IDENTITY AND THE FEMALE BODY: CARSON McCULLERS'S FRANKIE ADDAMS

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Through the character of Frankie Addams, the 12-year-old protagonist in the 1946 novel, *The Member of the Wedding*, American Modernist author Carson McCullers (1917-1967) appraises the limited options for women in the twentieth century. She examines patriarchal hegemony in terms of quashing women's creativity through 15-year-old Frances in "Wunderkind" (1936), her first published short story. In the female character of Mick Kelly in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940), McCullers adds the social components of educational and economic disparities promulgated by gender inequality. McCullers takes these social constructions even further in her portrayal of Frankie Addams, for this adolescent female assumes three separate names and identities to reflect her conception of masculinity and femininity. McCullers proves unique in her creation of the feisty adolescent female character of Frankie Addams. Frankie is McCullers's most intricate—and most difficult and variably interpreted—female character. Like Jo March in Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* and, to an extent, the Laura character in Laura Ingalls Wilder's *Little House on the Prairie* series, Frankie is a tomboy who earnestly wants to break away from the feminine behavior society expects of her. Further, Frankie resembles Frances in "Wunderkind" and Mick in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* in many ways. All three characters are teenaged girls. While Frances approximates Frankie in terms of their shared name as well as their experiences with identity crises, Mick appears closest to Frankie concerning tomboyish proclivities and her search for an authentic identity. Scholars agree that Frances and Mick represent prototypes of Frankie, but Mick seems to be the most satisfying to readers because, at the end of her story, she still maintains her spunky personality and finds some semblance of hope for her future. Frankie, on the other hand, emerges at the end of her tale as "less

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attractive," according to Louise Westling, because "[t]he hard edge of her mind is gone, and all that is left is froth" (349), an assessment that will be examined later in this essay. Whether or not Frankie is a disappointment depends on each reader. However, when considering the Modernist theme of searching for an authentic identity and purpose, Frankie presents herself as a mosaic of selves, beginning as Frankie, metamorphosing into F. Jasmine, and finally settling on the identity of Frances.

Early critics tended to universalize Frankie's story, arguing that it concerns adolescent isolation and the attempt to come to terms with being separate from the world. Some believed the novel denotes an initiation story, with Frankie successfully—or unsuccessfully—navigating her adolescent angst. Oliver Evans argues that both *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* and *The Member of the Wedding* "involve the initiation of an adolescent into adulthood" (*The Ballad* 109). Both approaches, however, presuppose the journey through adolescence to be the same for boys and girls. Such "gender-blind reading," as Judith Giblin James terms it (106), can be understood in terms of post-World War II political and social attitudes. Because the world seemed to be splitting apart during the war, the postwar culture in the U.S. strongly emphasized unity and solidarity, with the concept of difference being discouraged and oftentimes suppressed. In essence, then, society viewed female experience and understanding as the same as that of males. For example, a female initiation story was interpreted through human (read: male) experience. Thus, James declares, "the world of literary criticism persisted in wrapping the problems of difference in a normative cloak of male, white, middle-class experience" (107). Early scholars analyzed *The Member of the Wedding* as a story about being human, that is, male, rather than specifically female. Chester E. Eisinger, for instance, discusses McCullers's works through this patriarchal approach:

> Her view of man's fate, therefore, adds little, in the largest sense to the dimensions of our understanding. . . . She has succeeded perhaps too well in creating an art form that is cut off from life. It is a form cut off from society, from morality, from religion, from ideas, from concern with man's burden or with man's hope. (258)

In another example specific to *The Member of the Wedding*, Richard M. Cook asserts that the novel's "concern is with human isolation and man's struggle to overcome it" (Carson McCullers 80). While it is understood that, at the time Eisinger and Cook wrote their critiques, the use of "man" was commonly used to mean "human," such a gender-specific term reflects the male lens through which most scholars and critics interpreted literature.

In addition to interpreting Frankie's tale as depictive of both male and female experiences and emotions, a number of critics disturbingly accepted at face value Leslie Fiedler's assessment of McCullers's tomboys as lesbian. These scholars used McCullers's own supposed lesbianism, bisexuality, or asexuality to interpret and analyze Frankie's personas, as well as the author's other female characters, including Miss Amelia from The Ballad of the Sad Café and Mick Kelly. Through Virginia Spencer Carr's thorough biography of McCullers, published in 1975, we may believe McCullers to have been bisexual, asexual, or, at the very least, sexually ambivalent (110). Carson McCullers fell in love with women, most deeply with Annemarie Clarac-Schwarzenbach, although no solid evidence suggests McCullers ever had a sexual relationship with any woman. She twice married Reeves McCullers and appeared to have, at least for a time, a sexual relationship with him. Further, both she and Reeves carried on an intimate relationship—whether sexual or not has not been determined—with Modernist composer David Diamond. In writing about McCullers, Carr declares, "To her, nothing human in nature was alien or abnormal. A love relationship between two men or two women could also be a very spiritual union that should be above petty jealousies" (171). Certainly, Carson McCullers dressed most frequently in men's clothing, often being portrayed in pictures wearing a man's white shirt, suit coat, and pants. But she also wore women's clothing, especially in her later years. In any event, Fiedler and others of his ilk coupled McCullers's use of autobiographical elements in her stories with her ambivalent sexuality to claim that her female characters, too, represent lesbians, bisexuals, or some other form of non-heterosexuality. For example, in his discussion of *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, A. S. Knowles points to

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McCullers's use of the words "strange" and "queer," John Singer's apparent homosexual love for Spiros Antonapoulos, Biff Brannon's acceptance of his feminine side, and, oddly, Mick's sexual encounter with Harry Minowitz, to assert that "the loneliness, the alienation experienced by her characters can be mitigated only in some basically homosexual orientation toward human relationships" (91). However, correlation does not equal causation. While McCullers utilized some aspects of her childhood and adolescence in her stories and may have been something other than heterosexual, it simply does not follow that she created her female characters to mirror herself. Such a reductive claim attenuates her imaginative and creative powers to mere autobiography and ultimately devalues McCullers as a Modernist writer, one who used her literary skill not only to create engaging, challenging fiction but also to address the sociopolitical issues of her time: sexism, racism, and economic disenfranchisement. James correctly asserts that early critics

> largely avoided noticing . . . those very tremors that foretell and accompany seismic social upheaval. Growing racial unrest, a teenage counterculture, rebellion against confining gender roles, sexual norms, and other brands of social conformity were already subterraneously in motion beneath postwar consensus culture. Novelists like McCullers registered the tremors minutely. (107)

Thus we see that, in the character of Frankie Addams, McCullers critiques the concepts of femininity and masculinity, effectively illustrating how gender restrictions and societal pressure to conform to culturally imposed feminine standards suppress, even alter, women's authentic identities and aspirations. In so doing, McCullers delves more deeply into the machinations of female role-playing in a patriarchal society.

When *The Member of the Wedding* begins, twelve-year-old Frankie suffers from a terrible identity crisis. In fact, she wishes to be someone other than herself: "This was the summer when Frankie was sick and tired of being Frankie" (22). She hates her life and herself because she feels isolated. Her best friend, Evelyn Owen, has moved to Florida, and Frankie has nobody else to play with. She no longer sleeps with her widowed father because he deems her too old to do so. Even her cat has run away, a situation that prompts Frankie to lament to Berenice Sadie Brown, the Addams's African American housekeeper, "'It looks to me like everything has just walked off and left me'" (31). Not only does Frankie feel isolated, but she also feels excluded, for the neighborhood girls refuse to let her join their club: "[U]ntil this summer she had been like a younger member of their crowd, but now they had this club and she was not a member. They said she was too young and mean" (12). Additionally, Frankie dislikes herself because she has "become a loafer and a big no-good who hung around the summer kitchen: dirty and greedy and mean and sad" (22). For twelve years, Frankie Addams has been carefree tomboy Frankie, but now she dons the identity of "loafer" and "no-good," and she adds "criminal" to her identity because she stole a knife from the Sears and Roebuck store and "committed a secret and unknown sin" with Barney MacKean in his garage (25). Frankie feels lonely, isolated, and excluded, and she also suffers from fear because she conflates her theft of the knife with the "secret sin" she and Barney perpetrated, convincing herself "the Law" may be after her. Therefore, she decides to remain at home throughout the summer, choosing to spend the long, hot summer days, afternoons, and evenings with Berenice and Frankie's six-year-old cousin, John Henry West, a situation that makes Frankie even more irritable, mean, and sad.

At this early stage of the novel, McCullers presents Frankie as a dissatisfied adolescent female on the cusp of puberty. Like most girls her age, she desires to belong to a group of likeminded females, but she clearly does not fit in because she prefers to be a tomboy. However, she instinctively knows that to be part of the group, she must change herself, at least outwardly, to be like the other girls. And because she stole a pocketknife, an instrument associated with masculinity, she labels herself a "thief." Frankie senses that she is on the verge of change, but she does not yet understand what that change may be. Simone DeBeauvoir declares that girls who are near the age of puberty realize that "the future not only approaches: it takes residence in her body"

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(367), referring to a girl's growth of breasts and body hair and the onset of menstruation. DeBeauvoir continues, "She is already free of her childish past, and the present seems but a time of transition; it contains no valid aims, only occupations" (367). While McCullers does not reveal whether Frankie is experiencing any physical changes brought on by puberty, she does address this time of waiting, of Frankie having no real aims, merely occupations of her time, which proves distinctly dissatisfying to her.

Like Mick Kelly, Frankie chooses a masculine identity. She dresses and behaves like a boy, wearing shorts and "a B.V.D. undervest" (4) and walking around barefoot, which creates thick callouses that she later cuts off with a butcher knife as she brags to herself that she has "the toughest feet in town" (28). To add to her boyish appearance, Frankie sports very short hair, prompting Berenice to observe, "You had all your hair shaved off like a convict" (90). Frankie knows she does not look or act like other girls her age, but she rebels against the American culture that dictates how women and girls should look, that is, being clean and wearing dresses.

Frankie also likes to play with knives, which she deems to be a masculine trait; certainly it symbolizes the phallus. When Berenice teases her about having a crush on the wedding—Frankie's brother, Jarvis, is to marry Janice Williams in two days, and the young girl is thrilled at the prospect of the wedding—Frankie grabs a knife from the table and throws it, the knife narrowly missing Berenice and sticking in a door. She boasts, "'I am the best knife-thrower in this town'" (36). Here, Frankie has not yet completely forsaken her "childish past," as DeBeauvoir terms it. Moreover, one can interpret Frankie's knife-throwing skills as her way of compensating for the penis she lacks. Thus, to be the best knife-thrower represents a form of male power for Frankie, something that typical girls of that time did not and could not possess.

Frankie's masculine persona is further accentuated when she utterly rejects the doll her brother and his fiancée give to her: "Frankie stared at the doll for a minute. 'I don't know what went on in Jarvis's mind when he brought me that doll. Imagine bringing me a doll!'" (18). Instead, she gives the doll to John Henry, who loves it and names it Lily Belle. Dolls play a prominent role in the indoctrination of female children to become feminine and assume the role of mother, according to DeBeauvoir. By playing with the doll, "the little girl ascertains that the care of children falls upon the mother, she is so taught; stories heard, books read, all her little experiences confirm the idea" (318). Yet, Frankie rejects this symbol of patriarchal subordination and domestication of females. Here, she maintains her sovereignty, in essence preserving some aspect of an authentic self.

Despite her feelings of autonomy, Frankie clearly struggles with her sense of self. She has always been a tomboy, but now she begins to see that, as a female, a twelve-year-old girl, she is expected to look more feminine. The mirror in the Addams kitchen creates distorted images; however, when Frankie looks at herself in that mirror, she believes she sees an accurate portrait of herself: "The reflection in the glass was warped and crooked, but Frankie knew well what she looked like" (4), and what she sees she does not like, for Frankie fears becoming a freak, like those she once saw at the Chattahoochee Exposition. She knows intuitively that, as a girl, she should be petite and pretty, but she has grown taller over the summer. She thinks to herself:

> This August she was twelve and five-sixths years old. She was five feet five and three-quarter inches tall, and she wore a number seven shoe. In the past year she had grown four inches, or at least that was what she judged. . . . If she reached her height on her eighteenth birthday, she had five and one-sixth growing years ahead of her. Therefore, according to mathematics and unless she could somehow stop herself, she would grow to be over nine feet tall. And what would be a lady who is over nine feet high? She would be a Freak. (19)

The word "lady" proves important here because Frankie instinctively knows she will grow out of her tomboy identity and assume the role of grown female, or in this

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case, “lady,” a term that implies beauty, refinement, and propriety. Constante González Groba rightly asserts, “[Frankie] has been growing so tall that she is afraid of becoming a freak one day, and this terror of freakishness is the terror of becoming an ugly girl, as the governing standards demand that women should be smaller than men and ‘cute’” (137). As a means to offset her fear of ugliness, Frankie wears perfume. She frequently douses herself with Sweet Serenade, for she is convinced the other girls are spreading rumors that she stinks. Frankie rubs the perfume on her head and pours some down the inside of her shirt: “‘Boy!” she said. ‘I bet I use more perfume than anybody in this town’” (13). Obviously, Frankie’s overuse of perfume causes people to accuse her of smelling bad, but here, we also see her attempting to become more feminine in the only way she seems to comprehend, by using large quantities of perfume. After all, society dictates that girls and women should not only be clean and look pretty but also smell lovely.

Despite Frankie’s attempt to conform to traditional modes of femininity, she desires to do masculine activities beyond playing with knives. The novel takes place in 1944, when World War II is still going on in Europe, Asia, and the Pacific, and McCullers writes, “It was the year when Frankie thought about the world” (23). Frankie envisions the various battles raging in Europe and Japan. “It was the summer when Patton was chasing the Germans across France. And they were fighting, too, in Russia and Saipan. She saw the battles, and the soldiers” (23). Like Alcott’s Jo March, who wants to fight in the American Civil War, Frankie wishes she were a boy so that she could be a Marine and fight in the Second World War. “But she could not join the war, and this made her sometimes feel restless and blue” (23). Frankie understands that, while women can participate in the war effort on the home front or as nurses overseas, they cannot do so in combat; that job is left solely to men. In *The Arsenal of Democracy*, A. J. Baime declares that by the spring of 1942, “the military was draining the labor force. As soon as a man was trained to build an airplane part, at great expense, he might be called to duty—here today, gone tomorrow” (156). Therefore, women were tapped to do the jobs that men had traditionally held, including working in factories to build war materiel and on farms to feed the nation and its soldiers. Thousands of women served as

> ‘Rosie the Riveter’ girls, or the women who converged upon the workplace in response to the desperate demand for workers. . . . [Women also served in] the first-ever female military units, such as the WAAC/WAC, or the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corp, later the Women’s Army Corp. These were the first legal opportunities for women to operate in large-scale, diversified military occupations. (Stewart 26)

Additionally, a number of women joined the WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), while thousands functioned as nurses serving near combat lines. However, only men were allowed to fight on those frontlines. Clearly, Frankie desires to be a soldier in the war, not to be relegated to the limited, “less glamorous” jobs women were allowed to inhabit. But Frankie is not a boy and cannot fight; therefore, she decides to donate blood so that soldiers from all over the world will have some of her blood in them, “and it would be as though she were close kin to all of these people” (23). Frankie convinces herself that she would be a hero of sorts and that, after the war, all the soldiers would call her “Addams” instead of just plain Frankie. However,

> [t]he Red Cross would not take her blood. She was too young. Frankie felt mad with the Red Cross, and left out of everything. . . . She was not afraid of Germans or bombs or Japanese. She was afraid because in the war they would not include her, and because the world seemed somehow separate from herself. (24)

Frankie’s gender, coupled with her age, precludes her from participating in what she believes is the great adventure of war. Like Mick in *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*, who wants to join Harry Minowitz in fighting Fascists, Frankie desires to perform masculine duties to help with the war effort. But her gender further adds to her identity confusion. She wants the opportunities males have—to fly planes, fight in the war, win “gold medals for bravery” (23)—but she realizes that her culture forbids females

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from performing such valorous feats. Hence, she becomes even more frustrated with her current existence.

However, Frankie begins her identity transformation when Jarvis and Janice visit the Addams household on a Friday. They inform Frankie and Mr. Addams that they will marry in Winter Hill on Sunday, and Frankie immediately becomes enamored with the upcoming wedding. After the couple leave, Frankie insists that Berenice convey to her the entire story of their visit and wedding announcement. Berenice once again relates how Frankie and John Henry ran into the house to see Jarvis and Janice: "'The next thing I realize you busted back through the kitchen and run up to your room. You came down with your organdie dress on and lipstick an inch thick from one ear to the next'" (29). Frankie understands the import of such a visit, so she dresses up for the occasion. One would expect a tomboy merely to tidy up a bit, perhaps by washing her face and hands. But Frankie chooses feminine attire and lipstick, which indicates a distinct change in how she perceives herself, and, more importantly, how she hopes others will view her. And when Janice tells her that she does not look too tall and that she, Janice, achieved her full height before she turned thirteen, Frankie sees the possibility that she may not grow up to be an ugly, freakish woman. Further, Frankie wishes her name were "Jane or Jasmine" (17), two undeniably feminine names. She desires the name change because the monikers Jarvis and Janice both begin with the letters J A. Frankie says, "'Jarvis and Janice and Jasmine. See?'" (17). The couple's wedding announcement signifies the genesis of Frankie's shift in identity: she dresses more like a girl, wishes to be called a feminine name, and connects herself with the couple as a way to ameliorate her feelings of isolation and exclusion.

Frankie desires to be a more feminine version of herself, and she asks Berenice for confirmation that she is not, in fact, a freak. When they discuss the freaks at the Chattahoochee Exposition, Berenice declares that they give her "'the creeps,'" to which Frankie asks, "'Do I give you the creeps?'" (21). Having seen the beautiful Janice—her hair "done up in a knot" and wearing "a green dress and green high-heel dainty shoes" (30)—Frankie frets that she will not measure up to the wedding event because she does not present herself like other girls. She asks Berenice, "'Do you think I will grow into a Freak?'" (21). Berenice kindly responds that Frankie most definitely will not. Frankie's next question, however, illustrates her longing to look more feminine: "'Well, do you think I will be pretty?'" (21). Berenice thinks Frankie is asking about the future, when she grows up. However, Frankie desperately wishes to make a noteworthy change in her self, her identity, by Sunday (in two days time), the day of the wedding. She declares, "'I want to do something to improve myself before the wedding'" (21). The word "improve" is significant because it suggests Frankie believes herself to be deficient as she currently is. McCullers's word choice intimates that in order to be "better," Frankie thinks she must be more feminine, that is, she must dress and behave like a girl, not as she so recently preferred, as a tomboy. DeBeauvoir rightly contends that "[b]y means of compliments and scoldings, through images and words, [the girl child] learns the meaning of *pretty* and *homely*; she soon learns that in order to make herself look like a picture, she puts on fancy clothes, she studies herself in a mirror" (314). At this point, then, Frankie unconsciously begins to conform to the cultural standards of femininity because she intuits that she is expected to and feels the obligation, perhaps even the inner yearnings, to do so.

In addition to becoming more feminine, Frankie conjoins her identity with the couple, Jarvis and Janice. On the evening of the wedding announcement, after the couple has left to return to Winter Hill, Frankie goes outside to contemplate the day's events. She pictures Jarvis and Janice as separate from her, 100 miles away in a different town, and she feels sick at heart. Suddenly, a thought occurs to her: *"They are the we of me"* (41). Frankie cogitates on this phrase:

> Yesterday, and all the twelve years of her life, she had only been Frankie. She was an I person who had to walk around and do things by herself. All other people had a we to claim, all others except her. When Berenice said we, she meant Honey [her foster brother] and Big Mama [her mother], her lodge, or her church. The

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> we of her father was the store. All members of clubs have a we to belong to and talk about. The soldiers in the army can say we, and even the criminals on chain-gangs. But the old Frankie had had no we to claim, unless it would be the terrible summer we of her and John Henry and Berenice—and that was the last we in the world she wanted. Now all this was suddenly over with and changed. There was her brother and the bride, and it was as though when first she saw them something she had known inside of her: *They are the we of me.* (42)

Although Frankie belongs to the "we" of Berenice and John Henry, she rejects this relationship in favor of the "we" of Jarvis and Janice. Frankie joins herself with the wedding, believing she and the newlyweds will embark on great adventures. According to Barbara A. White, Frankie "envies the soldiers she sees in town for their mobility, the opportunity they have to travel and see the world—in other words, to gain experience" (130). However, Frankie's envy does not exist simply because she wishes to have more experience. Rather, in terms of gender restrictions, Frankie understands that, as a female, she does not possess the freedoms that males have, that she cannot possibly do the things men can do (e.g., fighting in the war and traveling the world). Therefore, she finds another avenue by which she can achieve some of the sovereignty males enjoy. In her childlike thinking, Frankie believes that, by joining with Janice and Jarvis, she not only will belong to something outside herself but also will be able to go on journeys most people only dream about. She tells Berenice:

> 'Things will happen so fast we won't hardly have time to realize them. Captain Jarvis Addams sinks twelve Jap battleships and decorated by the President. Miss F. Jasmine Addams breaks all records. Mrs. Janice Addams elected Miss United Nations in beauty contest. . . . We will know decorated aviators and New York people and movie stars. We will have thousands of friends, thousands and thousands and thousands of friends. We will belong to so many clubs that we can't keep track of all of them.' (118)

Frankie's revelation that Janice and Jarvis are her "we of me" instantly prompts a change in her identity and gives her a purpose for her life: "For it was just at that moment that Frankie understood. She knew who she was and how she was going into the world" (45). Virginia Spencer Carr asserts that when McCullers was writing this novel, she experienced a flash of inspiration and discovered that "Frankie is in love with her brother and the bride, and wants to become a member of the wedding!" (*The Lonely Hunter* 121). Frankie's love for Jarvis and Janice sparks in her a yearning to transform herself into a new person. Moreover, she finds what she believes to be her true purpose in life: to belong to the couple and go on numerous adventures with them, to join the ranks of heterosexual norms and thus gain the benefits attached to that status. Frankie believes they will travel the world and always be together. Louise Westling declares, "The old question of who she is and what she will become ceases to torment her when she decides to be a member of the wedding and go out into the world with her brother and his bride" (347). But more to the point, Frankie's identity melds with the couple, which transforms her sense of self and generates in her a true purpose for her life.

Part Two of the tale presents a new identity for Frankie. She has become F. Jasmine Addams, a girl who no longer fears life and who now feels connected to the rest of the world, which for her means the town in which she lives. In fact, she tells Berenice, "'Don't call me Frankie! I don't wish to have to remind you any more'" (77). F. Jasmine credits her new confidence with belonging to the wedding, and throughout this section of the novel, the "old Frankie" is contrasted with the new F. Jasmine. For instance, "It was the old Frankie of yesterday who had been puzzled, but F. Jasmine did not wonder anymore; already she felt familiar with the wedding for a long, long time" (50). Upon waking to this new day, F. Jasmine decides to make visiting cards with her new name: "*Miss F. Jasmine Addams, Esq.*" (51). Groba writes that Frankie's transformation into F. Jasmine has "'feminine' romantic connotations," (139), but he couches the addition of "Esq." to the name in terms of sexuality. According to Groba, "[t]he ambivalent Frankie wants to become a member of a wedding without the physical sexual

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union marriage entails, to become an adult without going through the process of restriction required to become a 'woman' in her society" (139). Thus, she adds the masculine "Esq." However, Frankie does not yet fully understand human sexuality. The adolescent girl rejects the descriptions of adult sexual activities told to her by the older girls. She tells John Henry, "'They were talking nasty lies about married people. When I think of Aunt Pet and Uncle Ustace. And my own father! The nasty lies! I don't know what kind of fool they take me for'" (12). Further, when Frankie was nine years old, she mistook Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe—boarders in the Addams's home—having sex, but in her child mind, she believed that Mr. Marlowe had been experiencing "a fit" (40). And she recalls "the unknown sin that [Barney MacKean] showed her, that later made her want to throw a knife between his eyes" (83), a reference to Barney exposing his penis to her. Clearly, Frankie/F. Jasmine does not yet understand the ways of adult heterosexuality; instead, she considers it to be unimaginable, some sort of physical ailment, or something sinful. Thus, the honorific of "Esquire" more likely reflects F. Jasmine's desire "to be known and recognized" (61). In other words, F. Jasmine, who still thinks more like an adolescent than an adult, chooses to add the title to reinforce that she is an important individual in the world.

While Part One—the Frankie section—takes place almost solely in the Addams's kitchen, Part Two shows a self-assured F. Jasmine who goes to purchase new wedding clothes and walks throughout the town telling nearly everyone she meets about the wedding:

Because of the wedding, F. Jasmine felt connected with all she saw, and it was as a sudden member that on this Saturday she went around the town. She walked the streets entitled as a queen and mingled everywhere. It was the day when, from the beginning, the world seemed no longer separate from herself and when all at once she felt included. (49)

Gone is the fearful, mean, and sad Frankie. Yet, in order to maintain her identity as F. Jasmine, she consciously must suppress the old Frankie within her. As the narrator relates, "the ghost of the old Frankie, dirty and hungry-eyed, trudged silently along not far from her" (61). For example, F. Jasmine enters the Blue Moon Café, a place she never dared go as Frankie. She tells the Portuguese owner about the wedding, and as she prepares to leave, she says "'Adios'" (60). Throughout the summer, Frankie frequently wore an old Mexican hat. So after F. Jasmine bids the café owner farewell, she automatically reaches up to her head to tip her hat, which, as F. Jasmine, she no longer wears. She suddenly realizes her error, feels ashamed, and pretends to scratch her head instead, as a way to cover for her mistake. Despite feeling embarrassed, however, her new identity allows her to continue on with her mission of buying new clothes and enlightening everyone about her new life with Janice and Jarvis, and she walks with a fresh feeling of "lightness, power, entitlement" (55). Where the name "Frankie" represents fear and confusion, "F. Jasmine" signifies power, sovereignty, and hope, attributes associated with male identity.

Throughout Part Two, F. Jasmine accedes to cultural standards of femininity in her sartorial choices, even though she does not fully comprehend the societal nuances attached to them. While Frankie dresses like a tomboy and takes pride in her tough, calloused feet, F. Jasmine prefers to clothe herself in her petticoat, pink organdie dress, and black pumps. She carries a pink pocketbook, wears lipstick, and splashes on Sweet Serenade perfume. Moreover, when she informs her father she needs "'to buy a wedding dress and some wedding shoes and a pair of pink, sheer stockings'" (52), he responds, "'Charge them at MacDougal's'" (66), the local store. F. Jasmine rebels at having to purchase her clothing at that store. "'I don't see why we always have to trade at MacDougal's just because it's a local store. . . . Where I am going there will be stores a hundred times bigger than MacDougal's'" (66). Here, we see the more feminine F. Jasmine desiring to be fashionable and shop at classier establishments. Old Frankie would not shrink at having to trade at the local retailer, but "mature" F. Jasmine most certainly does. F. Jasmine adopts the cultural stereotype that grown women prefer to dress, look, and smell pretty and shop at trendy stores. Later, she tries on a number of dresses and finally chooses an ill-fitting orange satin evening gown, silver slippers, and silver hair ribbon to wear to the wedding ceremony. When F. Jasmine

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shows Berenice her new bargain basement outfit, the housekeeper is appalled:

> 'What's the matter?' F. Jasmine asked.
>
> 'I thought you was going to get a pink dress.'
>
> 'But when I got in the store I changed my mind. What is wrong with this dress? Don't you like it, Berenice?'
>
> 'No,' said Berenice. 'It don't do.'
>
> 'What do you mean? It don't do.'
>
> 'Exactly that. It just don't do.'
>
> F. Jasmine turned to look in the mirror, and she still thought the dress was beautiful. (89)

Berenice fully comprehends the social implications of wearing such a lurid color of orange to a wedding, especially for a 12-year-old girl, but newly feminized F. Jasmine does not. She believes the outfit to be gorgeous and does not see it as inappropriate to the occasion. She insists, "'I only want to look good'" (91). Barbara A. White asserts that "she does not yet understand society's division of women into 'nice' (pink organdie) and 'not nice' (orange satin)" (128). In her assessment of the orange dress, Rachel Adams declares that "[i]nstead of transforming Frankie into a woman, the gown highlights the discrepancy between the body's awkward suspension between youth and adulthood, and the garment's unfulfilled promise of glamour and sophistication" (560). More importantly, while F. Jasmine's choice of the orange satin dress points to her desire to be a more mature and feminine teenager, in reality, the dress signifies her immaturity and lack of knowledge concerning the underlying values attached to female clothing.

Despite her inner transformation into F. Jasmine, the old Frankie still exists. Berenice points out that because Frankie shaved off nearly all her hair at the beginning of summer, wearing a hair ribbon "'just looks peculiar,'" to which F. Jasmine replies, "'Oh, but I'm washing my hair tonight and going to try to curl it'" (90). In fact, as Frankie in Part One, the young girl regrets having cut her hair so short and tells Berenice, "'The big mistake I made was to get this close crew-cut. For the wedding I ought to have long bright yellow hair. Don't you think so?'" (18). Once again, we see Frankie/F. Jasmine understand, and more importantly, accept, society's vision of female beauty. In *The Feminine Mystique*, Betty Friedan recalls "women dying of cancer [who] refused a drug which research had proved might save their lives: its side effects were said to be unfeminine. 'If I have only one life, let me live it as a blonde,' a larger-than-life-sized picture of a pretty, vacuous woman proclaimed from newspaper, magazine, and drugstore ads" (17). Friedan then states that, at the time she performed the research for her book, "three out of every ten women dyed their hair blonde" (17). Frankie holds to this conception of female beauty: a woman (that is, a white woman) must wear her hair long and preferably be blonde. When Berenice tells her that the "'brown crust'" on Frankie's elbows does not match with a "'grown woman's evening dress'" (90), F. Jasmine hides her filthy elbows, for she knows that on this point, Berenice speaks the truth. However, F. Jasmine later reassures Berenice that she will take two baths that Saturday evening: "'One long soaking bath and scrub with a brush. I'm going to try to scrape this brown crust off my elbows. Then let out the dirty water and take a second bath'" (112). Thus, we witness the exterior conversion of Frankie into F. Jasmine: she wears dresses, bathes, wishes to curl her hair, and desires to shop at a "good" store, not the same store where Frankie shopped.

Essentially a mother figure to Frankie, Berenice reinforces in the teenager the cultural standards of femininity, some of which represent negative stereotypes. The housekeeper encourages F. Jasmine to focus on finding a "'nice little white boy beau,'" one who will pay her way to the movies (82). Berenice further declares that F. Jasmine must "'fix yourself up nice in your dresses. And speak sweetly and act sly'" (83). Her emphasis on acting sly and speaking nicely bolsters the notion that, not only must a woman play a role—that she must not be genuine—she must also somehow trick a man in order to catch him. Berenice underscores the societal expectation that women must be artificial rather than authentic and that finding a boyfriend or husband should be a woman's goal in life. When John

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Henry asks her how many beaus she has had in her life, Berenice responds, "'How many! Lamb, how many hairs is in these plaits? You talking to Berenice Sadie Brown'" (84). Married four times, Berenice fully accepts these culturally imposed values of femininity; in fact, she prides herself on fulfilling them. F. Jasmine, too, seems to believe in Berenice's teachings because she tells the housekeeper that she should marry Mr. T. T. Williams since she is not getting any younger. As Barbara A. White has noted, scholars interpret Berenice as kindly and helpful to Frankie, but, in fact, "McCullers presents Berenice as a completely man-oriented woman. For her to talk about her life means to talk about her four previous husbands and current beau" (129). White points to Berenice's pride at being married at the age of thirteen, her preference for associating with men rather than women, and her aversion to sleeping alone (129-130). Whereas Frankie oftentimes disregards Berenice's stories, F. Jasmine listens intently, which prompts her statement that the housekeeper should settle down and marry T. T., a declaration that reflects yet another cultural expectation for women: they must marry young or risk becoming a lonely spinster.

The idea of naming proves important in this novel as well. In "Passing: Narcissism, Identity, and Difference," Carole-Anne Tyler discusses identity in terms of the symbolic:

> The wish for one's own terms and one's proper identity, perhaps the most deeply private property of all, is an impossible desire since both are held in common with others in the community as an effect of the symbolic. We can never be sure what is 'coming out' of us for the other, or from the other. Nevertheless, there persists a paradoxical desire to be self-present to others, to come out as our proper self to ourselves through the other's recognition of our proper name and image. (230)

For F. Jasmine, one's name does not necessarily equate to an authentic self. At twilight on that Saturday before the wedding, she, Berenice, and John Henry sit in the kitchen and discuss life in general, when F. Jasmine wonders aloud why it is illegal for someone to change his or her name. Berenice declares that a law allowing name changes would only cause confusion: "'Just think. Suppose I would suddenly up and call myself Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. And you would begin naming yourself Joe Louis. And John Henry would try to pass off as Henry Ford. Now what kind of confusion do you think that would cause?'" (113). Curiously, Berenice suggests a man's name for the girl, which implies that she still views F. Jasmine as tomboy Frankie, despite the fact she now dresses like a girl and insists that everyone call her by her new feminine moniker. F. Jasmine argues that people should be able to choose their own names, "'to a name you prefer,'" especially if the original name "'doesn't suit you'" (113). Clearly, F. Jasmine believes that by simply changing her name, she can discard her Frankie identity, not realizing that that identity is all part of her self.

Their discussion soon turns philosophical as Berenice asserts that "'things accumulate around your name'" (113). According to Berenice, life events and daily situations amass so that "'soon the name begins to have meaning'" (113). The adolescent girl declares that her name—Frankie—means nothing to anybody. Here, the old Frankie resurfaces because F. Jasmine refers to her original name, her first identity. In essence, then, F. Jasmine still thinks of herself as Frankie despite her name change. As the girl tries to explain what she means, she grows more and more agitated, eventually reverting back to her F. Jasmine identity, walking swiftly around the kitchen while describing all the adventures she and the wedded couple will undertake: "'We will be members of the whole world. Boyoman! Manoboy!'" (118). Suddenly, the old Frankie pops up once more as she grabs the butcher knife from a drawer, not wanting to use it but simply to have something "in her hand and wave about as she hurried around the table" (117). Soon, Frankie breaks down crying and sits on Berenice's lap for comfort. They continue their discussion of names and identities. Berenice suggests that people in the world are caught in their identities:

> 'We all of us somehow caught. We born this way or that way and we don't know why. But we caught anyhow. I born Berenice. You born Frankie. John Henry born John Henry. And maybe we wants to widen and bust free. But no matter what we do we still caught. Me is me and you is you and he is he. We each one of us somehow caught all by ourself.' (119)

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F. Jasmine declares that she does not want to be caught, to which Berenice agrees but offers up that she is more caught than Frankie because of her race. She declares, "'I'm caught worse than you is. . . . Because I'm black. . . . Because I'm colored. Everybody is caught one way or another. But they done drawn completely extra bounds around colored people'' (119). Berenice's declaration echoes W. E. B. DuBois's concept of double consciousness found in his foundational work about race in the United States, *The Souls of Black Folk*:

> It is a peculiar sensation, this double-consciousness. . . . One ever feels his twoness—an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body. . . . The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. (2-3)

While McCullers aptly points to the double-bind of African Americans, where they are "caught" because of the color of their skin, she utilizes Frankie's identity crises to reveal that women, too, suffer from a double-bind because of their gender, that is to say, they are human beings, but, in patriarchal societies, they are also viewed as Other because the standard by which all things are assessed and valued (or devalued) is male, not female. Throughout the novel, Frankie struggles to find her authentic self. She seems most comfortable in her guise of tomboy, but she also realizes she is expected to conform to the ideals of female beauty and behavior. Therefore, whether she wishes to adapt to these standards, she feels compelled to do so. McCullers frequently points to the imposition of feminine ideals, especially in her F. Jasmine character. Just as Berenice is caught because of her race, F. Jasmine is caught because of her gender.

Additionally, in her philosophical discussion with Berenice, F. Jasmine conveys, as best a twelve-year-old can, the existential predicament of modernity. Rather than think of people being caught, as Berenice believes, Frankie argues that they are caught but also "loose," disconnected from each other. She tries to explain her feelings to Berenice:

> 'I mean you don't see what joins [people] up together. You don't know where they all came from, or where they're going to.' . . . F. Jasmine's voice was thin and high. 'But what is it all about? People loose and at the same time caught. Caught and loose. All these people and you don't know what joins them up. There's bound to be some sort of reason and connection. Yet somehow I can't seem to name it. I don't know.' (120-121)

In his dissertation, "Ideas in the Raw: American Modernist Fiction as a Source of French Existentialism," Jonathan M. Bradley declares, "Frankie expresses the fundamental existential understanding that people possess a freedom that makes knowing one another impossible" (143). According to Bradley, who utilizes Simone de Beauvoir's The Second Sex to analyze the existential and feminist elements in McCullers's novel, both Berenice and F. Jasmine conclude that people are, in essence, trapped by societal dictates. However, how they come to this conclusion differs in terms of their personal perspective. He states, "Berenice is focused on each individual's conception of themselves. She argues that we, which in her slang refers to each person, might want to bust free. Frankie, on the other hand, is focused on those outside herself. She sees 'all people' and is concerned with knowing where they are from or going" (143). Concerning cultural gender restrictions, DeBeauvoir asserts that men define women, that "[w] oman is not a completed reality, but rather a becoming, and it is in her becoming that she should be compared with man; this is to say, her *possibilities* should be defined" (38). Thus, Bradley argues that F. Jasmine's notion of loose "refers to their freedom to become something new at any moment, and that is a freedom she also wishes to have" (143). However, as a female, F. Jasmine cannot attain this freedom because of patriarchal constraints applied to women. As much as she desires the sovereignty that men enjoy—much like Jo March does in *Little Women* and, to a lesser degree, Laura in the *Little House* series—F. Jasmine cannot do so because of her gender. Bradley rightly asserts that both Berenice and Frankie's "understanding is that everyone is imbued with an innate freedom and almost endless possibilities,

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but society restricts those possibilities, makes demands on people, and generally stifles those who want to break out, particularly women" (144). In F. Jasmine's case, she instinctively perceives, if not fully comprehends, these societal limitations placed on her, not only as a human being, but additionally as a female. This intuitive "knowing" causes much of the strife she encounters in her endeavor for an authentic identity. She desires to be a full human being, but the society in which she lives constrains her because of her female gender.

The most alarming aspect of Frankie's metamorphosis into F. Jasmine occurs when a soldier in the Blue Moon Café attempts to rape her. Tomboy Frankie disdains all things sexual, having declared that adult sexual activities represent "'nasty lies!'" (12). She interprets Mr. and Mrs. Marlowe's sexual activity as the husband suffering from "a fit" (40). And she hates the "unknown sin that [Barney MacKean] showed her in the garage" (83). However, on her walkabout through town as F. Jasmine, she becomes intrigued with a soldier she meets in an alley, for he "was the only person during that day who spoke first to F. Jasmine and invited her to join with him" (69). Dressed in her pink organdie dress and black pumps, she appears older than her twelve years, especially to the soldier, who has been drinking all morning in the Blue Moon. From the start, McCullers shows that F. Jasmine is out of her depth with the young man. She attempts to make polite conversation, but he interprets her comments sexually. For example, knowing he is a soldier, she wishes to know where he will be deployed once his leave is over. She asks him, "'Do you have any idea where you will be going?'" to which he responds that he is on a three-day leave (69). "He had mistaken the meaning of her question, for she had asked it to him as a soldier liable to be sent to any foreign country in the world, but, before she could explain what she had meant, he said: 'There's a kind of hotel around the corner I'm staying at'" (69), an obvious indication that he wishes to take her there to have sex. However, naïve F. Jasmine does not comprehend the true meaning behind his comment. So she takes his elbow when offered and walks with him to the hotel. Here, F. Jasmine marvels that she is actually walking with a soldier, "with one of the groups of loud, glad gangs that roamed around the streets together or walked with grown girls. They danced at the Idle Hour and had a good time, while the old Frankie was asleep. . . . And now F. Jasmine walked with a soldier who in his mind included her in such unknown pleasures" (70). The adolescent girl, so wishing to be grown up and to belong, thrills at the thought of associating with the soldier, yet she also feels "an uneasy doubt" about the situation, a feeling she cannot place (70). Here, McCullers points to F. Jasmine's intuition, for she knows, deep inside herself, that she does not fit with the soldier, nor does she belong in the Blue Moon, a place she understood to be a café and bar, not a hotel where people stay overnight. Still, she disregards her apprehension, accepts a beer from the soldier, and tries to converse with him once more. Interestingly, F. Jasmine unconsciously realizes she cannot be her real self around this man; therefore, she speaks "in a voice that was absolutely new to her—a high voice spoken through the nose, dainty and dignified" (71). She changes how she speaks because she believes that is what women are supposed to do to attract men. F. Jasmine talks about the war, all the time thinking to herself about the wedding couple and how much she feels connected to the world. The soldier, getting increasingly drunker, cannot follow F. Jasmine's words any more than she can understand his. When they met earlier, she had witnessed the soldier trying to buy the monkey from the monkey-man, an organ-grinder of sorts. So she says to the soldier, "'That certainly is a darling little monkey,'" and he replies, "'What monkey?'" (73). He admits he has had too much beer and offers to meet her at 9:00 that night after he has rested. F. Jasmine, stunned at the thought of going on a date, thinks to herself that the "very word, date, was a grown up word used by older girls. But here again there was a blight upon her pleasure. If he knew she was not yet thirteen, he would never have invited her, or probably never joined with her at all. There was a troubled sense, a light uneasiness" (74). The girl instinctively knows that "dating" this soldier is wrong for both of them, yet she desperately wishes to be someone other than old Frankie, fearful and sad. She wishes to be grown-up, feminine F. Jasmine, a girl who looks, dresses, and acts like a woman. Therefore, she agrees to meet him, but when she does, her intuition

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once again warns her of danger. Yet, she feels compelled to follow him up the stairs because she believes that is what is expected of her as a female: "The soldier was waiting at the foot of the stairs and, *unable to refuse*, she followed after him" [my emphasis] (135). When he becomes sexually forceful with her, she bites down on his tongue and brains him with a glass pitcher. At this point, F. Jasmine connects the soldier's sexual advances with all the other sexual experiences she has encountered—Barney in the garage, the older girls' sex talk, the Marlowe's in the front bedroom—and flees the room via the fire escape. In this scene, McCullers demonstrates the danger associated with Frankie's new identity, F. Jasmine. In *Lovers and Beloveds: Sexual Otherness in Southern Fiction 1936-1961*, Gary Richards asserts that F. Jasmine "seems largely unaware of the sexual element when she accepts the date with the nameless soldier, doing so only because it affirms her maturity" (187). F. Jasmine does wish to date the soldier because it makes her feel older than she really is, yet another aspect of her new self. Old Frankie would not have placed herself in such a perilous position, but feminized F. Jasmine, following the cultural dictates of the feminine, feels obligated to ignore her intuition in favor of acquiescing to the man. McCullers offers a subtle but clear critique of these patriarchal cultural norms that dictate women should change themselves for men.

Part Three of the novel begins with a flashback of Frankie still as F. Jasmine. She humiliates herself at the wedding by being forcefully removed from the honeymoon car as she repeatedly screams to the newlyweds, "'Take me!'" (147). On the bus ride home, F. Jasmine transforms into Frances, a girl who wishes "the whole world to die" (144). Upon returning home, Frances attempts to run away from home, but "The Law" catches her in the Blue Moon Café. Three months pass, and thirteen-year-old Frances appears to have accepted her female self. John Henry has died from meningitis, and, for a time, Frances regrets being forbidden to visit him when he was sick. Yet, "[h]e came to her once or twice in nightmare dreams, . . . But the dreams came only once or twice, and the daytime now was filled with radar, school, and Mary Littlejohn" (162), her new best friend. This new persona, Frances, appears to be a self-absorbed teenaged girl, one who "'is just mad about Michelangelo'" (159). She now wishes to be "a great poet—or else the foremost authority on radar" (159). Here, the old Frankie peeks through because at the time McCullers wrote the novel, women rarely became famous scientists, or at least were not recognized openly as such. For example, it only recently came to light that during World War II, the famous Hollywood actress, Hedy Lamarr, helped invent a telecommunications system designed to disrupt radio-guided torpedoes. It is unlikely that F. Jasmine would wish to be a famous radar specialist, but Frankie certainly would. As such, Frances seems to be an amalgamation of Frankie and F. Jasmine. She prepares for Mary Littlejohn's visit by "making sandwiches, cutting them into fancy shapes and taking great pains" (159), something Frankie would not consider doing but that F. Jasmine likely would do. Moreover, like Frankie and F. Jasmine, Frances fantasizes that she and Mary will travel the world and have adventures; Frankie wished to do these activities as a boy, while F. Jasmine desired to travel with the Janice and Jarvis, her "we of me."

One aspect of Frances's personality, though, proves disheartening. She purposefully hurts Berenice with her words. On the bus ride home, Frances sits with Berenice in the section designated for "colored people, and when she thought of it she used the mean word she had never used before, nigger—for now she hated everyone and wanted to spite and shame" (144). Additionally, Frances takes exception to Berenice's description of Mary Littlejohn as "lumpy and marshmallow-white" (160). As she prepares the dainty sandwiches for Mary's visit, Frances tells Berenice:

> 'There's no use our discussing a certain party. You could not possibly understand her. It's just not in you.' She had said that once before to Berenice, and from the sudden faded stillness in her eye she knew that the words hurt. And now she repeated them, angered because of the tinged way Berenice had said the name, but once the words were spoken she was sorry. (160)

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Despite Frances's regret at hurting Berenice, she then indignantly corrects the housekeeper when Berenice calls Mary's braids "pigtails." "'Braids!'" Frances cries (160). In her examination of "the 'girling'" of girls, Judith Butler discusses the power of names: "The naming is at once the setting of a boundary, and also the repeated inculcation of a norm" (8). In Frances's case, her new moniker reveals not only a boundary of behavior—she no longer resembles either Frankie or F. Jasmine and has become quite a different personage—but also Butler's notion of the inculcation of a norm. In other words, through her behavior, Frances now conforms to the socially constructed, patriarchal vision of femininity. Thus, we see McCullers render this adolescent girl's change in personality, from fearful Frankie to confident and feminine F. Jasmine to thoughtless and self-absorbed Frances.

Scholars have offered a number of different interpretations of Frances in McCullers's ending to the story. Margaret B. McDowell believes Frances has "failed to develop in any genuine sense. A superficial self-assurance, along with heightened insensitivity and complacency, pass for maturity" (*Carson McCullers* 82). Joseph R. Millichap declares that in choosing to be with Mary Littlejohn, Frances "believes the girl can provide her with an identity—the identity not achieved in the wedding. Of course, she is mistaken; Mary will disappoint her just as the wedding has, but she does not know this now. Now she is alive with a heedless love, love which is really self-love and self-delusion" ("A Critical Reevaluation" 105). Louise Westling argues that Frances is not as appealing a character as "frightened tomboy Frankie. She has become a silly girl . . . . [who] instead gushes sentimental nonsense about the Great Masters. The hard edge of her mind is gone, and all that is left is froth" (349). Certainly, Frances presents herself as a somewhat persnickety person, but considering her age, such a trait hardly seems unusual. Moreover, Westling's statement implies that Frances's identity will remain static for the rest of her life. Frances is merely thirteen years old, still a girl, who has much living and learning and changing to experience. To suggest that she will continue on as the self-absorbed, rather frivolous Frances does not take into account the transformations that have already taken place in the girl. As Sarah Gleeson-White declares, "Frankie's parade of feminine masks, signaled by her name changes as well as her dress, parodies any notion of a fixed identity" (*Strange Bodies* 90). She declares:

> There is no such thing here as a peeling away of masks in the hope of getting to some firm core. Beneath each mask lies another, and another. The reader is foiled at every turn in any attempt to get to the bottom of identity through Frankie's various name-crossings, dress, and behavior. Behind the sensible 'Frances' is the flighty 'F. Jasmine,' and behind her the tomboy 'Frankie.' But the masquerade does not stop there for 'Frankie' is another mask, of masculinity, which enacts a type of gender suspension. (90-91)

While Gleeson-White correctly assesses the notion of Frankie's masks, we cannot discount the masks that Frances will continue to adopt as a female in a patriarchal society. As Frankie, she tries to rebel against her gender, wishing she possessed the sovereignty that boys inherently have. Yet, intuitively she knows that as a girl, she is expected to look and behave in a feminine manner; hence, her declaration that she should really have long, yellow hair. F. Jasmine attempts to adapt to culturally imposed standards of womanly dress and behavior, and she nearly gets raped for her efforts. Although Frances seems to accept the restrictions of her gender, we do see that she still holds some element of the "tomboy self-reliance" and "scrappy assertiveness" that Westling speaks of concerning Frankie (341), for Frances dreams of being a radar specialist. Nevertheless, the vast majority of the novel centers on societal restrictions for women. As Barbara A. White declares, "Frankie has done exactly what has been expected of her, what she has been educated to do" (141). White couches this statement in terms of Frankie losing her very self, but she has not lost her self. She simply continues adding masks as the patriarchal culture dictates: she must be beautiful, act sly, and search for a man to complete her. Both Louisa May Alcott and Laura Ingalls Wilder understood well these expectations and wrote their characters to critique but

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ultimately accept them. McCullers's Frances, too, seems to comprehend them. If she chooses to don the mask of anything other than the feminine, her identity could become that of a lonely spinster.

As an author during the Modernist era, McCullers lived through the existential crises that took place after World War I, addressing the human need to be genuine and find a true purpose in life. Certainly, middle class women's roles were greatly restricted during the Modernist era, notwithstanding the freedom from the domestic sphere many experienced during both World Wars. Despite their war work outside the home, these women were expected to return to the culturally designated realm of the home, create comfortable havens for their husbands, and produce children. Moreover, McCullers clearly understood the female desire to be and do more than the male-dominated society dictated, that there was more to a woman's life than being a wife and mother. Through the three personas of Frankie Addams, McCullers subtly but clearly critiques the American culture that not only conditions women to forego their own aspirations and adapt themselves to serve males, but that also imposes standards that force girls and women to be inauthentic persons.

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