

INFORMATION TO USERS

This was produced from a copy of a document sent to us for microfilming. While the most advanced technological means to photograph and reproduce this document have been used, the quality is heavily dependent upon the quality of the material submitted.

The following explanation of techniques is provided to help you understand markings or notations which may appear on this reproduction.

1. The sign or "target" for pages apparently lacking from the document photographed is "Missing Page(s)". If it was possible to obtain the missing page(s) or section, they are spliced into the film along with adjacent pages. This may have necessitated cutting through an image and duplicating adjacent pages to assure you of complete continuity.
2. When an image on the film is obliterated with a round black mark it is an indication that the film inspector noticed either blurred copy because of movement during exposure, or duplicate copy. Unless we meant to delete copyrighted materials that should not have been filmed, you will find a good image of the page in the adjacent frame.
3. When a map, drawing or chart, etc., is part of the material being photographed the photographer has followed a definite method in "sectioning" the material. It is customary to begin filming at the upper left hand corner of a large sheet and to continue from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps. If necessary, sectioning is continued again—beginning below the first row and continuing on until complete.
4. For any illustrations that cannot be reproduced satisfactorily by xerography, photographic prints can be purchased at additional cost and tipped into your xerographic copy. Requests can be made to our Dissertations Customer Services Department.
5. Some pages in any document may have indistinct print. In all cases we have filmed the best available copy.

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. ZEEB ROAD, ANN ARBOR, MI 48106
18 BEDFORD ROW, LONDON WC1R 4EJ, ENGLAND

8023705

GONSHER, DEBRA ANN

STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA:
1958-1978

City University of New York

PH. D.

1980

University
Microfilms
International

300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106

18 Bedford Row, London WC1R 4EJ, England

Copyright 1980

by

Gonsher, Debra Ann

All Rights Reserved

STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN
in
CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN DRAMA:
1958-1978

by

DEBRA A. GONSHER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate
Faculty in Theatre in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University
of New York.

1980

© COPYRIGHT BY
DEBRA A. GONSHER
1980

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Theatre in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

5/16/80
Date

Stanley G. Waver
Chairman of Examining Committee

5/16/80
Date

Stanley G. Waver
Executive Officer

Alberzema C
Ezra M. Roberts
Supervisory Committee

The City University of New York

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my indebtedness to Professor Stanley A. Waren, whose superb guidance and support were unrelenting from the inception of this work. More than a mentor, he has given unselfishly of his time and energy. I would also like to express my appreciation to Professor Albert Bermel, whose comments and criticism regarding theatre underline his brilliance as both a critic and theorist, and to Professor Vera Roberts, whose expertise on American theatre was an important aid to this work.

In addition, I would like to thank Robert Zuckerman who helped uncover many miscellaneous dates and statistics; Margaret Knapp, whose theatrical expertise and suggestions regarding format were invaluable; Carol Van Dyke, who helped me organize and who typed this work with such care; and Arlene Feltman, who acted as a sounding board for many aspects of this work and whose belief in me has never failed.

This dissertation is dedicated to Joel Forman, my most rigorous critic and my most steadfast supporter. A companion for a lifetime, he is always able to make me laugh.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Scope and Purpose	
Methods and Problems	
II. THEATRE AND SOCIETY.	17
Influence of Art on Society	
Role of Women in Contemporary Society	
III. STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN	32
Definitions	
Criteria of Stereotypes	
Analysis of Plays According to Criteria	
IV. THE IDEAL WIFE	67
<u>Mary, Mary</u> by Jean Kerr	
<u>The Price</u> by Arthur Miller	
<u>The River Niger</u> by Joseph A. Walker	
<u>Chapter Two</u> by Neil Simon	
V. THE BLACK MAGICIAN AND THE GREAT AMERICAN BITCH	99
<u>The Night of the Iguana</u> by Tennessee Williams	
<u>A Delicate Balance</u> by Edward Albee	
<u>Scuba Duba</u> by Bruce Jay Friedman	
<u>The Best Man</u> by Gore Vidal	
VI. NON-STEREOTYPICAL PRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN	129
<u>Luv</u> by Murray Schisgal	
<u>Effect of Gamma Rays</u> . . . by Paul Zindel	
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u> by Robert Anderson	
<u>In the Boom Boom Room</u> by David Rabe	
VII. CONCLUSION	163
.	
APPENDIX	171
BIBLIOGRAPHY	173

LIST OF TABLES

1. Plays Examined and Criteria for Selection.	5
2. Number and Names of Female Characters Examined	9
3. Presentation of Female Characters.	43
4. Plays Containing Ideal Wives	68
5. Plays Containing Black Magicians or Great American Bitches	100
6. Plays Containing Non-Stereotypical Presentations of Women	130

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Theatre and drama are no newcomers to opposition and criticism. Plato objected to dramatic literature; the English Puritans succeeded in closing the theatre; and the birth of the American theatre was greatly hampered by its opponents. More recently in the United States, the purposes of popular theatre again came under fire. In the Sixties, the very nature and essence of the theatre were questioned. Relevance was the key issue. The theatre was called upon to be an active part of society, a tool of life. Social and political theatre groups, such as The Bread and Puppet Theatre, El Teatro Campesino, The Living Theatre, and The Performance Group, strove for a closer connection between society and theatre.

Theatre, however, was only one element of our society which underwent severe re-examination in the Sixties. Toward the end of the decade, women once again began to review more intensively their social, political, and economic status. There was a resurgence of the feminist movement which had been quiescent since the passage of the nineteenth amendment. Newly formed coalitions of women sought to instigate and did instigate some change throughout the nation, protesting the

inequalities in our society. The first national conference of the National Organization of Women was held in 1967. The Redstockings, a more militant feminist group, published its manifesto in 1969. Studies exploring the role of women in business, literature, music, and art became commonplace. Noticeably absent, though, was any substantial research about women in contemporary American drama, a gap which this dissertation will endeavor, at least in part, to fill.

An analysis of the portrayal of women in contemporary drama demands an understanding of the drama of the period and of the society that produced it. In the end, we will endeavor to answer these questions. How are women presented? How are their roles developed? To what degree do these presentations reflect convincing/plausible or implausible/unconvincing characterizations of female behavior? Have these characterizations undergone change? Is the relationship between woman and man, and woman and the world reflected in the plays? Is there a similarity of presentation, a predictability, perhaps a one-dimensionality? Are there stereotypes in contemporary drama? One observation will, however, be clearly established: certain principal female characters are rigidly unimaginative and based on age-old prejudices.

This work is both critical and descriptive. Criteria will be developed by which the plays will be evaluated. Conclusions will be supported by demonstrating the recurrence of similar patterns throughout a large body of literature.

Thus, a key element of this work is a survey of fifty full-length plays from the contemporary theatre. Analysis of these fifty full-length plays will reflect repeated patterns from which stereotypes were established.

The choice of the plays surveyed required representative as well as quantitative sampling. To comment on society's effect on the representation of women, and vice versa, dictated that the plays chosen had had to achieve a level of importance or prominence and/or a degree of popular appeal. Conceptions of popular appeal may vary and so different criteria to measure popularity were formulated: a prize winner (Pulitzer, Drama Critics' Circle, Tony, Best Play), one that generated a high Broadway or Off-Broadway attendance record (i.e., minimum of five hundred performances), or a play that owing to the author's reputation and the representation of its characters, simply ought to be considered. In fact, many of the plays fulfill more than one of these criteria.

Moreover, the plays are restricted to those written by native Americans. No adaptations from novels or stories will be dealt with, since we are expressly interested in original American drama. The selection of plays also excluded musicals because the musical-play genre would necessitate taking into account additional and diverse factors not in the realm of this study. One other qualification: obviously, each play must contain at least one principal female character.

Table 1, which follows, lists the plays chosen for this study, the playwright, year of original production, and the criteria it satisfied. The plays are listed in chronological order of production.

As shown in Table 1, of the fifty plays, nine are Pulitzer Prize winners, nine are Drama Critics' Circle winners, and three are Tony award winners for Best Play of the year. (There is some obvious overlap.) All full-length prize-winning non-musicals have been included. Twenty-four plays had runs of over five hundred performances. Seven more have been included because they appear in the dramatic yearbook series, Best Plays, as well as having had respectable runs, most often between four hundred and five hundred performances. Two plays in the table do not meet any of the above criteria: Silent Night, Lonely Night by Robert Anderson and In the Boom Boom Room by David Rabe. These two plays have been included only because of the reputation and importance of their authors and the representation and importance of the plays' characters.

Though many of these plays satisfy several criteria, Table 1 lists first after each play what may be considered the primary criterion for selection. For example, Effect of Gamma Rays . . ., is a winner of the Pulitzer, Drama Critics' Circle prizes, and ran for 819 performances.

All plays selected were originally produced between the late Fifties and the late Seventies. These twenty years

TABLE 1

PLAYS EXAMINED AND CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CRITERIA FOR SELECTION</u>
<u>Dark at the Top of the Stairs</u>	Inge	12/57	pre-period, Best Play, 468
<u>Two for the Seesaw</u>	Gibson	1/58	750
<u>Pleasure of His Company</u>	Taylor/ Skinner	9/58	Best Play, 474
<u>J.B.</u>	MacLeish	12/58	Pulitzer, 364
<u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>	Hansberry	3/59	Drama Critics' Circle, 530
<u>Sweet Bird of Youth</u>	Williams	3/59	Best Play, 375
<u>The Connection</u>	Gelber	7/59	722
<u>The Tenth Man</u>	Chayevsky	11/59	623
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u>	Anderson	12/59	interest in playwright, characters represented, 125
<u>Toys in the Attic</u>	Hellman	2/60	Drama Critics' Circle, 556
<u>The Best Man</u>	Vidal	3/60	520
<u>Come Blow Your Horn</u>	Simon	2/61	677
<u>Mary, Mary</u>	Kerr	3/61	1,572
<u>Night of the Iguana</u>	Williams	12/61	Drama Critics' Circle, 316
<u>Oh Dad, Poor Dad, . . .</u>	Kopit	2/62	Best Play, 454
<u>A Thousand Clowns</u>	Gardner	4/62	Best Play, 428
<u>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</u>	Albee	9/62	Drama Critics' Circle, 664

TABLE 1--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CRITERIA FOR SELECTION</u>
<u>Never Too Late</u>	Long	11/62	1,007
<u>Barefoot in the Park</u>	Simon	9/63	1,530
<u>Any Wednesday</u>	Resnick	2/64	982
<u>The Subject Was Roses</u>	Gilroy	5/64	Pulitzer, Drama Critics' Circle, Tony, 832
<u>Luv</u>	Schisgal	11/64	901
<u>The Odd Couple</u>	Simon	3/65	964
<u>The Impossible Years</u>	Fisher	10/65	670
<u>Hogan's Goat</u>	Alfred	11/65	607
<u>Don't Drink the Water</u>	Allen	11/66	598
<u>A Delicate Balance</u>	Albee	9/66	Pulitzer, 132
<u>You Know I Can't Hear You . . .</u>	Anderson	3/67	756
<u>Scuba Duba</u>	Friedman	10/67	692
<u>Plaza Suite</u>	Simon	2/68	1,097
<u>The Price</u>	Miller	2/68	Best Play, 429
<u>Great White Hope</u>	Sackler	10/68	Pulitzer, Drama Critics' Circle, 556
<u>No Place to be Somebody</u>	Gordone	5/69	Pulitzer, 250
<u>Butterflies are Free</u>	Gershe	9/69	1,128
<u>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</u>	Simon	12/69	706
<u>Effect of Gamma Rays . . .</u>	Zindel	4/70	Pulitzer, Drama Critics' Circle, 819

TABLE 1--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CRITERIA FOR SELECTION</u>
<u>House of Blue Leaves</u>	Guare	2/71	Drama Critics' Circle, 337
<u>Prisoner of Second Avenue</u>	Simon	11/71	780
<u>Sticks and Bones</u>	Rabe	3/72	Tony, 367
<u>The River Niger</u>	Walker	12/72	Tony, 400
<u>Hot 1 Baltimore</u>	Wilson	2/73	Drama Critics' Circle, 1,166
<u>In the Boom Boom Room</u>	Rabe	11/73	interest in play- wright, characters represented, 37
<u>Same Time, Next Year</u>	Slade	3/75	1,444
<u>Seascape</u>	Albee	5/75	Pulitzer, 65
<u>Vanities</u>	Heifner	3/76	1,700; still running
<u>California Suite</u>	Simon	6/76	Best Play, 445
<u>Shadow Box</u>	Cristofer	3/77	Pulitzer, 315
<u>Gin Game</u>	Coburn	10/77	Pulitzer, 517
<u>Chapter Two</u>	Simon	12/77	857
<u>Deathtrap</u>	Levin	2/78	975; still running

encompass the period of resurgence of the feminist movement in the late Sixties and the formulation of its principles into the Seventies. Examining plays before and after this rise of feminism enables us to ascertain whether the representation of women has remained constant or whether it has changed, along with the society.

Our analysis began with a preliminary reading of the fifty plays. A synopsis of each play, including initial reaction to the play and the role of women, was recorded. From this preliminary reading, without knowledge as to what might constitute a stereotype, recurring representations were noted and when they occurred. During this reading, also, criteria for what constitutes a principal female character for study were established. Thus, to be disregarded are the numerous female extras, bit parts, and tiny roles containing only one or two brief appearances. Second, the women had to have a fundamental importance to the main plot or, at least, to the subplot. Many "large cast" plays have a number of sizable or principal female roles, while smaller casts often contain just one principal female role. Third, the characters must have achieved womanhood. Young girls, their dreams, aspirations, and indoctrinations will not be examined.

Table 2 indicates the number of principal female characters in each play and the names of the characters.

Following the preliminary reading of the plays, our examination focussed on what appeared to be stereotypical

TABLE 2

NUMBER AND NAMES OF FEMALE CHARACTERS EXAMINED

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WOMEN VIEWED</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Dark at the Top of the Stairs</u>	Inge	12/57	2	Cora Flood Lottie Lacey
<u>Two for the Seesaw</u>	Gibson	1/58	1	Gitl Mosca
<u>Pleasure of His Company</u>	Taylor/ Skinner	9/58	2	Katherine Dougherty Jessica Poole
<u>J.B.</u>	MacLeish	12/58	1	Sarah
<u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>	Hansberry	3/59	3	Lena Younger Ruth Younger Beneatha Younger
<u>Sweet Bird of Youth</u>	Williams	3/59	4	Princess Kosmonopolis Heavenly Finley Aunt Noonie Miss Lucy
<u>The Connection</u>	Gelber	7/59	1	Sister Salvation
<u>The Tenth Man</u>	Chayevsky	11/59	2	The Girl*
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u>	Anderson	12/59	2	Katherine Janet
<u>Toys in the Attic</u>	Hellman	2/60	4	Carrie Berniers Anna Berniers Lily Berniers Albertine Prine

* Although in the credits the play lists only one female character, due to the total split of the characterization (credited to magical sources) it has been studied as two female roles.

TABLE 2--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WOMEN VIEWED</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>The Best Man</u>	Vidal	3/60	3	Alice Russell Mabel Cantwell Mrs. Gamadge
<u>Come Blow Your Horn</u>	Simon	2/61	3	Peggy Evans Mrs. Baker Connie
<u>Mary, Mary</u>	Kerr	3/61	2	Mary McKellaway Tiffany Richards
<u>Night of the Iguana</u>	Williams	12/61	4	Hannah Jelkes Maxine Faulk Miss Fellowes Charlotte Goodall
<u>Oh Dad, Poor Dad, . . .</u>	Kopit	2/62	2	Madame Rosepettle Rosalie
<u>A Thousand Clowns</u>	Gardner	4/62	1	Sandy Markowitz
<u>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf</u>	Albee	9/62	2	Martha Honey
<u>Never Too Late</u>	Long	11/62	2	Edith Lambert Kate
<u>Barefoot in the Park</u>	Simon	9/63	2	Corrie Bratter Mrs. Banks
<u>Any Wednesday</u>	Resnick	2/64	2	Ellen Gordon Dorothy Cleves
<u>The Subject Was Roses</u>	Gilroy	5/64	1	Nettie Cleary

TABLE 2--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WOMEN VIEWED</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Luv</u>	Schisgal	11/64	1	Ellen Manville
<u>The Odd Couple</u>	Simon	3/65	2	Gwendolyn Pigeon Cecily Pigeon
<u>The Impossible Years</u>	Fisher	10/65	2	Alice Kingsley Linda Kingsley
<u>Hogan's Coat</u>	Alfred	11/65	1	Katherine Stanton
<u>Don't Drink the Water</u>	Allen	11/66	2	Marion Hollander Susan Hollander
<u>A Delicate Balance</u>	Albee	9/66	4	Agnes Edna Julia Claire
<u>You Know I Can't Hear You . . .</u>	Anderson	3/67	5	Dorothy Jill Harriet Edith Muriel
<u>Scuba Duba</u>	Friedman	10/67	3	Carol Janus Cheyenne Mrs. Wonder
<u>Plaza Suite</u>	Simon	2/68	3	Karen Nash Muriel Tate Norma Hubley
<u>The Price</u>	Miller	2/68	1	Esther Franz

TABLE 2--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WOMEN VIEWED</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Great White Hope</u>	Sackler	10/68	3	Ellie Bachman Mrs. Jefferson Clara
<u>No Place to be Somebody</u>	Gordone	5/69	3	Dee Jacobson Mary Lou Bolton Cora Beasley
<u>Butterflies are Free</u>	Gershe	9/69	2	Jill Mrs. Baker
<u>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</u>	Simon	12/69	3	Elaine Navazio Bobbi Michelle Jeanette Fisher
<u>Effect of Gamma Rays . . .</u>	Zindel	4/70	1	Beatrice
<u>House of Blue Leaves</u>	Guare	2/71	3	Bannanas Shaughnessy Bunny Flingus Corrinne Stroller
<u>Prisoner of Second Avenue</u>	Simon	11/71	1	Edna Edison
<u>Sticks and Bones</u>	Rabe	3/72	1	Harriet
<u>The River Niger</u>	Walker	12/72	4	Mattie Williams Ann Vanderguild Grandma Brown Gail

TABLE 2--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>NUMBER OF WOMEN VIEWED</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Hot 1 Baltimore</u>	Wilson	2/73	4	Girl April Jackie Suzy
<u>In the Boom Boom Room</u>	Rabe	11/73	2	Chrissy Helen
<u>Same Time, Next Year</u>	Slade	3/75	1	Doris
<u>Seascape</u>	Albee	5/75	2	Nancy Sarah
<u>Vanities</u>	Heifner	3/76	3	Joanne Kathy Mary
<u>California Suite</u>	Simon	6/76	3	Hannah Marvin's Wife Diana
<u>Shadow Box</u>	Cristofer	3/77	4	Maggie Beverly Agnes Felicity
<u>Gin Game</u>	Coburn	10/77	1	Fonsia
<u>Chapter Two</u>	Simon	12/77	2	Jenny Malone Faye Medwick
<u>Deathtrap</u>	Levin	2/78	2	Myra Bruhl Helga Ten Dorp

women characters. The purpose: to develop a set of criteria by which to identify and categorize stereotypes. Notwithstanding the paucity of research in theatre stereotypes, the depiction of women in literature, such as Mary A. Ferguson's Images of Women in Literature¹ and Mary Ellman's Thinking About Women,² studies of women characters in the performing arts, such as Molly Haskell's From Reverence to Rape,³ and an examination of female images in film and popular culture, such as Kathryn Weibel's Mirror, Mirror⁴ do offer limited assistance in the formulation of the criteria for stereotypes. Other types of scholarly works were also examined, such as Carl Jung's psychological study, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious,⁵ and Vivian Gornick's sociological Woman in Sexist Society⁶ on the rearing, education, and socialization of women and sex-roles. In addition, historical analyses of women's roles during these twenty years, such as William H.

¹Mary A. Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977).

²Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968).

³Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973).

⁴Kathryn Weibel, Mirror, Mirror (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1977).

⁵Carl G. Jung, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, ed. W. McGuire, vol. 9: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁶Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, eds., Woman in Sexist Society (New York: Basic Books, 1971).

Chafe's The American Woman⁷ were consulted.

Armed with a new set of criteria we were now in a position to re-evaluate the plays and draw conclusions with respect to the representation of the principal women characters. The creation and development of the stereotype and exactly why it constitutes a stereotype will be analyzed. The most persistent stereotypes, the Ideal Wife, the Great American Bitch, and the Black Magician will be discussed in great detail.

We will also examine briefly plays that do not contain a one-dimensional stereotypical presentation. An appendix will include a selected list of those plays with non-stereotypical females. Such plays, though they might not meet the criteria of the study with small-scale productions of possibly inferior quality, poor attendance, and with little or no recognition, nonetheless contain complete and complex characterizations of women. All plays analyzed in depth have been researched for their critical reception and performance history, as well as for literature written only on the dramatic material itself.

It is our hope that the following examination of female characters in a large selection of popular plays briefly, and of twelve plays in depth, will enable us to make some conclusions about the dramatic representation of women.

⁷William H. Chafe, The American Woman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

Are stereotypes truly prevalent in contemporary American drama and if so, what are they? Perhaps, we might even be able to hypothesize as to how society affects the representation of women, and vice versa.

Understanding the stereotypes created in drama is important. Drama, "the mirror of life"--does it really mirror, or help to create and possibly maintain specific and limiting life for women? Do playwrights need stereotypes, given the conservative nature of commercial theatre and the need for financial, and thus immediate success? But drama does not inherently demand stereotypes. Great drama offers complex and multi-sided individuals when it is concerned with characterization.

CHAPTER II

THEATRE AND SOCIETY

A pessimistic view of social change presupposes that behavior is altered only by compulsion. A less cynical view is based on the premise that attitudes that determine behavior may be changed by persuading society that a given set of values is wrong and should be modified.¹ Only by adopting the latter approach can one assess the value of art as an influence on society (and vice versa). John Gardner wrote: "Art rediscovers, generation by generation, what is necessary to humanness."² The hope is that such rediscoveries of humanness help to affect societal perceptions, thus reaffirming this particular value of art.

A relationship exists between art and society, yet the nature of the connection is difficult to define. If attitude and behavior can be changed, is art a suitable instrument for such change? "Art can also evoke reverence for the dignity of every man . . ."³ according to Tolstoy,

¹William H. Chafe, The American Woman (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 245.

²John Gardner, On Moral Fiction (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 6.

³Leo Tolstoy, What is Art and Essays on Art, trans. Aylmer Maude, World Classics Edition (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp. 286-88.

who thereby suggests that art may affect attitude and behavior. Horace believed that art should instruct, yet in a recently published book on the hundred most influential people throughout history, only six artists were listed.⁴ John Gardner, however, asks us to recall the crazes initiated by movies and theatre. "After Marlon Brando appeared in On the Waterfront, an entire generation took to slumping, mumbling, turning up its collar, and hanging its cigarette casually off the lip. After the appearance of Roy Rogers, hordes of twelve-year-olds took to squinting."⁵ Even though such influences might be viewed as unimportant, they do constitute a set of interactions. Although sociologist Grace Glueck rejects a direct cause and effect, believing that "cultural institutions . . . do not affect society directly and politically," she does agree that such institutions "help us to change our view of ourselves."⁶ At a conference on Women and the Arts in Wisconsin in 1973, the consensus was that images of women were transmitted through the arts and that such images did influence expectations and values.⁷ Catherine Stimpson holds similar beliefs. "Literature is both descriptive, that it reflects social

⁴Michael H. Hart, The 100 (New York: Hart Publishing Company, 1978).

⁵Gardner, On Moral Fiction, p. 107.

⁶Grace Glueck, "Making Cultural Institutions More Responsive to Social Needs," Arts in Society (Summer 1974): 49.

⁷Linda Heddle and Monika Jensen, "A Shift in the Balance," Arts in Society (Summer 1974): 7.

realities, and normative, that it encourages certain kinds of behavior."⁸

What is the process at work here? If drama, as a form of literature, describes, does it accurately reflect social realities and more specifically, the social situation of women? And, what kind of female behavior is being encouraged? Are women (and society) being presented with models of behavior and, if so, what are these models? By documenting briefly in this chapter the societal role and status of women during the last twenty years we will be able to explore later whether American drama written in this period accurately "describes." Have drama and theatre really reflected the nature of women with the complexity and variety inherent in Susan Langer's definition: "Art is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling."⁹ (Emphasis mine, and human equates male and female.)

* * *

Any twenty year period must bring with it a degree of social change, both major and minor upheavals. The Thirties in America are associated with the Great Depression, a partial recovery, and the coming of World War II; the Forties are

⁸Catherine R. Stimpson, "Sex, Gender and the American Culture," in Women and Men: Changing Roles, Relationships and Perceptions, ed. L. A. Cater (New York: Praeger, 1977), p. 226.

⁹Susan Langer cited by Elizabeth Janeway, "Images of Women," Arts in Society (Summer 1974): 14.

marked by the war, itself, and the postwar adjustment.¹⁰

The Fifties are a period in which personal security, "good" form in both life and art, and the nuclear family seemed to reign.¹¹ These years, characterized by such works as The Organization Man and The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit, along with McCarthyism and the Cold War, are described as a time of restraint, passivity, "silent" students, and slow but steady economic growth.¹² The Sixties brought social chaos and turbulence, and the Seventies, perhaps, because we have just lived through them, are the most difficult to categorize.

Half of the dramatic literature we will examine is from the Sixties. Nora Sayre, in her book, Sixties Going on Seventies, says that we must see the period in " . . . chunks and slabs: pieces of a perennial process which disintegrates, congeals, dilates, collapses and expands."¹³ Stephen Spender in The Thirties and After calls it the "decade of American agony."¹⁴ Eugene McCarthy, a Sixties symbol, believes that

¹⁰Eugene McCarthy, "The Young People Revitalized America," Look, December 30, 1969, p. 32.

¹¹Malcolm Cowley, "Reconsiderations: The Sixties," New Republic, August 20, 1977, p. 37.

¹²McCarthy, "The Young People Revitalized America," p. 32.

¹³Nora Sayre, Sixties Going on Seventies (New York: Arbor House, 1973), p. 13.

¹⁴Stephen Spender, The Thirties and After (New York: Random House, 1978), p. 169.

there were no lines of continuity from the decade before.¹⁵ Morris Dickstein, in his social and cultural analysis of the period, disagrees, believing that the Sixties evolved from the Fifties. Dickstein terms the Sixties a time of "liberation . . . the shackles of tradition and circumstance were to be thrown off."¹⁶ David Halberstam calls the Sixties a shattering decade. "All confidence seemed to be gone--we wondered who we were and where we were going."¹⁷ Along with Joan Didion, Halberstam divides the decade into two periods: the first half is filled with expectation and hope; the second half is an era of pain, disillusionment, and bitterness--from civil rights and brotherhood to Black Power.¹⁸ Dickstein and Malcolm Cowley subdivide the decade even more--from the years of peace and hope, to anger and violence, and, finally to a turning inward. In these latter years, some people followed movements which returned them to the land and/or religion.¹⁹

Theorists differ as to when the social flavor of the decade changed. Didion refers to mid-1969, Sayre, to the

¹⁵McCarthy, "The Young People Revitalized America," p. 32.

¹⁶Morris Dickstein, The Gates of Eden (New York: Basic Books, 1977), p. ix.

¹⁷David Halberstam, "Farewell to the Sixties," McCalls, January 1970, p. 85.

¹⁸*Ibid.*

¹⁹Cowley, "Reconsiderations: The Sixties," pp. 37-40.

end of 1970, and both Dickstein and Cowley extend the social searching of the decade into the early Seventies.²⁰ The turbulence, disorder, and chaos of the period was by no means over. "Public life in the early 70's was not the result of a new phase but merely the garbage of an older one, the unfinished business of the 60's."²¹

Critics often note the similarity of the Seventies, though difficult to assess at this time, to the Fifties: the silence and passivity of the students, an emphasis on material growth and economic welfare, and the singleness of human concern. Sayre talks of the " . . . backlash; the enormous resistance to such old-fashioned topics as equal pay."²² Cowley comments on the new forms of salvation. The Seventies, the era of Watergate, disco music, and the M.B.A. are humorously summed up by one writer as a time of dribs and drabs, without sufficient coalescence yet to be critically examined.²³

* * *

Where were "women" during these decades? What was their status; socially, economically, and psychologically?

²⁰Joan Didion, The White Album (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979), p. 47; Sayre, Sixties Going on Seventies, p. 16; Dickstein, The Gates of Eden, p. 271; Cowley, "Reconsiderations: The Sixties," p. 39.

²¹Dickstein, The Gates of Eden, p. 271.

²²Sayre, Sixties Going on Seventies, p. 46.

²³"Who Erased the 70's?" Esquire, December 1977, pp. 152-155.

In the Fifties, The Organization Man of the Eisenhower years had permeated American society. Some women, however, were not adapting to the prescribed role of "True Womanhood" and domesticity.²⁴

In her book, Sexual Politics, Kate Millett discusses conservative trends in the United States between 1930 and 1960, including the post-war reaction and anti-Communist animus.²⁵ But as conservative as a large portion of the American public may seem in retrospect, certainly adding to a "deterioration in the economic and educational status of women,"²⁶ hers to me must remain an incomplete assessment of the period. The work of Caroline Bird in Born Female, William O'Neill in Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism,²⁷ and especially William Chafe in The American Woman, uncover what appears to be a more accurate and in certain respects a more positive view of the changing status and attitudes of women.

Before we turn to the Fifties, at least a retrospective glimpse at the Forties is in order. This is the decade that

²⁴See Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-60," American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966) for evidence of earlier and similar patterns of behavior that were outlined for women, pp. 1-26.

²⁵Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 177.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Caroline Bird, Born Female (New York: David McKay Company, 1968); William O'Neill, Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1969).

some believe was the watershed in changing women's status-- particularly World War II.²⁸ Prior to World War II, in 1940, the percentage of working females was exactly what it had been in 1910 and there was no reason to expect any change in the future.²⁹ With the onset of the Depression, men scrambled for jobs and it was deemed unfair to allow the wife of an already employed man to work while an unemployed man and his family went hungry.³⁰ Womens' economic independence and potential mobility were sacrificed for the sake of the American male.³¹ With the onset of War and the manpower shortage that resulted, "women's economic status changed significantly for the first time in thirty years."³² By VE Day the female labor force had increased by 57%. More wives were employed than single women; more women over thirty-five years of age than under. Women made up 35% of the total working force.³³

²⁸William Chafe, Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture (New York: Oxford University Press), p. 172.

²⁹Chafe, The American Woman, p. 135.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 107-09.

³¹Sheila Rothman reports in Woman's Proper Place (New York: Basic Books, 1978), p. 232, that this idea of women sacrificing their own well being, socially and economically for a greater male good was later repeated in the Sixties in the Black community. Black women were asked to take the backseat to their men and were promised that later on, black men would give women all the equality they desired. Unfortunately, according to Michelle Wallace, Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman (New York: Dial Press, 1979), this was not the way it worked out.

³²Chafe, The American Woman, p. 148.

³³Ibid.

The Department of Labor lifted many restrictions on the types of jobs suitable for women. "Women became crane operators, riveters and truck drivers."³⁴ When questioned, most women cited "economic need" as the primary motivation for work. But more was happening. Frieda Miller pointed out that the need for self-esteem was probably cloaked in what was thought to be "more acceptable" answers.³⁵ A Ladies' Home Journal poll demonstrated that 79% of the women workers interviewed enjoyed the experience of being employed.³⁶

The conclusion of the war brought the firing of 300,000 women war workers. Certainly, men were fired, too, along with the disbanding of the armed forces, yet every effort was made to find other employment for the men. Millet writes that "women are used as a reserve labor force, periodically and widely purged from employment."³⁷ What is important, however, is not the fact that the women were purged, but that they did not like it. In a survey conducted by Elmo Roper at the end of the war, two out of three women war workers surveyed, wanted permanent jobs.³⁸

The Fifties, generally viewed as an era of tranquility and traditional values, present a paradox. Supposedly, there

³⁴ Bird, Born Female, p. 40.

³⁵ Chafe, The American Woman, p. 191.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Millet, Sexual Politics, p. 177.

³⁸ Bird, Born Female, p. 42.

was a return to True Womanhood and higher domesticity.³⁹ Betty Friedan believes that motherhood and fertility were the official selling appeals of business and advertising.⁴⁰ Between 1940 and 1960 the family birthrate for a third child doubled, and for a fourth child, tripled.⁴¹ Togetherness seemed to be a key word of the time. "This revival of home life coincided with a substantial exodus to the suburbs between 1950-60."⁴² The suburbs grew five times faster than urban areas; the number of people in these areas increased from 24% to 35% of the population.⁴³ The media stressed articles on suburban life, decorating the home, cooking for the family, group outings, etc.⁴⁴ On the other hand, statistics show that although women were marrying earlier, having more babies, moving to the suburbs, and enjoying the wife/companion role,⁴⁵ they were, at the same time, continuing

³⁹O'Neill, Everyone was Brave: The Rise and Fall of Feminism, p. 309. The term is O'Neill's, used to denote the elevation of child rearing and homemaking as complicated lofty enterprises, demanding a mixture of exact science and aesthetic inspiration.

⁴⁰Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1963), pp. 206-32.

⁴¹Chafe, The American Woman, p. 217.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

⁴⁴"New American Family," Commentary, January 1956, pp. 1-6.

⁴⁵See Herbert J. Gans, The Levittowners (New York: Pantheon, 1967) for a look at the suburbs and the ideology of the women who went to live there. Seventy-eight percent said that they

to enter the job market and to expand their social roles.

"The pace of female employment quickened rather than slowed during the post-war years."⁴⁶

In 1960 twice as many women as in 1940 were employed.⁴⁷ Statistics also demonstrate that the greatest growth in the female labor force took place among the well-educated wives of the middle class.⁴⁸ This work trend continues through the Sixties and, regardless of the impact of the Women's Liberation Movement, by 1970, 60% of all non-farm wives, in families with incomes over \$10,000, were employed.⁴⁹ Thus, the same women who had found renewed contentment in "domesticity" were also spearheading a dramatic increase in women's employment.

In a 1950s survey conducted in North Carolina and Illinois, 90% of the women interviewed expressed satisfaction with their employment, particularly in the opportunity it gave them to be with other people and in a sense of personal recognition.⁵⁰ In another survey conducted in Michigan in

had come to enhance the qualities and conveniences of family life. The homes were family- rather than community-oriented and women felt that their first duty was to their husbands. Yet some also spoke of loneliness; women suffered disproportionately from emotional illness and suicide.

⁴⁶Chafe, The American Woman, p. 218.

⁴⁷Ibid.

⁴⁸Ibid.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 219.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 220

1955, 48% of the women interviewed cited economic necessity as the reason for employment, while another 21% noted the need for a feeling of accomplishment.⁵¹ Many of those who mentioned economic need also referred to the sense of independence represented by the paycheck. Other surveys of women indicated that jobs and not homemaking gave them a feeling of importance.⁵² Thus, for whatever the reason, many women were working in the Fifties and reporting the experience as satisfying.

Women's growing employment brought changes in their domestic lives. No longer were women home all day; they had less time to perform the prescribed female tasks--cooking, cleaning, caring for the children. Sharing of household tasks became more common. Breadwinning and homemaking were not as sexually opposed as they once were. Though the "Feminine Mystique" was certainly strong during the Fifties (women marrying younger and having more babies), the trend of married women going to work, along with the accompanying changes in domestic life, continued through the Sixties.

Homemaking was still an important activity in many women's lives, but it was no longer the focal point for the majority. Changes had occurred quietly. By 1962, the editors of Harper's magazine observed that an extraordinary number of women were "ardently determined to extend their

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵²Ibid.

vocation beyond the bedroom, kitchen and nursery,"⁵³ although only a few were interested in feminism.

The Women's Liberation Movement of the late Sixties was the culmination of a growing awareness on the part of women that a basic problem remained in our society. Betty Friedan's book, The Feminine Mystique, published as early as 1963, sold more than a million copies. Not all women agreed with the book's conclusions, but many were beginning to re-examine their lives. As already pointed out, many had changed their lifestyles. Over 40% of all women held jobs by the end of the Sixties,⁵⁴ and by 1975, 49% of all wives were working.⁵⁵

There were other changes. A Gallup poll in 1967 showed that 34% of women anticipated having four children; by 1971 that number had dropped to 15%. By 1973, 70% of women between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four said they would have no more than two children.⁵⁶ In another survey, taken on eight college campuses, 82% of the women questioned considered a career important or very important to self-fulfillment, while only 67% said the same about marriage.⁵⁷ Women earned 11% of the Ph.D.s awarded in 1970 and 21% in

⁵³Harper's, October 1962, pp. 115-19.

⁵⁴Chafe, The American Woman, p. 234.

⁵⁵Chafe, Women and Equality, p. 120.

⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 121.

⁵⁷*Ibid.*, p. 140.

1975. During the same period, enrollment by women in traditionally "feminine" fields (e.g., teaching, nursing, library sciences) had dropped from 31% to 10%.⁵⁸ Another survey showed that 92% of the women and 86% of the men interviewed believed that men should spend as much time as women in raising children.⁵⁹

The number of articles on the Women's Liberation Movement appeared to reach its peak between 1970 and 1971.⁶⁰ Although the American woman had, in many aspects, changed dramatically, she would often disclaim feminism, and still does, with statements such as, "I'm no women's libber," or "They're too radical for my taste." Still, many women generally support such programs of the movement as equal pay, equal career opportunities, and availability of abortions. Perhaps the ever widening choices available to women have lessened the urgency to protest or to engage in feminist dialogue. Or, perhaps, as Chafe says, "whenever America becomes sensitive to the issue of human rights, the women's movement acquires new support."⁶¹ This was certainly the case at the end of the Sixties. The end of the Seventies

⁵⁸Ibid.

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰See Kathryn Wiebel, Mirror, Mirror, p. 230. One indication is the fact that more articles were indexed on the topic in the New York Times Index and the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature in these years than before or after.

⁶¹Chafe, The American Woman, p. 239.

may show a reverse trend.

On the average, during the twenty-year period, we are examining half the women worked. Most of those queried enjoyed working, perceiving it as economically necessary and fulfilling. Many women playing the more traditional roles were also happy; but some were questioning their lives. By the end of the Seventies, more single women were involved in independent, solo life styles, and often in careers once thought of as exclusively male.⁶²

Now we will turn to the plays of the period to determine if they did, in the "descriptive" sense of art, as defined above, represent the social climate of the time as it related to women. Did American drama accurately reflect women? Or, was drama, like Betty Friedan's indictment of the media, culpable, too, in fostering a limited, and even spurious image of women?

⁶²Chafe, Women and Equality, p. 140.

CHAPTER III

STEREOTYPES OF WOMEN

Having glimpsed the growing variation in societal roles for women over the last twenty years, one finds the plays of the period are disappointing because the female roles are so similar. Mary Ellman remarks in her book, Thinking About Women, " . . . the chief mark of sexual stereotypes is their tedium . . . the reader recognizes the patterns of distinction and closes the book. Even various degrees of plausibility within the stereotypes no longer hold an audience for them."¹ Simone de Beauvoir points out that though women provide patterns of varied behavior to stimulate men, such behavior is defined exclusively by women's relationship to men.² Such exclusivity is mainly responsible for the creation and proliferation of stereotypes.

But what constitutes a stereotype? Although, in talking about the presentation of female images, we could use Ellman's "patterns of distinction" a "stereotype," in addition to being familiar, also implies rigidity. Sociologists use the word to denote society's images. The term's origin is

¹Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 73-74.

²Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), p. 180.

found in printing and refers to the metal plates used to reproduce an item and copy it exactly.³ There is, however, one principal difference between the term's original usage and its usage in literary criticism. In the latter, the type need not be identical each time. As long as certain aspects of the characterization are present, the audience supplies the rest. Sociologists consider such perception, or stereotypical thinking, necessary for society to create role models. But when the stereotypes or patterns become so rigid that individual human variations are ignored or denigrated and the complexity of human beings disappears, then we have what we call stereotypes, along with their negative connotations. Thus, in the literary world, the stereotype denotes an unimaginative or one dimensional characterization.⁴

We must be careful in our analysis of stereotypes not to confuse the above concept with the related, but certainly not synonymous idea of negative images. The stereotypes we will examine fall into two basic categories--those that are socially acceptable and those that are socially unacceptable. The former carry out some socially useful function; the latter are thought of as harmful to social interactions. Perhaps stated more simply, the former might be thought of as positive stereotypes (which, of course, is a misnomer); the latter, as negative. Stereotyping, itself,

³Mary A. Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 9.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

is a rigidity, a disregard for complexity and variety, and for this reason, a perjorative term. But we are not looking only for positive presentations of women; we are looking for whole presentations. Some characters, therefore, which are not stereotypes, will be annoying, dislikable, pitiable, but also strong and competitive. And, certain likable, funny, warm, and caring women may be classified as stereotypes because of their patterns of behavior; their desires, needs, and attitudes show no variation or movement from a set course. Again, we are searching for an imaginative presentation of women. The specific criteria will be discussed later on.

First though, in order to ascertain what constitutes a stereotype, we must see how a stereotype compares to an archetype (a somewhat controversial, but nevertheless acceptable and often positive psychological phenomenon), and to a stock character (a dramaturgical term that connotes a dramatist's specific character choice for a specific dramatic purpose).

Carl Jung is responsible for generating the modern discussion of archetypes. In his treatise, "Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious," Jung hesitates to advance a definition of an archetype, fearing the loss of purity of the idea when put into words. Jung states, "the contents of the collective unconscious . . . are known as archetypes . . . universal images that have existed since the remotest times." The "archetype," he adds, "is essentially an unconscious

content that is altered by becoming conscious, and by being perceived and it takes its color from the individual consciousness in which it happens to appear."⁵ The archetype, therefore, is difficult to decipher, difficult to define. In formulating the images, we cannot help but add our individual perceptions.

Jungians believe that in the collective unconscious, which is common to all people and even animals, there exists deeply embedded a group of images that find expression through symbol and art.⁶ Sociologists who do not share Jung's theories often agree that the archetypes or universal images grounded in emotion are strong. The myths that develop around them, which are the basis of religious beliefs and rituals, are difficult to challenge with either logic or even factual evidence.⁷ One peculiarity of the images of women throughout history is that social stereotypes have been reinforced by archetypes; that is, in every age, women have been cast in their biological primordial roles (e.g., Jung's archetype of the Great Mother).

Stock characters, on the other hand, are a component of dramatic art. They have been present in plays since the earliest productions of the Greeks and Romans. Some of the most famous are from the *commedia dell'arte* of sixteenth

⁵Carl G. Jung, The Collected Works of C. G. Jung, ed. W. McGuire, vol. 9: Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969).

⁶Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 9.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 10.

century Italy. Edwin Wilson in The Theatre Experience said that stock characters "symbolize in bold relief some particular type of person or some outstanding characteristic of human behavior to the exclusion of virtually everything else."⁸ Closely related to stock characters are characters that embody one dominant trait or "Humour"--as in the miser, the snob, the coward, the swindler, the whore.

Stock characters have often been used as a convenience in dramaturgy. Stock characters may be found in comedy, melodrama, or farce, where the machinations of plot control often dictate their use. But this dramaturgical device may be differentiated from the stereotype because of the specificity of the character attributes. A stock character is one dominant trait personified, whereas a stereotype might be considered a cluster of traits. The stock character has no past; we are rarely presented with a monologue on how the drunk became addicted to alcohol and how he tried to fight it. On the other hand, a stereotypical character will often give us a life history, but one that we can supply beforehand. The Whore with a Heart of Gold is unloved, unwanted, was raped at an early age, and so on.

Stock characters do not think or react as a consequence of the plot's action. The play seems to whirl around them. Their personalities are fixed and often do not relate to

Edwin Wilson, The Theatre Experience (New York: McGraw Hill, 1976), p. 92.

reality. They reflect little on society and do not provide role models. The use of a stock character is merely a device, chosen by the dramatist for his role in the unfolding of the drama. With stereotypes, however, the dramatist is presenting people with realistic needs and desires. Not just a dramatic nuance, we are being taught how to behave by such mirroring of behavior. How the two relate to society provides a key difference between stock characters and stereotypes.

As already noted,⁹ we observe the use of stereotypes from the consistency of certain behavior patterns in many female characters. This consistency is, moreover, extant in different types of dramatic literature and in the arts generally. The observation is important for it aids us in dealing with plays that because of their absurdist style, present all characters in exaggerated ways, both male and female, e.g., Oh Dad, Poor Dad . . ., Scuba Duba. Women are not caricatured in the educated woman role, or as the Amazon, or the femme fatale, but rather as mother, wife, and companion. It is the consistency of the types when compared to the variety of roles possible that is significant. In Woody Allen's Don't Drink the Water, for example, we may call Walter a buffoon; yet we also see him as comforter, lover, father, as well as businessman, citizen, and alleged spy. Marion Hollander is, however, just Mrs. Hollander, the

⁹See Chapter I for discussion of research methodology used.

Ideal Wife.

Stereotypes do "define"¹⁰ women, but the definition is limiting. While men have been defined by their relationship to the outside world--to nature, to society, even to God, women have been defined in relationship to men. Milton's description of Adam and Eve, "he for God only; she for God in him!"¹¹, may have said it all.

This indeed holds true for stereotypes of women in stage drama; they are defined by their relationship to men. Even television and movies include images of women in relation to careers: "showgirl," "brassy modern," "career women."¹² Why then are women in successful stage drama shown mostly in their relationship to men? Why is the educated woman or business woman curiously absent? The plays analyzed show us that out of 115 female characters, only forty-three have jobs. (Compare this to the fact that on the average, over the twenty-year period, a little less than half the non-farm female work force was employed.)¹³ And of those forty-three women, only seven could be said to have careers, the other jobs being secretarial, or menial, and of course, there

¹⁰Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 10.

¹¹John Milton, Paradise Lost (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1975), p. 86.

¹²Joseph Baunoch, "Film Stereotypes of American Women," in American Women and American Studies, Vol. II, ed. Betty Chmaj (Pittsburgh: Know, Inc., 1972), p. 275

¹³U.S. Department of Labor, Monthly Labor Review, June 1979, pp. 59-60.

remains the prostitute.

Women have generally been viewed in their biological roles: wife, mistress, mother. Thus, it should come as no surprise that the stereotypes of women fall into three general categories: woman as man's companion, woman as man's destroyer, and woman as man's mother or the mother of his children. The majority of roles are of the first type: companion. Ideal Wife, Amoeba Girl, Woman/Child, Fallen Woman are all there to offer company to men as are Sex Object and Whore with Heart of Gold to give sexual companionship, and the White Magicians to provide psychological and metaphysical relief and friendship. The second category: the Great American Bitch, Dominating Wife, Black Magician, Old Maid, and Sexually Frustrated Woman are seen as threats to men and are viewed as a primary force in their destruction. The third, the image of the Mother, both Good and Deadly, is found least often. Women in stage drama are not seen in a myriad of biological roles, but mainly one: the Companion or, more specifically, the Ideal Wife. De Beauvoir wrote: "Woman is field and pasture but she is also Babylon."¹⁴ Not so in contemporary American drama. Although we are constantly being inundated by woman as sex object in media, television, and movies, stage drama cannot be added to that list. The combined total of stereotypes related to sex from all categories (Sex Object, Whore with Heart of Gold, and Black

¹⁴De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 148.

Magicians) account for merely eleven of 115 major female roles.

Each stereotype has its own unique pattern of behavior or attributes, and these are discussed below. But now let us summarize the criteria in determining whether or not we are being confronted with a stereotype. First, as previously mentioned, a sequence of behavior or action that negates change and omits the "many sides" of an individual is an indication. The ability to develop as a person implies variation and complexities; we no longer have an easily discernible, predictable, and, therefore, tedious pattern. Such rigidity signals stereotypical behavior, especially at the conclusion of the play. For example, in Heifner's Vanities, though the presentation of one of the women follows the pattern of the Ideal Wife, by the conclusion of the play we are made aware of all the cracks in the armor--drinking, sexual problems, fear--thus releasing the character from her stereotypical role and showing us the dangerous aspects of this kind of role model. Conversely, a character like Ruth in Hansberry's A Raisin in the Sun, or Sandy in Gardner's A Thousand Clowns, for all their bickering,¹⁵ finish exactly where they began and where they wanted to be at the end, still adhering to a set of rules in relation to their men.

The second criterion for discerning stereotypes is

¹⁵See below for the differentiation between today's Ideal Wife and the classic model of Submissive Griselde.

the assignment of attributes that sociologists and psychologists consider to be part of the stereotypical view of women. Mary Ellman writes that women have been viewed as formless: mind and body soft; passive; waiting to be conquered. If roused from this passivity they turn out to be hysterical, unstable. They are seen as materialistic, lacking ability to deal in abstractions, pious but unable to invent religions or philosophy.¹⁶ Kate Millet in Sexual Politics asserts that literature has viewed the attributes of women as passivity, ignorance, docility, virtue, and ineffectuality.¹⁷ And psychologist Judith Bardwick includes non-aggression, low pain tolerance, sensitivity, nurturance, and supportiveness, among others.¹⁸ Most of these characteristics appear frequently in the stereotypical portrayals, while characteristics assumed to be male, including leadership, innovation, courage, and stoicism, are nowhere to be found.

For a woman character not to be considered a stereotypical representation, there needs to be development, realization, or at least, understanding at the play's conclusion, some portrayal of complexity rather than the assignment to her of attributes, assumed to be female or male. It is "a

¹⁶Ellman, Thinking About Women, pp. 56-132.

¹⁷Kate Millet, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 26.

¹⁸Judith M. Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," in Woman in Sexist Society, p. 225.

¹⁹Ibid.

search for wholeness."²⁰ In her book, Women and the Future, Janet Giele writes that the positive portrayal of women would combine power, discipline, and intellectual strength with vulnerability, fecundity, and a capacity for rich and complex emotion.²¹ But, we are also interested in "non-stereotypes" that are less positive. A multi-dimensional view is being sought; not just the rigid role of castrator or clitoral temptress, but rather a role like Beatrice in Effect of Gamma Rays . . . Unlikable though she must ultimately become to us, we have laughed with her, at her, felt pity, vulnerability, her own pathos, and our own understanding of it.

Table 3 lists all the plays in chronological order: the title of the play, playwright, the female characters analyzed, and the representation of each.

As Table 3 indicates, the Ideal Wife recurs twenty-three times, appearing more frequently than any other stereotype. When we include the variations closely related,²² (Woman/Child appearing fourteen times; Amoeba Girl, six; and Helpmate, five) the total is over half the stereotyped female presentations.

Literary critics have discussed the importance of

²⁰ Janet Zollinger Giele, Women and the Future (New York: Free Press, 1978), p. 325.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See below for criteria regarding Amoeba Girl, Woman/Child, and Helpmate: all, though similar, possess important differences regarding age, level of connection, and dependence on man, forcing them into separate categories.

TABLE 3

REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>Dark at the Top of the Stairs</u>	Inge	Cora Flood Lottie Lacey	Ideal Wife Sexually Frustrated Woman
<u>Two for the Seesaw</u>	Gibson	Gitl Mosca	Fallen Woman
<u>Pleasure of His Company</u>	Taylor/ Skinner	Katherine Dougherty Jessica Poole	Good Mother Non-Stereotyped
<u>J.B.</u>	MacLeish	Sarah	Helpmate
<u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>	Hansberry	Lena Younger Ruth Younger Beneatha Younger	Good Mother Ideal Wife Non-Stereotyped
<u>Sweet Bird of Youth</u>	Williams	Princess Heavenly Finley Aunt Noonie Miss Lucy	Non-Stereotyped Fallen Woman White Magician Black Magician
<u>The Connection</u>	Gelber	Sister Salvation	Old Maid
<u>The Tenth Man</u>	Chayesky	The Girl	White Magician Black Magician
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u>	Anderson	Katherine Janet	Non-Stereotyped Ideal Wife

TABLE 3--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>Toys in the Attic</u>	Hellman	Carrie Berniers Anna Berniers Lily Berniers Albertine Price	Sexually Frustrated Woman Old Maid Woman/Child Non-Stereotyped
<u>The Best Man</u>	Vidal	Alice Russell Mabel Cantwell Mrs. Gamadge	Ideal Wife Ideal Wife Great American Bitch
<u>Come Blow Your Horn</u>	Simon	Peggy Evans Mrs. Baker Connie	Amoeba Girl Good Mother Sex Object
<u>Mary, Mary</u>	Kerr	Mary McKellaway Tiffany Richards	Ideal Wife Amoeba Girl
<u>Night of the Iguana</u>	Williams	Hannah Jelkes Maxine Faulk Miss Fellowes Charlotte Goodall	White Magician Black Magician Old Maid Woman/Child
<u>Oh Dad, Poor Dad . . .</u>	Kopit	Madame Rosepettle Rosalie	Deadly Mother Deadly Mother
<u>A Thousand Clowns</u>	Gardner	Sandy Markowitz	Ideal Wife

TABLE 3--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</u>	Albee	Martha Honey	Great American Bitch Woman/Child
<u>Never Too Late</u>	Long	Edith Lambert Kate	Helpmate Woman/Child
<u>Barefoot in the Park</u>	Simon	Corrie Bratter Mrs. Banks	Woman/Child Good Mother
<u>Any Wednesday</u>	Resnick	Ellen Gordon Dorothy Cleves	Woman/Child Ideal Wife
<u>The Subject Was Roses</u>	Gilroy	Nettie Cleary	Non-Stereotyped
<u>Luv</u>	Schisgal	Ellen Manville	Non-Stereotyped
<u>The Odd Couple</u>	Simon	Gwendolyn Pigeon Cecily Pigeon	Whore, Heart of Gold Whore, Heart of Gold
<u>The Impossible Years</u>	Fisher	Alice Kingsley Linda Kingsley	Helpmate Ideal Wife
<u>Hogan's Goat</u>	Alfred	Katherine Stanton	Fallen Woman

TABLE 3--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>Don't Drink the Water</u>	Allen	Marion Hollander Susan Hollander	Ideal Wife Amoeba Girl
<u>A Delicate Balance</u>	Albee	Agnes Edna Julia Claire	Great American Bitch Great American Bitch Woman/Child Fallen Woman
<u>You Know I Can't Hear You . . .</u>	Anderson	Dorothy Jill Harriet Edith Muriel	Amoeba Girl Amoeba Girl Great American Bitch Great American Bitch Non-Stereotyped
<u>Scuba Duba</u>	Friedman	Carol Janus Cheyenne Mrs. Wonder	Sex Object Black Magician Woman/Child
<u>Plaza Suite</u>	Simon	Karen Nash Muriel Tate Norma Hubley	Ideal Wife Woman/Child Helpmate
<u>The Price</u>	Miller	Esther Franz	Ideal Wife
<u>Great White Hope</u>	Sackler	Ellie Bachman Mrs. Jefferson Clara	Non-Stereotyped Good Mother Black Magician

TABLE 3--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>No Place to Be Somebody</u>	Gordone	Dee Jacobson Mary Lou Bolton Cora Beasley	Fallen Woman Woman/Child Ideal Wife
<u>Butterflies are Free</u>	Gershe	Jill Mrs. Baker	Woman/Child; Crazy Girl Good Mother
<u>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</u>	Simon	Elaine Navazio Bobbi Michelle Jeanette Fisher	Great American Bitch Woman/Child; Crazy Girl Ideal Wife
<u>Effect of Gamma Rays . . .</u>	Zindel	Beatrice	Non-Stereotyped
<u>House of Blue Leaves</u>	Guare	Bannanas Shaughnessy Bunny Flingus Corinne Stroller	Woman/Child Dominating Wife Amoeba Girl
<u>Prisoner of Second Avenue</u>	Simon	Edna Edison	Ideal Wife
<u>Sticks and Bones</u>	Rabe	Harriet	Deadly Mother
<u>The River Niger</u>	Walker	Mattie Williams Ann Vanderguild Grandma Brown Gail	Ideal Wife Ideal Wife Ideal Wife Ideal Wife

TABLE 3--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>	<u>PRESENTATION OF WOMEN</u>
<u>Hot 1 Baltimore</u>	Wilson	Girl April Jackie Suzy	Woman/Child; Crazy Girl Non-Stereotyped Non-Stereotyped Whore, Heart of Gold
<u>In the Boom Boom Room</u>	Rabe	Chrissy Helen	Non-Stereotyped Non-Stereotyped
<u>Same Time, Next Year</u>	Slade	Doris	Non-Stereotyped
<u>Seascape</u>	Albee	Nancy Sarah	Non-Stereotyped Ideal Wife
<u>Vanities</u>	Heifner	Joanne Kathy Mary	Non-Stereotyped Non-Stereotyped Non-Stereotyped
<u>California Suite</u>	Simon	Hannah Marvin's Wife Diana	Non-Stereotyped Helpmate Non-Stereotyped
<u>Shadow Box</u>	Cristofer	Maggie Beverly Agnes Felicity	Ideal Wife Whore, Heart of Gold White Magician Non-Stereotyped
<u>Gin Game</u>	Coburn	Fonsia	Non-Stereotyped
<u>Chapter Two</u>	Simon	Jennie Malone Faye Medwick	Ideal Wife Non-Stereotyped
<u>Deathtrap</u>	Levin	Myra Bruhl Helga Ten Dorp	Ideal Wife Non-Stereotyped

the Wife in literature, starting with the Bible and ranging to contemporary works. In "Images of Women in the Old Testament," Phyllis Bird states that the primary category for women in the Old Testament is wife, which described the destiny of every female in Israel.²³ Woman was first seen as Eve, Adam's companion.²⁴ The Wife in the Bible is mostly portrayed positively, though compliant, such as Abigail, an intelligent, beautiful, discreet, loyal, quick-witted woman, who only acts in her husband's behalf, obeying him totally. In Greek drama we have examples of loyalty and obedience in Andromache and Alcestis. Yet, this ideal of the good wife has undergone considerable change. During the Middle Ages the image of the Wife was seen as both Shrew (e.g., Noah's wife in The Deluge: Noah and His Sons) and the Submissive Wife (e.g., Patient Griselde). The image of women was spiritual and, in comedy, mostly carnal. Of course, the predominant chivalric code of the Middle Ages was persuasive. In the more serious plays, as in The Annunciation and The Nativity, both of which are parts of the Pageant of the Shearmen and Tailors of Coventry, woman is seen in her highest, most spiritual representation, the Virgin Mary.

Chaucer's Patient Griselde was the norm for a while and became the model image that Mary Ferguson and others call

²³Phyllis Bird, "Images of Women in the Old Testament," in Religion and Sexism, ed. R. R. Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), p. 63.

²⁴De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 141.

the Submissive Wife. The difference between the Biblical and Chaucerian version is slight, but it results in limiting women's image even further. Griselde possesses the same beauty as the Biblical wife, but lacks the sharpness and wit. It is her passivity, acknowledged inferiority to her husband, complete obedience to his commands, and, above all, willingness that are stressed.²⁵

The Submissive Wife, appearing consistently in literature and drama, undergoes some change in the twentieth century. We are no longer inundated with her passivity but the result is the same: obedience to husband's commands, action on his behalf. This twentieth century Ideal Wife in drama documents the concepts of de Beauvoir. "Thus the ideal of the Average Man is a woman who freely accepts his domination, who doesn't accept his ideas without discussion but who yields to his arguments, who resists him intelligently and ends by being convinced."²⁶ (Underscoring mine.) Such is the pattern of the Ideal Wife found in drama. The women will discuss, struggle, even scream and berate--but the play concludes with their happiness being confirmed in the acceptance of the superiority of the male and their willingness to obey him. As Joseph Baunoch points out in his article reviewing stereotypes of women in film, the Wife is supportive,

²⁵Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 17.

²⁶De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 172.

enduring, often good-humored; she complements the male;²⁷
 she is good looking, yet not overly sexy.²⁸

Some identifying behavior patterns found in the Ideal Wife have already been mentioned: a degree of passivity and a belief in her inferiority. In addition, the relationship between the woman and her man is of paramount importance. If there is a rift between man and children we have a Helpmate, with more turning toward the children, the Mother. For such women there is no choice between man and job; these characters usually do not work. Out of twenty-three Ideal Wives only six have jobs, and of those, two work only during the time span of the play. The relationship between the wife and her man is a strong one. Thus, we are able to include in this category women who are formally married as in The Best Man, and women who are not, but who act as if they were, and aspire to the job as in The River Niger. The age of the Ideal Wife ranges from her mid-twenties to fifties. If she is younger, she fills these and the other criteria for the Amoeba Girl.

The Amoeba Girl and the Ideal Wife are conceptually related; the Amoeba Girl usually grows up into the Ideal Wife. The "Amoeba-like heroines," as Edmund Wilson first called

²⁷Less than half the Ideal Wives are the protagonist. The majority are in supporting roles like Esther Franz in The Price, or Ruth in A Raisin in the Sun.

²⁸Baunoch, "Film Stereotypes of American Women," p. 276.

them,²⁹ are younger than the Ideal Wife, even more passive, and have just begun their relationships with men. This stereotype, found six times, occurs mostly in supporting roles. The Amoeba Girl is there to flatter a man's ego, respond to his sexual needs, and to not bother him.³⁰ She is usually wholesome, but like the Ideal Wife, not overly sexy or glamorous,³¹ and, as a rule, does not make sexual advances.³² Youth is an important factor because she is always younger than her man, less experienced, and often of a lower social or economic class. Alec Waugh wrote "one values the women who make one feel good about himself."³³ This is exactly what these women are there for. Passive, loyal, pliant, supportive, generally not very smart--they possess many of the qualities of an ideal slave-concubine.³⁴

The next largest stereotypical grouping, accounting for fourteen female characters is the Woman/Child. This category consists of two related stereotypes: the Child and the Crazy Girl, or as Molly Haskell refers to the latter,

²⁹Dolores Barracano Schmidt, "The Great American Bitch," College English 32 (May 1971): 903.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹See below (p. 92) for the idea of beauty and glamour and the destruction it causes.

³²Weibel, Mirror, Mirror, p. 72.

³³Ellman, Thinking About Women, p. 106.

³⁴Vivian Gornick and Barbara Moran, "Introduction," in Women in Sexist Society, p. xxii.

the Daffy Ingenue.³⁵ The Daffy Ingenue appeared in the late Sixties and lasted just into the early Seventies, spawned no doubt by the social climate of the time. Once again, the Woman/Child may be identified by degree of passivity and dependence. The degree of passivity and dependence increases as we go from the Ideal Wife, to the Amoeba Girl, to the Woman/Child. The age of the Woman/Child varies, but generally she is in her early twenties. Through others she defines her identity, negotiates the physical world and meets her emotional needs.³⁶ The Woman/Child is often the leading character of a play, and the action may revolve around her childish pranks, petulance, and immaturity.

According to Una Stannard, since the Victorian Age, there has existed a sexual preoccupation with youth and children. Brothels in the nineteenth century abounded with girls catering to mens' desire for the young, soft, tender child. Narcissism and exhibitionism, common attributes of childhood, are found in the image of Woman/Child.³⁷ Since the obsession with appearance is an outgrowth of sexual preoccupation, the Woman/Child is indeed pretty; her looks are fundamental to her character, and to her relationship with men.

Molly Haskell observed that for male film characters,

³⁵Haskell, From Reverence to Rape, p. 237.

³⁶Una Stannard, "The Mask of Beauty," in Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 202-203.

³⁷Ibid.

the phenomenon of the Woman/Child is compelling. Men, when given the choice, choose the Woman/Child. The "lure of the sleepwalker, butterfly is irresistible."³⁸ Clearly, the allure is of total dependence and lack of struggle; the desire to pin a butterfly's wings, to draw what one would like on an empty board.

Another stereotype that is an outgrowth of the Ideal Wife is the Helpmate. The important difference between the two is that the Helpmate divides her time and attention between two primary relationships, husband and children, while the Ideal Wife is concerned only with her man. The Helpmate, which Beverly J. Stoeltje has pointed out, is a major character of frontier literature, possessing a variety of skills which are frequently used to take responsibility for the welfare of others and to provide for her husband's and children's needs.³⁹ Though not essential, this stereotype frequently abides by the dictum of strong and tough (that is, shooting Indians). Nevertheless, she corresponds to basic female stereotypical attributes found in earlier patterns. She is obedient to her man and fulfills his desires--though this is tempered by her need to fulfill the wants of her children. In this study, five female roles, mainly from comedy, exhibit such characteristics; Edith Lambert in Never Too Late

³⁸Haskell, From Reverence to Rape, p. 347.

³⁹Beverly J. Stoeltje, "A Helpmate for Man Indeed," in Women and Folklore, ed. C. Farrer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), p. 33.

is representative. Often, her relationship with, or her feelings about the children become the butt of humor; they are made to seem unimportant in relation to the importance of the husband as in "Visitors from Philadelphia" in California Suite. Or her relationship is not apparently as good as the father's relationship to the child as in "Visitor from Forest Hills" in Plaza Suite. The Helpmate does not have to be married, though she usually is.

Surprisingly, the Good Mother is not a dominant stereotype in contemporary stage drama. Apparently, playwrights see women primarily as companions to men rather than to children. The Good Mother appears six times throughout the Sixties. She possesses some of the qualities of the Great Mother archetype, embodying her most positive aspects, nourishment, protection, warmth, and comfort--the refuge of all suffering.⁴⁰ She is recognizable from her earthiness and fecundity,⁴¹ and we see her through her primary relationship: woman vis-a-vis her children. Baunoch points out that in the movies she is always aproned, over forty and beyond sex.⁴² Rarely does the Good Mother either initiate or seem suitable for sexual advances, as does the Ideal Wife. Sex may be mentioned from the Good Mother's past, as in A

⁴⁰Erich Neumann, The Origins and History of Consciousness (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970), p. 15.

⁴¹De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 133.

⁴²Baunoch, "Film Stereotypes of American Women," p. 276.

Raisin in the Sun or it may become the subject of much humor, worry, and even a certain amount of repugnance, as in Barefoot in the Park. The Good Mother does not usually have an outside job; she is too busy worrying to be able to carry that additional burden, as in Come Blow Your Horn. If she does have a job, it is a menial one (like cleaning in A Raisin in the Sun), which adds more to our notions about sex than it does the race. Such "job taking" works to further our perception of this stereotype: the quintessence of strength, the bastion of the home who would go to great lengths for her family. There is also an interesting difference in how the Good Mother is represented in drama and comedy. In both A Raisin in the Sun and The Great White Hope, the mother is almost elevated to the Great Mother archetype. She becomes larger than life, a sufferer and endurer. In comic representations, such as Barefoot in the Park, Butterflies are Free, and Come Blow Your Horn, however, she is the target for many of the jokes. In spite of this difference, the Good Mother ultimately soothes domestic wounds and instructs her female children in the ways of Ideal Wifeliness, e.g., Mother to Ruth, in A Raisin in the Sun; Mother to Cory, in Barefoot in the Park.

Along with the Good Mother is the Deadly Mother. For every female biological role there has always been a positive/socially acceptable and negative/socially unacceptable view. The image of mother is seen, therefore, as both the giver of life and death, of pleasure and pain. The group of

Good Mothers found in the early Sixties is joined by a group of Deadly Mothers, in equal proportion, in the late Sixties.

The Deadly Mother, sometimes referred to as the Devouring Mother,⁴³ is the first stereotype mentioned thus far in which passivity is not an attribute. In fact, of the socially unacceptable stereotypical characters, few are guilty of passivity. It is their activity, or active assertions, which ultimately operate to repulse us. In Woman Hating, Andrea Dworkin analyzes the role of the mother in fairy tales: "When she lives she is bad. She has one real function, motherhood. In that function, because it is active she is characterized by overwhelming malice, devouring greed, . . . ruthless, brutal, ambitious . . . a danger to children and other living things."⁴⁴ She is the Deadly Mother (the devouring woman) who destroys her loved ones, especially her children. "The dark all devouring . . . bone wreathed Lady of the place of skulls"⁴⁵ became increasingly evident toward the end of the Sixties along with the social unrest and the heightened involvement in Viet Nam.⁴⁶ The sterile mother

⁴³See the excellent analysis of the Devouring Mother in Katherine Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966).

⁴⁴Andrea Dworkin, Woman Hating (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1974), p. 41.

⁴⁵Harold Schecter, "Kali on Main Street: The Rise of the Terrible Mother in America," Journal of Popular Culture (Fall 1973): 253.

⁴⁶*Ibid.*

figure, Mommy, in Albee's The American Dream, is the epitome of the type. (Though not included in this study, the play is still an important one in the period surveyed.) Her successors include Madame Rosepettle in Oh Dad, Poor Dad . . . and Harriet Nelson in Sticks and Bones. The age of these mothers, like their "good" counterpart, is usually over forty. Few plays present any type of Mother at the considered usual child-bearing age. Usually the Deadly Mother, like her counterpart, is a real mother, but not always. She can simply assume the role of nurturer and comforter in the guise of the Good Mother.

Another negative view of a biological role is the Dominating Wife. In contrast to the Ideal Wife, which appears most frequently, this character is found in only one play: House of Blue Leaves, yet is included here because of parallels in literature. The Dominating Wife is a less destructive (and often less effective) version of the Great American Bitch. As with the Ideal Wife, formal marriage certification is not a requirement. In this play, Bunny, in her thirties, has, in a manner of speaking, jobs. Although in earlier centuries the Dominating Wife was viewed with a certain amused tolerance, she is here seen as a nagging, pushy wife who makes her husband feel inadequate. She uses a variety of techniques in her role as mother and disciplinarian: scolding, nagging, withholding services, and firmness, decisiveness, and the ability to organize time, respectively.

Though a husband may desire such attributes for his children, he rejects them for himself. The difference between this character and the Great American Bitch is once again a matter of degree; the Dominating Wife is the less destructive model. With the Ideal Wife, Amoeba Girl, and Woman/Child, a principal criterion is the level of passivity. Here it is degree of virulence.

In 1971, Dolores Barracano Schmidt wrote an article entitled "The Great American Bitch."⁴⁷ She explored the concept of the Great American Bitch and her development in literature. Later, Judith Gustafson responded by expanding the dimensions of the term.⁴⁸ But even before this minor "controversy," Diana Trilling, in a lecture/essay entitled "The Image of Women in Contemporary Literature," though not using the same nomenclature, had begun inquiry into this type. " . . . The harrassed shrew of a few decades ago . . ." is now "someone who is man's equal even his superior, in the ability to meet the requirements of daily living, and woman becomes something more insidious than a mere scold; she becomes the force in life which not only has its own unconquerable and even undefinable power but also operates to rob man of his last shred of purpose and dignity."⁴⁹

⁴⁷Schmidt, "The Great American Bitch," pp. 900-05.

⁴⁸Judith Gustafson, "Stereotypes of Women in Contemporary Literature," in American Women and American Studies, ed. Betty Chmaj (Pittsburgh: Know, 1972), pp. 253-73.

⁴⁹Diana Trilling, "The Image of Women in Contemporary Literature," in The Woman in America, ed. R. Lifton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 61.

She continues, "Sexually she is all hunger and depredation, she is an empty shell." And, "castrating woman is not new in literature . . . but the new impulse of the writer to identify the destructive female force with the destructive social force. Woman is society."⁵⁰ She is also responsibility.⁵¹ The Great American Bitch, a principal character in plays through the Sixties and early Seventies, appears seven times, comprising one of the largest socially unacceptable stereotypical groupings. Whether, in the plays surveyed, she is a symbol of society itself, as Trilling suggests, is debatable, but as a character, she is easy to identify. Contempt is her very essence.⁵² She is almost always in her mid-thirties, forties, or older, often without a job, and usually married and a mother. Invariably, these women are materialistic and narrow minded, attacking others' (male) higher instincts or failing to lend support to their husbands. Verbal and sexual abuse are the tools of the Great American Bitch; Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? represents this stereotypical character.

Some feminist critics see the Great American Bitch as a female goal. She is a symbol, who represents the right of women to retain or demand their own identity, regardless

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 63.

⁵¹Schmidt, "The Great American Bitch," p. 904.

⁵²Ibid.

of cost to others.⁵³ This is an interesting interpretation, but not for development here. The Great American Bitch is a demanding, destructive character. She has two methods of operation: one, using her sexual role as object, wife, and mom to acquire power in roles normally thought of as subordinate; and, two, in taking on these roles, finding herself unhappy and becoming destructive.⁵⁴ Robert Anderson in some of the playlets in You Know I Can't Hear You . . . shows us the first type, while Neil Simon in the Last of the Red Hot Lovers gives us the latter. Both exhibit ruthless egoism, desire for self-aggrandisement, and contempt for male sexuality or the lack of it. We cringe, are awed and repulsed by her, but perhaps marvel at her actions when seen alongside the passivity of other women. The evil in these women is identified with their actions, "The only good woman is a dead woman!"⁵⁵

A stereotype developed solely around the sex act, is relatively scarce. Combining all such stereotypes possible Sex Object and Whore with a Heart of Gold, and the socially unacceptable counterparts, Old Maid (without the sex act) and the Sexually Frustrated Woman, we find a total of only eleven out of 115 female roles. Adding in the Black Magicians,

⁵³Jo Freeman, "The Bitch Manifesto," in Notes from the Second Year (New York: Radical Feminism, 1972), pp. 5-6.

⁵⁴Gustafson, "Stereotypes of Women in Contemporary Literature," p. 270.

⁵⁵Dworkin, Woman Hating, p. 41.

since their sexuality and use of it is a key to their stereotypical character, brings the tally to a mere sixteen.

The Sex Object and the Whore with a Heart of Gold are the positive or more socially acceptable of these stereotypes. The sex object is man's prey.⁵⁶ Her main characteristic is the same passivity found in most other socially acceptable roles, as this relates to sexual intercourse. She is generally young (twenties) and jobless. The two plays that incorporate Sex Objects, Come Blow Your Horn and Scuba Duba, also add stupidity to passivity. Neither is a major role.

The Whore with a Heart of Gold ("her goodness now is not a surprise or a discovery, contrary to her occupation; it is her occupation!"⁵⁷) is invariably older (twenties to thirties) than the Sex Object. Like the Sex Object, hers is usually not a principal role in the play. With the exception of Beverly in The Shadow Box, she is as stupid or naive as the Sex Object. The Whore, however, is less passive and does express her feelings.

The Old Maid, and her more active and more scorned sister, the Sexually Frustrated Woman, have always been a part of literature. Yet, perhaps her interest value is waning. She appears in only five plays near the end of the Fifties

⁵⁶Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 13.

⁵⁷Ellman, Thinking About Women, p. 123.

and into the early Sixties and has not resurfaced.⁵⁸ In the plays, an Old Maid is usually a single woman over the age of thirty, "often seen as queer . . . frequently seen as thin and emaciated to symbolize the withdrawal from life, highly conventional, excessively curious, and quarrelsome."⁵⁹ She is never the main character, operating in the fringe areas of the play and society, e.g., Miss Fellowes in Night of the Iguana. We are often told that if the Old Maid had a man or sex, her life would change for the better.⁶⁰

The Sexually Frustrated Woman (the word neurotic is often added), as seen in Hellman's Toys in the Attic, is more active than just "quarrelsome" and vents her sexual frustration in mostly harmful ways. In Dark at the Top of the Stairs, we feel more pity for Lottie than we do for Carrie Berniers in Hellman's play. Yet, in both plays it is the same stereotypical woman who, because of frustration, causes grief to others (Toys in the Attic), or is unwilling to help and lend support (Dark at the Top of the Stairs).

The Sex Object and the Whore with a Heart of Gold are two stereotypes related solely to the sex act. Similarly related, but providing a negative image, is the Black

⁵⁸ Although Old Maids are found in some later plays, e.g., The Impossible Years, the parts are too small to be fairly analyzed.

⁵⁹ Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 14.

⁶⁰ Marilyn Stasio, "The Nights the Critics Lost Their Cool," Ms., September 1975, p. 37.

Magician.⁶¹ Including Femme Fatales, Temptresses, and Vixens, Black Magicians are socially unacceptable. Such women are viewed principally as they relate to sexual intercourse. They take on a magical, almost out of control aura, and are often destructive presences. Haskell and Baunoch report on the recurrence of such roles in film; in contemporary stage drama the Black Magician account for the second largest socially unacceptable group. As a Femme Fatale, she is a woman of mystery, allure, and triumph (active roles).⁶² As a Temptress, she often casts a spell over men. Possibly they fear the extraordinary knowledge she possesses, e.g., The Tenth Man.⁶³ Vivian Gornick writes that the Temptress role is created as a receptacle for man's own desires,⁶⁴ like the woman of unbridled lust, Cheyenne, in Scuba Duba. The Vixen, defined as a "female fox,"⁶⁵ is a woman who also exudes a magical, out of control, and often destructive and vindictive power, e.g., Clara in The Great White Hope. All of these women are older than the acceptable Sex Object--possibly in their mid-forties, such as Maxine in Night of the

⁶¹See below for origin of this phrase in relation to de Beauvoir's "White Magicians."

⁶²Baunoch, "Film Stereotypes of American Women," p. 278.

⁶³De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 153.

⁶⁴Vivian Gornick, "Woman as Outsider," in Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 135-36.

⁶⁵Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, 2nd ed. (New York: William Collins & World, 1978), p. 2046.

Iguana. Maxine comes closest to being a major role; the other four are minor roles and do not provide the focal point of the play.

The term "Black Magicians" was created as a counterpart to another stereotype, de Beauvoir's "female white magicians."⁶⁶ The White Magician, appearing in four plays, is the most positive portrayal of woman aside from the Good Mother. Made up of grandmothers, old women, good servants, nurses, sisters, childhood friends, and pure young girls, they have mystery and magic ascribed to them.⁶⁷ They dress and heal physical and psychological wounds and are capable of tremendous rapport and understanding. Their age range is wider than for any other category; from the eighteen-year-old girl in The Tenth Man, to Aunt Noonie in Sweet Bird of Youth. None of these women have jobs; perhaps such activities would detract from their "magical" abilities. They are often seen in principal female roles, as in The Tenth Man and Night of the Iguana, and when they are not, their relationship to the principals is very important, e.g., Sweet Bird of Youth and The Shadow Box. This stereotypical character was quite popular near the end of the Fifties and early Sixties, then disappeared, and was later resurrected in the late Seventies.

All of the above stereotypes have either socially

⁶⁶De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 163.

⁶⁷Ibid.

acceptable or socially unacceptable patterns. The last of the stereotypes, however, cannot be categorized so easily. She is the Fallen Woman. Though society may find her basically unacceptable, the audience, upon viewing her demise, is left confused and unsure. The Fallen Woman may have found her way into literature, as Leslie Fiedler suggests in Love and Death in the American Novel, from a need to punish women because they are too threatening; they may grow into Great American Bitches.⁶⁸ Whether this is true or not, there is a group of female characters, whose origins are not known with certainty; they are seen as "morally inferior creatures, who beguiled by their own passions are destined to tragic lives if they deviate from laws of God or man."⁶⁹ The age of these women is usually around thirty, and they do not hold jobs. They are the lead roles, e.g., Gitl in Two for the Seesaw, or the roles that are of crucial importance to the play. It is their relationships that the audience is asked to examine. They are fairly passive, even though they may attempt ineffectual actions. Their sufferings stem from their own passions, e.g., Hogan's Goat, and they are unable to extricate themselves.

In the next chapters we will examine the stereotypes that appear most frequently: the Ideal Wife, the Great American Bitch, and the Black Magician in greater detail.

⁶⁸Leslie Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel, 2nd ed. (New York: Stein & Day, 1966), pp. 307-08.

⁶⁹Wendy Martin, "The Image of Woman in American Fiction: Seduced and Abandoned in the New World," Woman in Sexist Society, p. 330.

CHAPTER IV

THE IDEAL WIFE

Deprived of her magic weapons by the marriage rites and subordinated economically and socially to her husband, the good wife is man's most precious treasure.¹

By examining four of the fifty plays, we can observe the stereotype's one-dimensional and predictable nature.

As noted in Table 4, nineteen plays contain Ideal Wives, the most frequent representation of women. From reading these plays, it becomes evident that Ideal Wives are caught in a bind, a Catch-22 if you will. No matter what task the woman performs, it is the male's task that achieves distinction. This can be further seen in Mary Ellman's list of stereotyped female characteristic opposites, such as materiality and spirituality, passivity and hysteria.² Either we have the dream-filled, fragile woman and the strong, sensible man, direct, realistic, and economically and socially responsible, or we have the materially minded, supportive woman who does not have the ability to visualize the dreams of her man. Such a woman is "incapable of grasping subtle

¹Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), p. 163.

²Mary Ellman, Thinking About Women (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968), pp. 56-145.

TABLE 4

PLAYS CONTAINING IDEAL WIVES

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Dark at the Top of the Stairs</u>	Inge	1957	Cora Flood
<u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>	Hansberry	1959	Ruth Younger
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u>	Anderson	1959	Janet
<u>The Best Man</u>	Vidal	1960	Alice Russell Mabel Cantwell
<u>Mary, Mary</u>	Kerr	1961	Mary McKellaway
<u>A Thousand Clowns</u>	Gardner	1962	Sandy Markowitz
<u>Any Wednesday</u>	Resnick	1964	Dorothy Cleves
<u>The Impossible Years</u>	Fisher	1965	Linda Kingsley
<u>Don't Drink the Water</u>	Allen	1966	Marion Hollander
<u>Plaza Suite</u>	Simon	1968	Karen Nash
<u>The Price</u>	Miller	1968	Esther Franz
<u>No Place to be Somebody</u>	Gordone	1969	Cora Beasley
<u>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</u>	Simon	1969	Jeanette Fisher

TABLE 4--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Prisoner of Second Avenue</u>	Simon	1971	Edna Edison
<u>The River Niger</u>	Walker	1972	Mattie Ann Gail Grandma
<u>Seascape</u>	Albee	1975	Sarah
<u>Shadow Box</u>	Cristofer	1977	Maggie
<u>Chapter Two</u>	Simon	1977	Jennie Malone
<u>Deathtrap</u>	Levin	1978	Myra Bruhl

principles of conduct, large aspirations, bold errors, grand designs."³ The four plays analyzed, Jean Kerr's Mary, Mary, Arthur Miller's The Price, Joseph A. Walker's The River Niger, and Neil Simon's Chapter Two are representative of the latter female pattern.

In these plays, the signature of the Ideal Wife is the loss or sublimation of identity, accompanied by the strong connection to her man. Woman's relationship to man is strong, for he acts as the source of her identity. Job, children, even ideals are negligible concerns when compared to her man.

In all four plays (with the possible exception of Mary, Mary⁴), women have smaller or less important roles than the male characters. The drama of The Price confronts two brothers with their past. In The River Niger, a man seeks dignity and opportunity for achievement. In Chapter Two, a man's understanding of the past and acceptance of the future is central to the play.

In Mary, Mary, although the play has a central female character, she is even more rigidly stereotypical than in the other plays. A classic type of formula comedy,⁵ one of

³Ibid., p. 91.

⁴It is interesting to note that although Mary is certainly the titular and a leading character, Bob is on stage and has more lines than she does.

⁵Howard Taubman, "A Bit of Summer Reading," New York Times, 9 March 1961.

the longest running non-musical plays on Broadway,⁶ the play panders to preconceived, one-dimensional notions of women's basic needs and desires. One critic wrote that "it is a play about a woman learning that grace is equally as important for her as wit."⁷ More precisely, the play is about a woman who learns that beauty and supportiveness are far more important than intelligence and wit.

In two weeks, the divorce of a young publisher, Bob, and his wife, Mary, is to become final. Bob, now planning to marry wealthy Tiffany, asks his lawyer-friend, Oscar, to help with his finances. In an effort to straighten out the \$1800 Bob probably owes in back taxes, Oscar invites Mary to come over to assist him, but without Bob's knowledge. Thus, Bob and Mary meet in their old apartment after a nine-month separation and rekindle "old loves" along with "old fights." Dirk, a movie star stops by, meets Mary, becomes interested in her, and takes her out after he and Bob quarrel. Returning to the apartment, Mary and Bob rekindle affection, but they fight again, and Bob leaves. The next morning, Tiffany reacts passively to the thought that Bob and Mary have slept together (although they have not). Bob realizes that he loves Mary, and not Tiffany. Accidentally, he takes sleeping pills instead of vitamins, making the wooing of Mary all the more

⁶Otis Guernsey, Jr., The Best Plays 1976-77 (New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1977), pp. 400-10.

⁷Paine Knickerbocker, "Mary, Mary--Sunny Comedy," San Francisco Chronicle, 18 July 1962.

difficult. Dirk, meanwhile, pursues Mary. He asks her to fly away with him on a business trip, and while she is vacillating, Bob, in one of his more wide awake moments, pushes her into a closet, locks the door, and throws the key out into the snow. Dirk leaves, while vowing to return. Mary then steps out of the closet. She had had her own set of keys in her bag all the time. Bob and Mary realize that they love each other and belong together.

In the beginning, Mary is invested by the playwright with certain elements of the Ideal Wife: humor, a certain comeliness, and an ability to complement the male.⁸ As the play progresses, she develops into a full-blown stereotype. The play is instructive on the behavior befitting and not fitting the Ideal Wife. The key is the sublimation of the female identity. Mary's wit and intelligence are re-trained.⁹ She no longer "ruffles" Bob's feathers, and gets to him "in the eye."¹⁰ She becomes stereotypically female: her narcissism and vulnerability are emphasized, approaching the concept of the Ideal Wife. Though Mary resists him intelligently, she becomes more supportive of and devoted to Bob. Ironically,

⁸Joseph Baunoch, "Film Stereotypes of American Women," in American Women and American Studies, Vol. II, ed. Betty Chmaj (Pittsburgh: Know, Inc., 1972), p. 276.

⁹One reviewer wrote that the theme of the play showed that "a witty wife, with a little training, can be a joy forever." See "Can Witty Women Win in Love?" Life, April 14, 1961, p. 70.

¹⁰Jean Kerr, Mary, Mary, in Best American Plays 1957-63, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1963), p. 384.

upon Mary's return, Bob says to her, "You haven't changed."¹¹ But, she has, in fact, decisively changed, leaving the outcome of her character and of the play predictable.

Narcissism¹² and vulnerability,¹³ two stereotypical female qualities, are dominant. "Narcissism . . . excessive interest in one's own appearance, . . ."¹⁴ is one of Freud's three indispensable qualities of women.¹⁵ Mary is bright and she hates it. She desires beauty; her dialogue reflects the longing. She thinks about it; how it has eluded her and influenced her life. She "was the only twenty-eight-year-old girl wearing a polo coat and no lipstick."¹⁶ She calls herself a "retarded case." "It's only just this year I learned how to put my hair up in rollers."¹⁷ "Lately I'm going to Elizabeth Arden and I want you to know that it's a whole new way of life."¹⁸ She is now continually preoccupied with her looks.

¹¹Ibid., p. 386.

¹²Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 179.

¹³Una Stannard, "The Mask of Beauty," in Woman in Sexist Society, p. 203.

¹⁴Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, 2nd ed. (New York: William Collins & World, 1978), p. 1194.

¹⁵Sigmund Freud, "Femininity," New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933), trans. James Strachey (New York: Norton & Company, 1964), p. 135.

¹⁶Kerr, Mary, Mary, p. 395.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 396.

¹⁸Ibid.

It is Mary's self-image that moves her to tears, which are unlike her. "I'm the drab, colorless type and I should know better than to believe it when somebody tells me I'm pretty . . . (She can't help the catch in her voice, try as she may.)"¹⁹ She eventually has a "good cry." Her lack of beauty is the only thing important enough to elicit such a strong reaction. What Mary has, instead of beauty, which any "girl" in her right mind does not want, is brains, wit, "character." "I could have faced being plain, but to be plain and bright. In the high school I went to that's a beatable combination."²⁰ "If there is one thing I'm not interested in having any more of--if there's one thing I'm lousy with--it's character."²¹ Dirk, responding to the needs of the stereotype, decides that Mary's shyness is due to the way men respond to her: "like she was intelligent,"²² and that this is not what women want. They want to be appreciated for their looks.

Eventually Mary begins to feel "comely," but not overly sexy. That would not be fitting the Ideal Wife. She might think about it, though "I'd like to think I was a puzzle. A woman of mystery. Smiling and enigmatic on the

¹⁹Ibid., p. 400

²⁰Ibid., p. 397

²¹Ibid., p. 400

²²Ibid., p. 403.

surface--but underneath a tigress."²³

As the play progresses, Mary becomes more vulnerable. She is introduced, in Bob's words, as "direct and straight forward."²⁴ Bob, however, is most comfortable with, and sexually attracted to Mary, when she appears to be most vulnerable. It was only after Mary jammed her fingers in the door and began to cry that they shared their first kiss. According to Bob: "It started out I was just trying to comfort her."²⁵ We sense Bob's disappointment when he says: "She never cried again. Not any place--ever--not once."²⁶ If only she were more vulnerable!

Subsequently, there is a replay of that earlier narrated incident. Bob disparages Mary's looks. She cries, and it soon becomes obvious that he is enjoying it. "What I am is surprised. I never thought I'd find you sobbing on the sofa. For all the world like any other woman. Actually it's quite becoming. (Sits near Mary and offers his handkerchief.)"²⁷ She is attractive to Bob again when she wears his oversized coat over her pajamas, a "vulnerable" outfit. Bob becomes flustered and unsettled: "You look like Jackie Coogan

²³Ibid., p. 396.

²⁴Ibid., p. 382.

²⁵Ibid., p. 385.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Ibid., p. 401

in The Kid."²⁸ He realizes that he still loves and wants Mary.

How then does Mary attain to the role of a better wife, the Ideal Wife? She must destroy her own identity and focus on a new superficial one. Bob wants Mary. He wants a wife, the Ideal Wife. He loves being "clucked over."²⁹ After a bad day, he admits, "I felt a peculiar need for some warmth. I guess I felt I needed a wife."³⁰ Kerr gives us the final nuance of the Ideal Wife: the supportiveness, a complement to her man, the sublimation of her identity.

Indeed, Kerr constructs a scene to show just how well Mary functions as the Ideal Wife. Her material sense and common sense qualities can help him in his business. Mary understands Bob's dreams and values. "I'm glad you have standards. I wouldn't want you to settle for trash. But it's no crime to stay in business. You've got to keep the shop open . . ."³¹ How well she compensates for Bob's deficiencies. She can resist his concepts intelligently, yet, ultimately, it is his wishes that will prevail.

It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the sublimation of Mary's identity closes the play. Bob pushes Mary into a closet and throws away the key, preventing her from

²⁸Ibid., p. 405.

²⁹Ibid., p. 382.

³⁰Ibid., pp. 391-92.

³¹Ibid., p. 404.

leaving with Dirk. After everyone but Bob has left, Mary walks out--keys in hand--able to have escaped at any time. Instead, she chose to create for herself the passive role of the Ideal Wife. She has learned to be quiet, to tone down her wit, to obey her man. The stage directions are instructive: "Mary catches herself"³² from making a joke. The play closes as Mary, in the role of the Ideal Wife, takes off Bob's shoes. He has fallen asleep. She is now one of his creature comforts.

* * *

Arthur Miller's 1968 play, The Price, a drama successfully revived in 1979, received mixed reviews, some critics calling it one of the best of America's best playwright.³³ There was controversy, too, in how to describe the only female in the play, Esther. One reviewer described Esther as "a portrait of a wife who is loving and faithful but does wish her husband was slightly more aggressive in money matters."³⁴ Others call her "a referee,"³⁵ a "nice, trite

³²Ibid., p. 417.

³³Michael Smith, "Theatre Journal," Village Voice, 15 February 1968.

³⁴Harriet MacArthur, "The Price is Right in Every Way," The Evening Star, 28 October 1969.

³⁵Richard Watts, Jr., "Minority View of Arthur Miller," New York Post, 24 February 1968.

woman,"³⁶ a "bitter, unfulfilled wife,"³⁷ a neurotic American wife.³⁸ And, one critic, reacting strongly to the role wrote, "Kate Reid is so perfectly grey and grating as his frustrated wife, one has to remind oneself it is the character and not the actress one detests."³⁹ Still others were inclined to dismiss the character, noting that "Miller has always been most deficient with his female characters"⁴⁰ and the part "is unrealized . . . in the writing."⁴¹ Whatever the deficiencies, the role is clearly just another Ideal Wife.

The Price concerns two middle-aged brothers, Victor and Walter, who meet after a long estrangement. Their father went from wealth to poverty overnight in the Depression. Soon, after the death of their mother, the father became helpless. Walt went to college, then to medical school, all the while sending five dollars a month for the father's support. Victor, said to be even more talented in science than his brother, became a cop in order to support his father.

³⁶Penelope Gilliatt, "Miller's Heroic Testament," London Observer Review, 11 February 1968.

³⁷David Gunter, "Arthur Miller's The Price," Newark Evening News, 4 March 1968.

³⁸Peter Lewis, "Old Style Drama Still a Knock Out," London Daily Mail, 5 March 1968.

³⁹Charles Marowitz, "When the Villain is Self-Delusion," Plays and Players, April 1969.

⁴⁰Nathan Cohen, "The Price, Nothing of Dramatic Value," Toronto Daily Star, 11 November 1969,

⁴¹Gerald Weales, "The Song of Solomon," The Reporter, March 21, 1968, p. 44.

He never went back to school and stayed in a cop's uniform. Walt became a successful surgeon. Over the years, he experienced both a divorce and a nervous breakdown. The occasion of meeting is the sale of their father's furniture, which has been stored in a brownstone attic. Esther, Vic's wife, feels that Vic should receive all the money from the sale. Vic intends to divide it with Walter, whom he hasn't seen in sixteen years. After a number of quarrels between Esther and Vic, Gregory Solomon, an eighty-nine-year-old furniture dealer, arrives to bid on the furniture. Though the bid seems low, Vic accepts. As the money is being paid, Walter, to the surprise of everyone, arrives. He hesitates to intrude on the transaction, even though he believes that the price is too low. Esther returns from a short walk and is delighted, but upset to find Walter there. When she learns of the agreed-on price, she is thoroughly dismayed. Walter suggests ways to increase the profit, some of which would require his good graces. As the two men get involved in discussion, they begin to argue. Past actions, guilts, and responsibilities are laid bare. Victor accuses Walter of deserting him and his father, thus destroying his chances for a career. Walter accuses Victor of becoming a "victim," of supporting a man who didn't need it, who didn't even care or believe in him. The play ends in an impasse, both brothers angry, hurt, perhaps enlightened, but unable to connect. Walter leaves; the business transaction between Solomon and

Victor is completed. Solomon is left alone with the furniture.

The role of Esther Franz is the smallest in the play. She is on stage longer than Solomon, but most of the time she is there merely to "listen and react to long stretches of dialogue assigned to others."⁴²

What makes Esther a stereotype? First, let us look at two of the qualities of Esther which are stereotypically assigned to women: interest in material things (already seen in Mary, Mary) and formlessness.⁴³

This interest in the material is a recurring theme of both the play and the character of Esther. More than any other character, including Walter, the brother caught up in the success-oriented world, her dialogue pertains to money. Upon arriving at the brownstone, she begins to nag Victor about bargaining with the furniture dealer. "You're going to have to bargain you know,"⁴⁴ is her constant refrain. She also dislikes Vic's police uniform. "But we go out so rarely--why must everybody know your salary."⁴⁵ She admits her desire for money openly: "I want it, Vic? I want money."⁴⁶

⁴²"Arthur Miller Breaks His Silence," Cue, February 17, 1968, p. 18.

⁴³Ellman, Thinking About Women, p. 74.

⁴⁴Arthur Miller, The Price, in The Portable Arthur Miller, ed. Harold Clurman (New York: Viking Press, 1971), p. 350.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 352.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 359

This kind of nagging and beratement is acceptable for the Ideal Wife. Total immediate submission is not a requirement, rather fight first, and then capitulate.

Such nagging and preoccupation with money also follows the pattern identified by Ellman and used by Kerr in Mary, Mary: the woman attached to the material world, unable to understand the higher ideals and designs of men. Here, Victor is torn by a thousand thoughts and memories. For Esther, the focal point is clear--money.

There is another interesting facet of Esther's material desires. She cannot by her own efforts satisfy them. She is compelled to rely on others, specifically Victor, for satisfaction.

Esther's formlessness, another stereotypical character attribute, is a trademark of the Ideal Wife: the feminine mystique, the willingness of these women to submerge their identities.⁴⁷ Esther truly has no identity outside of Ideal Wife.

Formlessness is the inability of women to maintain control of themselves or their ideas: these characters are like water, movable, changeable, flowing, without form.⁴⁸ Miller exploits this concept in the very first scene of this play. Since her son left ("I'm not used to Richard not

⁴⁷Mary A. Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, 2nd ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1977), p. 39.

⁴⁸Ellman, Thinking About Women, p. 74.

being there, that's all."⁴⁹) Esther has nothing to do. She refuses to work, a supposedly female attitude toward employment: "I can't go to the same place day after day. I never could and I never will."⁵⁰ She never even suspects that something might be missing from her own life that is causing her unhappiness. Rather, she believes that Vic is the cause of her unhappiness. His indecision. Except for Walter's curiosity about her poetry ("She still writing poetry?"⁵¹), which gives us a glimpse of an Esther that perhaps once was, Esther has no formed identity of her own.

Her formlessness is also evidenced by her need for male guidance, even if that means changing loyalties. When money is the issue, she is easily led. Learning the agreed-on price, she remarks: "Oh I think that's . . . isn't that very low? (She looks to Walter for confirmation),⁵² unable to voice the complaint herself.

The loss of identity, central in Mary, Mary, denotes the Ideal Wife, here as well. She is simply unable to implement action herself. In her first speech to Victor (while Walter is out of the room), Esther is excited by the new monetary and career opportunity offered by Walter. Realizing that Vic is not impressed by the "offering," Esther

⁴⁹Miller, The Price, p. 354.

⁵⁰Ibid.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 390.

⁵²Ibid., p. 397.

says:

You throw this away, you've got to explain it to me. You can't go on blaming everything on him or the system or God knows what else! You're free and you can't make a move, Victor, and that's what's driving me crazy! . . . Now take this money! Or I'm washed up. You hear me? If you're stuck it doesn't mean I have to be.⁵³

But that is exactly what it means. She is "stuck." "You take this money or I'm washed up." The choice of pronouns is revealing. The line might read "You take this money or you're washed up." But, Esther is so intimately a part of Vic, that the you/I differentiation has become lost.

Esther often voices Victor's inner fears. "Woman has often been compared to water because among other reasons she is the mirror in which the male . . . contemplates himself."⁵⁴ Esther does mirror Vic's fears. She may see what is happening. Yet, Chekhovian-like, she cannot act on what she knows or sees, because this is the identity which acts. In Esther's final speech, her words are negated by her inaction:

We've been lying away our existence all these years; down the sewer, day after day after day . . . No wonder it all seemed like a dream to me--it was; a goddamned nightmare. I knew it was unreal, I knew it and let it go by. Well, I can't any more, kid. I can't watch it another day. I'm not ready to die. (She moves toward her purse. She sits. Pause.)⁵⁵

⁵³Ibid., p. 411.

⁵⁴De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, p. 173.

⁵⁵Miller, The Price, p. 435.

Throughout Esther's adult life, it is Victor who has acted. She cannot move without him. She is totally dependent.

In his article, "All About Talk: Arthur Miller's The Price," Gerald Weales wrote of a "solidity to the marriage that prepares us for the almost unspoken reconciliation of the play's end."⁵⁶ One wonders if it is truly a solidity of the marriage or the tenacity of an Ideal Wife.

The term "loyalty" is frequently bandied about between the brothers. Certainly the play bears witness to the loyalty a son had for his father. By the play's conclusion, however, it appears that the loyalty was unwarranted and self-defeating. Not so with Esther's final and prevailing loyalty toward Vic, a loyalty that Miller draws attention to. We learn briefly that Walter's wife could not stay with him, and that Victor's mother failed his father. "When he needed her, she vomited."⁵⁷ His mother's death less than a year after the crash represented her ultimate inability to support her husband. Not so of the Ideal Wife. She will not vomit; not even argue any more. She accepts Victor, accepts his uniform. She must. His is the only identity she has.

⁵⁶Gerald Weales, "All About Talk: Arthur Miller's The Price," Ohio Review 13 (Winter 1972): 77.

⁵⁷Miller, The Price, p. 437.

* * *

In Joseph A. Walker's Tony award-winning play, The River Niger, the point of view, once again, is clearly and emphatically male. Warm and loving, women are the warriors' helpers.⁵⁸ Supportive, common sense women aid their dreaming men.

This concept is verbalized in a conversation between the hero, Johnny, and his friend, Dudley:

John: You hear that, Dudley, a warrior's woman.
A fighter--
Dudley: Women were always the real fighters, man,
don't you know that? Men are the artists,
philosophers--creating systems, worlds.
Silly dreams and fictions.
John: Fiction is more real, stupid.⁵⁹

Men are not only capable of dreams, but they can also deal with the material world. Women are capable of the latter, but not the former. If dreams and fiction are more important, ergo, men are more important. A woman must sublimate her dreams for the sake of her man, her fighter.

Of the four plays examined in this chapter, The River Niger has the largest cast of characters: eleven, including four women. All four women are basically the same. All are eager to serve as the Ideal Wife. Two of them, Mattie (John the hero-painter-philosopher's wife) and Ann

⁵⁸Joseph A. Walker, The River Niger (New York: Hill & Wang, 1973), p. 27.

⁵⁹Ibid.

(the girlfriend of John's son Jeff) are of particular interest.

The stereotyping of women in this play and the black male chauvinism in plays generally have not gone unnoticed. Jeanne Noble, writing about this black male trend, notes: "There is a serious black male chauvinism flourishing in the midst of white racist America."⁶⁰ One black critic wrote: "In the plays written by Black males, Black women's happiness or completeness in life depends upon strong Black men."⁶¹

Following its 1972 opening Off-Broadway, many black male critics were elated that the play broke away from stereotypes of black males (worthless ne'er-do-well).⁶² Other critics assailed the portrayal of women. Hobe Morrison in Variety wrote, "It seems to imply that women should subordinate themselves to their man and assist rather than lead."⁶³ "A woman," wrote Martin Gottfried, "is not a character because she is dying of cancer, or because she is a tippling grandmother, or because she is South African."⁶⁴

⁶⁰Jeanne Noble, Beautiful, Also, Are the Souls of My Black Sisters (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978), p. 315.

⁶¹Jeanne Marie A. Miller, "Images of Black Women in Plays by Black Playwrights," CLA Journal 20 (June 1977): 502.

⁶²Jean Carey Bono, "Review of The River Niger," New York Times, 8 December 1972.

⁶³Hobe Morrison, "The River Niger," Variety, 28 March 1972.

⁶⁴Martin Gottfried, "The River Niger," Women's Wear Daily, 28 March 1973.

Most succinct was Julius Novick: "I am struck . . . by the male chauvinism in the play . . . (Don't the women) have needs that ought to be considered?"⁶⁵

The plot is a somewhat complicated and melodramatic story. Johnny Williams, housepainter-poet, his wife, Mattie, his mother-in-law, and his friend Dudley are awaiting the homecoming of Johnny's and Mattie's son Jeff from the army. In the play's opening scene, Dudley and Johnny are engaged in one of their many arguments concerning the black man, his responsibilities and his battlefield. Johnny needs money from Dudley, having drunk his away. As usual, Dudley bails him out, extracting a poem in payment. Jeff's girlfriend, Ann Vanderguild, comes in. She is a "strong, black South African girl, a lover of quality."⁶⁶ Knowing Jeff is expected home, she has come from Canada to be with him. That night, members of Jeff's old gang harass Ann while she is waiting for Jeff. Johnny, returning from drinking with Dudley, in a show of bravado, threatens to blow the gang away with grenades. After the gang's departure, Jeff arrives, but only Ann knows of his presence.

The next morning, Dudley informs Johnny that he thinks Mattie has cancer. The two go out and get drunk. The gang returns and Jeff fights with several members. Upon

⁶⁵Julius Novick, "Realism in Harlem," Village Voice, 5 April 1973.

⁶⁶Walker, The River Niger, p. 3.

Johnny's return, he finds Jeff and gets the news that Jeff never became a navigator, as Johnny had wanted. Upset, Johnny goes on a bender for a week. When he gets back, Mattie is ready to go into the hospital. Jeff's old gang has internal problems with which Johnny and the family become involved. This leads to the death of an undercover policeman, as well as Johnny, who wants to be blamed for all previous crimes so that no one else will be prosecuted.

Often a playwright has one character tell a story, which will be repeated during the action of the play or will become a parable for all or part of the ensuing action. In Mary, Mary, it is the story of Mary's accident leading to Bob's and Mary's first kiss. As told to us by Ann in The River Niger, her story becomes the pattern for the play's action as well as the pattern for the behavior of the women. The police "bust" the illegal press run by Ann's brothers in South Africa. Her father, taking complete responsibility for the press, is sent to prison, the brothers escaping to England. Ann's mother waits "quietly" for her husband.⁶⁷ Here is the play's presentation of the behavior of women: Mattie, the older version, and Ann, the younger, willing to wait quietly.

The idea of love and loyalty between males is exemplified in Ann's story, and is dramatized in the play. Walker insists upon classifying such feelings as loyalty and love

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 43.

as male, giving the women dialogue which makes it impossible for women to share such feelings. "Women," says Ann, "don't seem to be able to get along with each other that way--I mean that deep loving way." Mattie: "It's all 'cause women don't trust one another..."⁶⁸ Millett has remarked on this schism, writing that "One of the effects of . . . patriarchy is to set women against each other."⁶⁹ The women in this play can trust only their men.

Both women are stereotypically attractive and supportive; domination is accepted and expected. Few plays present women so unceasingly devoted, so single-minded in their support.

Mattie first appears as an example of the Helpmate, devoted to both husband and son. Yet even Jeff makes no real demands on the connection and source of her identity, Johnny. She makes it clear that her life is her husband and her family. "I play anything my folks need me to play,"⁷⁰ and "the only thing I'm worried about is the whereabouts of my man."⁷¹ Toward the end of the play, these feelings become even more pronounced. Walker seems to want to record the strength of dependence and connection of these women, which, as Grandma shows, lasts past death. "Look at me!" says

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 42-43.

⁶⁹Millett, Sexual Politics, p. 38.

⁷⁰Walker, The River Niger, p. 72.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 138.

Mattie. "I've had a full life with an extraordinary man who fell upon me and fed my soul like manna from heaven--bless him!"⁷² The final scenes are overpowered by Mattie's selflessness⁷³ and saintliness:

Mattie: I've been so goddam happy. All I cared about was seeing you walk . . . through that door. I only complain because I felt I should say something--but I never meant it . . . You couldn't have given me nothing more, baby. I'da just keeled over and died from too much happiness.⁷⁴

Walker effectively categorizes the "argument" factor of the Ideal Wife.⁷⁵ The "fight" or "gumption," if you will, is an integral part of the Ideal Wife stereotype but it is only show and not essential to the character.

Mattie's illness and imminent death are eclipsed by Johnny's bravado, strength, and "savage power."⁷⁶ The last scene encapsulates this. "I've got to get our children straight before I go--now be my superbitch and shut the fuck up. (Mattie understands and obeys.)"⁷⁷ Mattie has always

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Mattie's lack of ego is in counterpoint to Johnny's excess. On hearing that Mattie has to go to the hospital, Johnny says: "What do you want from me you bastard?" (p. 150) He sees her illness as a loss and tragedy for him, rather than the effect on her.

⁷⁴Walker, The River Niger, p. 153.

⁷⁵See above p. 50.

⁷⁶Walker, The River Niger, p. 174.

⁷⁷Ibid.

understood and obeyed. "I'm with you every second, baby."⁷⁸ She has been constant--supportive and understanding. It is Johnny who has been philosopher, poet, painter, father, revolutionary, protector. Mattie has been the Ideal Wife.

The final scene touches upon the aspects of male loyalty and love discussed earlier. Johnny, for his own sense of self, as well as for the protection of his son and male friends, has taken responsibility for the informant's death. It is no surprise then, that the last conversation before Johnny dies is between him and Dudley. They talk about things in the male province--poetry, philosophy, battlefields, things that are "important" in life, and excluded from the world of the Ideal Wife.

Mattie, however long she lives, will grow into a Grandma Brown, and Ann will grow into a Mattie. Three-quarters of Ann's lines are self-deprecating. Hers is the supportive role from her first lines. On meeting her, Dudley says, "Oh, these strong black women!" Ann responds, with the epigram of the play: "I'm only strong if my man needs me to be, sir."⁷⁹ She has accepted the stereotype as her own self-image.⁸⁰ She never perceives of herself as a central figure--there is only Jeff. She comes equipped with all the stereotypical wifely qualities: ability to cook, "hook" a

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 175.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 26.

⁸⁰Ferguson, Images of Women in Literature, p. 35.

man,⁸¹ and knowing when to leave and make coffee while the men talk. She is attractive, yet not outstandingly so.⁸² Finally, although Ann may put up a fight, she will embrace the domination of her man and submerge herself in Jeff's identity. "I won't get in the way, Mrs. Williams."⁸³ And she doesn't. She offers advice, cajoles, flatters. She is a "mamma who's gonna protect your flanks,"⁸⁴ a concise summation of the job of the Ideal Wife.

* * *

Neil Simon's works account for eight of the fifty plays selected for analysis, more than any other playwright's. Half of these plays incorporate Ideal Wives; Chapter Two, the most recent (1977), and one of Simon's commercial successes. Chapter Two is similar to his earlier play, Prisoner of Second Avenue. In the latter, the husband is unable to

⁸¹Walker, The River Niger, p. 35.

⁸²As in Mary, Mary, we see the Ideal Wife can never be overwhelmingly beautiful--she is simply attractive. But Walker, unlike Kerr, explicitly gives us the reason: beautiful women are bad; destroyers of men. Talking about the pressures on him in navigator's school, Jeff says about a girlfriend: "She was the fox to end all foxes, Pop. An afro so soft and spongy, until my hands felt like they were moving through water. And she kept on telling me, 'Honey, we needs that extra hundred and thirty a month flight pay to keep me in the style to which you have made me accustomed.'" (P. 127)

⁸³Walker, The River Niger, p. 45.

⁸⁴*Ibid.*, p. 119.

deal with the demons in society; in Chapter Two the demons are inside himself. The wife in both plays is Ideal-- understanding, supportive, possessing energy and vigor, all of which facilitate realization and self-knowledge in the male.

While some critics still found this type of woman endearing, "admirably spirited,"⁸⁵ "pretty and sympathetic,"⁸⁶ others sensed an "artificiality." Richard Eder, for example, wrote, "She doesn't seem very real. Her qualities seem to belong to George's apprehension of her--or Mr. Simon's-- rather than to a real flesh-and-blood character."⁸⁷ Julius Novick, writing for the Village Voice, noted: "Jennie is a paragon . . . she is not written from the inside for she has no inside . . . If I were a woman I think I would hate this play."⁸⁸ How did we arrive at this point? A decade earlier, two plays contained women being trained for the role of Ideal Wife. Yet, by the end of the Seventies, we are being presented women, content in this limited role and seemingly denying the changed societal role of women. Chapter Two gives just such a presentation--the totally well-adjusted

⁸⁵Brendan Gill, "And Now to Be Serious for a Moment," New Yorker, December 12, 1977, p. 91.

⁸⁶Clive Barnes, "A Touching Play Tiptoes on the Heart," New York Post, 5 December 1977.

⁸⁷Richard Eder, "For Neil Simon, It's Chapter Two," New York Times, 5 December 1977.

⁸⁸Julius Novick, "Innaurato Out the Other," Village Voice, 19 December 1977,

Ideal Wife.

The story is simple. George Schneider, a writer of both successful "bad" and unsuccessful "good" novels, has been recently widowed after a twelve-year "euphoric" marriage. Following a vacation in Europe, taken to forget his wife, he returns to resume his life. His brother, Leo, and George's Central Park West apartment (filled with memories) await him. Leo arranges a series of dates for George, all of which turn into disasters. Because of a mix-up in phone numbers, George speaks to a recently divorced actress, Jennie Malone. To both characters' surprise, they meet and like each other. They arrange to be married two weeks later, in spite of general disapproval. Leo tries to dissuade Jennie, citing George's poor mental health as the reason. But, George and Jennie marry anyway. Immediately after the wedding, the mood of ecstatic happiness turns to one of abject despair. George is unwilling to forget the past and resents Jennie for making him happy. He leaves for California to straighten himself out. This, he manages to do instantly, and he returns to New York, to Jennie and to a happy life. A small and unsuccessful⁸⁹ subplot is interwoven throughout the story: Jennie's friend Faye is unhappy with her marriage, and, unsuccessfully, attempts to consummate an affair with

⁸⁹Eder, "For Neil Simon, It's Chapter Two."

Leo.⁹⁰

Loss of identity, a key element of the Ideal Wife, is achieved in varying ways. For example, in Mary, Mary and The Price, a moral lesson is imparted. Becoming an Ideal Wife will make the women and everyone around them happier. In The River Niger, the Ideal Wife is grateful to aid and support her man. In Chapter Two, the most recent of these plays, the Ideal Wife is the tool to be used by man in order to find himself and his deepest feelings. De Beauvoir wrote " . . . she gently recalls them to a modest realization of their true condition . . . (Man) . . . must project himself into an object in order to reach himself."⁹¹ This is Jennie's purpose in Chapter Two.

Jennie, typical of the Ideal Wife is physically attractive; she possesses a sense of humor and complements her husband. Unlike the females of Mary, Mary and The Price, she possesses stereotypical female qualities that are positive. Like Mattie in The River Niger, she has empathy, sensitivity, and intuitiveness,⁹² which aid in making her

⁹⁰The failure of this liaison is based on stereotypical beliefs of both female and male sexuality. Faye is only interested in sex when love and a romantic veneer is involved. Leo is shown to have a callous and totally impersonal attitude toward affairs.

⁹¹De Beauvoir, The Second Sex, pp. 169-73.

⁹²Judith M. Bardwick and Elizabeth Douvan, "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women," in Woman in Sexist Society, p. 225.

saintly, almost unreal. Novick wrote that the "play is clearly a wish-fulfillment for the author as George."⁹³

"She's so good," according to John Simon, "margarine wouldn't melt in her mouth."⁹⁴ It is her overwhelmingly positive female attributes that lead to such one-dimensionality. Jennie never has a mean thought, a doubt, or an unclear goal. She is the "sweetest girl,"⁹⁵ who will do anything to help her man.

The play's dialogue is revealing, but it is the small interactions between her and George that highlight her qualities. After George and Jennie have been together almost constantly for two weeks, George gets sick at dinner. Jennie brings him home, massages his feet, puts cool compresses on his forehead, and sympathizes with George's diagnosis of the "attack." As they are embracing, George has another "attack":

Jennie: What is it? . . . Is it the pain again? . . .
 George! Oh, George, sweetheart, what?
 Tell me.
 George: I don't know, Jennie.
 Jennie: It's alright . . . Whatever you're feeling.
 George: I keep trying to push Barbara out of my
 mind . . . I can't do it. I've tried, Jennie.
 Jennie: I know.
 George: I don't really want to. I'm so afraid of
 losing her forever.
 Jennie: I understand and it's alright . . .⁹⁶

⁹³Novick, "Innaurato Out the Other."

⁹⁴John Simon, "Dry Doc," New York Magazine, December 19, 1977, p. 102.

⁹⁵Neil Simon, Chapter Two (New York: Samuel French, 1978), p. 54.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 55.

.

Jennie: I just want you to be happy. I want you to have room for all your feelings. I'll share whatever you want to share with me. I'm very strong, George . . . I have enough for both of us. Use it, George, please. Use me.⁹⁷

This is typical of the play's dialogue. Jennie is constantly saying "All right," "Whatever you say," "Whenever you want," "I feel the same way."⁹⁸ One critic observed that her "understanding of him turns her into a vertiable golden girl."⁹⁹ She is the kind of wife, Judy Syfers points out, that anyone, male or female, would like to have.¹⁰⁰

Jennie's final speech, which John Simon called a "flashy but shallow tirade"¹⁰¹ is interesting not for insight into Jennie's character, but because of how it acts as a catalyst for George. The speech mirrors his feelings. He is mobilized into self-realization and self-knowledge.

The importance of George and the subservient supportiveness of Jennie are epitomized by the "happy" ending of the play. George has returned home to New York, full of

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 56.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 69.

⁹⁹Marjorie Gunner, "On and Off Broadway," Park Bulletin, 22 December 1977.

¹⁰⁰Judy Syfers, "Why I Want a Wife," in Radical Feminism, ed. Anne Koedt (New York: Quadrangle, 1973), pp. 60-62.

¹⁰¹Simon, "Dry Doc," p. 102.

self-understanding, and with his completed novel. He calls Jennie, and after the obligatory lines of forgiveness, George begins immediately to read his entire novel over the phone. Predictably, Jennie relishes every word. Bright, efficient, relinquishing her own identity, she can now get on with the task of being the Ideal Wife--complementing (and complimenting) her man. To Jennie, a job or career is useful only if things do not work out with a man.¹⁰²

Neither work, nor children, nor unrelated ideals approaches a woman's relationship and support for her husband. It is this parasitic, though socially acceptable or positive bond, that characterizes the Ideal Wife.

¹⁰²Simon, Chapter Two, p. 27.

CHAPTER V

THE BLACK MAGICIAN

AND

THE GREAT AMERICAN BITCH

Socially unacceptable or "bad" female behavior occurs less frequently than acceptable behavior in American drama of the last two decades. The socially acceptable Ideal Wife, along with her closely related variants, e.g., Amoeba Girl, Woman/Child, accounts for most of the characters examined.

As noted in Table 5, ten plays contain the image either of the Black Magician or Great American Bitch. These two socially unacceptable characterizations are found most often. The Black Magician of Tennessee Williams' Drama Critics' Circle award winner, The Night of the Iguana, as well as of Gore Vidal's commercially successful, The Best Man, is a destroyer of men. A Femme Fatale, Temptress or Vixen, she attempts, by means of her overpowering sexuality to possess, manipulate, and control the male. The Great American Bitch occurs as often as the Black Magician. She is found in Edward Albee's Pulitzer Prize winning, A Delicate Balance, as well as in Bruce Jay Friedman's long-running Scuba Duba. Through her acquired power as mother and wife

TABLE 5

PLAYS CONTAINING BLACK MAGICIANS OR
GREAT AMERICAN BITCHES

BLACK MAGICIANS			
<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Sweet Bird of Youth</u>	Williams	3/59	Miss Lucy
<u>The Tenth Man</u>	Chayevsky	11/59	The Girl
<u>Night of the Iguana</u>	Williams	12/61	Maxine Faulk
<u>Scuba Duba</u>	Friedman	10/67	Cheyenne
<u>Great White Hope</u>	Sackler	10/68	Clara
GREAT AMERICAN BITCHES			
<u>The Best Man</u>	Vidal	3/60	Mrs. Gamadge
<u>Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?</u>	Albee	9/62	Martha
<u>A Delicate Balance</u>	Albee	9/66	Agnes Edna
<u>You Know I Can't Hear You . . .</u>	Anderson	3/67	Harriet Edith
<u>Last of the Red Hot Lovers</u>	Simon	12/69	Elaine Navazio

she destroys the male. She abuses him verbally, loads him down with responsibilities, suffocates him under material needs, and hints to him of his demise. These "bad" female images--as represented in these plays--will be analyzed in some detail.

Tennessee Williams' projections of women in his plays have provided the basis for much critical analysis. Like Arthur Miller, Williams is considered one of America's leading playwrights. Kenneth Tynan points out, however, that while Miller's plays are "hard, 'patrist,' athletic, concerned mostly with men, Williams' are soft, 'matrist'" concerned mostly with women.¹ In his autobiography published in 1975,² Williams dealt at length with his homosexuality. Were Williams' female characters "women" or "substitutions" for men? Were the conflicts in his play truly heterosexual or are they more typical of the homosexual world?³ And if the conflicts are intended to be heterosexual doesn't Williams' homosexuality, as William Goldman suggests, color his perception of women?⁴ However, the most we can infer is

¹Kenneth Tynan, Tynan on Theatre (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961), p. 141.

²Tennessee Williams, Memoirs (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975).

³For a detailed discussion of this point see Nancy Tischler, Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan (New York: Citadel Press, 1961), p. 213 and Stanley Edgar Hyman's "Some Trends in the Novel," College English 20 (October 1958): 2-9.

⁴William Goldman, The Season (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969), pp. 238-39.

that perhaps, his homosexuality colors his presentations of both men and women.

Williams' images of women are and may be considered stereotypical; they are often socially unacceptable, and his emphasis on a single quality makes the character appear one-dimensional. His concern is certainly not with the Ideal Wife. Nancy Tischler notes that even in his early plays, Williams offered negative images of women. "One of his first plays described a woman inviting guests to dinner and then flooding the banquet hall."⁵ Williams, in his plays, created White Magicians, Fallen Women, and Black Magicians. Both of Williams' plays included in this study contain Black Magicians: Miss Lucy, in Sweet Bird of Youth, and Maxine Faulk in The Night of the Iguana. The latter character is the only major Black Magician role found in the fifty plays used for this study.

The Night of the Iguana opened on December 28, 1961 to generally good reviews. Some critics called the play Williams' "most mature drama,"⁶ "a Great Williams Play,"⁷

⁵Nancy Tischler, "A Gallery of Witches," in Tennessee Williams: A Tribute, ed. Jac Tharpe (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), p. 494.

⁶John Chapman, "Tennessee Williams' Most Mature Drama," New York Daily News, 14 January 1962.

⁷John McClain, "Brilliant Cast Adds to Great Williams' Play," New York Journal American, 29 December 1961.

and "eloquent and moving."⁸

The male lead, Shannon, in Iguana is a tour guide. He and his party of Texas ladies arrive at a broken-down coastal Mexican hotel, which provides the setting for the play, in September of 1940. Shannon, at one time a priest, has spent the past decade wandering around the globe as a tour guide. Shannon has brought the ladies to the hotel against their wishes as it is not on their itinerary. The proprietor of the hotel, Shannon's friend, has died, and his widow, Maxine, is in charge. Shannon tries to fend off both Maxine's sexual advances and the growing irritation of the tour group. Miss Fellowes, a member of the group, is even more incensed by her discovery that Shannon has made love to one of her young charges. There are two later arrivals on the scene, Hannah Jelkes, a forty-year-old woman, companion to her ninety-eight-year-old grandfather, Nonno, "the oldest practicing poet in the world," and the second late arrival. Though Maxine has given Hannah permission for the pair to stay the night, she attempts to rescind the offer, when she becomes aware of the growing relationship between Hannah and Shannon. Miss Fellowes has Shannon fired, and the tour group leaves.

Shannon, who had become almost wild after his dismissal, has been strapped to a hammock. He and Hannah bare

⁸Whitney Bolton, "Night of the Iguana, Eloquent, Moving," New York Morning Telegraph, 30 December 1961.

their souls to the sound of the iguana, held captive beneath the hotel. Shannon tells Hannah how he was locked out of his church and accused of rape. Hannah shares with him her philosophy of life, but she rejects Shannon's request that she travel with him. They decide to free the iguana, who is being held for food. Penniless and desperate, Shannon decides to stay on with Maxine. Nonno, dying, finishes his last poem and Hannah is now left alone.

Some critics have discussed Hannah as the fair heroine, the saint, and Maxine as the whore.⁹ Earlier, we described them as the White Magician and the Black Magician.¹⁰ Maxine is not simply a whore. Although she may be said to project the one-dimensional overriding quality of a stereotype, she is mainly the sensual, predatory Black Magician; she is the woman whose lust can destroy.

Such are the basic characteristics of the Black Magician--an overpowering sexuality resulting in the destruction of her prey. Reviews of the original projection, with Bette Davis in the role of Maxine, emphasized these qualities. One critic called Maxine "a blatantly sexual being."¹¹

⁹Foster Hirsch, A Portrait of the Artist: The Plays of Tennessee Williams (Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1979), p. 68. Tischler also noted that they are both characterized principally by their relationship to men--one having lived without sexuality and one based totally on it. See Tischler, "Gallery of Witches," p. 506.

¹⁰See above, p. 65.

¹¹Jacob Adler, "Night of the Iguana, A New Tennessee Williams?" Ramparts 1 (November 1962): 59-68.

Another termed her "an earthy sensualist."¹² Williams' own description of her includes "rapaciously lusty."¹³

Everything about Maxine emphasizes sex and lust. She first appears in tight pants and a half-unbuttoned shirt, followed by one of her Mexican employee-beachboys who is also in a state of semi-dress.¹⁴ The beachboys underline the "oversexed"¹⁵ nature of Maxine. Glenn Embrey claims that the beachboys are there to point up the nature of Maxine's sexual appetite; she has hired not one but two young men to service her.¹⁶ Maxine's last name (Faulk), a crude pun, further accents her lasciviousness.

Maxine's lust is often the topic of conversation. Many of her own lines relate to sex. "How many you laid so far?"¹⁷ she asks Shannon. Shannon notes that Maxine looks like she's "been having it too."¹⁸ Maxine talks openly about her sex life with her deceased husband. "We hadn't

¹²Howard Taubman, "Night of the Iguana Opens," New York Times, 29 December 1961.

¹³Tennessee Williams, The Night of the Iguana, in The Theatre of Tennessee Williams, vol. IV (New York: New Direction Books, 1972), p. 255.

¹⁴Ibid.

¹⁵Edward Sothorn Hipp, "Taking the Edge Off," Newark Evening News, 29 December 1961.

¹⁶Glenn Embrey, "The Subterranean World of The Night of the Iguana," in A Tribute, p. 336.

¹⁷Williams, The Night of the Iguana, p. 255.

¹⁸Ibid., p. 256.

sex together in, . . ."¹⁹ which is why Maxine hired the beachboys. She displays her body unrelentingly. She touches, pushes, throws herself at Shannon. Early on, "Maxine comes over and sits down on him in the hammock."²⁰ Shannon shouts that she should button her shirt. She is constantly seen giving him an "affectionate little pat."²¹ Her ass and hips, it seems, are all over the place--and him. Maxine's only response to his criticism is to project indignation. After all, her body is well thought of by the Mexicans.

In each of Maxine's scenes there are vulgar references to sex. She talks of "hot whores";²² ass dragging.²³ She openly covets Shannon and wants him to replace her dead husband. When Shannon, exasperated, pleads, "What do you want out of me Maxine, honey?" she replies easily, "Just to do this" (running her fingers through his hair).²⁴

Williams uses animal imagery to point up Maxine's sexual nature. He has Shannon call her a "pig,"²⁵ and a "bright widow spider."²⁶ Williams describes her laugh as

¹⁹Ibid., p. 257.

²⁰Ibid., p. 261.

²¹Ibid., p. 273.

²²Ibid., p. 328.

²³Ibid., p. 255.

²⁴Ibid., p. 320.

²⁵Ibid., p. 328.

²⁶Ibid., p. 317.

"a single harsh, loud bark, opening her mouth like a seal expecting a fish to be thrown to it."²⁷ Such images of food and animals²⁸ delineate Maxine fully. Sexuality is not her only quality. This must be combined with an insatiable lust, which devours men.

Bette Davis was pleased that the character was not complicated. She saw Maxine as a simple "good healthy animal,"²⁹ but some critics disagreed, perceiving the destructive force of the character. Kerr observed that Shannon "can only be eaten alive by Miss Davis."³⁰ Hobe Morrison called Maxine the "epitome of cruel possessive aggressiveness";³¹ others termed her a "she-bitch."³² Nancy Tischler points out that Williams seemed to enjoy creating the Venus-spider character.³³ It is the menacing quality of the spider utilizing web-like control over the male that identifies Maxine

²⁸ See below for more detail regarding the iguana.

²⁹ "The Night of the Iguana," New York Times, 29 October 1961.

³⁰ Walter Kerr, "The Lively Arts," New York Herald Tribune, 7 January 1962.

³¹ Hobe Morrison, "The Night of the Iguana," Variety, 3 January 1962.

³² Jerry Tallmer, "The Lizard's Skin," Village Voice, 4 January 1962.

³³ Nancy Tischler, "A Gallery of Witches," p. 508. Other critics also discuss Williams' use of this Venus-spider female throughout his work. Jacob Adler wrote about "the more or less grotesque older woman," p. 60, and Signi Falk talks about the recurrence of the sexually aggressive older woman, p. 70.

as a Black Magician.

Williams backed away from attempted parallels between Maxine and Stanley Kowalski of A Streetcar Named Desire.³⁴ Yet her hard, tough, and vulgar qualities were of paramount importance to him. During the filming of the drama, Williams complained about how Ava Gardner was playing the role. Williams said that "they've poured syrup over her and that's wrong."³⁵ Maxine is not meant to be sweet.

The Black Magician wants to control the male. Maxine tries alcohol as well as sex. A drunken Shannon would be easy to manipulate. She urges him to have a rum-coco.³⁶ "I thought you were going to break down and have a drink, Rev."³⁷ "What you need is a drink,"³⁸ becomes her refrain. She stands "holding her drink deliberately close to him,"³⁹ cajoling him, and always aware of how self-destructive the results would be. When Hannah points out that Shannon is

³⁴In an interview in the New York Times, Williams was asked, "Isn't the hotel keeper, portrayed by Miss Davis, a Stanley Kowalski type, a figure of evil?" "Evil?" said Williams, "I don't think evil is ever a person. I think evil is a thing." See Seymour Peck, "Williams and the Iguana," New York Times, 24 December 1961.

³⁵Peter Evans, "Tennessee Williams Wants to Unsweeten Ava," New York World Telegram and Sun, 24 October 1963.

³⁶Williams, The Night of the Iguana, p. 277.

³⁷Ibid., p. 309.

³⁸Ibid., p. 322.

³⁹Ibid., p. 307.

"putting up a struggle not to drink"⁴⁰ Maxine lashes out at her.⁴¹ Both women fight over Shannon: Hannah, to help; Maxine, to own him.

Maxine is quite ready to destroy Hannah if she gets in her way. She is unnecessarily cruel to both Hannah and Nonno from their first appearance during one of Maxine's attempted seductions of Shannon. "You bathe and rest and have a rum-coco baby"⁴² she says to him. Her "What can I do for you folks?" is said to the "female" Hannah "while her tone indicates no desire to do anything for them."⁴³

Maxine's attempts to dominate by means of alcohol and by removal of female competition are minor when compared to the threats she makes to Shannon. From past eavesdropping on her husband's and Shannon's conversations, she is now able to dredge up in Shannon personal and painful memories regarding God, sex, youthful masturbation, and subsequent punishment by his mother. She threatens him with a future as unpleasant as his past. "You'll sing a different tune if they put you where they put you in 'thirty-six.' Remember 'thirty-six,' Shannon?"⁴⁴ She continues:

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 319.

⁴¹Ibid.

⁴²Ibid., p. 277.

⁴³Ibid., p. 279.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 339.

Now I'm going to call in town to get a doctor to give him a knockout injection, and if he's not better tomorrow he's going into the Casa de Locos again like he did the last time he cracked up on me.⁴⁵

These threats make Shannon passive for a while. When he later becomes agitated, once again Maxine taunts him.

. . . Dr. Lopez . . . the men in the dirty white jacket that came here the last time you cracked up here? And hauled you off to the Casa de Locos? Where they threw you into that cell with nothing in it but a bucket and straw and a waterpipe? And dropped head-down on the floor and got a concussion? Yeah, and I told him you were back here to crack up again and if you didn't quiet down here tonight you should be hauled out in the morning.⁴⁶

Shannon has little choice but to remain passive, and he has no choice but to remain with Maxine.

Critics have had some difficulty analyzing the play's ending. Hannah and Shannon release the iguana and Shannon remains with Maxine. Some critics have described this ending as more loving optimistic than the endings of other Williams plays.⁴⁷ Others have seen only pathos and despair.⁴⁸ The

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 341.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 348-49.

⁴⁷Louise Blackwell in her article, "Tennessee Williams and the Predicament of Women," South Atlantic Bulletin 35 (March 1970): 9-14 attempts, without sufficient evidence, to argue this as well as other sentimental points about women.

⁴⁸Nancy Tischler, Tennessee Williams, Southern Writers Series #5 (Austin: Steck Vaughn Company, 1969), p. 38. "The natural setting is less malignant, but it is equally despairing of more than a momentary respite from anguish."

final exchange between Maxine and Shannon is somewhat disconcerting. Maxine tells Shannon that she needs someone to help her manage the hotel. Her suggestion that she will keep the male guests happy and he, the women, is greeted by Shannon's "happy chuckle."⁴⁹ Glenn Embrey, disturbed by this chuckle from a man hitherto guilt-ridden and disgusted by sex, felt it so inappropriate "that it should be dismissed as a temporary lapse of the playwright."⁵⁰ Doubt exists about whether or not the chuckle was part of the original ending. Adler reports that there was no "chuckle in the original Broadway production" and Esquire, which first published the play, also omits it.⁵¹ Perhaps this ending shows Shannon's acceptance of his captive state. Tischler thinks it crystallizes the belief that "man can hope for little more than facing the end with dignity and self-knowledge."⁵² Williams, himself, has said that the play is about "how to live beyond despair and still live."⁵³

There is additional evidence in support of Williams' statement to be found in the symbol of the iguana. It may symbolize the plight of many of the characters in the play,

⁴⁹Williams, Night of the Iguana, p. 374.

⁵⁰Embrey, "The Subterranean World of The Night of the Iguana," p. 338.

⁵¹Adler, "Night of the Iguana, A New Tennessee Williams?" p. 68.

⁵²Tischler, Tennessee Williams, p. 38.

⁵³Lewis Funke and John E. Booth, "Williams on Williams," Theatre Arts 46 (January 1962): 17.

but it may be most closely related to Shannon. He releases the iguana, but he knows that he will not receive similar mercy.⁵⁴ To further emphasize Maxine's power and Shannon's vulnerability, in the original Broadway production, Shannon appeared on stage, after freeing the iguana, with the rope as a noose around his own neck.⁵⁵ Critics wrote about Maxine: "She likes iguana and she devours men."⁵⁶ "At the end he is led away as a sort of bizarre pet by the red-headed female who knows what she wants."⁵⁷ Williams, evidently wanting to soften this dismal portrayal of women, created a counterpoise in Hannah, who is herself, a stereotype. Yet however sympathetic, the chaste, White Magician cannot erase the image of the predatory Maxine.

* * *

Tennessee Williams had been displeased with the movie version of The Night of the Iguana. Maxine was characterized too sweetly; too warmly. Williams preferred that the character be brought "back to earth." She must be hard, Williams argued with film director John Huston, since

⁵⁴Williams, Night of the Iguana, p. 368.

⁵⁵Adler, "Night of the Iguana, A New Tennessee Williams?" pp. 67-68.

⁵⁶John Chapman, "Tennessee Williams' Most Mature Drama," New York Daily News, 14 January 1962.

⁵⁷Richard P. Cooke, "The Underside of Life," Wall Street Journal, 2 January 1962.

she reflects the world.⁵⁸ Such equating of women to harshness in the world is even more pronounced in the Great American Bitch.

In the past twenty years, the Great American Bitch has consistently appeared in Edward Albee's works. His The American Dream and The Death of Bessie Smith contain this character, as does Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and A Delicate Balance. Martha in Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? has become synonymous with bitchery and such female critics as Mary Ferguson and Judith Gustafson have analyzed both the play and the character in much detail. A Delicate Balance contains two Great American Bitches, Agnes and Edna, and will be discussed here.

In his review of this Pulitzer Prize winning play, John Simon wrote that A Delicate Balance was about nothing.⁵⁹ It is true that there is little action. Tobias and Agnes, a retired couple, are drinking and talking in their living room. They argue about Claire, Agnes' alcoholic younger sister. Whereas Claire is described as angry and bitter, Tobias is seen as conciliatory. Claire enters and apologizes for her drunken behavior. Agnes rejects the apology and goes off to telephone her daughter Julia. Tobias and Claire talk. Tobias allows Claire to drink, but rejects her sexual

⁵⁸Peter Evans, "Williams Wants to Unsweeten Ava," p. 12.

⁵⁹John Simon, "Theatre Chronicle," The Hudson Review 19 (1966-67): 627.

advances. Agnes returns and informs them that Julia's fourth marriage has failed and that she is again returning home.

A car arrives with Tobias' and Agnes' best friends, Harry and Edna. Harry and Edna explain to their hosts, who don't understand why they have come, that they are afraid. The "terror" has come over them and they have only Tobias and Agnes to turn to for help. They ask to go to bed, and Tobias and Edna, without recourse, agree.

Harry and Edna do not leave their room during the next day, and Julia is bitter at coming home and finding her room occupied. Agnes and Tobias are not sympathetic. Later, Harry and Edna enter and announce that they are going home to gather their clothes, and will return.

After dinner, Julia continues to argue about the loss of her room. When Harry and Edna return with their belongings and ask Julia to serve them, she becomes hysterical. She fetches a gun and demands that they leave. Tobias disarms her, and everyone retires for the evening.

Next morning, Tobias, concerned about what to do with Harry and Edna, asks Agnes for help. She refuses. Harry and Edna appear and tell Tobias that they are leaving. Even though he wants them to leave, Tobias tries to persuade them to stay. Harry and Edna do leave, and the household somehow survives.

In common with most plot synopses, the above does not delineate the characters. Like Williams, Albee has

consistently worked with contrasting pairs of men and women. Williams uses the predator and the prey.⁶⁰ Albee uses a sexually polarized Mommy and Daddy.⁶¹ Michael Rutenberg writes, "From the first Albee drama . . . two characters continually make their appearance: the dominating, man-eating, she-ogre of the American family--Mom--and her playmate, that weak-willed spineless, castrated, avoider of arguments--Dad."⁶² This same twosome is present in A Delicate Balance.

A Delicate Balance possesses many similarities to Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?,⁶³ including the image of the Great American Bitch, but the modus operandi of the stereotype differs. The Great American Bitch evokes an image of the classic verbal vitriol: Martha of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? Haskell writes, however, that the destructive woman "can lead man to his doom passively and slowly as well as aggressively and violently."⁶⁴ Such is the method of Agnes of A Delicate Balance. Martha is a

⁶⁰Signi Falk, Tennessee Williams, 2nd ed., (Boston: Twayne Books, 1978), p. 159.

⁶¹Michael E. Rutenberg, Edward Albee: Playwright in Protest (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1969), p. 149.

⁶²Ibid.

⁶³Some similarities include the use of realism, two couples, suburban setting, extensive conversation, and the use of alcohol.

⁶⁴Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape (New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973), p. 346.

woman who was not able to use the roles of wife and mother for her destructive ends. Agnes, on the other hand, has used both roles to gain power and exert control. These women represent what Gustafson calls "all the social responsibility and pressures men face."⁶⁵

Earmarks of the Great American Bitch include strength of will, control and destruction of others, and emasculation of the male. From A Delicate Balance's first lines, we are aware of Agnes' emasculation of Tobias. Agnes is idly discussing the possibility of going mad. Tobias says, "We will all go mad before you." Agnes cuts him off with "I could never do it--go adrift--for what would become of you."⁶⁶ The counterpoint to Albee's bitch is a wimpish male. Claire, although fond of Tobias, calls him "predictable and stolid."⁶⁷ After Agnes berates her, Claire tells Tobias that she wants to drink so "that will give her (Agnes) occasion for another paragraph and your ineffectual stop-it-nows."⁶⁸ When Tobias says, "I thought it was better" (referring to the times that Claire attended Alcoholics Anonymous), Claire corrects him: "You mean Agnes thought it was better."⁶⁹ Julia,

⁶⁵Judith Gustafson, "Stereotypes of Women in Contemporary Literature," in American Women and American Studies, ed. Betty Chmaj (Pittsburgh: Know, 1972), p. 269.

⁶⁶Edward Albee, A Delicate Balance (New York: Atheneum, 1967), p. 3.

⁶⁷*Ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁸*Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶⁹*Ibid.*, p. 18.

describing Tobias, says, " . . . poor old man--you sank to the cipher, and you've stayed there I'm afraid--very nice but ineffectual, essential, but not really thought of gray . . ."⁷⁰

Tobias is the end product of Agnes the emasculator. Agnes has the last word about everything. "I will not tolerate it" is often her refrain. She commands Tobias.

Agnes: Claire was not better tonight. Honestly, Tobias!

Tobias: I thought she was better.

Agnes: (Putting an end to it.) Well she was not.⁷¹

.

Agnes: What then? (Quietly daring him.)

Tobias: I shall sit very quietly . . .

Agnes: . . . as always . . .⁷²

Agnes reduces Tobias to nothing by taking over and completing his tasks. Trilling wrote, "This kind of woman is man's . . . superior, in his ability to meet the requirements of daily living . . ."⁷³ Tobias reacts hesitantly,⁷⁴ but before he moves, Agnes has already taken over the task.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 63.

⁷¹Ibid., p. 11.

⁷²Ibid., p. 70.

⁷³Diana Trilling, "The Image of Women in Contemporary Literature," in The Woman in America, ed. R. Lifton (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), p. 63.

⁷⁴Albee reinforces the sluggishness of Tobias by stage directions such as Tobias speaking "timidly," "vaguely," "spluttering," etc.

Tobias: (reluctantly on his feet) Where . . .
 What do you want me to do with everything?
 Every? . . .
 Agnes: Well for God's sake! I'll do it.⁷⁵

Agnes, long the lone voice of responsibility,⁷⁶ berates Tobias for being a poor father and for neglecting his duty, but she blocks him at the slightest sign of action. She will tolerate no action on his part, however feeble. She is dominant and he is to remain timid. She nurtures his timidity as often as she castigates him for it. At one point Agnes says, "If you've decided to assert yourself, finally, too late, I imagine."⁷⁷ Tobias cannot assert himself; he is too often beaten down by Agnes.

Agnes dominates the rest of the household as well. She is often cold, commanding. When Harry and Edna announce that they are moving in, "Agnes: (composed, chilly,

⁷⁵Albee, A Delicate Balance, p. 91.

⁷⁶An interesting sidenote concerns the relationship of Agnes and Tobias as compared to that of Claire and Tobias. Gustafson notes that in the literature of the Sixties, Great American Bitches were often pitted against Whores with Hearts of Gold. While the Great American Bitch enforces social responsibility, the Whore with the Heart of Gold operates outside of society. Claire, pitted opposite Agnes, is certainly not a whore. Yet, through her alcoholism, she operates on the outskirts of society. The relationship between Tobias and Claire is ambiguous, but special. Agnes complains that Tobias sides with Claire, has private talks with her and critics note the sexual nuances between them. One critic went as far to suggest that they had an affair. Claire offers Tobias relief from the bastion of responsibility, Agnes.

⁷⁷Albee, A Delicate Balance, p. 31.

standing) I believe that dinner is served . . . if any of you have the stomach for it."⁷⁸ Agnes uses the pronoun "you" rather than "us," to underscore weakness in others.

After dinner, Julia attempts to put down Agnes. She says, "That was, without question, the ugliest dinner I have ever sat through." Albee's stage directions for Agnes tell us that she is "seemingly pleased."⁷⁹ In other words, she acknowledges the control that she wields.

Julia: . . . You! Sitting there! Like a combination . . . pope, and . . . "We will not discuss it," "Claire, be still"; "No, Tobias, the table is not the proper place"; "Julia!" . . . nanny! Like a nanny!

Agnes: When we are dealing with children . . .

Julia: I must discover, sometime, who you think you are.

Agnes: (Icy) You will learn . . . one day.⁸⁰

Agnes governs her husband, her sister, and her daughter, using her roles as wife and mother. She says, "I shall . . . keep this family in shape. I shall maintain it; hold it."⁸¹

After noting Agnes' verbal one-upmanship, her emasculation of Tobias, her dwelling on "his" responsibilities, and her control over him and the rest of the household, it is surprising to report that the play's conclusion has been given a variety of critical interpretations. In the play's

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 79.

⁸⁰Ibid.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 80.

final act, Tobias wrestles with the problem of Harry and Edna. He asks Agnes what to do. She refuses to help; she tells him that he has always made the decisions; "it is an illusion you have"⁸² that she rules the game. Tobias asks again, "What are we to do? About everything?" Agnes replies, "(quietly, sadly, cruelly) Whatever you like. Naturally."⁸³ Anne Paolucci says that Agnes now "recognizes the challenge but knows it is not her decision."⁸⁴ Rutenberg writes that woman is finally handing over the reins to man.⁸⁵ Such analyses are as inconsistent with what has been stated about the character of Agnes, as the critical commentaries that described a happy Shannon walking off with a loving Maxine at the conclusion of Night of the Iguana. There is no reason to believe that Agnes has abdicated command--perhaps she is simply being devious.

Agnes has always manipulated Tobias and made the final decision. Although Agnes has repeatedly denied her influence on Tobias' life, making such statements as "There are things we do not do . . . (Harder) We don't decide the route . . . We follow. We let our . . . men decide the

⁸²Ibid., p. 136.

⁸³Ibid., p. 139.

⁸⁴Anne Paolucci, From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee (Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois Press, 1972), p. 110.

⁸⁵Rutenberg, Edward Albee: Playwright in Protest, p. 144.

moral issue,"⁸⁶ Hayman points out the converse in her remarks about Harry and Edna and the plague.⁸⁷

Tobias: These are people! Harry and Edna!
 These are our friends, God damn it.
 Agnes: Yes, but they've brought the plague with
 them, and that's another matter . . .
 It is not Harry and Edna who have come
 to us--our friends--it is a disease.⁸⁸

Tobias takes his usual indecisive stand. "I DON'T WANT YOU HERE! NO I DON'T BUT BY CHRIST YOU'RE GOING TO STAY HERE!"⁸⁹ Gustafson writes that the Great American Bitch is a "woman who despises the . . . man for failure in initiative and nerve and then . . . jealousy tries to break him down as soon as he exhibits any."⁹⁰ Agnes stops Tobias in his attempt to take action. He makes an ineffectual decision and remains weak and defeated. His last line in the play is the pathetic, "I tried."⁹¹

Agnes has said, "I shall keep this family in shape, I shall maintain it," and she has. The play concludes as it began, with Agnes discussing the possibility of a mental

⁸⁶Albee, A Delicate Balance pp. 131-32.

⁸⁷Ronald Hayman, Edward Albee (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971), p. 76.

⁸⁸Albee, A Delicate Balance, p. 151.

⁸⁹Ibid., 162.

⁹⁰Gustafson, "Stereotypes of Women in Contemporary Literature," p. 270.

⁹¹Albee, A Delicate Balance, p. 169.

breakdown, a conjecture that, after viewing the tyranny of Agnes, is bitterly ironical.

Paralleling Agnes' dominance is the other Great American Bitch in the play, Edna. Critics have noted the similarity of Edna to Agnes, and of Harry to Tobias.⁹² Albee describes Edna as "very much like Agnes"⁹³ and at one point his stage directions state: "Edna: (becoming Agnes)."⁹⁴ He has constructed similar repetitive speech patterns⁹⁵ which also highlight the parallel.

Edna's desire to dominate is seen in her relationship toward the household and to Julia in particular. Edna, a guest in the house, complains about the upholstery, certain that she will have it redone.⁹⁶ She wants Julia to wait on her, and she is "curiously unconcerned"⁹⁷ when she tells Julia that she intends to stay on at the house. She is vicious with Julia. "You return to your nest from your

⁹²C. W. Bigsby quoted in Hayman, Edward Albee, p. 74.

⁹³Albee, A Delicate Balance, unnumbered page.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 115.

⁹⁵Compare Agnes' speech to Claire, p. 13, "If you come to dinner unsteady, if when you try to say good evening . . . If I scold, it is because I wish I needn't. If I am sharp, it is because I am neither less nor more than human. . . ." with Edna's speech, p. 116, "If we come to the point . . . if we are at home one evening, and the . . . terror comes . . . descends . . . if all at once we . . . NEED . . ." for rhythmic and structural similarity.

⁹⁶Albee, A Delicate Balance, p. 94.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 114.

latest disaster, dispossessed, and . . . screaming the house down . . . willful wicked, wretched girl."⁹⁸ She slaps Julia. She manipulates Harry, making him believe that she wants to make love. She truly mirrors Agnes.

Both women are in control. In spite of their subservient female roles, they are in charge. Albee has continued in his indictment of women. Difficult as it might be, Agnes has maintained "a delicate balance," and has remained dominant.

* * *

Having examined how the Black Magician and the Great American Bitch operate in serious drama, let us turn briefly to comedy. The genre demands a tempering of such character types. They cannot be projected as destructively as their counterparts in serious drama or the play ceases being comic. As a result, they remain minor rather than major characters in the plays.

Scuba Duba, Bruce Jay Friedman's farcical comedy, opened Off-Broadway in 1967. One of the first plays to "take for granted expressions and attitudes" that were a part of contemporary life,⁹⁹ it is populated with "exaggerated" characters, including Cheyenne, a Black Magician.

⁹⁸Ibid., p. 115.

⁹⁹Clive Barnes, Introduction to Scuba Duba, by Bruce Jay Friedman, in Best American Plays, 1967-73, 7th series, ed. Clive Barnes (New York: Crown Publishers, 1975), p. 170.

Scuba Duba is the story of Harold Wonder, whose wife has run off with a black scuba diver. The action revolves around Harold's attempt to deal with this problem and to win his wife back. The constant parade of characters includes a bikini-clad neighbor, a tourist, a landlady, a burglar, and Harold's psychiatrist, accompanied by Cheyenne.

Cheyenne does not reveal the all consuming destructive passion of Maxine of Iguana, but the basic pattern remains. She is introduced as a "wild looking blonde."¹⁰⁰ She is not at all reticent, discussing her problems openly: "sexual climaxes." She has too many of them and wants to cut down.¹⁰¹ Molly Haskell writes that the sex obsessed woman is "one of the great male chauvinist fantasies."¹⁰² Millett discusses the image in terms of its "blinding manifestation of sexuality," and "insatiable clitoral demand."¹⁰³ Cheyenne projects herself only through sex. Friedman's stage directions are to the point. She is to wear a robe, then underwear, and appear later semi-nude.¹⁰⁴ More than half the time she is on stage, she is in some degree of undress.

Force or manifestation of will, along with lust form

¹⁰⁰Bruce Jay Friedman, Scuba Duba, in Best American Plays 1967-73, p. 184.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 185.

¹⁰²Haskell, From Reverence to Rape, p. 363.

¹⁰³Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon, 1971), p. 153.

¹⁰⁴Friedman, Scuba Duba, p. 185.

the Black Magician. This becomes clear if we compare Cheyenne to Miss Janus, another of the play's sexual stereotypes. Miss Janus is a Sex Object. She is the prey: she is acted upon. Miss Janus talks about drifting into sexual relationships when she can't "seem to be able to drift out." She lets men "make love to me right in the middle of those publications."¹⁰⁵ She is the object of others' wishes or desires.

Cheyenne is not the prey; she dominates situations. She is wild, coarse, vulgar, and in control. She is instantly at home, wandering around freely. First, she looks for a bidet, then she appears, searching for milk. "Phillys likes to have a little warm milk before he gets rolling. Helps him crank up his motor."¹⁰⁶ "Phillys" might require something to get him rolling, but not Cheyenne. She continues, telling a story about another simp who needs to be covered with mayonnaise. "It was the only way he could get his rocks off. (Cheyenne erupting in vulgar laughter.)"¹⁰⁷ At whom is that laughter directed--the mayonnaise fellow, the psychiatrist, or all men who "need" something, or simply, all men? Cheyenne is able to control such weak, milk-drinking males, whom, in a serious play, she might destroy. In this genre, she'll just laugh, vulgarly, knowingly.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 178.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., p. 186.

¹⁰⁷Ibid.

A comedy containing a Great American Bitch is Gore Vidal's The Best Man. Opening in 1960, it is concerned with men's struggle for the presidency. Bill Russell (the idealist), Eastern intellectual, is running against Joe Cantwell (the corrupt), homespun southerner, for their party's presidential nomination. The play's female characters consist of two Ideal Wives, who are supporting their men, and Mrs. Gamadge, a comic image of the Great American Bitch.

Mrs. Gamadge is the "national committee woman,"¹⁰⁸ an undefined job. She is not party chairperson--more likely, she is a party worker who controls the women's vote of the party. Vidal writes that "She is the Voice of the American Woman."¹⁰⁹ At the original Broadway production, critics assessed the role as "a garrulous committee woman,"¹¹⁰ or a "squealing and bumbling national committeewoman."¹¹¹ Missing from these reviews is any mention of the power and destructiveness of this socially unacceptable image of a woman.

Mrs. Gamadge is present in only two scenes. Her first and most important scene is with Bill Russell and his campaign manager. Upon entering Russell's suite, Mrs. Gamadge

¹⁰⁸Gore Vidal, The Best Man, in Best American Plays, 1957-63, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1963), p. 639.

¹⁰⁹*Ibid.*, p. 640.

¹¹⁰George Oppenheimer, "Who Will be Pres?" Newsday, 6 April 1960.

¹¹¹Brooks Atkinson, "The Best Man Arrives," New York Times, 1 April 1960.

takes instant charge. She seizes Russell for a picture and, spurning offers of comfort, she, herself, decides where she'll sit. Draped in the mantle of social responsibility, she declines alcohol and sips a soda. Mrs. Gamadge quickly gets down to business, outlining for Russell both his defects and what he must do to garner the women's vote. In doing so, Mrs. Gamadge defines how the Great American Bitch regards men. A perfect man is someone like Eisenhower. "You could imagine him washing up after dinner, listening to his wife's view on important matters."¹¹² A good candidate should not be "pushy or aggressive or all those things we women don't like in our men."¹¹³ Mrs. Gamadge, whose husband is dead (and we feel no sympathy for her loss, "he wasn't interested in politics"¹¹⁴) now dominates other men. "Your wife should be at your side at all times. She must seem to be advising you. The women must feel that there is a woman behind you."¹¹⁵

The Great American Bitch is often competitive and snide about other women. Mrs. Gamadge expresses her pleasure with Mrs. Russell's plain looks--she will make no one jealous. She disparages Mrs. Cantwell. "Mabel dyes her hair, but she gets away with it because she does such a bad

¹¹²Vidal, The Best Man, p. 640.

¹¹³Ibid.

¹¹⁴Ibid., p. 641.

¹¹⁵Ibid.

job the women feel sorry for her."¹¹⁶ She is more tolerant of women than of men, but she wishes to dominate both, and taunt them, too.

Mrs. Gamadge: (at the door, the knife). Oh, by the way! A little bird tells me Joe Cantwell has a little surprise for you! He's going to smear you with something. . . . (gaily) But here I am telling you what you already know.¹¹⁷

She parades her superior knowledge, flaunting this information as she departs, enjoying the spectacle of men confused and unsure of themselves.

Black Magicians and Great American Bitches transcend genre. Though they appear less destructive in comedy, the unmistakable behavior of the image is there. Yet the paucity of such roles gives rise to undocumented speculation. Are they more difficult to create than the Ideal Wife, or is the sense of power and destruction they generate frightening to the playwright? Or, more simply, is the concept of the "natural order" reversed with the female riding high and the male out of control, perhaps too uncomfortable an idea?

¹¹⁶Ibid.

¹¹⁷Ibid., p. 642.

CHAPTER VI

NON-STEREOTYPICAL PRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN

Androgyny suggests . . . a full range of experience open to individuals who may, as women, be aggressive, as men tender; it suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom.¹

In the last decade, a number of books have been published on androgyny.² Having the characteristics of both man and woman,³ androgynous beings combine attributes previously sex-linked--e.g., aggressiveness, male; vulnerability, female--into one person. Such complexity in a character precludes stereotypical behavior patterns. Women cannot be defined by their dependence on, or their destructiveness of, the male.

As noted in Table 6, of the 115 female characters, twenty-four (from twenty plays) were considered non-stereotypical presentations of women. Although these plays may

¹Carolyn G. Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny (New York: Knopf, 1973), pp. x-xi.

²See Robert May, Sex and Fantasy (New York: Norton & Company, 1980); A. G. Kaplan and J. P. Bean eds., Beyond Sex Role Stereotypes: Readings Toward a Psychology of Androgyny (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1977); Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny.

³Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary, 2nd ed. (New York: William Collins & World, 1978), p. 68.

TABLE 6

PLAYS CONTAINING NON-STEREOTYPICAL PRESENTATIONS
OF WOMEN

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>Pleasure of His Company</u>	Taylor	9/58	Jessica Poole
<u>A Raisin in the Sun</u>	Hansberry	3/59	Beneatha Younger
<u>Sweet Bird of Youth</u>	Williams	3/59	Princess
<u>Silent Night, Lonely Night</u>	Anderson	12/59	Katherine
<u>Toys in the Attic</u>	Hellman	2/60	Albertine Price
<u>The Subject Was Roses</u>	Gilroy	5/64	Nettie Cleary
<u>Luv</u>	Schisgal	11/64	Ellen Manville
<u>You Know I Can't Hear You . . .</u>	Anderson	3/67	Muriel
<u>Great White Hope</u>	Sackler	10/68	Ellie Bachman
<u>Effect of Gamma Rays . . .</u>	Zindel	4/70	Beatrice
<u>Hot 1 Baltimore</u>	Wilson	2/73	April Jackie
<u>In the Boom Boom Room</u>	Rabe	11/73	Chrissie Helen
<u>Same Time, Next Year</u>	Slade	3/75	Doris
<u>Seascape</u>	Albee	5/75	Nancy
<u>Vanities</u>	Heifner	3/76	Joanne Kathy Mary

TABLE 6--Continued

<u>PLAY</u>	<u>BY</u>	<u>DATE</u>	<u>CHARACTER NAMES</u>
<u>California Suite</u>	Simon	6/76	Hannah Diana
<u>Shadow Box</u>	Cristofer	3/77	Felicity
<u>Gin Game</u>	Coburn	10/77	Fonsia
<u>Chapter Two</u>	Simon	12/77	Faye Medwick
<u>Deathtrap</u>	Levin	2/78	Helga Ten Dorp

not present androgynous characters, as literally defined,⁴ they do present women whose attitudes and behavior reflect what have been thought to be both "male" and "female" patterns. Two of these successful plays, Murray Schisgal's Luv, a popular, if not literary triumph, and Paul Zindel's The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, a Pulitzer and Drama Critics' Circle winner, will be examined more fully. In addition, two unacclaimed plays, Robert Anderson's Silent Night, Lonely Night, and David Rabe's In the Boom Boom Room, will be discussed. The four principal women in these plays, in addition to their "male" and "female" attributes, all have one additional trait: the search for self.

Murray Schisgal's comedy, Luv, produced in 1964, was a widely appreciated work. With an all-star cast and director,⁵ the critics called it "bright, wonderfully funny,"⁶ "the funniest show of the century,"⁷ "a brilliant comedy,"⁸

⁴See Janet Zollinger Giele, Women and the Future (New York: Free Press, 1978), p. 326 for a discussion on androgyny as an outcome of (1) keeping "male values" important, or (2) by giving greater importance to "female values," or (3) by seeking a balance between the two.

⁵The original cast, directed by Mike Nichols, included Alan Arkin, Eli Wallach, and Anne Jackson.

⁶Whitney Bolton, "Luv, Bright, Wonderfully Funny, Best Non-Musical of the Season," New York Morning Telegraph, 13 November 1964.

⁷John McClain, "A Real Love of a Comedy," New York Journal American, 12 November 1964.

⁸Richard Watts, Jr., "A Brilliant Comedy Entitled Luv," New York Post, 12 November 1964.

and "wildly inspired, daffy, absurd, hilarious, and absolutely enchanting."⁹

The action takes place on a bridge in a city. Harry Berlin, a neurotic bum, is preparing to commit suicide by jumping off the bridge. Milt Manville, a sleazy entrepreneur and con man, stops him. Recognizing Harry as an old classmate, Milt cannot believe that Harry is the same erudite, renaissance man that he had known. He convinces Harry that love is the answer to all problems--and then expresses his own desire to kill himself. It seems that Milt is married, in love with another woman, and his wife, Ellen, will not give him a divorce. Milt decides to match Ellen with Harry. Ellen and Harry meet, fall in love, and after proving to each other that their love is strong, decide, to Milt's joy, to marry.

Months later, Milt and Ellen meet on the bridge and brag about their new happy lives. Milt breaks down and admits that his life is terrible, his new wife awful, and that he is still in love with Ellen. She, too, confesses that her life with Harry is miserable. Realizing that they want to remarry, Milt decides to kill Harry because Harry will never consent to divorce Ellen. When Harry arrives, Ellen explains to him that their marriage is a failure. Harry is surprised, but as anticipated, refuses to give her a divorce. Finally, the men decide to let Ellen select whom

⁹Hobe Morrison, "Luv," Variety, 18 November 1964.

she wants. She chooses Milt and the two exit together, while Harry, contemplating suicide, is pursued by a dog.

The play has a farcical, often insane quality. Critics, after seeing the original Broadway production, discussed the "Absurd" qualities in the play, and drew parallels between Schisgal and Ionesco.¹⁰ The comparison is important here, for the Absurdist theatre often neutralizes sex roles or reverses sexual images. In Luv, Schisgal makes all the characters absurd; their actions are seemingly often "devoid of purpose."¹¹ Crazy, and regardless of gender, the characters assume extreme positions.

In Ellen's first scene, we find the key to understanding her. Milt has told Harry that Ellen is "a wonderful woman." Milt would "do anything for her."¹² "She reads, Harry, book after book after book . . . with hard covers, too."¹³ We have been set up--but not for what is to happen. Ellen arrives and Milt readies her to meet Harry. He teases her hair; smooths her slip; applies her mascara and lipstick. Nothing is overlooked. Ellen stands, passive. Milt instructs

¹⁰See Henry Hewes, "Adieus from the Bridge," Saturday Review, November 28, 1964, p. 14; "Luv's Labor Lost," Newsweek, November 23, 1964, p. 102; Howard Taubman, "Schisgal's Luv Is Directed by Nichols," New York Times, 12 November 1964.

¹¹Eugene Ionesco, as quoted in Martin Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969), p. 5.

¹²Murray Schisgal, Luv (New York: New American Library, 1967), p. 34.

¹³Ibid., p. 37.

Ellen to spit into the cake mascara: she spits. He tells her to purse her lips; she does. She stands, expressionless; an object. In the Theatre of the Absurd, however, words and action do not necessarily jell. As noted by Martin Esslin, "actions of the characters contradict their verbal expression, . . . language is put into a contrapuntal relationship with action."¹⁴ In the funny routine, described above, the image of the passive, pliant female, apparently controlled by her husband, is negated by her lines and action. She refuses to meet Harry; she will not budge, until she talks to Milt about the failure of their marriage. This contradiction between action and words indicates some complexity in Ellen's character.

Ellen has more than one-dimensional attitudes and desires. "I'm compelled to live this fractured existence."¹⁵ She may be described as being somewhere between manhood and womanhood: she has "the intelligence of a man, but the emotions of a woman."¹⁶ She is unable to reconcile these supposedly contradictory attributes.

Her intelligence is the bane of her existence. Milt says, "she reads continuously . . . and she paints and plays guitar."¹⁷ Milt exploits her photographic memory, which

¹⁴Esslin, The Theatre of the Absurd, p. 63.

¹⁵Schisgal, Luv, p. 47.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁷Ibid., p. 37.

supplies him with answers for gambling ("What was Sugar Ray Robinson's record from 1940-1944?")¹⁸ She has a "cold calculating mind . . . sharp as a razor, incisive, penetrating."¹⁹ She was taught "trigonometry, biochemistry, and paleontology."²⁰ Along with this "male intellect," she has "female desires": to succumb "to biological and sociological necessity . . . I was a woman who wanted to have children, who wanted all the common, dreary horrible middle-class things . . . things that every other woman takes for granted."²¹ Later she says, "Above everything else, despite my educational background- despite my academic achievements, I want to be a good wife and a good mother."²²

Ellen's dialogue helps to express her fractured existence. Formlessness²³ is often present in her lines, but Schisgal's words veer between extremes. When she meets Harry, she talks incessantly, words flowing without constraint, hounding him, splattering him. Yet, she can also talk analytically, crisply, precisely, biting off a word and spitting it out:

¹⁸Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 46.

²⁰Ibid., p. 72.

²¹Ibid., p. 47.

²²Ibid., p. 70.

²³See above, p. 81.

Ellen: Love is a gradual development based on physical attraction, complementary careers and simple social similarities.²⁴

.....

Ellen: You married me as a substitute-figure because you couldn't confront him and your own latent homosexuality.

Harry: What are you saying?

Ellen: I'm saying you're queer, Harry.²⁵

Schisgal suggests that men may be responsible for Ellen's problem. They will not discuss issues seriously with her. Often then, the struggle appears to be not so much within Ellen, as between what she is--an educated, strong, and direct woman--and what men would like her to be. This is exemplified in the scene between Harry and Ellen, shortly after meeting.

Ellen: Men wouldn't discuss things with me. They became resentful and standoffish and avoided me because I was a threat to their feelings of masculine superiority. Ask me a question, Harry.

Harry: How many states did Al Smith win in the election of 1928?

Ellen: In the election of 1928 the presidential candidate Alfred E. Smith won eight states: they were the states of Arkansas, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Rhode Island and South Carolina.

Harry: (Nodding, shakes Ellen's hand.) It's been very nice speaking to you, Ellen. But I really have to go . . . ²⁶

²⁴Schisgal, Luv, p. 82.

²⁵Ibid., p. 88.

²⁶Ibid., p. 47.

Whatever the cause, Ellen is a mixture of attributes, both male and female, which do not bring her happiness. Whitney Bolton wrote that she "is an exceedingly bright young woman, too bright for her happiness, who is married to one and in turn marries the other and in turn returns to the first, all in a . . . search for something. Anything."²⁷ Ultimately, the search is fruitless.

Superficially, Ellen's behavior at the end of the play is similar to the Ideal Wife. Ellen and Milt are back together. Ellen will no longer answer questions that draw attention to her intellect. "I don't know and I don't care to know. I'm submerging my intelligence so that we can be happy together. That's all I want, Milt."²⁸ She talks about having a baby, an apparent triumph for the Ideal Wife. However, at the play's conclusion Milt and Ellen are not projected walking into the sunset. Rather, the play's and the characters' arguments continue:

Ellen: I love you, my darling first-and-only husband.
 Milt: Not as much as I love you. Never.
 Ellen: More than you love me.
 Milt: (Turns to Ellen) You couldn't love me more than I love you.
 Ellen: Much, much, much more
 Milt: (Slight pause) How much more?

²⁷Bolton, "Luv, Bright, Wonderfully Funny, Best Non-Musical of the Season."

²⁸Schisgal, Luv, p. 75.

.

Ellen: Please, Milt.
 Milt: No, no . . . Never mind "please Milt."
 What about Harry?
 Ellen: What about Linda?
 Milt: I never loved Linda.
 Ellen: But, you slept with Linda, didn't you?
 Didn't you? Didn't you?²⁹

Minutes earlier, Ellen was embracing Milt, rejecting further argument, revelling in wifehood. Now, she is back to questioning and arguing. She cannot constrain herself.³⁰ She represents women's conflicts that have long been felt and in all probability will continue to be dramatized.

Feminists may argue that Ellen is not the most positive role model for women. However, it is important to remember that Ellen's search for "something," even if unsuccessful, reveals her as a complex human being. She is not a stereotypical one-dimensional character.

²⁹Ibid., p. 96.

³⁰The reception to the play abroad underscores Ellen's non-stereotypical nature. In Italy, where machismo is an aspect of life, and where the culture retains socially restrictive perceptions of women, the play was a disaster. Ellen represented independent women, playing flamenco guitar, and counting her orgasms, and the Italian audience, with women "afraid of overpowering their men" was stupefied. The actress playing Ellen was herself uncomfortable with the role. Whereas in the second act, Ellen is the moving force, the actress, timid, downplayed the strength rendering the act flat and unfunny. See Patricia Richmond, "Luv Among the Romans," Village Voice, 19 May 1966.

* * *

The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds

was written by Paul Zindel in 1965. First produced in Texas, Chicago, and Connecticut, it was subsequently made into a sixty-minute PBS special in the late Sixties. Only later it was brought to Broadway. Starring Sada Thompson in the lead role, it garnered a Pulitzer Prize, a Drama Critics' Circle Award, and ran over three years. The play presented Beatrice Hunnsdorfer, a repulsive, pitiful, but non-stereotypical woman.

Beatrice, a widowed mother, lives with her two daughters, Tillie and Ruth, in an old papered up store. Other than what she receives from sickly old boarders, she has no income. Tillie is a gifted science student, but Beatrice, to the despair of Tillie's school, often keeps her at home, cleaning the house. She brings home her school experiments, e.g., a rabbit. The other daughter, Ruth, has had a nervous breakdown and suffers from epileptic fits.

One day, Tillie returns from school with marigolds that have been treated with cobalt-60. Beatrice, resentful of Tillie's ambition and interests, contemplates setting up a tea room. During a thunderstorm, while she is attempting to calm the hysterical Ruth, Beatrice acknowledges her loss of direction.

Soon after, Tillie informs Beatrice that she (Tillie), due to the success of her marigold experiment, has been selected

as one of the finalists in the school science fair. The school requests Beatrice's attendance at the science assembly. Weeks later, Tillie and Ruth are nervously getting ready for the presentation. While Beatrice is upstairs dressing, Ruth tells Tillie that she heard the teachers denigrating Beatrice. Tillie begs Ruth not to tell Beatrice, but Ruth agrees only after Tillie gives her the rabbit. Beatrice, elaborately dressed, excited and proud, tells Ruth to stay home and care for their boarder, Nanny. Ruth, angry and disappointed, spitefully echoes the taunts of the teachers. Beatrice, shattered at hearing the old names, sends Ruth to the assembly in her place. Beatrice gets drunk, chloroforms the rabbit, and calls to have Nanny removed. Tillie, victorious, returns with Ruth, only to have Beatrice inform her that the family is going to convert the place into a tea room. Finding the dead rabbit, Ruth goes into a fit. The play ends with Beatrice in despair and Tillie immersed in her experiments.

After looking at this series of vignettes, we are reminded of Edith Oliver's remark, "The plot is the least of it. The character of Beatrice Hunnsdorfer is all."³¹ Effect of Gamma Rays . . . , Oliver wrote, is "more than anything else the study of a woman."³² Some critics described the character as "a combination Auntie Mame, Madwoman of

³¹Edith Oliver, "Why the Lady is a Tramp," New Yorker, April 18, 1970, p. 82.

³²Ibid.

Chaillot and Medea."³³ Others, perhaps less perceptive, characterized the role as simply an "odious creature."³⁴ Still others recognized an elusive quality of truth which brings forth a real character and not a stereotype. Critics noted the "psychologically perceptive ambience,"³⁵ "the uneasy relationship that can never achieve equilibrium, because human beings and life are like that."³⁶ The characters' behavior "is made as comprehensive as anybody's behavior ever can be made."³⁷ The play is real because the characters are close to life, and none is more so than Beatrice.

Clive Barnes observed that, at first glance, Beatrice seems to be all bad.³⁸ Sarcasm is her chosen weapon against the children and the world. She berates Tillie mercilessly, calling her ugly, a millstone around her neck. On the phone, her sarcasm further illuminates her character--the tyrant,

³³Arthur Reisman, "Marigolds: A Child's Garden of Neuroses," Boston After Dark, April 27, 1971, p. 18 as well as others, use the parallel between Medea and Beatrice undoubtedly due to the vengeance wreaked on the children.

³⁴Harold Hobson, "Theatre," London Sunday Times, 19 November 1972.

³⁵Ted Kalem, "Cave of Terrified Mutants," Time, April 20, 1970, p. 51.

³⁶Howard Taubman, "The Effect of Gamma Rays," New York Times, 7 June 1965.

³⁷Oliver, "Why the Lady is a Tramp," p. 82.

³⁸Clive Barnes, "Gamma Rays on Marigolds," New York Times, 8 April 1970.

doing with her children what she pleases; the concerned mother, discussing the perfect lighting conditions for study, "both my daughters have their own desks and I put 75-watt bulbs right near them";³⁹ the coy flirt, [You're such a] "delightful and handsome young man"⁴⁰ which, when not well-received becomes (the receiver replaced) "I never saw a man with a more effeminate face in my life . . . my poor girl got herself a Hebrew hermaphrodite."⁴¹ Her language is metaphoric; her words sledgehammers, "Do you want me to chloroform that thing right this minute? Then shut up."⁴² Nanny is viewed as "half a corpse," Ruth as "half a mind."⁴³ There is certainly enough to damn Beatrice. She is miserable, bitter, and dominating; she has succeeded in making both her daughters unhappy.

But Beatrice is also "capable of sudden remorseful tenderness and pride."⁴⁴ Beatrice is protective of Tillie only after she has almost destroyed her. The school has invited Beatrice to attend the science fair assembly:

³⁹Paul Zindel, The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the Moon Marigolds (New York: Bantam Books, 1973), p. 4.

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹Ibid., p. 7.

⁴²Ibid., p. 10.

⁴³Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁴Oliver, "Why the Lady is a Tramp," p. 82.

Beatrice: How could you do this to me? . . .
 I have no clothes, do you hear me?
 I'd look just like you up on the stage,
 ugly little you! DO YOU WANT THEM TO
 LAUGH AT US? LAUGH AT THE TWO OF
 US? . . .

(Tillie breaks into tears . . . It seems as though
 she is crushed . . .)

Tillie: But . . . nobody laughed at me.

(Beatrice's face begins to soften as she glimpses
 what she's done to Tillie.)

Beatrice: Oh, my God . . . (Beatrice opens her
 arms to receive her . . .)⁴⁵

Beatrice is cognizant of her feelings: "This is the
 first time in my life I've ever felt just a little bit proud
 over something. Isn't that silly? Somewhere in the back of
 this turtle-sized brain of mine I feel just a little bit
 proud."⁴⁶

Beatrice's tenderness, however, is directed mainly
 toward Ruth--the "crazy one." Ruth is what Beatrice once
 was and still is: crazy, out of place, vulnerable with an
 outer layer of toughness. With Ruth, Beatrice is relaxed;
 singing a song, having her back scratched, talking.

In a scene which Walter Kerr called lyrical, morose,
 and charming, "essential to the cruel body of the play,"⁴⁷

⁴⁵Zindel, The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, p. 67.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 88.

⁴⁷Walter Kerr, "Everything's Coming Up Marigolds,"
New York Times, 19 April 1970.

Beatrice, comforting Ruth, aborts an epileptic seizure. A thunderstorm has upset Ruth. She remembers the diseases of previous boarders and the death rattle of one, and she begins to have a seizure. Beatrice, making funny faces, eases the tension and calms her. Beatrice wraps the cold, frightened girl in a blanket, demanding that Ruth not discuss death. They both smoke and recollect a story of Beatrice's youth. Ruth is thus comforted by the warmth, tenderness, and humor of her mother.

This scene is essential to our understanding of Beatrice. It demonstrates Beatrice the mother, and introduces Beatrice, the woman. To Beatrice, womanhood and selfhood assume priority over motherhood.

Beatrice's self, rather than "biological destiny" comes first. Looking at this domineering woman we might momentarily see the Deadly Mother, trampling over her children. Although the play does deal with Beatrice and her children,⁴⁸ it is more concerned with Beatrice, herself--her search for identity, direction, help, and her ultimate failure. Her daughters are simply another puzzle that she tries to solve. Thus, Zindel has created an intelligent (if perhaps half-mad) woman. Intelligent enough to feel frustration, depression, she is witty, sarcastic, and able to assess the wreck of her

⁴⁸ Ibid.

As Kerr points out, Zindel does not attempt to obscure the obvious parallels between the effect of gamma rays on marigolds and the effect of Beatrice's brand of motherhood on her daughters.

life. She dreams of setting up garages, nursing homes--she curses herself for not finishing beauty school, or a course in real estate.⁴⁹ She is continually searching for direction, fulfillment.

Beatrice's nightmare confession symbolizes both her failure to find a sense of direction and society's rejection of her. Beatrice describes the nightmare: she is riding her Papa's wagon, only it is nicer than it ever was, and she is dressed in jewels and feathers. When she turns into the block where her father sold his wares, the doors of the houses are closed to her; the block is silent. Beatrice's assessment of her life--"Do you know everything I ever thought I'd be has exploded!"⁵⁰--is a series of closed doors. Plaintively asking, "What's left for me, Ruth?"⁵¹ Beatrice gives us a glimpse of the maimed woman inside.

The conclusion of Effect of Gamma Rays underlines the terror and pathos of Beatrice's search for self. Ruth's words, with echoes of Beatrice's youth, renders Beatrice a "pathetic form."⁵² Pathos is mixed with tyranny, the only way Beatrice knows how to assert herself. She perceives the tea room as a possibility and she sets out to attain it,

⁴⁹Zindel, The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds, p. 25.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 35.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 58.

⁵²Ibid., p. 91.

destroying anything in her way. The rabbit is killed; Nanny is to be sent away. Tillie is informed, upon returning from the assembly, that "After school you're going to have regular hours. You'll work in the kitchen, you'll learn how to cook, and you're going to earn your keep, just like in any other business."⁵³ Beatrice tells Ruth "If you don't shut up I'm going to have you put away."⁵⁴ When Ruth begins to have a seizure, Beatrice refuses to call a doctor, claiming "We're going to need every penny to get this place open."⁵⁵ Callously, blindly, she attempts to satisfy her needs. Hiding beneath venom and frustration is an injured woman. "I hate the world. Do you know that, Matilda? I hate the world."⁵⁶

* * *

Luv and Effect of Gamma Rays were critical and popular successes that contained complicated women. Non-stereotypical female characters are, however, found mainly in relatively unsuccessful plays, and in non-commercial productions. Robert Anderson's play, Silent Night, Lonely Night, written at the end of the Fifties belongs to the first category; David Rabe's In the Boom Boom Room, a more recent play, is an example of the latter category.

⁵³Ibid., p. 103.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 101.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 106.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 107.

Silent Night, Lonely Night was the butt of harsh criticism.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, it contains a perceptive portrayal of a woman. Vivien Leone was delighted to discover a feminist perspective in Anderson's 1971 Solitaire/Double Solitaire.⁵⁸ Evidence of Anderson's understanding of a woman's life, however, is found in his earlier work, Silent Night.

The plot evolves from the recollections of Katherine and John in what is mainly a two-character play. The action occurs on Christmas Eve at an inn near a boy's boarding school. Katherine Johnson has gone there to pick up her son, who is ill, but will be on vacation the next day. Sitting unhappily in her room she passes the time drinking and playing solitaire. Unable to contain her anguish, she softly cries out for help. To her chagrin, John Sparrow, occupying the next room, overhears her. Conquering an initial embarrassment, they agree to dine together in Katherine's room.

Katherine confides that she is sending her son to meet his father in London the next day. John confides that he wrote a book about a love affair he had during the war. After attending the movies together, they return to Katherine's

⁵⁷Gerald Weales, American Drama Since World War II (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), p. 51.

⁵⁸Vivien Leone, "Notes from an Accidentally Passionate Playgoer," Drama and Theatre 10 (Spring 1972): 134-36.

room with another couple from the inn. When the couple leaves, Katherine, though lonely, informs John that she will not sleep with him. She details her unhappiness over her husband's numerous affairs. She is unsure of what, if any, action to take. Eventually Katherine and John share the same room for the night.

They awake in the middle of the night and John discusses his life: how, though in love with his wife, he became infatuated with another woman. His young daughter drowned when his wife, concerned about the infatuation, looked away from the water. Shortly after, his wife went insane. He is at the inn because it is near his wife's sanitorium. John has not slept with anyone for two years. Finally, Katherine and John, lonely and caring, make love.

The next morning Katherine and John recall their evening, trying to say good-bye. Katherine decides to go with her son to London. John receives a call from the sanitorium. His wife is asking for him. Katherine, moved to tears, leaves John talking on the phone.

Certainly the critics were justified in viewing the play as too wordy and lacking in action.⁵⁹ Anderson acknowledged that the play did not work on Broadway. It

⁵⁹ See Brooks Atkinson, "Silent Night, Lonely Night," New York Times, 4 December 1959; Walter Kerr, "Silent Night, Lonely Night," New York Herald Tribune, 4 December 1959; John McClain, "Cast Superb; Play Isn't," New York Journal American, 4 December 1959.

seemed "to many a static play."⁶⁰ Yet some critics saw it as "Adult, sensitive, touching--written with depth and perception";⁶¹ the characters "real" and their reactions "genuinely plausible."⁶² Anderson himself described the work "as a fairly dynamic play in which the 'lives' were only important in so far as they bore on the immediate developing situation between the two people on stage."⁶³ Both the "lives" and the "situation" give evidence of Katherine's complexity. In her view of her life with her husband and her relationship with John, she is a woman searching for understanding and a sense of her self.

She confides in John, an unusual act for her: "I haven't talked with anyone in five days, or five years . . . or ever like this";⁶⁴ she acknowledges her unhappiness and lack of direction. Willingly dedicating her life to her husband, "preferring another's existence to her own,"⁶⁵ her

⁶⁰Robert Anderson, "Introduction to Silent Night, Lonely Night," Theatre Arts 45 (December 1961): 26.

⁶¹Whitney Bolton, "Silent Night: Adult, Sensitive, Touching," Morning Telegraph, 5 December 1959.

⁶²Hobe Morrison, "Silent Night, Lonely Night," Variety, 9 December 1959.

⁶³Anderson, "Introduction to Silent Night, Lonely Night," p. 26.

⁶⁴Robert Anderson, Silent Night, Lonely Night in Best American Plays, 5th series, ed. John Gassner (New York: Crown Publishers, 1963), p. 327.

⁶⁵Simone de Beauvoir, The Second Sex, trans. H. M. Parshley (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953), p. 184.

life became stultifying. "I committed myself to the marriage . . . I think I terrified him with my sense of dedication. I wanted to dedicate my life blindly."⁶⁶ But, she now feels cheated, having scorned those "convenient marriages," those "needs for self-expression."⁶⁷ She lacks fulfillment, self-expression, and direction in her life. Her husband, with a career and outside interests, does not need her.⁶⁸ Katherine realizes that she is alone; she has only herself. "We promised to love, honor and succeed--and he succeeded."⁶⁹ Her poetry, an outlet for her loneliness, did not assuage her sense of emptiness. Katherine was no Ideal Wife. She was lonely, painfully aware that without him her life lacked significance, at least to her.

Katherine's poems offer a sense of her growing frustration. "I had expressed my loneliness so directly, so nakedly" that her husband had cried after reading them.⁷⁰ Then, "we were very gentle towards each other. I because I knew I had hurt him. He, because he realized my loneliness in our relationship."⁷¹ Katherine never suggests that she tried to overlook her grievances. Katherine demanded that

⁶⁶Anderson, Silent Night, Lonely Night, p. 329.

⁶⁷Ibid.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 327.

⁷⁰Ibid., p. 332.

⁷¹Ibid.

her husband understand the feelings she conveyed in her poems.

If Katherine's relationship with her husband is fraught with loneliness and insecurity, her relationship with John is warm and direct. In that one evening, Katherine plays a myriad of roles. She was John's confessor, sister, friend, and lover. "Unfolding a variety of moods,"⁷² she is often undecided about the "proper" response to this new situation. Anderson called her "easily bewildered."⁷³ It is this sense of bewilderment, of searching for answers, that makes Katherine a multi-faceted human being. She views her husband's infidelity in a different light. "I'd always thought of adultery as shared ecstasy . . . shared . . . excitement . . . I never realized it could be shared sadness."⁷⁴ Katherine comes to view herself as a person, responding to a situation without regard to socially preconceived notions of behavior. Thomas Adler notes that Anderson's Silent Night is his most anti-puritan play.⁷⁵ Katherine's affair, however, is not solely anti-puritan; it is foremost a declaration of self.

⁷²Cyrus Durgin, "A Woman's Play," Cue, December 4, 1959, p. 17.

⁷³Anderson, Silent Night, Lonely Night, p. 315.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 337.

⁷⁵Thomas P. Adler, Robert Anderson (Boston: G. K. Hall & Company, 1978), p. 109.

Katherine's hesitancy to make love⁷⁶ may seem quaint and old-fashioned today. Anderson presents Katherine's struggle to remain faithful as her attempt to continue in the role of Ideal Wife. Twice, once with the husband of a dying friend, and another time with a famous poet, she feels compelled to live by the rules: the restrictions of her father, her husband, and society. She resents her lack of strength, her lack of self. "I'm not strong enough to make up my own rules as I go along. I wish I were."⁷⁷ Instead, she relies on her husband's presence as a substitute for her needs, using his physical being to constrain her desires. But beneath Katherine's "correct behavior" is dissatisfaction and a search for self-fulfillment, understanding, and direction. She responds to John in the way she wishes she had with the others.

Silent Night contains a story that is repeated during the action of the play and serves as a lesson to the leading female character. John's book, The Comfort of Your Company, focussed on an incident in John's life similar to this evening with Katherine. John, leaving for the war, had spent an evening with a woman whose husband was away. Although he desired to sleep with her, he did not. In the book, John had always regretted his decision, changed the ending so

⁷⁶ Ibid.

Adler comments on the length of time it takes to consummate the inevitable.

⁷⁷ Anderson, Silent Night, Lonely Night, p. 327.

that the character stays the night. This triggers Katherine's realization of self: to be true to oneself and to follow one's inner emotional needs; to respond to others' kindness rather than to be circumscribed by codes of social behavior. She will sleep with a man she cares about. She will return to the husband she loves. Both actions will satisfy her own desires.

* * *

David Rabe's play, In the Boom Boom Room, is one of many non-mainstream plays of the Seventies which received harsh criticism. Marilyn Stasio noted that when a drama with an enlightened and complex viewpoint of women does arrive "the reception it receives from the mostly male critics is frequently obtuse, insensitive, and unencouraging."⁷⁸

Boom Boom Room is concerned with Chrissy, a young woman from Philadelphia, who takes a job as a go-go dancer in a bar. At home, she is often visited by her father, a brutal and disturbed man, and her homosexual neighbor, Guy. She is briefly involved with Eric, an unexciting man, who interests her in astrology.

One evening, two men, Al and Ralph, follow her home. Annoyed that she would not have a drink with them, they force their way into her apartment where they tell her how

⁷⁸Marilyn Stasio, "The Nights the Critics Lost Their Cool," Ms., September 1975, p. 38.

wonderful she is. She agrees to sleep with Al. Later, at work, Chrissy confides to the head dancer, Susan, that she is unsure of exactly when to sleep with a man. Susan suggests that Chrissy sleep with her, but Chrissy rejects the offer.

Chrissy becomes despondent when Al decides to travel. After he leaves, Chrissy tries to learn the truth about her childhood. Did her mother really try to have her aborted? Was she sexually molested as a child? Lonely and frustrated in her attempt to find answers, she decides to accept Susan's offer, only to find Susan with a man.

Al returns from his travels, sick and poor, and eager to marry Chrissy. After the marriage, Chrissy sits at home, half-dressed, drunk, waiting for Al to return from work. When he does return, they argue. He accuses her of having affairs with Blacks and lesbians. She accuses him of a lack of virility. He beats her up. The play concludes with Chrissy dancing topless in a seamy bar in New York.

Many similarities exist between this play and Effect of Gamma Rays. Both plays, loosely constructed, a mix of styles, are case studies of a woman's unsuccessful struggle for selfhood. Both women are on stage for almost the entire play and command audience attention.

Critics faulted the structure of the play,⁷⁹ but many of their comments were directed at the character of

⁷⁹See George Oppenheimer, "Boom Boom Room," Newsday, 23 November 1973; Martin Gottfried, "Boom Boom Room Revived," New York Post, 5 December 1974.

Chrissy. Clive Barnes called the play a "portrait of a young tramp as a neurotic."⁸⁰ Another reviewer called it "a hideous story about a cruelly, pathetically, unfortunate girl and the cheap, shallow, vicious people she chooses to associate with."⁸¹ Still another suggested that it was a "play about a stupid girl who doesn't know when to shut up . . ."⁸² a "justification for male chauvinism" since liberated women were shown as shrill and obnoxious.⁸³ Some critics, however, did find in the play and in the role of Chrissy "unmistakable moral authenticity"⁸⁴ and a "compassionate and devastating study of all women as seen through one."⁸⁵

Chrissy, like Ellen, Beatrice, and Katherine, is searching for self: "self-discovery, self-improvement" is her mission.⁸⁶ This search for self is sought in career and artistic pursuit, questioning of her past, and of her relationship with men. These aspects of her life reflect the problems

⁸⁰Clive Barnes, "New Papp Home," New York Times, 9 November 1973.

⁸¹Hobe Morrison, "Boom Boom Room," Variety, 14 November 1973.

⁸²Michael Feingold, "Rabe: Almost Poetry," Village Voice, 16 December 1974.

⁸³Ibid.

⁸⁴Jack Kroll, "Go-Go in Hell," Newsweek, November 19, 1973, p. 96.

⁸⁵Martin Gottfried, "Boom Boom Room Revived," p. 55.

⁸⁶Albert Bermel, "Libra and the Moon," New Leader, December 24, 1973, p. 21.

of a woman "groping and stumbling after some kind of decent life,"⁸⁷ and a center for it.

Coming from a poor, lower class background, the job of go-go dancer seemed like step one for Chrissy. Before that, Chrissy had worked as an A & P clerk. One day "this girl came by and I'd seen her dancin', she was buyin' groceries, she said I could be one if I wanted."⁸⁸ To dance was one of Chrissy's dreams. "I have dreamed of ballet all my life and other kinds of dancing-so-you-tell-a story."⁸⁹ Though go-go dancing "is just a poor facsimile,"⁹⁰ Chrissy takes it very seriously. She worries about getting up early for dance lessons.⁹¹ She practices her steps ("Disliking a certain move she has just made. 'No, no' she tells herself and tries again."⁹²) She proudly sews her own costume for the job. She adamantly rejects prostitution, sometimes associated with go-go dancing. "I'd never do that. I'm a dancer, gonna be a great dancer."⁹³ It is through dancing that she hopes to define herself. "Her drive to

⁸⁷Julius Novick, "Papp Goes Boom at the Beaumont," Village Voice, 15 November 1973.

⁸⁸David Rabe, In The Boom Boom Room (New York: Samuel French, 1975), p. 7.

⁸⁹*Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁹⁰*Ibid.*

⁹¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹²*Ibid.*, p. 5.

⁹³*Ibid.*, p. 20.

become a great go-go dancer is the only kind of specialness she can conceive of."⁹⁴

As the play progresses, Chrissy's dancing, like Katherine's poetry, does not provide her with answers. She begins to look to her past. Hoping to find some meaning in her life there she asks her parents: "Don't you have anything to tell me."⁹⁵ Chrissy is convinced that "something bad was done" to her when she was a child.⁹⁶ If she can learn what happened she might be able to straighten herself out.

She confronts her mother with the knowledge that she wasn't wanted. "You tried to get rid of me . . . you used to sit on the floor and bounce up and down on the floor tryin' to get me out."⁹⁷ Her mother insists, "I was hesitant in my bouncing . . . I coulda bounced much harder . . . some tugging at my heart for you held me back or you wouldn't be here."⁹⁸ Chrissy, however, is not convinced. "You always looked at me and me at myself, like I was a little bit dead or that I oughta be dead, which is how I regard and look at myself a lot."⁹⁹

Chrissy's self-dissatisfaction and distress increase;

⁹⁴Gottfried, "Boom Boom Room Revived," p. 55.

⁹⁵Rabe, In the Boom Boom Room, p. 75.

⁹⁶Ibid., p. 76.

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 66.

⁹⁸Ibid., pp. 66-67.

⁹⁹Ibid.

"You know I feel like my thoughts are getting louder."¹⁰⁰
 She questions her father to find out whether he did "something" to her when she was a child. "This man very far above me . . . Only I don't know it happened or if I made it up outa my head. 'It's a funny kinda finger' he said. 'Just a funny kinda finger' Don't tell any body' . . . Only I don't know if it happened or if it didn't."¹⁰¹ The incident remains uncertain, and no light is shed which might help Chrissy.

Marilyn Stasio believes that it was Chrissy's ongoing relationships with men that "infuriated many male critics on a deep level because the character is asking for a reexamination of the values--their own values that are responsible for the pain."¹⁰² Chrissy plays many roles with the men around her. With Guy, she may jump around in her bunnysuit, but she may also try to stab him. With Eric, she is alternately shy, and tough. With her father, she is both terrified, and bored. It is Chrissy's relationship with Al, however, that shows us the "majestic terror and coquetry"¹⁰³ of a complex woman and the level of tolerance for such behavior.

Chrissy meets Al while she is working. By rejecting his invitation to drink because it is against the rules,

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 71.

¹⁰¹Ibid., p. 77.

¹⁰²Stasio, "The Nights the Critics Lost Their Cool," p. 40.

¹⁰³Heilbrun, Toward a Recognition of Androgyny, p. x-xi.

she succeeds in temporarily thwarting his advances. Later, he forces his way into her apartment and eventually arouses her interest and sexuality. After this encounter, her reactions become varied and erratic. She professes her love for him, but she continues to see another man, thus upsetting him.

Soon Al makes his wishes known: "I don't want you seeing no other guys, Chrissy. Not while I'm around. You're the best lay I ever had in a long time,"¹⁰⁴ but then he decides to leave. Chrissy begs him to stay, promising to change. Al responds: "It's nothing personal against you, Chrissy. It just gets old when it's the same woman all the time is all and that's the truth."¹⁰⁵

Al leaves at the beginning of the second act and does not return until the middle of the third. Dirty, disheveled, and diseased, he brags of his exploits. Chrissy is unimpressed. Drunk, after one of her unsuccessful attempts to learn about the past, she is now indifferent to him. Only when he begs her to marry do her feelings undergo change. She agrees to marry him and then tries to convince herself, and her friends, that she will be happy. At the same time, she continues to drink from a whiskey bottle in a brown paper bag.

Jack Kroll saw in Chrissy a "double energy . . . an energy that thunders off simultaneously toward self-destruction

¹⁰⁴Rabe, In the Boom Boom Room, p. 35.

¹⁰⁵Ibid., p. 41.

and self discovery."¹⁰⁶ It is this energy that led her to dance, to examine the past, and that now forces her to demand what she needs. A part of Chrissy may be soft, innocent, and insecure, but another part has become powerfully assertive.

I want you to give me a rubdown. I want you to ball me real good for a change--if you could manage that--so I get off--so I get off for a change instead of givin' you blow jobs all the time, which I didn't mind for variety, but as a steady diet, it brings to mind the lyrics from that old and much loved song--"I knew this dance was gonna be a drag" . . .¹⁰⁷

Chrissy's search for identity is a failure. She has tried to find herself in men, career, and the past. She is surrounded by people who never treat her as anything more than a physical object. At the play's conclusion, the image of the bare-breasted Chrissy symbolizes the woman as selfless sex object.

Through the extensive "care lavished on her"¹⁰⁸ in detailing this woman's struggle with career, interpersonal relationships, and the search for selfhood, Rabe created a real and non-stereotypical character. Like Ellen, Beatrice, and Katherine, Chrissy embarked on her search for understanding,

¹⁰⁶Jack Kroll, "Go-Go Gone," Newsweek, December 16, 1974, p. 105.

¹⁰⁷Rabe, In The Boom Boom Room, p. 87.

¹⁰⁸John Simon, "Boom Boom Room," New York Magazine December 23, 1974, p. 62.

but through Chrissy, we are able to perceive how rough the actual going can be.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

True images will come about only when women and men of the age listen to their own inner experience.¹

Our culture and many symbols reflective of our culture are male. As Kate Millett wrote, "Under patriarchy the female did not herself develop the symbols by which she is described. As both the primitive and the civilized worlds are male worlds, the ideas which shaped culture in regard to the female were also of male design."² Such male descriptions often lower the female's own sense of self.³ That women historically have cast their ballots against their own liberation, have refused to work for female bosses, and have voted against female candidates reflect this adoption of a patriarchal frame of reference.⁴ It is no surprise then that modern American drama, whether created by men or women,

¹Janet Zollinger Giele, Women and the Future (New York: Free Press, 1978), p. 319.

²Kate Millett, Sexual Politics (New York: Avon Books, 1971), p. 46.

³Ibid., p. 47.

⁴Elsie Adams and Mary Louise Briscoe, eds., Up Against the Wall, Mother (Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1971), p. xiv.

should have adopted a "male" point of view.

Theatre is big business. Hundreds of shows have been produced on Broadway over the last twenty years, and if we add Off and Off-Off Broadway productions, the number becomes much higher. Many millions of theatre tickets have been sold. Broadway, recovering from a slump in the Sixties, has experienced a rebirth in the Seventies. The theatre is important to the New York City economy, and regional theatres, too, are flourishing. The number of people viewing dramatic presentations, by their very magnitude, justify an examination of the influence of "male" presuppositions.

As evidence there is almost consistent representation of stereotypical women in American drama of the last twenty years. Stereotypical representations are one-dimensional. Women are seen in only a limited number of attitudes and responses. Often, predictability replaces motivation: we do not know why the female characters act so conventionally, only that they do. When we do understand such a character's motivation, we have possibly deduced it after seeing countless other productions with the same stereotype.

Most of the female characters found in American plays of the last twenty years are defined by their relationships with males. Female stereotypes fall into three categories: woman as man's companion; woman as man's destroyer; and woman as man's mother or the mother of his children. The first two categories are more common.

Of these two, man's companion far outnumbers the destructive woman. The companion, most frequently, the Ideal Wife, is supportive, enduring, and understanding of her mate. The overwhelming lust of the Black Magician and the desire for power and control of the Great American Bitch serve to destroy men and their "higher" ideals.

Surprisingly, the stereotype of mother--either the Good Earth Mother, or, Kali, the Deadly Mother--is rare. It is hard to say why, given their presence in many myths and religion. Motherhood, too, is not treated in a major way.

Genre did not significantly affect the use of stereotypes, which crop up as frequently in comedy as in "straight" plays though the socially unacceptable female stereotype of comedy is not quite as harsh as her serious counterpart. It should be noted, however, that female comic characters have had different critically receptions than serious ones. As Katherine Rogers notes, the nature of comedy has often blunted criticism of the portrayal of women who were supposed to be good for a laugh.⁵ Nothing is to be taken seriously; there is no reason to fuss over characterization.

The past twenty years have produced some non-stereotypical women characters, who may exhibit some complexity. Sometimes they consist of elderly women without sexual attributes, or are painstaking character studies. More

⁵Katherine Rogers, The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966), pp. xi-xii.

frequently, however, the playwright succeeds because he chooses to deal with private rather than public worlds. Luv and Silent Night, Lonely Night call for small casts and focus on dyadic relationships. The people respond to each other personally, without being thrust into more general societal interactions. This is not to say that all personally-scaled plays project non-stereotypical behavior, only that many non-stereotypical female characters are seen in close-up and in relation to few other characters. Once the world becomes a public rather than a private space, writers appear to view reactions according to accepted formula. Thus, such plays as Hogan's Goat, No Place to be Somebody, and The Connection contain women who are limited and one-dimensional.

The economics of theatre, moreover, help to perpetuate the stereotypes. With high production costs, plays must be an immediate success or face closing. Knowing this, playwrights rely on proven formulas, however much they may distort reality.

Women did more than lead the lives portrayed in the theatre. From the late Fifties to the late Seventies, they entered the job market in increasing numbers, having fewer children, postponing children, and choosing more singular life styles. Although many took jobs only for the extra pay check in increasingly difficult economic times, others did so because they wanted to.

There is a tremendous disparity between the Ideal

Wife stereotypes and the real life character. As a dramatic character, the Ideal Wife is tenacious, supportive, happy in her marriage, and seemingly dependent on her husband. Some sociologists and psychologists report that such a woman may be a rarity. Pauline Bart in "Depression in Middle-Aged Women" concludes that women are often unhappier with their marriages than their husbands, are depressed more frequently, plagued by doubts about their worth, and lack a sense of direction.⁶

Playwrights have neglected their female characters. The same rigor, intensity of effort, and originality afforded male roles have not been bestowed on female characters. Playwrights have not developed fully female motivations and ideas. Few have plumbed a woman's psyche, her particularities, and depths with the degree of diversity and thoughtfulness they have expended on the male.

This dissertation hopes to encourage playwrights to draw on actual prospects and obstacles that confront women. Career choice, mothering, lesbianism, male-female relationships, sexuality, and menopause are topics long neglected. The drama of the last twenty years displays an extraordinary dearth of female characters over forty and especially over fifty. Women of those ages need to be explored; opportunities are manifold. Interestingly, recent major dramatizations

⁶Pauline B. Bart, "Depression in Middle-Aged Women," in Woman in Sexist Society, eds. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New York: Basic Books, 1972), pp. 163-86.

of middle aged and elderly women have not been stereotypical. The few older women presented in The Gin Game and The Shadow Box seldom show stereotypical attributes assigned to younger women. Instead, they unveil true fears, frustrations, hopes, and disappointments.

Whether the restrictions imposed by stereotypes are viewed as positive, as in the *Good Mother and the White Magician*, or negative, the response called for is crudely predetermined. Perhaps in the future, female characters, freed from their templates, can appear as worthwhile role-models for women: characters who are self-actualizing and whose identities are not wholly dependent on men.

In addition, this dissertation endeavors to prod theatre reviewers and drama theorists to assess female roles in dramatic productions with more thoroughness. Many past reviews pay limited attention to the female characters. Some critics are apt to explore both the male role and the actor in the part in more detail than the female role and the actress, as in the reviews of Scuba Duba and The Best Man. Only a line or two are devoted to the females. Often, that line does not accurately assess the role. A case in point is Joseph Walker's The River Niger. For the opening, Walker invited four Black critics to review the play, promising publication of the reviews in ad form. In their reviews, published in a full page advertisement in the New York Times, all four critics dealt at length with the role of Johnny and

only briefly discussed Mattie. Their few comments with respect to Mattie avoided touching on the one-dimensionality of the character, her emptiness and dependence.

Furthermore, this work is intended to encourage more scholarly endeavors dealing with women and the theatre. The representation of women in musicals, being outside the scope of this dissertation, is still, unassessed. More investigation of female roles in the work of the major playwrights, from Sophocles, Euripides, and Shakespeare to Ibsen, Shaw, and Strindberg must be undertaken. Other areas for future research include a comparison between the images of women written in plays by male and female playwrights, an examination of androgynous presentations, a survey of positive role models for women in drama, and a look at the image of women as conveyed through the dialogue of both men and women. An analysis of the work of new feminist dramatists, e.g., Myrna Lamb, Megan Terry, Corinne Jucker, Ruth Wolff, Honor Moore would be another valuable project.

An implication of this work for women and women's studies should be mentioned. With the raised consciousness brought on by the contemporary Women's Movement, there is now a surge of curiosity over the parts women have played and are playing in all aspects of life. Women have been excluded from many religious, scientific, and historical surveys. Recently, scholars have attempted to fill this void with a number of books on women's roles in American history.

The discovery of the "lost truths" of women must be explored in all the arts as well. Germaine Greer's survey of women artists is one such work, and this dissertation is meant to fill still another void.

Finally, it is hoped that playwrights and reviewers will write and criticize more generously and thus help to change American drama. Perhaps, one outcome of this work might be more accurate presentations of life and its meaning--presentations that will attempt to speak truthfully about the experiences of women, as well as men.

APPENDIX

The following plays should be examined for their complete and/or unique presentations of women. The date of the first New York production follows the title of the play:

Look We've Come Through (1961)--Hugh Wheeler

Days and Nights of Beebee Fenstermaker (1962)--William Snyder

Penny Change (1963)--Helen Eisner

Little Murders (1967)--Jules Feiffer

The Abdication (1969)*--Ruth Wolff

But What Have You Done For Me Lately (1969)--Myrna Lamb

Approaching Simone (1970)--Megan Terry

Breakfast Before Noon (1971)--Ursule Molinaro

Twigs (1971)--George Furth

Moonchildren (1972)--Michael Weller

Hothouse (1974)--Megan Terry

Birth and After Birth (1974)--Tina Howe

Mert and Phil (1974)--Anne Burr

Mourning Pictures (1974)--Honor Moore

Bits and Pieces (1974)--Corinne Jacker

LuAnn Hampton Laverty Oberlander (1976)--Preston Jones

Ladyhouse Blues (1976)--Kevin O'Morrison

*1969 is the year Wolff wrote the play. Despite numerous European productions and a cinema adaptation, The Abdication has not been professionally produced in New York.

Uncommon Women and Others (1977)--Wendy Wasserstein

First Monday in October (1978)--Jerome Lawrence and Robert Lee

Getting Out (1978)--Marsha Norman

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Theatre

Plays

- Albee, Edward. A Delicate Balance. New York: Atheneum, 1966.
- _____. Seascape. New York: Atheneum, 1975.
- _____. Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? New York: Atheneum, 1962.
- Alfred, William. Hogan's Goat. New York: Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1966.
- Allen, Woody. Don't Drink the Water. New York: Random House, 1967.
- Anderson, Robert W. Silent Night, Lonely Night. In Best American Plays, Fifth Series, 1957-63. Edited by John Gassner. New York: Crown Publishers, 1963.
- _____. You Know I Can't Hear You When the Water's Running. New York: Random House, 1967.
- Chayevsky, Paddy. The Tenth Man. New York: Random House, 1960.
- Coburn, D. L. The Gin Game. New York: Drama Book Publishers, 1978.
- Cristofer, Michael. The Shadow Box. New York: Samuel French, 1977.
- Fisher, Bob, and Marx, Arthur. The Impossible Years. New York: Samuel French, 1964.
- Friedman, Bruce Jay. Scuba Duba. In Best American Plays, Fifth Series, 1967-73. Edited by Clive Barnes. New York: Crown Publishers, 1975.
- Gardner, Herb. A Thousand Clowns. New York: Samuel French, 1962.
- Gelber, Jack. The Connection. New York: Grove Press, 1960.

- Gershe, Leonard. Butterflies are Free. New York: Random House, 1969.
- Gibson, William. Two for the Seesaw. New York: Samuel French, 1960.
- Gilroy, Frank. The Subject Was Roses. New York: Samuel French, 1965.
- Gordone, Charles. No Place to be Somebody. Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1969.
- Guare, John. The House of Blue Leaves. New York: Viking Press, 1972.
- Hansberry, Lorraine. A Raisin in the Sun. New York: Random House, 1959.
- Heifner, Jack. Vanities. New York: Samuel French, 1976.
- Hellman, Lillian. Toys in the Attic. New York: Random House, 1960.
- Inge, William M. The Dark at the Top of the Stairs. New York: Dramatist's Play Service, 1960.
- Kerr, Jean. Mary, Mary. In Best American Plays, Fifth Series, 1957-63. Edited by John Gassner. New York: Crown Publishers, 1963.
- Kopit, Arthur. Oh Dad, Poor Dad, Mamma's Hung You in the Closet and I'm Feelin' So Sad. New York: Samuel French, 1960.
- Levin, Ira. Deathtrap. New York: Dramatist's Play Service, 1979.
- Long, Sumner Arthur. Never Too Late. New York: Samuel French, 1963.
- MacLeish, Archibald. J.B. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1958.
- Miller, Arthur. The Price. In The Plays of Arthur Miller. Edited by Harold Clurman. New York: Viking Press, 1971.
- Rabe, David. In the Boom Boom Room. New York: Samuel French, 1975.
- _____. Sticks and Bones. New York: Samuel French, 1972.
- Resnick, Muriel. Any Wednesday. New York: Samuel French, 1966.

Sackler, Howard O. The Great White Hope. New York: Dial Press, 1968.

Schisgal, Murray. Luv. New York: New American Library, 1967.

Simon, Neil. Barefoot in the Park. New York: Random House, 1964.

_____. California Suite. New York: Random House, 1977.

_____. Chapter Two. New York: Samuel French, 1978.

_____. Come Blow Your Horn. Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1961.

_____. Last of the Red Hot Lovers. New York: Random House, 1970.

_____. The Odd Couple. New York: Random House, 1966.

_____. Plaza Suite. New York: Random House, 1969.

_____. The Prisoner of Second Avenue. New York: Random House, 1972.

Slade, Bernard. Same Time, Next Year. New York: Samuel French, 1975.

Taylor, Samuel, and Skinner, Cornelia Otis. The Pleasure of His Company. New York: Random House, 1959.

Vidal, Gore. The Best Man. In Best American Plays, Fifth Series, 1957-63. Edited by John Gassner. New York: Crown Publishers, 1963.

Walker, Joseph A. The River Niger. New York: Hill & Wang, 1973.

Williams, Tennessee. Sweet Bird of Youth. In The Theatre of Tennessee Williams. Vol. IV. New York: New Direction Books, 1972.

_____. The Night of the Iguana. In The Theatre of Tennessee Williams. Vol. IV. New York: New Direction Books, 1972.

Wilson, Lanford. The Hot l Baltimore. New York: Hill & Wang, 1973.

Zindel, Paul. The Effect of Gamma Rays on Man-in-the-Moon Marigolds. New York: Bantam Books, 1973.

Theatre

Books

- Adler, Thomas P. Robert Anderson. Boston: G. K. Hall & Company, 1978.
- Amacher, Richard E. Edward Albee. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1969.
- Bigsby, C. W. Ed., ed. Edward Albee: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1975.
- Debusscher, Gilbert. Edward Albee: Tradition and Renewal. Brussels: Center for American Studies, 1969.
- Esslin, Martin. The Theatre of Absurd. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1969.
- Falk, Signi. Tennessee Williams. 2nd Edition. Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1978.
- Goldman, William. The Season. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1969.
- Guernsey, Otis, ed. Burns Mantle Yearbook: Best Plays of 1963-1978. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1963-1978.
- Hayman, Ronald. Edward Albee. London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1971.
- Hewes, Henry, ed. Burns Mantle Yearbook: Best Plays of 1961-1963. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1961-1963.
- Hirsch, Foster. A Portrait of the Artist: The Plays of Tennessee Williams. Port Washington, New York: Kennikat Press, 1979.
- Jackson, Esther Merle. The Broken World of Tennessee Williams. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965.

- Kronenberger, Louis, ed. Burns Mantle Yearbook: Best Plays of 1958-1961. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1958-1961.
- Paolucci, Anne. From Tension to Tonic: The Plays of Edward Albee. Carbondale, Illinois: Southern Illinois Press, 1972.
- Rutenberg, Michael E. Edward Albee: Playwright in Protest. New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1969.
- Stanton, Stephan, ed. Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977.
- Tharpe, Jac., ed. Tennessee Williams: A Tribute. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.
- Tischler, Nancy M. Tennessee Williams. Southern Writers' Series #5. Austin, Texas: Steck Vaughn Company, 1969.
- _____. Tennessee Williams: Rebellious Puritan. New York: Citadel Press, 1961.
- Tynan, Kenneth. Tynan on Theatre. Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1961.
- Weales, Gerald. American Drama Since World War II. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962.
- Williams, Tennessee. Memoirs. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1975.
- Wilson, Edwin. The Theatre Experience. New York: McGraw Hill, 1976.
- Yacowar, Maurice. Tennessee Williams and Film. New York: Fredrick Ungar Publishing Company, 1977.

Theatre

Articles

- Adler, Jacob. "Night of the Iguana: A New Tennessee Williams?" Ramparts 1 (November 1962): 59-68.
- Anderson, Robert. "Introduction to Silent Night, Lonely Night." Theatre Arts 45 (December 1961): 26.
- Bigsby, C. W. E. "Tragedy of Madness: An Analysis of Edward Albee's A Delicate Balance." Contemporary Literature (April 1968): 223-24.
- Blackwell, Louise. "Tennessee Williams and the Predicament of Women." South Atlantic Bulletin 35 (March 1970): 9-14.
- Da Ponte, Durante. "Tennessee Williams' Gallery of Feminine Characters." Tennessee Studies in Literature, X. Knoxville: University of Tennessee, 1965, pp. 7-26.
- Embrey, Glenn. "The Subterranean World of The Night of the Iguana." In Tennessee Williams: A Tribute, pp. 325-40. Edited by Jac Tharpe. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.
- Funke, Lewis, and Booth, John E. "Williams on Williams." Theatre Arts 46 (January 1962): 17-19.
- Jones, Robert Emmet. "Sexual Roles in the Works of Tennessee Williams." In Tennessee Williams: A Tribute, pp. 545-52. Edited by Jac Tharpe. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.
- Leon, Ferdinand. "Time, Fantasy and Reality in The Night of the Iguana." Modern Drama 11 (May 1968): 87-96.
- Leone, Vivien. "Notes from an Accidentally Passionate Playgoer." Drama and Theatre 10 (Spring 1972): 134-36.
- McGlinn, Jeanne M. "Tennessee Williams' Women: Illusion and Reality, Sexuality and Love." In Tennessee Williams: A Tribute, pp. 510-24. Edited by Jac Tharpe. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977.

Miller, Jeanne Marie A. "Images of Black Women in Plays by Black Playwrights." CLA Journal 20 (June 1977): 494-507.

Tischler, Nancy M. "A Gallery of Witches." In Tennessee Williams: A Tribute, pp. 492-509. Edited by Jac Tharpe. Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1977..

Weales, Gerald. "All About Talk: Arthur Miller's The Price." Ohio Review 13 (Winter 1972): 74-84.

_____. "The Song of Solomon." The Reporter 21 (March 1968): 44.

_____. "Tennessee Williams' Achievement in the Sixties." In Tennessee Williams: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 111-117. Edited by Stephan Stanton. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1977.

"Women in Modern Drama." Intellect (May 1977): 388.

Theatre

Reviews

Atkinson, Brooks. "The Best Man Arrives." New York Times,
1 April 1960.

_____. "Silent Night, Lonely Night." New York Times,
4 December 1959.

"Arthur Miller Breaks His Silence." Cue, February 17, 1968,
p. 18.

Barnes, Clive. "Arthur Miller's The Price." New York Times,
8 February 1968.

_____. "Gamma Rays on Marigolds." New York Times,
8 April 1970.

_____. "New Papp Home." New York Times, 9 November 1973.

_____. "Rabe Revisited." New York Times, 5 December 1974.

_____. "A Touching Play Tiptoes on the Heart." New York Post, 5 December 1977.

Beaufort, John. "David Rabe's Boom Boom Room." Christian Science Monitor, 14 November 1973.

_____. "Maggie Smith and Mary, Mary." Christian Science Monitor, 1 March 1963.

Bermel, Albert. "Libra and the Moon." New Leader, December 24,
1973, p. 21.

Bolton, Whitney. "Arthur Miller's The Price." Morning Telegraph, 9 February 1968.

_____. "Luv: Bright, Wonderfully Funny, Best Non-Musical of the Season." New York Morning Telegraph,
13 November 1964.

_____. "Night of the Iguana: Eloquent, Moving." New York Morning Telegraph, 30 December 1961.

Bolton, Whitney. "Off-Broadway: Scuba Duba." New York Morning Telegraph, 12 October 1967.

_____. "Silent Night: Adult, Sensitive, Touching." New York Morning Telegraph, 5 December 1969.

Bono, Jean Carey. "Review of The River Niger." New York Times, 8 December 1972.

Brustein, Robert. "Albee Decorates an Old House." In Edward Albee: A Collection of Critical Essays, pp. 135-37. Edited by C. W. E. Bigsby. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1975.

"Can Witty Women Win in Love?" Look, April 14, 1961, p. 70.

Chapman, John. "Tennessee Williams' Most Mature Drama." New York Daily News, 14 January 1962.

Coe, Richard. "First Rate Chapter." Washington Post, 11 January 1979.

Cohen, Nathan. "The Price: Nothing of Dramatic Value." Toronto Daily Star, 11 November 1969.

Cook, Richard. "Bridge of Laughs." Wall Street Journal, 13 November 1964.

Cooke, Richard P. "The Underside of Life." Wall Street Journal, 2 January 1962.

Durgin, Cyrus. "A Woman's Play." Cue, December 4, 1959, p. 17.

Eder, Richard. "For Neil Simon, It's Chapter Two." New York Times, 5 December 1977.

Evans, Peter. "Tennessee Williams Wants to Unsweeten Ava." New York World Telegram and Sun, 24 October 1963.

Feingold, Michael. "Rabe: Almost Poetry." Village Voice, 16 December 1974.

Gill, Brendan. "And Now to Be Serious for a Moment." New Yorker, December 12, 1977, p. 91.

Gilliatt, Penelope. "Miller's Heroic Testament." London Observer Review, 11 February 1968.

Gottfried, Martin. "Boom Boom Room Revived." New York Post, 5 December 1974.

- Gottfried, Martin. "A Delicate Balance." Women's Wear Daily, 23 September 1966.
- _____. "The Price." Women's Wear Daily, 8 February 1968.
- _____. "The River Niger." Women's Wear Daily, 28 March 1973.
- Gunner, Marjorie. "On and Off Broadway." Park Bulletin, 22 December 1977.
- Gunter, David. "Arthur Miller's The Price." Newark Evening News, 4 March 1968.
- Hewes, Henry. "Adieus from the Bridge." Saturday Review, November 28, 1964, p. 14.
- _____. "The Half Life." Saturday Review, May 2, 1970, p. 12.
- Hipp, Edward Sothern. "Accent on Laughter." Newark Evening News, 18 March 1961.
- _____. "By Schisgal." Newark Evening News, 12 November 1964.
- _____. "Taking the Edge Off." Newark Evening News, 29 December 1961.
- Hobson, Harold. "Theatre." London Sunday Times, 19 November 1972.
- Kalem, Ted. "Cave of Terrified Mutants." Time, April 20, 1970, p. 51.
- Kelly, Kevin. "Gamma Rays Likened to Menagerie." Boston Sunday Globe, 26 April 1970.
- Kerr, Walter. "Everything's Coming Up Marigolds." New York Times, 19 April 1970.
- _____. "The Lively Arts." New York Herald Tribune, 7 January 1962.
- _____. "Silent Night, Lonely Night." New York Herald Tribune, 4 December 1959.
- Knickerbocker, Paine. "Mary, Mary: Sunny Comedy." San Francisco Chronicle, 18 July 1962.

Kroll, Jack. "Go-Go Gone." Newsweek, December 16, 1974, p. 105.

_____. "Go-Go in Hell." Newsweek, November 19, 1973, p. 96.

Lahr, John. "On Stage." Village Voice, 16 April 1970.

Lewis, Peter. "Old Style Drama Still a Knock Out." London Daily Mail, 5 March 1968.

"Luv's Labor Lost." Newsweek, November 23, 1964, p. 102.

MacArthur, Harriet. "The Price is Right in Every Way." Evening Star, 28 October 1969.

McClain, John. "Brilliant Cast Adds to a Great Williams Play." New York Journal American, 29 December 1961.

_____. "Cast Superb; Play Isn't." New York Journal American, 4 December 1959.

_____. "A Real Love of a Comedy." New York Journal American, 12 November 1964.

Marowitz, Charles. "When the Villain is Self-Delusion." Plays and Players 7 (April 1969).

Morrison, Hobe. "Boom Boom Room." Variety, 14 November 1973.

_____. "A Delicate Balance." Variety, 28 September 1966.

_____. "Luv." Variety, 18 November 1964.

_____. "The Night of the Iguana." Variety, 3 January 1962.

_____. "The River Niger." Variety, 28 March 1972.

_____. "Silent Night, Lonely Night." Variety, 9 December 1959.

Nadel, Norman. "A Delicate Balance Lacks It." New York World Journal Tribune, 23 September 1966.

Novick, Julius. "Innaurato Out the Other." Village Voice, 19 December 1977.

_____. "Papp Goes Boom at the Beaumont." Village Voice, 15 November 1973.

_____. "Realism in Harlem." Village Voice, 5 April 1973.

- Okpaku, Joseph. "The River Niger Flows Deep." New York Times, 8 December 1972.
- Oliver, Edith. "Why the Lady is a Tramp." New Yorker, April 18, 1970, p. 82.
- Oppenheimer, George. "Boom Boom Room." Newsday, 23 November 1973.
- _____. "Who Will be President?" Newsday, 6 April 1960.
- Peck, Seymour. "Williams and the Iguana." New York Times, 24 December 1961.
- Reisman, Arthur. "Marigolds: A Child's Garden of Neuroses." Boston After Dark, April 27, 1971, p. 18.
- Richmond, Patricia. "Luv Among the Romans." Village Voice, 19 May 1966.
- Simon, John. "Boom Boom Room." New York Magazine, December 23, 1974, p. 62.
- _____. "Dry Doc." New York Magazine, December 19, 1977, p. 102.
- _____. "Theatre Chronicle." The Hudson Review 19 (1966-67): 627.
- Smith, Michael. "Theatre Journal." Village Voice, 15 February 1968.
- Stasio, Marilyn. "The Nights the Critics Lost Their Cool." Ms., September 1975, pp. 37-41.
- Tallmer, Jerry. "The Lizard's Skin." Village Voice, 4 January 1962.
- _____. "Upstairs to The River Niger." New York Post, 28 April 1973.
- Taubman, Howard. "A Bit of Summer Reading." New York Times, 9 March 1961.
- _____. "The Effect of Gamma Rays." New York Times, 7 June 1965.
- _____. "Night of the Iguana Opens." New York Times, 29 December 1961.
- _____. "Schisgal's Luv is Directed by Nichols." New York Times, 12 November 1964.

Watt, Douglas. "Boom Boom Room Bombs Again." New York Daily News, 5 December 1974.

Watts, Richard, Jr. "A Brilliant Comedy Entitled Luv." New York Post, 12 November 1964.

_____. "Conflict Between Two Brothers." New York Post, 8 February 1968.

_____. "A Somber Lyric Vision of the Lost." New York Post, 14 January 1962.

Wilson, Edwin. "A Serious Simon Loses His Balance." Wall Street Journal, 6 December 1977.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

WomenBooks

- Adams, Elsie, and Briscoe, Mary Louise, eds. Up Against the Wall, Mother. Beverly Hills: Glencoe Press, 1971.
- Bird, Caroline. Born Female. New York: David McKay Company, 1968.
- Cater, L. A., ed. Women and Men: Changing Roles, Relationships and Perceptions. New York: Praeger, 1977.
- Chafe, William H. The American Woman. New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.
- _____. Women and Equality: Changing Patterns in American Culture. New York: Oxford University Press, 1977.
- Chmaj, Betty. Image, Myth, and Beyond. Vol. II: American Women and American Studies. Pittsburgh: Know, 1972.
- De Beauvoir, Simone. The Second Sex. Translated by H. M. Parshley. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1953.
- Dworkin, Andrea. Woman Hating. New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1974.
- Ellman, Mary. Thinking About Women. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968.
- Ferguson, Mary A. Images of Women in Literature. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
- Fiedler, Leslie. Love and Death in the American Novel. New York: Criterion Books, 1960.
- Freud, Sigmund. "Femininity," New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis (1933). Translated by James Strachey. New York: Norton & Company, 1964.
- Friedan, Betty. The Feminine Mystique. New York: Norton & Company, 1963.

- Giele, Janet Zollinger. Women and the Future. New York: Free Press, 1978.
- Gornick, Vivian, and Moran, Barbara K., eds. Woman in Sexist Society. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Haskell, Molly. From Reverence to Rape. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1973.
- Hays, H. R. The Dangerous Sex: The Myth of Feminine Evil. New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1964.
- Heilbrun, Carolyn G. Toward a Recognition of Androgyny. New York: Harper and Row, 1973.
- Hole, Judith, and Levine, Ellen. Rebirth of Feminism. New York: Quadrangle, 1971.
- Janeway, Elizabeth. Between Myth and Morning: Women Awakening. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1974.
- _____. Man's World, Woman's Place: A Study in Social Mythology. New York: William Morrow & Company, 1971.
- Lederer, Wolfgang. The Fear of Women. New York: Grune & Stratton, 1968.
- Lifton, Robert Jay, ed. The Woman in America. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.
- Millett, Kate. Sexual Politics. New York: Avon Books, 1971.
- Morgan, Robin, ed. Sisterhood is Powerful. New York: Random House, 1970.
- Neumann, Erich. The Great Mother: An Analysis of the Archetype. Translated by Ralph Manheim. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963.
- Noble, Jeanne. Beautiful Also Are the Souls of My Black Sisters. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1978.
- O'Neill, William. Everyone Was Brave: The Rise and Fall of America. Chicago: Quadrangle, 1960.
- Rogers, Katherine M. The Troublesome Helpmate: A History of Misogyny in Literature. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1966.

- Roszak, Betty, and Roszak, Theodore, eds. Masculine/Feminine: Readings in Sexual Mythology and the Liberation of Women. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- Rothman, Sheila M. Women's Proper Place. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Wallace, Michelle. Black Macho and the Myth of the Superwoman. New York: Dial Press, 1979.
- Weibel, Kathryn. Mirror, Mirror: Images of Women Reflected in Pop Culture. Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1977.
- Woolf, Virginia. A Room of One's Own. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929.

Women

Articles

- Bardwick, Judith M., and Douvan, Elizabeth. "Ambivalence: The Socialization of Women." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 225-41. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Bart, Pauline B. "Depression in Middle-Aged Women." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 168-86. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Baunoch, Joseph. "Film Stereotypes of American Women." In American Women and American Studies. Vol. II, pp. 275-98. Edited by Betty Chmaj. Pittsburgh: Know, 1972.
- Bernard, Jesse. "The Paradox of the Happy Marriage." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 145-62. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Bird, Phyllis. "Images of Women in the Old Testament." In Religion and Sexism, pp. 41-88. Edited by R. R. Ruether. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974.
- Dominick, Joseph R., and Rauch, Gail E. "The Image of Women in Network TV Commercials." Journal of Broadcasting 16 (Summer 1972): 259-65.
- Erikson, Eric. "Womanhood and the Inner Space." In Womanhood in America, pp. 1-26. Edited by R. Lifton. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1965.
- "Female Image Stereotypes." Intellect, December 1975, pp. 215-16.
- Freeman, Jo. "The Bitch Manifesto." In Notes from the Second Year, pp. 7-11. New York: Radical Feminism, 1972.

- Glueck, Grace. "Making Cultural Institutions More Responsive to Social Needs." Arts in Society 11 (Spring-Summer 1974): 49-54.
- Gornick, Vivian. "Woman as Outsider." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 126-44. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Gustafson, Judith. "Stereotypes of Women in Contemporary Literature." In American Women and American Studies. Vol. II, pp. 253-73. Edited by Betty Chmaj. Pittsburgh: Know, 1972.
- Harper's, October 1962, pp. 115-19.
- Heddle, Linda, and Jensen, Monika. "A Shift in the Balance." Arts in Society (Summer 1974): 7.
- Howe, Florence. "Sexual Stereotypes Start Early." Saturday Review, October 16, 1971, pp. 76-77.
- Israel, Lee. "Women in Film: Saving an Endangered Species." Ms., February 1975, pp. 51-57.
- Janeway, Elizabeth. "Images of Women." Arts in Society (Summer 1974): 9-14.
- Komisar, Lucy. "The Image of Women in Advertising." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 304-17. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Lieberman, Marcia. "Someday My Prince Will Come: Female Acculturation through Fairy Tales." College English 34 (December 1972): 383-98.
- Long, M. L., and Simon, R. J. "Roles and Statuses of Women and Children in Family TV Programs." Journalism Quarterly 51 (Spring 1974): 107-10.
- MacKay, Barbara. "Whatever Happened to the Ingenue?" Saturday Review World, July 27, 1974, pp. 42-43.
- Martin, Wendy. "Seduced and Abandoned in the New World: The Image of Woman in American Fiction." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 329-46. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.

- Mason, Karen Oppenheim, Czajka, John L., and Arber, Sara.
 "Change in U. S. Women's Sex-Role Attitudes, 1964-1974." American Sociological Review 41 (August 1976): 573-96.
- "New American Family." Commentary, January 1976, pp. 1-6.
- Nochlin, Linda. "How Feminism in the Arts Can Implement Cultural Change." Arts in Society 11 (Spring-Summer 1974): 81-89.
- Orth, Maureen. "How to Succeed: Fail, Lose, Die." Newsweek, March 4, 1974, pp. 50-51.
- Patrick, Robert, and Haislip, William. "Thank Heaven for Little Girls: An Examination of the Male Chauvinist Musical." Cineaste 6 (Spring 1973): 22-25.
- Schechter, Harold. "Kali on Main Street: The Rise of the Terrible Mother in America." Journal of Popular Culture 7 (Fall 1973): 251-63.
- Schmidt, Dolores Barracano. "The Great American Bitch." College English 32 (May 1971): 900-05.
- Shainess, Natalie. "Images of Women: Past and Present, Overt and Obscured." American Journal of Psychotherapy 23 (January 1969): 77-97.
- Stennard, Una. "The Mask of Beauty." In Woman in Sexist Society, pp. 187-206. Edited by Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran. New York: Basic Books, 1971.
- Stern, Paula. "The Womanly Image: Character Assassination through the Ages." Atlantic, March 1970, pp. 87-90.
- Stimpson, Catherine R. "Sex, Gender and American Culture." In Women and Men: Changing Roles, Relationships and Perceptions, pp. 201-44. Edited by L. A. Cater. New York: Praeger, 1977.
- Stoeltje, Beverly J. "A Helpmate for Man Indeed." In Woman and Folklore, pp. 27-36. Edited by Claire Farrer. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975.
- Streicher, Helen White. "The Girls in the Cartoons." Journal of Communication 24 (Spring 1974): 125-29.
- Syfers, Judy. "Why I Want A Wife." In Radical Feminism, pp. 60-62. Edited by Anne Koedt, Ellen Levine, and Anita Rapone. New York: Quadrangle, 1973.

"The Television Image of Women." Intellect, April 1975,
pp. 424-25.

Trilling, Diana. "The Image of Women in Contemporary
Literature." In The Woman in America, pp. 52-71.
Edited by Robert J. Lifton. Boston: Beacon
Press, 1965.

Welter, Barbara. "The Cult of True Womanhood: 1820-1860."
American Quarterly 18 (Summer 1966): 1-12.

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

Other Sources

- Cowley, Malcolm. "Reconsiderations: The Sixties." New Republic, August 20, 1977, pp. 37-40.
- Dickstein, Morris. The Gates of Eden. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Didion, Joan. The White Album. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1979.
- Gardner, John. On Moral Fiction. New York: Basic Books, 1978.
- Halberstam, David. "Farewell to the Sixties." McCalls, January 1970, pp. 85-92.
- McCarthy, Eugene. "The Young People Revitalized America." Look, December 30, 1969, p. 32.
- "New American Family." Commentary, January 1956, pp. 1-6.
- Sayre, Nora. Sixties Going on Seventies. New York: Arbor House, 1978.
- Spender, Stephen. The Thirties and After. New York: Random House, 1978.
- Tolstoy, Leo. What is Art? and Essays on Art. Translated by Aylmer Maude. World Classics Edition. London: Oxford University Press, 1969.
- Trilling, Diana. We Must March My Darlings. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1977.
- "Who Erased the Seventies?" Esquire, December 1977, pp. 152-55.