold the jawbone into the larger skull.

The empty nostrils at the end of the skull.

The peak of the skull.

I've never been this close to the structure and essence of a creature.

I sit the skull down and turn to face the mirror. I lift an eyebrow, wink, and stick out my tongue. I touch the softness of my temples, the hardness of my chin, and fatty pads of my cheeks. I

open my mouth and look at my teeth. The molars look almost identical to the remaining molars in the possum skull. I stick my index fingers under my upper lip and lift. A thin layer of tissue, muscle, nerves, and blood vessels cover the bone of my upper jaw. I stare into the mirror at it. My jaw seems so visible, the redness of the tissue becoming almost pink when layered over the whiteness of the bone.

I am alone with myself, with my bones, with the bones of an animal.

It suddenly becomes too real: the image of my skull trades places with the skull of the possum beside me. I hop off the counter and grab the skull. I find an empty plastic grocery bag downstairs, throw the skull in it, tie it up, and toss it in the trash.

3.

My breath is catching in my throat, my heart beating hard as he reaches down to unbutton his pants. His flaccid, twelve-year-old penis peaks out between the slits of his white Fruit of the Looms. My heel digs into the base of the tree behind me as he *tells* me to pull down my pants.

I must be about nine. This is the first time I have seen Jeremy's penis, but this won't be the first time he has seen the hairless folds of my genitals. It started as weird game. After I would go home from playing outside with Jeremy, I would tell him to stand behind my home's backyard fence. I would basically do a striptease in front of my second-story bedroom window, which faced the backyard. I would close the blinds when I was completely, or close to, naked.

My mother catches me doing this once. She tells me to close the blinds or the neighbors will see. I'm not sure if she sees

Jeremy down there behind the fence, watching me.

This time in the woods is different.

We have been playing in his backyard. His family has a large cherry tree and we climb up as far as we dare, picking dark red cherries (they are the sweetest), eating them and spitting pits at one another.

"Want to go b-bback int-t-t-to the wo-o-ods?" Jeremy manages to say, his legs dangling from a branch. His stutter always gets worse when he is nervous.

"What for?" I ask. Normally we just go, our days commonly ending in the woods building forts or swinging from grape vines.

"I want-t-t-t-t-t to sho-o-o-ow you someth-h-h-hing."

I shrug and jump from the tree.

The walk to the woods takes mere seconds.

We walk until we are surrounded by thick foliage.

"So" I smirk, "what have you got to show me?"

Jeremy doesn't say anything but begins to unbutton his pants. I understand what is about to happen, but I don't move. I'm curious to see "it." I've never seen an "it."

He reaches into his underwear and pulls out what seems like a thick roll of skin. His penis is fat and short, lying flaccidly on top of his unbuttoned shorts. He takes my hand and I touch it. It's soft and almost rubbery.

He laughs and puts it all away incredibly quickly.

"D-o-o-o what-t-t-t-t-t you-u-u-u do at-t-t-t-t the wind-d-d-d-dow. T-t-t-take of-f-f-f your-r-r-r pants-s-s-s."

I know there is something very wrong happening. I don't want to show him this in my woods, this close. The window is a

barrier. The act from afar, just a game. This is all too close and very real.

But.

I go ahead anyways, my heart beating in my throat, my head telling me (in a voice similar to my mother's) "don't, don't, don't."

I unbutton my shorts and creep my pink Disney Cinderella (I remember, for some reason, distinctly that it was Cinderella) panties down my invisible hips. My pre-pubescent vagina seems bare and formless, but when I feel his fingers against the front of it, creeping down to somewhere that feels foreign even to my fingers, I feel my body grow hot and I feel like I'm going to throw up.

I trip backwards over a tree root. There, in the dust, dirt, and leaves I gather up my shorts and, shooting a glance back at Jeremy looking very doe-eyed and blurry, I run home.

I tell my mother I fell in the woods, go upstairs, undress in my bathroom (which has no windows) and sink into a deep, tepid bath.

I never undress with the blinds open again. I continue to play with Jeremy until I am twelve or thirteen.

We never speak about what happened under that canopy of trees that afternoon.



the gendered messages found within disney movies

eryn kane

The legendary cartoonist, CEO, and American icon, Walt Disney, believed that "all cartoon characters and fables must be exaggeration, caricatures. It is the very nature of fantasy and fable" (http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/w/walt_disney.html). Disney's interpretation of famous childhood fables has been viewed by millions of girls throughout the world since the 1930s and, consequently, has become a recognized aspect of the American identity. Although Disney's intention for these cartoon fables was to be interpreted as exaggerated caricatures of reality, these characters and plots have become a form of media through which young girls interpret the world around them. For many young girls, the characters and plots found within these cartoons are their first lessons as to what it means to be a woman and the role of women in both society and relationships. For example, "in 1946, in conjunction with Walt Disney, the [personal product] industry...developed the first corporate film on [Menstruation], *The Story of Menstruation*, an animated cartoon that has been seen by approximately 93 million American women" (Brumberg 47).






According to Jean Kilbourne in *Killing Us Softly 3*, we live in "a world in which images of girls and women often project the illusion of female power and agency while at the same time subtly subverting them" (Kilbourne 2). In relation to female power, "a constant barrage of messages and subtle cultural expectations regarding physical attractiveness form the dominant standard: thinner is better, fat is bad...even for girls as young as seven or eight" (Kesselman 116). In a world in which the media presents young girls with contradictory images and negative messages relating to female power

and physical attractiveness, are Disney cartoons, shown to millions of young girls, exempt from this form of propaganda? If Disney cartoons are some of the first lessons that young girls receive about womanhood, what are the gendered messages within these characters and plots? What are the messages young girls are receiving in relation to appropriate female behavior, beauty, men, and self-worth from these "exaggerated fables?" What effect and influence can these messages have on young girls as they grapple with adolescence and their journey into womanhood?

To try to find answers to the posed questions, I watched five Disney cartoons: *The Little Mermaid*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Aladdin*, *Mulan*, and *The Princess and the Frog*. Each cartoon was carefully chosen based upon the ethnicity of the female protagonist, the plot, and the time period in which the story is set. I looked for similarities within each cartoon in relation to the appearance of the female protagonist, her behavior, her family background, and her interactions with male characters. *The Little Mermaid* (1989) introduces a young audience to sixteen-year-old mermaid and the female protagonist, Ariel. In the feature length cartoon, the audience follows Ariel on her journey of discovery and transformation in pursuit of her true love, a human man named Prince Eric. *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) is Disney's interpretation of the classic fairy tale of the same name. In the cartoon, Belle, the female protagonist, must sacrifice her freedom for her father's life and in return finds a hidden true love. *Aladdin* (1992) introduces a young audience to Princess Jasmine, Disney's first and only female heroine of Arabian descent. *Mulan* (1998) is Disney's interpretation of the famous Chinese legend of the same name. In the cartoon, the young audience follows Disney's first and only Chinese heroine as she must hide her

true identity from the world in order to defend her family honor and homeland. The Princess and the Frog (2009) features Disney's first and only African American female protagonist, Tiana. In the cartoon, the young audience is taken on an adventure as Tiana pursues her dreams and overcomes adversity in 1930s New Orleans.

Although each plot line of the five cartoons is extremely different, and each of the female protagonists is portrayed as having a unique story and personality, I found a number of striking similarities between the characters. To illustrate the similarities that I found amongst the female protagonists, I have created a table, as seen below.

Similarities	Ariel	Belle	Jasmine	Mulan	Tiana
Tiny waist, flat stomach, wide hips, full chest, perfect face					
Missing 1 parent	Has no mother	Has no mother	Has no mother		Has no father
Must hide or change something about self	To win the love of Prince Eric, Ariel trades her voice for the chance to become human	To save her father from imprisonment or death, Belle trades her freedom for her father's	To venture outside the Palace gates, Jasmine must disguise herself as a peasant	To save her father from military service, Mulan disguises herself as a man to enlist in the army	To try to help a person in need, Tiana is transformed into a frog
Has heterosexual relationship	Prince Eric	The Beast	Aladdin	Shang	Prince Naveen
Criticized for a sense of adventure or true self	discouraged by her father from pursuing her interest in the human world	criticized by her home village for loving to read and her disinterest in male suitors	discouraged by her father from pursuing adventures outside the Palace gates	criticized for not being an acceptable bride; discouraged by male comrades from being a soldier	told that she will never achieve her goal of owning her own restaurant

Is encouraged to marry by her father by Gaston by her father by her family by her mother

Based upon my findings, Disney movies send negative, problematic, and unrealistic messages to young girls as to what constitutes acceptable female beauty, behavior, and self-worth. Since all the female protagonists are portrayed as being thin, I have come to the conclusion that Disney cartoons reinforce the media dominant standard in which thin is good and fat is bad. Not only are these female protagonists extremely thin but their facial features are perfect, with full lips, big eyes, and skin free of blemishes. Since these women are portrayed as being the epitome of beauty and are therefore desired by their male counterparts, it is easy to see how "women must want to embody [these qualities] and men must want to possess women who embody [them]" (Wolf 121). The images of female beauty as seen in Disney cartoons can have a negative influence on young girls as they begin to mature and progress through adolescence. If girls do not meet the Disney definition of beauty they could be influenced to pursue diets and other forms of body transformation, and possess low self-esteem as they journey through adolescence. The images of beauty portrayed in Disney films and the inability to meet unrealistic standards could be a contributor in "4 out of 5 women [being] dissatisfied with their appearance" (Kilbourne 4).

In relation to acceptable female behavior found within Disney cartoons, young girls are taught to abandon their sense of adventure and to pursue a suitable courtship or marriage instead. The message found within Disney cartoons – to conform to parental wishes and to avoid adventure – could influence young girls to give up on their pursuits and instead strive for less-than-exceptional goals in life. Similar to acceptable female behavior found within Disney cartoons,

young girls are taught to change who they are to either pursue a dream or to have a man fall in love with them in order to live "happily ever after." Since only heterosexual relationships are portrayed in Disney cartoons and a relationship with a man is the epitome of happiness within these films, girls who have feelings for other women or do not have a boyfriend could feel "weird" or inadequate.

In a world in which young girls are exposed to negative images and unrealistic portrayals of women within the media, it is no surprise that Disney cartoons are no different. In order for girls and women to regain self-confidence in their body, personality, and abilities, a change needs to occur within the media and within society. Although this change will most likely not occur within the current generation or the next, it is the responsibility of women to oppose the messages found within these cartoons and to advocate for a more positive image of womanhood.

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bulimic

evelyn davis



CHOKING HAZARD: insecure toys
come with self-esteem issues. Gag reflex
included.

what the water gave to tia elisa

kathlene e.e. boone

My Tia Elisa is the sort of woman
who enjoys the idea of bubble baths,
but lacks the patience to finish them –

to think of spending more than
ten minutes submerged in the
luke warm gathering of zen and fuzz
from her sweater and her salts.

Every day, the door opens at
five thirty to reveal the
pit-stained, baggy-eyed remains of
Tia Elisa's day at work.

She pours a glass of chardonnay.
"At least thirty minutes!" she insists.

She parades into the bathroom
with a paperback.

The smell of grocery store candles
permeates the house.

Two minutes pass, and the prunes
begin to form on her red, polished
fingers and toes.

Determined, she imagines that
she is Kahlo's *What the Water Gave Me* –
her parents floating above her legs,
her grey body dangling from a noose,
the red and yellow dress from childhood.

But nothing works.
Another minute.

She is God Almighty, now, sitting
in a porcelain heaven. It's still
white.

Her core, her legs and feet all belong
to humankind.

Her belly button upward lives apart.

She is parting the clouds, their mystery
being that they look like bubbles. Her
palms are holy, her joints destructive.

She is freeing the Israelites, maybe.

She has sat, immobile, for
five long minutes.

I press my ear against the thin door and
the echoing marble floor is my witness.

Elisa has begun to let the water beneath
her drain into the basement, where my
sister has been squatting the entire time.

Slowly, slowly
the drops are released with utmost intent
and fear of being found out.

She finally emerges with a victorious
glimmer in a pink towel with black outlines
of roses and candy on it.

I have a toothy smile.

"Try again tomorrow?"

"Cálllese."

hopscotch, etc.

tony degenaro

Hopscotch *et cetera*,
jump roping around various neighborhoods in Cleveland,
you weren't always a woman, merry:
Once, you were a little girl,
Whose tender knees stuck out like twigs from a plaid skirt.
How often would the sounds of Donny Osmond
leap out of the old console record cabinet and
Into your dancing ears, bouncing underneath pigtails,
often to the dismay of your brother and father,
while eating a plum in a tree, swooning over teenage heartthrobs.
Did tears ever streak from soft blue eyes?
The malicious reminder of a tumble and fall,
scraping and cutting open elbows,
On the driveway and worse, reminding you that hurt
is well on its way, as your blood spills on the floor;
like an hour glass, counting down until you worry about my elbows
and knees.
As you grow,
all legs,
and the Beatles remind you to *twist and shout*,
What do you think about the dusk of adolescence?
as you change from the small, quiet
princess
into an adult, into a mother.

Of course,
when you smile at me, (a loving, caring, protective gaze)
I know nothing of this is lost:
you are a still that little girl, inside a woman.

