



Lesbian Broadway: American Theatre and Culture, 1920-1945

by Meghan Brodie Gualtieri

This thesis/dissertation document has been electronically approved by the following individuals:

Gainor, J Ellen (Chairperson)
Bathrick, David (Minor Member)
Villarejo, Amy (Minor Member)

LESBIAN BROADWAY: AMERICAN THEATRE AND CULTURE, 1920-1945

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School

of Cornell University

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

by

Meghan Brodie Gaultieri

August 2010

© 2010 Meghan Brodie Gualtieri

LESBIAN BROADWAY: AMERICAN THEATRE AND CULTURE, 1920-1945

Meghan Brodie Gualtieri, Ph.D.

Cornell University 2010

Lesbian Broadway: American Theatre and Culture, 1920-1945 is a project of reclamation that begins to document a history of lesbianism on Broadway. Using drama about lesbianism as its vehicle, this study investigates white, middle-class, female homosexuality in the United States from 1920 to 1945 and explores the convergence of Broadway drama, lesbianism, feminism, sexology, eugenics, and American popular culture. While the methodologies employed here vary by chapter, the project as a whole reflects a cultural excavation and analysis of lesbian dramas in their appropriate socio-historical contexts and suggests new critical approaches for studying this neglected collection of plays. Chapter One re-visits the feminist possibilities of realism, specifically lesbian realist drama of the 1920s and 30s, in order to reconsider how genre, feminist criticism, and historical context can inform socio-sexual readings of lesbian drama. Building on this foundation, Chapter Two explores a series of lesbian characters on Broadway that undermines and frequently reverses dominant sexological assumptions about the nature of and threats posed by lesbianism. These plays, when read comparatively, reveal a hierarchy of threatening lesbian types built on theoretical and historical constructions of masculinity. Chapter Three highlights how sexological and eugenic readings of lesbian antagonists dovetail to reveal a shared cultural perception of lesbians as abnormal, base, and immoral females and, consequently, as a threat to social order. A dramaturgical reading suggests how one might complicate understandings of these threats to the social order to view them as progressive depictions of lesbian power and departures from

traditional love-triangle tropes. Chapter Four offers a literary and historical reading of Christa Winsloe's *Girls in Uniform* (1932) that reveals how Winsloe draws parallels between authoritarianism and heteronormativity in a multivalent critique of repressive social structures that were, in 1931, on the rise in Germany. The conclusion explores the contested terrain of feminism and realism and the potential ramifications of grouping these plays together to write a lesbian theatre history.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Meghan Brodie Gualtieri earned her Ph.D. from Cornell University in 2010. Her work addresses intersections of theatre and feminist, gender, and sexuality studies.

For my parents, sister, and Shannon

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the support of my family, friends, colleagues, and mentors. I would like to thank J. Ellen Gainor for her invaluable feedback and unwavering support of my work as well as Amy Villarejo and David Bathrick for their guidance. My work with Aimee and Philip Stuart's *Love of Women* would not have been possible without the archival assistance of Maryann Chach, the Director of the Shubert Archive. Susan Klein of Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library was a great help to me in my effort to find resources related to Sholom Asch's *The God of Vengeance*. The love and encouragement of my parents and sister have been a gift to me during the writing of this book. And I cannot find words to express my love and appreciation for Shannon who has patiently lived with this project for as many years as I have.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Biographical Sketch	iii
Dedication	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Table of Contents	vi
Introduction	1
Chapter One	18
Strange Bedfellows?: Feminism & Lesbian Realist Drama of the 1920s & 1930s	
Chapter Two	80
The Masculine Menace: Lesbian Masculinity in Broadway Plays of the 1920s & 1930s	
Chapter Three	135
Sapphic Scheming: Lesbian Antagonists on Broadway, 1920-1945	
Chapter Four	190
<i>Girls in Uniform</i> : A Reclamation & Reinvestigation of the First Lesbian Boarding School Drama	
Conclusion	234
Additional References	241

INTRODUCTION

“Sappho dives, arms spread as if to grasp half of infinity; she leaves behind her only the swinging of a rope as proof of having left the sky.”¹
Marguerite Yourcenar, “Sappho or Suicide”

Lesbian Broadway: American Theatre and Culture, 1920-1945 is a project of reclamation that begins to write a history of lesbianism² on Broadway and uses drama about lesbianism as a vehicle for investigating white, middle-class, female homosexuality in the United States from 1920 to 1945. This project explores the intersections of Broadway drama, lesbianism, feminism, sexology, eugenics, and American popular culture and suggests new critical approaches for studying neglected lesbian drama. While the methodologies employed here vary by chapter, the project as a whole might best be described as a cultural excavation and analysis of the following plays in their appropriate socio-historical contexts: Sholom Asch’s *The God of Vengeance* (1922)³, Edouard Bourdet’s *The Captive* (1926), Thomas Dickinson’s *Winter Bound* (1929), Christa Winsloe’s *Girls in Uniform* (1932), Stephen Powys’ *Wise Tomorrow* (1937), Aimee and Philip Stuart’s *Love of Women* (1937), and

¹ Yourcenar, Marguerite. *Fires*. Trans. Dori Katz. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994. 129. Print.

² I employ the term “lesbianism” because of the terms used to express female homosexuality in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, “lesbianism” is perhaps the most neutral term. Words like “inversion,” “perversion,” and “degeneration” had specific socio-sexual and moral connotations during this period (please see Chapter Two for a thorough analysis of these terms). Newspaper articles and reviews covering Broadway productions addressing lesbian themes in the 1920s and 30s and 40s employ terms “sex perversion,” “sex degeneracy,” “sex-eccentricity,” “unnatural affection,” and “Lesbianism,” among others, to describe female homosexuality. These terms are used in the following articles, respectively:

“Padlocks For Stage Voted By Senate.” *New York Times* 24 Mar. 1927. Print.

“Padlocks For Stage Voted By Senate.” *New York Times* 24 Mar. 1927. Print.

Hammond, Percy. “The Theaters: ‘The Captive,’ an Expert Play, Dealing With a Subject Too Odd for a Polite Reviewer.” *New York Herald Tribune* 30 Sept. 1926: 14. Print.

Atkinson, Brooks. “The Play: ‘The Children’s Hour,’ Being a Tragedy of Life in a Girls’ Boarding House.” *New York Times* 21 Nov. 1934. Print.

Waldorf, Wilella. “Forecasts and Postscripts: Edith Barrett to Play a Role in ‘Wise Tomorrow.’” *New York Post* 17 Sept. 1937. Print.

³ The dates included in parentheses indicate the years of these plays’ Broadway premieres throughout the text. All other parenthetical dates indicate years of publication.

Dorothy and Howard Baker's *Trio* (1944).⁴

A brief review of literature on the topic of lesbian drama reveals the extent to which Broadway productions of these plays have remained largely untouched by scholars and the need not only for fuller recognition of these works, but also an interdisciplinary approach for constructing a history of lesbianism on Broadway. Although Kaier Curtin surveys early twentieth-century queer American drama in his book "*We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians*": *The emergence of lesbians and gay men on the American stage* (1987), his focus is not Broadway-specific and does not include close readings of the plays or examinations of the manner in which these plays embody cultural discourse about homosexuality. Exhaustive books on the history of Broadway are surprisingly scarce and usually oriented toward the history of Broadway musicals (e.g. the work of Ethan Mordden). *Broadway* (1970) by Brooks Atkinson, *Broadway Theatre* (1994) by Andrew B. Harris, and *Showtime: A Chronology of Broadway and the Theatre from Its Beginnings to the Present* (1998) offer varying perspectives on the history of Broadway, but do not provide more than passing references to the titles of some of the more well known lesbian plays on Broadway (e.g. *The Captive* and *The Children's Hour*). Perhaps the most comprehensive history of Broadway drama is Burns Mantle's *Best Plays* series. This collection of books, published annually, chronicles the theatrical seasons of select major American cities, the most popular plays of each season, run-related statistics, and Pulitzer Prize-winning play information. Social history texts like Lillian Faderman's *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America* (1991) and George Chauncey's *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the*

⁴ Sholom Asch's *The God of Vengeance* (1922) was directed by Rudolph Schildkraut, Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive* (1926) by Gilbert Miller, Thomas Dickinson's *Winter Bound* (1929) by James Light, Christa Winsloe's *Girls in Uniform* (1932) by Frank Gregory, Stephen Powys' *Wise Tomorrow* (1937) by Hugh MacMullen, Aimee and Philip Stuart's *Love of Women* (1937) by Leo G. Carroll, and Dorothy and Howard Baker's *Trio* (1944) by Bretaigne Windust.

Gay Male World, 1890-1940 (1994) touch upon queer theatre and map out ways of understanding homosexuality during the first half of the twentieth-century. Collections of essays on queer theatre like *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater* (2002) edited by Alisa Solomon and Framji Minwalla and “*We Will Be Citizens*”: *New Essays on Gay and Lesbian Theatre* (2008) edited by James Fisher focus primarily on contemporary queer theatre with a few Renaissance and Restoration drama exceptions. When read alongside each other, texts on Broadway history, queer history, and contemporary queer theatre provide a more complete picture of early twentieth-century American lesbian theatre history and a framework for interpreting it. This depiction of lesbian theatre history is further enhanced by explorations of sexuality studies texts such as John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman’s *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (1988), Jeffrey Weeks’ *Making Sexual History* (2000), and Martha Vicinus’s *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928* (2004), to name only a few. These are the histories and scholarly investigations upon which *Lesbian Broadway* is founded and this multi-disciplinary literature informs the methodologies employed here.

Broadway

Broadway of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s is perhaps most easily characterized by its more famous musicals and comedies such as: *Sunny* (1925),⁵ *Showboat* (1927), *Private Lives* (1931), *Ah, Wilderness!* (1933), *Anything Goes* (1934), *You Can’t Take It With You* (1936), and *Oklahoma!* (1943). But with these comedies and musicals ran successful dramas as well: *Anna Christie* (1921), *What Price Glory?* (1924), *Strange Interlude* (1928), *Abe Lincoln in Illinois* (1938), and *The Glass Menagerie* (1945).

⁵ Parenthetical dates denote Broadway premieres.

Popular playwrights of the period include Sherwood Anderson, Philip Barry, Marc Connelly, Edna Ferber, Moss Hart, Oscar Hammerstein II, Sidney Howard, Jerome Kern, Eugene O'Neill, and Elmer Rice, among others. Alongside Broadway classics by these dramatists, however, ran nearly a dozen lesbian plays that experienced varying degrees of success in this commercial setting. The lesbian plays' production on Broadway informs multiple historical and theoretical readings of these dramas precisely because of Broadway's commercial status and cultural centrality. Despite the popularity of Broadway, many of the plays that constitute its history have been ignored by contemporary theatre critics and scholars.

In *Performance in America* (2005), a text that "argues for the significance of the performing arts in contemporary U.S. culture by challenging the conventional wisdom that performance is marginal to the national imaginary," David Román sums up what he identifies as a prevailing contemporary disregard for commercial drama:

Commercial theatre offers its own pleasures and possibilities, and appreciating them should not automatically brand one as naïve and politically unaware. This disdain of the commercial theatre constitutes a strain of antitheatricity that is symptomatic of larger cultural anxieties about class, capital, pleasure, and the popular. The dismissal of certain kinds of theatre as not worthwhile subjects for theatre and performance studies—or for American studies, for that matter—constitutes a variant of the antitheatrical sentiment that permeates our culture. (34-35)

In terms of Broadway, Román goes on to note:

Broadway, in this scenario, is viewed as especially problematic; not only is it seen as irrelevant but it is also imagined as lacking in artistry and talent, its audiences lacking in taste. Unable to distinguish between art and entertainment, Broadway audiences are dismissed as indiscriminate and

unenlightened.

This anti-Broadway bias makes for a form of antitheatricality sanctioned by theatre scholars who do little to defend Broadway's artistic and cultural work. But it is also a form of antipopulism that needs to be rethought by progressive cultural critics. Rather than acquiesce to the anticommercial sentiment and solely endorse the indigenous, theatre and performance scholars should rethink their criteria of what constitutes a valid object of scholarly inquiry. (35)

While Román discusses current attitudes toward Broadway productions, one can argue that his appraisal of an anti-Broadway bias might be applied to criticism of the productions that constitute Broadway's history as well. It is important to note that Román argues that commercial theatre constitutes a worthwhile subject for theatre and performance studies as well as American studies. The addition of American studies to Román's list is particularly relevant to this study of Broadway theatre because lesbian dramas on Broadway provide an opportunity for performing readings of these works as cultural artifacts in American socio-sexual history from 1920-1945. Indeed, Román states that “[d]espite the critical attention that cultural studies has directed toward popular and mainstream archives, and despite the renewed interest in theatre and performance studied, Broadway itself—as a site of cultural production—nonetheless remains vastly undertheorized. Scholars of theatre and performance studies have only recently begun to directly engage the rich archives of Broadway” (112). Because Broadway plays were frequently reviewed by multiple newspapers and because attempts to censor Broadway plays made headlines, there exists a sizeable archive of primary and secondary source materials from this period. These materials can be used to gauge not only how lesbian plays were received, but also how their lesbian content was interpreted. It is my aim to demonstrate exactly why lesbian drama on Broadway deserves to be recovered and mined for its contributions not only to Theatre studies, but American, Feminist, and Queer studies as well.

Feminism & Realism

Conveniently, not only does the year 1920 mark the start of the first decade of lesbianism on Broadway, it is also the year in which females won the vote in the United States. This is of paramount importance for feminist readings of drama produced after the ratification of the 19th Amendment. Lesbian drama of this period thus cannot be separated from an understanding of historical feminism. In *The Grounding of Modern Feminism* (1987), Nancy Cott examines early twentieth-century feminism in the United States. She asserts that feminism is a “theory about equality” and a “theory about sexual difference, as can be seen in its method of mobilization, for it posits that women, *as women*, will feel the collective grievances to push forward toward equality” (6, italics in original). Cott acknowledges that feminism, “as an *ism* (an ideology) [...] presupposed a set of principles not necessarily belonging to every woman—nor limited to women” (3). In short, feminism is not monolithic across history or populations. But while I am working with historical notions of what constituted feminism from 1920 to 1945, I am also reading lesbian drama through more contemporary feminist theatre criticism, which presents some distinct methodological challenges.

Feminist theatre criticism of the 1980s and 90s frequently eschews the feminist possibilities of realism. Yet the plays considered here must all be considered realist dramas, so one is confronted with a dilemma: can these early twentieth-century lesbian plays engage this feminist theatre criticism? For the purposes of my study, I have adopted the succinct and historical definition of realism offered by Brenda Murphy in her book, *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940* (1987):

The realistic theory of drama had its variations, but all versions shared an assumption of what drama in the realistic mode should be: a representation of

the playwright's conception of some aspect of human experience in a given milieu, within fourth-wall illusion and in the low mimetic style. It should have characters who are individuals as well as social types, a setting that aimed at producing the illusion of the milieu as fully as possible rather than simply importing "real" objects onto the stage, thought that expressed the social issues of the milieu and the psychological conflicts of the characters in dialogue they would naturally speak, a form that was derived from the human experience being depicted, and a structure designed to produce the fullest illusion for the audience that the action onstage was taking place in reality. This notion came to dominate the American theater during the twenties and thirties[.] (49)

Some argue that such definitions are inherently problematic. William W. Demastes, in his preface to *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition* (1996), cautions that "it is unlikely that any prescribed definition [of realism] would be sufficient to embrace the many past and current applications of the term. [...] [R]ealism is a term identifying a rich and varied confederacy of theatrical products bound only by a limited set of prescriptions and utilized by a heterogeneous group of artists" (x). While Demastes' warning is well taken, Murphy's definition considers both the content and structure of realism and offers multiple perspectives for approaching realist drama. Murphy offers a useful framework, but leaves sufficient room for interpretation. Her definition also provides a point of departure for understanding feminist criticism of realism. In *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (1988), Jill Dolan states that realism "is prescriptive in that it reifies the dominant culture's inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes" (84). This view was shared by many other theatre theorists at this time like Elaine Aston, Elin Diamond, and others who generated a substantial body of work exploring feminist alternatives to realist dramaturgy, notably in Brecht's epic theatre. A handful of critics like theatre scholar Patricia Schroeder, however, view realism as an appropriate vehicle for social commentary. Schroeder contends

that “[t]he first reason to reevaluate realism is simple: realism was created not only to reflect social conditions but also to comment on them. [...] Even given our postmodern suspicion of mimesis and our awareness that all art creates a reality it cannot simply reflect, realism can invoke analogues (if not exact replicas) of offstage conditions and demonstrate the social consequences of oppression” (36). My work follows in Schroeder’s footsteps, but Schroeder’s views, in the 1980s and 90s, were in the minority. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, some feminist critics have begun to revise their views on realism and acknowledge that their former positions excluded considerations of historical drama. Nevertheless, their previous writings on the incompatibility of feminism and realism still constitute the core of feminist theatre criticism about realism. In Chapter One, my aim, therefore, is not to dismiss this substantial body of feminist theatre criticism, but to rethink and expand it to accommodate readings of realist dramas within their appropriate historical contexts.

Sex, Gender, & Sexuality in America, 1920-1945

To discuss sex, gender, and sexuality in America from 1920 to 1945, one must first define these terms and understand the significance of these dates. Theatre scholar Lynda Hart posits: “Sex, gender, and sexuality are difficult terms to think separately, but that is a crucial project for feminists” (276). Taking this idea one step further, Judith Butler, in *Gender Trouble* (1990), contends:

Although the unproblematic unity of “women” is often invoked to construct a solidarity of identity, a split is introduced in the feminist subject by the distinction between sex and gender. Originally intended to dispute the biology-is-destiny formulation, the distinction between sex and gender serves the argument that whatever biological intractability sex appears to have, gender is culturally constructed: hence, gender is neither the causal result of sex nor as

seemingly fixed as sex. (9-10)

Moreover, according to Butler, “[t]aken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. Assuming for the moment the stability of binary sex, it does not follow that the construction of “men” will accrue exclusively to the bodies of males or that “women” will interpret only female bodies” (9-10). Using Butler’s paradigm for understanding this sex/gender divide, I use the word “female” to denote one’s biological sex; the word “woman” to denote one’s gender, a combination of socially constructed notions of femininity and masculinity; and the word “sexuality” to denote one’s sexual orientation. In fact, these distinctions may conceptually predate Butler; a character in one of the plays I examine refuses to identify as a “woman,” although she does not dispute that the fact that she is a female.⁶ The male characters in the plays examined are all depicted as men and conform to heteronormative models of masculine males (the locus of socio-political power). Consequently, I do refer to these characters as men, representations of patriarchal control. While my work maintains the differences between sex, gender, and sexuality, such distinctions were not common in the United States in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. During this period, constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality were determined by late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century sexologists like Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and Sigmund Freud. Particularly in their characterizations of female homosexuality, these writers often collapse the discrete categories of sex, gender, and sexuality, pairing femininity with females and masculinity with males. By extension, masculine females and feminine males were marked as homosexuals by sexologists who sought to create criteria by which homosexuals might be identified and categorized. Drawing upon the work of queer theorist Judith Halberstam and sociologist Mary McIntosh,

⁶ This character is Tony Ambler in Thomas Dickinson’s play *Winter Bound* (1929).

Chapter Two explores a series of lesbian characters on Broadway that undermines and frequently reverses dominant sexological constructions of lesbianism. When read comparatively, these plays reveal a subversive hierarchy of threatening lesbian types based on theoretical and historical constructions of masculinity.

Sexologists also identified environments in which, they believed, lesbianism thrived: brothels, single sex schools, theatres, and the homes of the upper class. Ellis writes that one kind of homosexuality “is specially fostered by those employments which keep women in constant association, not only by day, but often at night also, without the company of men” (127). He goes on to credit a “friend” for explaining that

‘[p]assionat[e] friendships among girls, from the most innocent to the most elaborate excursions in the direction of Lesbos, are extremely common in theaters, both among actresses and, even more, among chorus- and ballet- girls. Here the pell-mell of the dressing-rooms, the wait of perhaps two hours between the performances, during which all the girls are cooped up, in a state of inaction and of excitement, in a few crowded dressing rooms, afford every opportunity for the growth of this particular kind of sentiment.’ (130)

Additionally, both Ellis and Krafft-Ebing note that lesbianism is common among prostitutes (Ellis 130, Krafft-Ebing 263). Furthermore, Ellis contends that “among the upper ranks, alike of society and prostitution,” lesbianism thrives because these females frequently “have much greater liberty of action, and much greater freedom from prejudices” (130). In short, if given freedom, females might choose the company of other females and choose female sexual partners, making feminism a scapegoat for lesbianism. All of the plays studied here are set in or revolve around environments sexologists would identify as locations conducive to the cultivation of lesbianism. Although it is impossible to know to what extent the work of sexologists prompted these dramaturgical choices, there clearly exists a literary trope that runs parallel to

sexological theory. My readings of the plays examine the degree to which these settings are convenient ways of suggesting that homosexuality can be acquired and how some of the plays and their reviews challenge notions of acquired homosexuality.

During the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, perceptions of female same-sex relationships changed radically. The previously condoned and encouraged close friendships between females became deeply suspect. Historian Lillian Faderman succinctly notes that “by the end of World War I the tolerance for any manifestations of what would earlier have been considered ‘romantic friendship’ had virtually disappeared” (35).

Tolerance waned as sexologists’ theories about the physical nature of female same-sex desire became more widely disseminated. Historian Martha Vicinus notes that

[d]uring the interwar years, with surprising thoroughness, the specialized debates and descriptions of the sexologists moved into the intellectual discourses of Europe and America. The varied nomenclature and theories proved enabling to many lesbians seeking to understand their desires. But for some women, [...] the new psychology was debilitating because it oversexualized same-sex love and companionship. For others, [...] it gave a rationale for a deeply held sense of self. (204)

Futhermore, according to John D’Emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, in the 1920’s and 30’s, “the resources for naming homosexual desire slowly expanded” and the “infiltration of psychiatric and psychoanalytic concepts into popular culture contributed to the process of labeling homosexual desire” (288). According to sexologists, females didn’t just seek emotional support from each other; many shared physical intimacy and preferred this intimacy with other females to intimacy with males. Any deep relationship between two females, especially if one of the females exhibited any degree of masculinity, would have been perceived as a lesbian relationship by sexologists and the broader American population who had been

exposed to the dissemination of sexological material since the early twentieth century. I identify these relationships as lesbian precisely because they were understood as such during this era. This would have been the perception of intimacy between females even if they were *not* sexually intimate (which sexologists would have attributed to weak sex drives). And in much the same way that sexologists sought to provide taxonomies for understanding lesbianism, eugenicists, too, endeavored to explain lesbianism, but eugenicists were more concerned with exposing what they perceived to be the threat of race suicide posed by homosexuality. Both sexological and eugenic constructions of lesbianism carried with them moral connotations. Chapter Three highlights the manner in which sexological and eugenic readings of lesbian antagonists dovetail to reveal a shared perception of lesbians as abnormal, base, and immoral females and, consequently, as a threat to social order. A companion literary reading based on literary scholar Terry Castle's revision of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's theory of male homosocial triangulation suggests how one might complicate understandings of this threat to social order to view it as a progressive depiction of lesbian power and a departure from traditional love-triangle tropes.

A thorough analysis of lesbianism on Broadway seems to indicate that lesbianism was not explicitly represented on Broadway prior to the 1920s; it was, however, represented, albeit infrequently, on Broadway after 1945. I have chosen to conclude my study in 1945, at the end of World War II, because of the drastic change in American culture that accompanied the end of the war. D'Emilio and Freedman contend:

With the onset of World War II, psychiatrists were incorporated into the nation's military effort, screening inductees for evidence of mental instability and, in the process, asking millions of young men about homosexuality.

World War II did more than propagate psychiatric definitions of homosexuality; it also created substantially new erotic opportunities that promoted the articulation of a gay identity and the rapid growth of a gay subculture. [...]

For a generation of young Americans, the war created a setting in which to experience same-sex love, affection, and sexuality, and to participate in the group life of gay men and women. (288-289)

In essence, for D’Emilio and Freedman, “World War II was something of a nationwide ‘coming out’ experience” so consequently, “in the 1950s and 1960s, federal, state, and local governments mobilized their resources” against emerging gay and lesbian communities (289, 288). My work stops short of the “nationwide ‘coming out’” followed by attempts to target and persecute homosexuals, which marked a significant transition in cultural responses to homosexuality. As early as 1950, in fact, the U.S. Senate authorized “a formal inquiry into the employment of ‘homosexuals and other moral perverts’ in government” (D’Emilio & Freedman 292). In *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940* (1994), social historian George Chauncey persuasively argues that “gay life in New York was *less* tolerated, *less* visible to outsiders, and *more* rigidly segregated in the second third of the century than the first, and that the very severity of the postwar reaction has tended to blind us to the relative tolerance of the prewar years” (9, italics in original). Although Chauncey is specifically writing about gay male culture, his assessment of gay visibility in the years between World War I and World War II versus after World War II applies to lesbianism as well. Indeed, the period from 1920-1945 marks the greatest concentration of lesbian plays appearing on Broadway in any twenty-five year span of Broadway history.

A Note About Play Selection

For purposes of space and focus, I do not perform readings of every play with lesbian content appearing on Broadway from 1920 to 1945. In addition to those studied here, Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934) and Allan Kenward's *Proof Thro' the Night* (1942) also appeared on Broadway during this period. Given the abundance of Hellman and *Children's Hour* scholarship, I chose not to focus on this play and instead provide a close reading of another lesbian boarding school drama, Christa Winsloe's *Girls in Uniform* (1932), produced on Broadway two years before *The Children's Hour*, but virtually untouched by theatre scholars. Chapter Four offers a dramaturgical and historical reading of *Girls in Uniform* which reveals that Winsloe draws parallels between authoritarianism and heteronormativity in a multivalent critique of repressive social structures that were, in 1931, on the rise in Germany.

Proof Thro' the Night, its title taken from the United States' national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner," explores the experiences of a group of nurses in a dugout on the Bataan Peninsula in 1942. The play is not a lesbian play, but addresses lesbianism as a part of one of the character's experiences in the all-female dugout. Because lesbianism is incidental to *Proof Thro' the Night* and there were other plays that were better fits for the rubrics of each chapter, I do not include it among the plays investigated here. The only other drama with lesbian content appearing on Broadway close to this period is John-Paul Sartre's *No Exit* which did not make its premiere until the end of 1946, after World War II, and, as a piece of existentialist drama, represents an important departure from the period, content, and form of the plays examined in this book. Additionally, Djuna Barnes' one-act play *The Dove* appeared on Broadway in 1926 for one performance as part of the fourth annual Belasco Cup tournament (a

competition of one-act plays).⁷ Because *The Dove* is a somewhat abstract, unconventional one-act play with some lesbian themes, it, too, departs from the full-length realist dramas studied here and is only tangentially related to the arguments of these chapters. But, like *Proof Thro' the Night* and *No Exit*, it certainly warrants further scholarly exploration.

While this work only begins to write a partial history of lesbian drama in the United States, I hope it may serve as a point of departure for others interested in reclaiming lesbian plays lost to history. *Lesbian Broadway*, in the tradition of work by social historians, aims to expand both a cultural and theatrical history of lesbianism in the United States and draw scholars and students to this rich archive of dramatic literature.

⁷ Plumb, Cheryl J. "Introduction, *The Dove*." *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1930s*. Ed. Katherine E. Kelly. London: Routledge, 1996. 300. Print.

WORKS CITED

- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge: New York, 1999. Print.
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994. Print.
- Cott, Nancy. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. Print.
- Demastes, William W. "Preface: American Dramatic Realisms, Viable Frames of Thought." *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*. Ed. William W. Demastes. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996. ix-xvii. Print.
- D'Emilio, John, and Estelle B. Freedman. *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1988. Print.
- Dolan, Jill. *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. Print.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Hart, Lynda. "Canonizing Lesbians?" *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon*. Ed. June Schlueter. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990. 275-292. Print.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Trans. Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Bell Publishing Company, Inc., 1965. Print.
- Murphy, Brenda. *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Print.
- Plumb, Cheryl J. "Introduction, *The Dove*." *Modern Drama by Women 1880s-1930s*. Ed. Katherine E. Kelly. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Román, David. *Performance in America: Contemporary U.S. Culture and the Performing Arts*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2005. Print.
- Schroeder, Patricia R. *The Feminist Possibilities of Realism*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1996. Print.

Vicinus, Martha. *Intimate Friends: Women Who Loved Women, 1778-1928*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004. Print.

CHAPTER ONE

Strange Bedfellows?: Feminism & Lesbian Realist Drama of the 1920s & 1930s

*“It’s hell to be a woman. But it’s a damned sight worse to be a man’s woman.”*⁸
Tony, in Thomas Dickinson’s *Winter Bound*

*“Whether or no literature presents them as successes, each step forward, every emancipation from nature that is scored in the field of production and leads to a transformation of society, all those explorations in some new direction which mankind has embarked on in order to improve its lot, give us a sense of confidence and triumph and lead us to take pleasure in the possibilities of change in all things.”*⁹
Bertolt Brecht

The efficacy of the genre of realism to affect social change has long been the subject of fierce intellectual debate. In their critiques of realism, contemporary feminist theorists draw on the work of Georg Lukacs, Bertolt Brecht, Ernst Bloch, and Walter Benjamin, among others who theorized the merits inherent in realist and anti-realist genres as well as the ability of each to influence social change. Many feminist critics in the 1980s and 90s advocated for anti-realist dramatic forms as a means of escaping the constraints of what they identified as the essentially patriarchal form and history of realism. Ironically, in doing so, these critics frequently embraced the very binary systems—here, a rigid and false dichotomy between patriarchal realism and feminist anti-realism—that continue to oppress females. This dichotomy often excluded a re-imagining of the feminist possibilities of realism, thus restricting rather than expanding modes of feminist expression. Since theorizing the limitations of realist drama, feminist critics like Elaine Aston, Elin Diamond, and Jill Dolan, among others, have begun to revise their earlier work and move in new directions that permit more varied readings of the efficacy of realist drama, especially historical realist drama.

⁸ Dickinson, Thomas. *Winter Bound*. MS. New York Public Library. 2-2-14. Print.

⁹ Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. & Trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. 202. Print.

Despite this move, early feminist criticism of realism from the 1980s and 1990s continues to serve as the touchstone for a significant portion of the work on feminism and realism today. This chapter re-imagines the feminist possibilities of realism, specifically lesbian realist drama of the 1920s and 30s, in an effort to explicate the manner in which genre, feminist criticism, and historical context inform socio-sexual readings of lesbian drama. Of realism between World War I and World War II, theatre scholar Brenda Murphy writes that

[r]ealistic playwrights developed the notion of setting to the extent that it not only grounded the play in a sense of place, by creating a powerful illusion of a definite milieu, but could also provide a scenic image of the environmental and psychological forces at its center. The new psychological dimension opened up the notion of character from the dramatic or social types to fully realized personalities who reflected the environmental, social, and familial conditions of the play's milieu in their makeup. The new realistic playwrights used the drama to express substantial thought, which often challenged basic assumptions about American society and its institutions, and they changed the way drama conveys thought by changing conventional structures to reflect the society's changing worldview. (194)

Understanding realism during this period, specifically the manner in which it reflects social conditions, challenges “basic assumptions about American society and its institutions,” and embodies a changing worldview, informs an appraisal of the unique contributions of lesbian realist drama. Although interwar lesbian realist drama is often neglected, it advances some progressive, albeit complicated, feminist politics during an era in which the relationship between feminism and lesbianism was tumultuous and frequently misunderstood. Feminism and lesbianism were often conflated during the 1920s and 30s (and this conflation persists today). A feminist reading of Thomas Dickinson's *Winter Bound* (premiering on Broadway in 1929), Stephen Powys' *Wise*

Tomorrow (1937), and Aimee and Philip Stuart's *Love of Women* (1937) explicates how each realist play's deployment of lesbianism informs its relationship to feminism.

The Original Debate: Lukacs and Brecht on Realism

Although the debate between Georg Lukacs and Bertolt Brecht is often used as paradigm for pro-realist and anti-realist stances (especially with respect to theatre), respectively, the views of these thinkers are not diametrically opposed. Eugene Lunn does a superb job of explicating the origins and complexities of this debate in *Marxism & Modernism: an historical study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno*. Lunn offers the following brief, but astute, encapsulation of this debate:

For Lukacs, all great art presents a social "totality" in which the merely apparent contradiction between immediate experience and historical development is overcome [...]. Through the reception of this "totality," the reader vicariously experiences the reintegration of a seemingly fragmented, dehumanized world. In his *Aesthetics* (1962), Lukacs was to argue at length that such an experience of reintegrated totality, as well as the exposure to "all-sided social-human personalities," would help in morally readying its recipients for active progressive participation in the world. Brecht insisted, however, that a response to contemporary dehumanization which treated men and women as "rounded," "harmonic," and integrated personalities was merely a solution on paper. A harmoniously structured reconciliation of contradictions facilitated, moreover, a sense of cathartic fulfillment within the audience and made political action appear unnecessary. By accentuating the conflict between everyday appearance and what is historically realizable, often through showing the "strangeness" of the "normal," Brecht hoped to galvanize his audience into action outside the theatre. Art needed to be completed by the

audience, and not “closed” by the author’s reconciliation of contradictions.

(89-90)

While Lukacs used the novel as his vehicle for an exploration of genre, Brecht frequently used drama as his vehicle for this same exploration. Despite this difference in genre, their arguments about the fundamental nature of realism and anti-realism provide for an insightful examination of nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetics. As Lunn notes, “the tendencies to divide the field up between [Lukacs and Brecht] and to see the two positions as antithetical and mutually exclusive are real errors, ones made frequently in the many attempts to reconstruct their ‘debate’ as a means of championing Brecht’s contributions” (77). This observation is particularly relevant to feminist criticism because the Brecht/Lukacs debate provides a theoretical foundation for establishing the anti-realist and pro-Brecht position of feminist scholarship with respect to drama.

Lukacs writes: “What matters is that the slice of life shaped and depicted by the artist and re-experienced by the reader should reveal the relations between appearance and essence without the need for any external commentary” (33-34). The external commentary of which he writes is the embodiment of Brecht’s *verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement-effect).¹⁰ Brecht critiques “dramatic” theatre/realist theatre/Aristotelian theatre and offers as a solution “epic theatre,” a theory of theatre as social inquiry, observation, and action. But Brecht does not reject realism. While he questions what he perceives to be Lukacs’ narrow definition of realism (and perhaps Lukacs’ aversion to *verfremdungseffekt*¹¹), Brecht identifies the potential of realism to lay “bare

¹⁰ I use the term “estrangement-effect” rather than the more popular “alienation-effect” because I believe “estrangement” better describes Brecht’s theory. Brecht does not aim to alienate his audience, but rather make strange that which appears on stage and distance his audience from this content so that the audience is better situated to think critically about what appears onstage.

¹¹ Lukacs rejects “[left-wing Surrealists’] method of ‘inserting’ theses into scraps of reality with which they have no organic connection,” thus rejecting, in no uncertain terms, *verfremdungseffekt* (Lukacs 34).

society's causal network" (109). The realist's goal, according to Lukacs, is "to penetrate the laws governing objective reality and to uncover the deeper, hidden, mediated, not immediately perceptible network of relationships that go to make up society" (38). Far from opposing one another, these statements express the same goal for realism. Although Brecht and Lukacs did accentuate the merits of their own proposed theories and carefully dissect and critique the opposing arguments of their peers, contemporary feminist readings of this debate occasionally over-simplify the complexity of these perspectives and ignore the points at which the theories of Brecht, Lukacs, and others converge. Both Lukacs and Brecht emphasize the role of history in understanding and/or changing the present. Lukacs contends that

if we are ever going to be able to understand the way in which reactionary ideas infiltrate our minds, and if we are ever going to achieve a critical distance from such prejudices, this can only be accomplished by hard work, by abandoning and transcending the limits of immediacy, by scrutinizing all subjective experiences and measuring them against social reality. In short, it can only be achieved by a deeper probing of the real world. (37)

In essence, the experiences of the individual must be studied in context and at a critical distance. Brecht also insists upon the importance of achieving critical distance: he writes that epic theatre's spectator "stands outside" and "studies" its "object of inquiry" (37). Brecht asserts that the field of human relations in which the action of a play takes place "has to be defined in historically relative terms," stressing that "we must leave them their distinguishing marks and keep their impermanence always before our eyes" (190). For Lukacs and Brecht, socio-historical context is key for crafting and decoding the potential of realism. This area of overlap informs my feminist reading of lesbian realist drama and represents the point at which traditional arguments against the feminist potential of realist drama break down. Older feminist criticism espousing the limitations of realism does not provide accommodation for

examining historical drama through the lens of the feminism that characterized the period in which the drama was written or produced. Examining lesbian realist drama of the 1920s and 30s through and against their socio-historical contexts offers a new perspective on the politics of this dramaturgy and simultaneously suggests a rationale for broadening the scope of contemporary feminist theatre theory and criticism.

Feminism & Lesbianism in Context

In order to understand the complex nexus of feminism, lesbianism, and realism in the early twentieth century, one must contextualize each of these terms historically. The historical feminist social movement examined in this chapter is largely a white and middle- to upper-class movement. I maintain this narrow focus because the plays' characters are largely white and middle- to upper-class and this demographic reflects the make-up of Broadway audiences during the 1920s and 30s as well. I am much indebted to Nancy F. Cott's important study *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, which articulates an historically-sensitive working definition of feminism. I draw a distinction between pre-1920 feminism, which Cott more accurately calls "the woman movement," and post-1920 feminism, a continuation of the woman movement in a different incarnation and a harbinger of feminism as it is more contemporarily theorized and understood. Cott explains:

People in the nineteenth century did not say *feminism*. They spoke of the advancement of woman or the cause of woman, woman's rights, and woman suffrage. Most inclusively, they spoke of the woman movement, to denote the many ways women moved out of their homes to initiate measures of charitable benevolence, temperance, and social welfare and to instigate struggles for civic rights, social freedoms, higher education, remunerative occupations, and the ballot. Nineteenth-century women's consistent usage of the singular *woman*

symbolized, in a word, the unity of the female sex. (3, italics in original)

Furthermore, Cott states that “in the 1910s—the height of the suffrage campaign—when *the woman movement* began to sound archaic, the word *feminism* came into frequent use” (3, italics in original). Proponents of feminism distinguished themselves from the suffrage movement. “The meaning of Feminism (capitalized at first),” Cott contends, “also differed from the woman movement. It was both broader and narrower: broader in intent, proclaiming revolution in all the relations of the sexes, and narrower in the range of its willing adherents” (3). Cott’s work is particularly appropriate for investigating feminism as both a liberal ideology of sex equality and a paradoxical and narrowly constructed fight founded upon a presupposed sameness that ignored the very diversity of the females who composed the movement. Although the woman movement encompassed many struggles, foremost among them was suffrage. While feminism as an ideology different from the suffrage-oriented woman movement existed prior to 1920, it continued to grow and change shape after females won the vote. Cott posits that feminism of many eras can best be understood in terms of its sex-equality/opposition to sex hierarchy, the presupposition that “women’s condition is socially constructed, that is, historically shaped by human social usage rather than simply predestined by God or nature,” and females’ perception of themselves as a biological sex and social grouping (4-5). According to Cott, “one’s experience reflects and affects the whole” (5). When I employ the word feminism, I am referring to Cott’s tripartite definition of how feminism might best be understood across a number of eras: in terms of sex-equality, the social construction of females’ position in culture, and females’ perception of themselves as a group. I focus on the manner in which females opposed a sex hierarchy (and the prescriptive sex roles inherent in this hierarchy) and identified and rebelled against their historically- and socially-condoned oppression. During the 1920s and 30s, feminism as an ideology was as dynamic as the female population was, and still is, diverse. Feminism was not, and is not,

monolithic. Consequently, projecting contemporary perceptions of feminism back on historical texts frequently elides what constituted feminism at the time of the text's creation. Feminism cannot be defined in terms of a sameness in gender expression, domestic roles, sexual desire, etc. that simply did not, and does not, exist. The lesbian dramas examined here exemplify these differences.

Any feminist interpretation of lesbian plays on Broadway in the 1920s and 30s necessitates an historically relative reading—one that requires a close look at the role of females in American society and a discussion of what constitutes “feminism” in the years immediately following passage of the 19th Amendment, enfranchising females in 1920. Ethel Puffer Howes, Ph.D., Director of the Institute for the Coordination of Women's Interests at Smith College, wrote a remarkable article in 1929 which addresses the turmoil facing feminism after females won the vote: “It is altogether fitting that there should be at this time a stock-taking of what is known as the woman movement. The last ten years have seen an extraordinary flux in the position, the activities, and most of all in the inner attitudes of women” (14). In summarizing the history of the woman movement, Howes notes that “the great interpreters of the woman's movement in the past have seen their goal as escape from a condition, rather than as the establishment of a positive concept or ideal of women's nature and work” (15). Furthermore, Howes states that despite the strides made by the woman movement, “[t]he woman question has never had an answer. And the proof of this is that never in the history of the woman movement were the conflicts in ethical motives more acute, the trends in education more contradictory, or the lack of clear thinking on fundamental meanings more notorious, than now” (16). Howes identifies a 1927 quote by Carrie Chapman Catt as an indication of the progress yet to be made by the woman movement. Catt's quote serves as an excellent summation of, and definition for, feminism after the passage of the 19th Amendment:

What is the woman movement and what is its aim? It is a demand for equality of opportunity between the sexes. It means that when and if a woman is as well qualified as a man to fill a position, she shall have an equal and unprejudiced chance to secure it...What will bring the revolt to a close?...absolute equality of opportunity only will satisfy and therefore close the woman movement. (Catt qtd. in Howe 15, ellipses in Howe)

The feminism espoused by Catt, Howes, and countless other American females provoked a significant backlash even after females won the vote, proving that suffrage did not bring an end to feminists' fight for equality.

After females won the vote, opponents of emancipation were still working to keep females securely in a sphere of married domesticity. Two *Harper's Magazine* articles from the 1920s embody the backlash against emancipation and set the stage for future anxiety over feminism and its uneasy relationship to lesbianism. If Americans were talking about something, *Harper's*, a popular national monthly magazine in publication since 1850, was likely publishing about it. In this way, *Harper's* might be considered a quintessentially American publication, especially during the first half of the twentieth century. In the first decade of female enfranchisement, *Harper's* published some vehement anti-feminist articles which can serve as examples of the hostility aimed at both the accomplishments and future of American feminists. The role of females was no longer a static one and the media reflected the significant cultural anxiety prompted by these changes. In his caustic critique of feminism, "Equality of Woman with Man: A Myth" (1926), John Macy contends that between the sexes, "inferiority does exist [...] comparative weakness does exist"; furthermore, "[w]oman is her own worst enemy" (38-39). He goes on to claim that the new mother is falling down badly on her job. And that job, if the race is merely to endure, not to speak of improvement, development, progress—that

job is in the home, in the household, bearing and bringing up children intelligently. That is the job for most women, though it is perfectly proper for some women, especially the less attractive ones, to go their solitary ways. (41)

Setting aside for the moment the fate of “the less attractive ones,” Macy’s contention that the new mother’s job is in the home speaks to a growing number of females in the workplace. Although females had entered the workforce during World War I and would do so again during World War II, they were expected to return to the domestic sphere when soldiers returned from abroad or upon marriage. But once females of many different socio-economic backgrounds had entered the workforce during World War I, it was impossible to turn back the clocks to pre-war norms of domesticity, causing Macy, and many others, anxiety and fear with respect to the changing position and power of females in American society. Two years after Macy’s article appeared in *Harper’s*, Henry R. Carey takes up Macy’s fight against feminism and its dangerous repercussions. Carey examines “[w]holesale divorce” as a “distinctly American phenomenon” and concludes his investigation with startling advice to males (98). Carey suggests that males “[c]onsider the ways of the Hornbill [bird]” (105). He explicates the male Hornbill’s mating ritual of walling his female mate in a hollow tree and keeping her there until she has given birth and “given her offspring a good start in life” (105). The female Hornbill “is never permitted to contribute to the family income” and Carey proposes that humans look to Hornbills as a paradigm for domestic arrangements because, according to Carey, “[m]arriage dissolves in feminism as sugar melts in acid” (105, 104). Macy’s and Carey’s articles are emblematic of American unease about changing roles for females and a cultural backlash against the effects of feminism on family structures. American reactions to increasing female independence were further complicated by the growing belief that feminism and lesbianism were virtually synonymous.

For many, lesbianism represented a feminist extreme and thus perhaps the most dangerous threat to social norms. Lillian Faderman traces the perception of the synonymous nature of lesbianism and feminism to the late nineteenth century. She contends that “as the late nineteenth-century feminist movement grew in strength and in its potential to overthrow the old sex roles, it was not too long before feminism itself was equated with sexual inversion and many women of the middle class came to be suspected of that anomaly, since as feminists they acted in ways inappropriate to their gender” (*Odd Girls* 45-46). Faderman further asserts that “[i]t was the European sexologists who were the first to connect sexual inversion and feminism” (*Odd Girls* 46). As early as 1893, French sexologist Julien Chevalier purports that while lesbianism is congenital, the number of lesbians was growing because females were pursuing education, careers, and emancipation (*Odd Girls* 46). In 1901, less than a decade later and almost two decades before American females won the vote, sexologist Havelock Ellis insists that females’ struggle for emancipation

carries with it certain disadvantages. It has involved an increase in feminine criminality and in feminine insanity, which are being elevated toward the masculine standard. In connection with these we can scarcely be surprised to find an increase in homosexuality, which has always been regarded as belonging to an allied, if not the same, group of phenomena [...] Marriage is decaying, and, while men are allowed freedom, the sexual field of women is becoming restricted to trivial flirtation with the opposite sex, and to intimacy with their own sex; having been taught independence of men and disdain for the old theory which placed women in the moated grange of the home to sigh for a man who never comes, a tendency develops for women to carry this independence still further and find love where they work. (147-148)

Ellis’s contention that females will find love where they work refers not to heterosexual trysts, but to same-sex relationships. Ellis notes that the increased

independence for females is not accompanied by socially condoned “intimacies” between young males and young females, thus females pursue sexual relationships with those with whom they are most intimate: other females. The sexologist draws connections between a fear of decaying marriage and female homosexuality and outlines how “the modern movement of emancipation” permits new sexual freedom which, in turn, jeopardizes the institution of marriage (147). Emancipation and the perceived decay of the institution of marriage were of paramount importance because they signified the presence of females in a realm traditionally restricted to males: the workplace. If females could support themselves without marrying, what would happen to the traditional sex roles upon which American domestic culture was founded? Faderman goes so far as to argue that “a top item on their [the sexologists’] hidden agenda, whether they were conscious of it or not, finally came to be to discourage feminism and maintain traditional sex roles by connecting the women’s movement to sexual abnormality” (*Odd Girls* 48). E.F.W. Eberhard’s 1927 text, *Feminismus und Kulturuntergang*,¹² neatly ties together the strands of anxiety about feminism and lesbianism. Eberhard observes that “feminism is bringing about the destruction of civilization and that lesbianism is its tool” (qtd. in Faderman, *Surpassing the Love* 336). Indeed, the cultural stereotype was reciprocal; lesbians were thought to be feminists because their sexuality excluded males and feminists were thought to be lesbians because their politics reflected a desire for the freedoms afforded males.

The New Debate: Feminist Critics on Realism

Just as important as defining feminism and lesbianism in context is establishing the

¹² This might be loosely translated as *Feminism and the Demise of Culture*.

scope of the feminist theatre scholarship that has shaped discourse on twentieth-century realist theatre. The body of feminist theatre criticism generated in the 1980s and 1990s still constitutes the core of feminist theatre studies over a quarter of a century later.¹³ The primary drawback of this work is the absence of a theoretical paradigm for studying and reading historical feminist drama within the context of historical feminism. Since the 1970s, many feminist theatre scholars have argued that feminism and realism are incompatible. In her groundbreaking book, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*, Jill Dolan contends that realism “is prescriptive in that it reifies the dominant culture’s inscription of traditional power relations between genders and classes,” noting that “[t]he crisis that propels the realist plot is resolved when the elements that create the textual disturbance are reinstated within a culturally defined

¹³ A survey of late twentieth-century feminist theatre theory and criticism reveals an ongoing intertextual dialogue between scholars like Elaine Aston, Sue-Ellen Case, Elin Diamond, Jill Dolan, Lynda Hart, Janelle Reinelt, and Patricia Schroeder, among others (some of these theorists, like Jill Dolan and Elin Diamond, have begun to revisit their earlier criticism). Following the publication of what became the texts of classic feminist theatre scholarship, emerged theatre scholarship querying the role of feminist theatre studies in an allegedly “post-feminist” era. In 2006, Elaine Aston and Geraldine Harris edited a volume of essays entitled, *Feminist Futures?: theatre, performance, theory*. Aston and Harris explain that the book

stages a (sometimes polemic) debate on *if* and in what ways feminism may still be an element (major or otherwise) of theatre and performance practice of the twenty-first century. The question mark in the title of our volume is crucial. This question mark poses the future of feminism and the relation between feminism and theatre and performance as a question and as being *in* question. (1, italics in original)

This type of feminist theatre inquiry is less useful for my historical investigation of feminism and lesbian drama because it is more concerned with the existence of feminist theatre criticism and less concerned with developing and deploying this criticism. In her 2008 *Theatre Journal* article “Feminist Performance Criticism and the Popular: Reviewing Wendy Wasserstein,” Jill Dolan discusses the current state of feminist theatre scholarship:

When I began writing feminist performance criticism and theory in the 1980s, feminism was a vibrant, growing field of critical and artistic practice. Those of us working in the field expected feminist work to grow and flourish, to expand and proliferate, in ways that required a useful taxonomy like “the feminisms” to productively sort out all this work. I never would have predicted that within fifteen or so short years, feminism would be declared “done,” not just by the mainstream media eager to chart newer ideological fads, but by academics and even activists who began to see the method and the movement as constrained and static. In 2008, not enough feminist performance work is visible or taken seriously enough for scholars to make the fine distinctions that once seemed necessary. (435)

Given the dearth of more recent feminist performance work, I take up the now classic feminist theatre theory and criticism of the late twentieth century because this body of work is still important. It identifies the necessity for feminist scholarship, offers multiple approaches for reading theatre and performance through a feminist lens, and demonstrates that there is still work to be done in the arena of feminist theatre scholarship.

system of order at the narrative's end" (84). In short, the name for drama of and about white heterosexual male cultural dominance is realism. Elaine Aston echoes Dolan's sentiments regarding the tension between feminism and realism. Aston argues that dramatic and theatrical texts in the realist tradition operate systems of 'closure'. Their well-constructed or well-made forms follow a linear pattern from exposition to crisis and ultimate resolution. The subject of this narrative is male and its discourse is phallogentric: is expressive of male experience, emotions, etc. By contrast, the 'female' is enclosed within male narratives of realism, is most commonly defined in relation to the male 'subject' (as wife, mother, daughter, etc.), is unable to take up a subject position [...] and is used as an object of exchange in an heterosexual, male economy. (40)

While Aston's argument, like Dolan's, is both persuasive and often accurate, it assumes a somewhat monolithic view of realist drama and doesn't account for feminist readings of historical drama, only contemporary work. Dolan herself neatly summarizes this view in "Feminist Performance Criticism and the Popular: Reviewing Wendy Wasserstein" (2008):

Feminist performance theory argued that ideology is inevitably written into form, and that realism—with its resolutely domestic locales, its box sets, its middle-class, bourgeois proprieties, and its conservative moralizing against outsiders who threaten the normative social order—was bound to marginalize and demonize women and others who don't fit conventional models of white, male, middle-class, heterosexual decorum. ("Feminist Performance..." 437)

Lesbian realist drama of the 1920s and 30s, however, ascribes to lesbians a subject position at odds with more traditional male narratives characteristic of realism. This lesbian drama reflects conceptions of feminism during an earlier historical moment and, given its lesbian content, doesn't fit into the paradigms in which scholars like Aston and Dolan were working. (In other texts, Dolan does study lesbianism in

realism, but she focuses primarily on examples from the last quarter of the twentieth century.) While Dolan has revisited her previous work and now asserts that “progressive feminists can no longer afford to disparage one another’s work or split critical hairs about which forms, contexts, and contents do more radically activist work” (“Feminist Performance...” 435), as a theatre critic and theorist, she states that she “remain[s] interested in the Marxist/Brechtian analysis that breaks open conventional forms and gives feminists fertile resources for our investigations into representation” (“Feminist Performance...” 436).

To be fair, lesbian drama from the first half of the twentieth century was not on the radar of most feminist scholars working in the 1980s and 90s. Despite their Broadway runs, the majority of lesbian plays produced in the 1920s and 30s—with a few of notable exceptions explored in subsequent chapters—remain unknown to critics and historians, perhaps because of their short runs, their disdained commercial venue, or because some are available only in manuscript form in special collections libraries because the play scripts were never published. Given the absence of these plays from feminist criticism, I suggest using the texts of Dolan and Aston (among others) as a point of departure for expanding and revising feminist theory and criticism to include the subversive power of lesbian realist drama. Revising contemporary feminist criticism of realism is especially advantageous for a thorough explication of lesbian drama of the 1920s and 30s insofar as realist drama of this era was particularly well-suited to the exploration of lesbianism at a moment in American history when the study and language of female homosexuality moved from the realm of medical professionals into the realm of the American popular imaginary (see below).

Viewing realism as a dramatic tradition that limits or excludes the expression of feminism, scholars frequently find feminist promise in the more experimental forms of

contemporary playwrights. These scholars focus almost exclusively on dramatists writing during and after second wave feminism of the 1960's. Some scholars, however, do identify realism as a viable dramatic form for the expression of feminism. These scholars concentrate on the possibilities of realism's structure, audience, and capacity for making that which is accepted as "normal" something that is perceived as strange. Patricia Schroeder's *The Feminist Possibilities of Dramatic Realism* (1996) argues that realism can be an ideal vehicle for the expression of feminism. She contends that because of their traditional form, realist plays might reach a wider audience than more structurally experimental dramatic works. Additionally, the traditional form can make experimental content more accessible to general audiences. Schroeder's contentions are particularly relevant to my analysis of lesbian drama on Broadway precisely because of Broadway's unique commercial status: traditional forms attract a larger audience and a larger audience means ticket sales. Schroeder deconstructs popular feminist rejections of realism and astutely notes that "while dramatic realism has a distinctive catalogue of attributes, the form is various and changes through time: 'conventional' does not equal 'monolithic'" (20). She believes that the "tendency to overstate realism's fixedness, to view it as a calcified set of immutable characteristics, is responsible for much of the feminist rejection of realism" (20). Moreover, the elasticity and popularity of realism make it an exceptional means of parsing lesbianism's relationship to feminism and lesbianism's position in American society in the 1920s and 30s. While lesbian characters in realist drama were, in the 1920s and 30s, frequently understood only within the context of patriarchal power, their mere presence in realist drama undermines the very structures that seek to marginalize lesbian sexuality.¹⁴

¹⁴ In Chapter Two, I will explore, through the lens of sexology, the manner in which masculinity and femininity inform lesbianism's relationship to the patriarchal paradigm.

In *Unmaking Mimesis*, Elin Diamond, like Schroeder, identifies the feminist potential of realism although she still privileges contemporary anti-realist forms. Diamond examines the feminist possibilities of destabilizing the relationship between text and bodies in performance, most notably in her appraisal of the 1893 drama *Alan's Wife*.¹⁵ It is not clear whether Diamond believes that *Alan's Wife* is a unique example of feminist realism. Diamond writes that “[o]ther examples would no doubt do, but in one short and biased version of twentieth-century drama and performance, *Alan's Wife* is augury” (38). *Alan's Wife* represents, according to Diamond, the “unmaking of realism in the name of realism,” or a realism in which the bodies of performers stand between the text and the performance (and, thus between the text and audience) (37). This type of realism, for Diamond, escapes the heteronormative pitfalls of understanding and/or performing realism-as-truth. In other words, *Alan's Wife* “recalls the anarchic potentialities of the ancient *mimos*, who makes and simultaneously unmakes representation” (38). For Diamond, “[i]t is this mimesis that Brecht refunctions into the *gestus*, in which an actor’s body is trained to encode historical resistance” (39). This notion of the encoded historical resistance is especially pertinent to an examination of the lesbian body on stage because the lesbian body signals identity and desire not sanctioned by the prevailing socio-political ideology of the 1920s and 30s. The lesbian body speaks her resistance in the absence of dialogue as her body “makes” lesbian representation and “unmakes” heteronormative representation.

Diamond, however, uses her analysis of *Alan's Wife* as a jumping-off point for a feminist appropriation of Brechtian language and theory to engage and contextualize the female body in history. Diamond, like many other critics, views Brechtian theory

¹⁵ Diamond, Elin. *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*. London: Routledge, 1997. 32-39. Print.

as anti-realist. She argues that Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt* (estrangement-effect) is a useful tool for exposing "gender-as-appearance" and, by extension, gender-as-performance, but confines her examples to contemporary feminist plays (46).

Diamond writes: "[u]nderstanding gender as ideology—as a system of beliefs and behavior mapped across bodies of women and men which reinforces the status quo—is to appreciate the continued timeliness of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the purpose of which always is to denaturalize and defamiliarize what ideology—and performativity—makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable (47). But is it possible to defamiliarize what ideology makes normal and inescapable *without* estrangement-effects and meta-theatrical devices that draw attention to performance—of a character and of the self—as performance? Or, can dramatic realism achieve Brecht's *verfremdungseffekt*?

These are two of the questions that I hope to answer in my re-imagining of the feminist potential of lesbian realist drama.

Portraits of lesbianism on Broadway in the 1920s and 30s represent complex takes on sexuality, domesticity, reproduction, and careers for females. These portraits are surprisingly feminist at times, and predictably anti-feminist at other times. The plays are not straightforward feminist tracts. They represent the struggles and challenges of the feminist movement during this era and are remarkable for the feminist and lesbian content that often emerges (sometimes triumphantly) alongside patriarchal rhetoric and engages this rhetoric to a variety of different ends. *Winter Bound*, *Wise Tomorrow*, and *Love of Women* offer complicated depictions of feminism and lesbianism. The plays' lesbian characters clearly shun social expectations of them as females, but in so doing, they sometimes reinforce stereotypes of both lesbians and feminists. In their representations of lesbianism, all three works demonstrate that realism and feminism were not incompatible in the 1920s and 30s, but they do exemplify confusion about lesbian identity and the lesbian's place in American

culture.

Winter Bound

Thomas Dickinson's play *Winter Bound* premiered on Broadway on November 12th, 1929 and ran for thirty-nine performances.¹⁶ The play is divided into three acts and takes place in the central living space of a farmhouse in Connecticut, probably in the 1920s (the exact date is not specified, but the dialogue reveals a post-World War I setting, so the play must be set sometime between the end of the war and the play's 1928 copyright). It is a conventional realist drama in that it follows the characters in their everyday lives over the course of less than a year. *Winter Bound* tells the story of two females who share a farmhouse: the masculine Tony Ambler and the feminine Emily Fullbright. Their neighbor Chet Williams soon interrupts their domestic arrangement and vies with Tony for the affection of Emily. At the close of the play, Chet wins the love of Emily and Tony is left alone after she learns that she may have driven a young male, whose affections she scorned, to his death.¹⁷ *Winter Bound* appears to be a dramatic adaptation of D.H. Lawrence's novella *The Fox*, first published in 1922, although it is not recognized as such in reviews of the play. While the two works have different endings (in *The Fox*, the male admirer wins the feminine female once he has killed his masculine female rival), both tell the same story with the same types of characters and often share the same minute details. In his book, "*We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians*": *The emergence of lesbians and gay men on the American stage* (1987), Kaier Curtin notes that

[s]ix years before Dickinson's drama was produced, D.H. Lawrence's novella *The Fox* was published. Apparently the work was unknown to New York

¹⁶ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1929-30*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1930. 440. Print.

¹⁷ Chapter Three examines this and other female-female-male desire triangles.

drama critics or they would have mentioned the similarity between *Winter Bound* and *The Fox* [...]. In *The Fox*, a young man succeeds in breaking up the relationship between two women who have been living together on a farm in England during the First World War. He marries one of them. The farm setting, the male intruder's hostility, the women's domestic bickering, and the fact that a youth falls in love with a woman in masculine attire tens years his senior are all to be found in both works. (145)

This love triangle spurs the central conflict of the drama and informs the play's dynamic relationship to the feminism of this era.

Tony the Feminist

Tony is depicted as a strong, angry, and often extreme feminist. In order to assess the feminism she espouses, one must return to the cultural context that informs her feminism and affected Broadway audiences' reception of Dickinson's play. A significant number of the plays with lesbian content appearing on Broadway during this era do address and, in many ways, reinforce social fears about an abandonment of marriage and motherhood in favor of careers on the part of females, particularly lesbians. In fact, these plays frequently set up a dichotomy and depict females (often of ambiguous sexuality) choosing between domesticity (marriage and motherhood) and a career. Some of the more fascinating of these dramas launch full-scale attacks on domesticity, many often using the most visibly lesbian (read: masculine)¹⁸ characters like Tony Ambler as mouthpieces for anti-marriage, anti-motherhood, and pro-career orations.

¹⁸ Please see Chapter Two for an investigation of the relationship between lesbianism and masculinity.

Dickinson's portrait of Tony Ambler is a psychologically complex one. She is not a stock character and the motivations for her criticisms of stereotypical heterosexual domesticity are not merely a function of either her lesbianism or her feminism. Dramaturgically, Dickinson has crafted a character struggling with overlapping personal and social conflicts. This depth of character, situated within a realistic setting and structure, mirrors Brenda Murphy's assessment of interwar drama as vehicles for interrogating "basic assumptions about American society and its institutions" (194). Tony begins her assault on the conventional domestic roles of females by criticizing the institution of motherhood. She tells Emily that they need to shun the "old fashioned virtues" (1-2-11). Tony describes these virtues as "[t]he old austere virtues when every good man killed three wives and the graveyards were full of young mothers with babies in their arms" and insists that there will be "[n]one of that for us. Not under the dispensation of the Lady Margaret Sanger. God! (SHE pounds the arm of her chair)" (1-2-11). The reference to Margaret Sanger's birth control crusade is unique among drama with lesbian content during this era and gestures toward Tony's distaste for motherhood. In *Woman and the New Race*, first published in 1920, Sanger claims that "woman has, through her reproductive ability, founded and perpetuated the tyrannies of the Earth" (3). She continues:

Even as birth control is the means by which woman attains basic freedom, so it is the means by which she must and will uproot the evil she has wrought through her submission. As she has unconsciously and ignorantly brought about social disaster, so must and will she consciously and intelligently *undo* that disaster and create a new and better order. The task is hers. It cannot be avoided by excuses, nor can it be delegated. It is not enough for woman to point to the self-evident domination of man. (5-6)

Like Sanger, Tony views motherhood as a form of submission. Historian Linda Gordon concisely sums up the ramifications of the birth control crusade when she

states that the implications of reproductive rights for women undo

the basic gender organization of society, traditional 'femininity' as we have known it, the particular and inevitable attachment of women to domesticity and child raising. Conventional femininity and masculinity, gender itself, are products of a near-universal division of labor in which women bear and rear children without much choice. We are talking about reconstructing not only femininity but masculinity, and in the process, altering the bases of our culture.

(25)

Tony challenges her era's conventions of gender in her demand to free females from their reproductive captivity. She equates reproduction with morbidity as she describes the deaths of young mothers that often result from successive childbirths and the hardships of raising many children. Tony's sentiments suggest that females are captive of the domestic imperative to reproduce. She continues her argument by suggesting an even more radical solution to reproductive captivity. Instead of relying on birth control, a female ought to cut out (heterosexual) sex entirely in Tony's opinion. In a caustic attack on Emily's attraction and affection for their neighbor, Chet, Tony warns:

All right, dearie. Say you don't have any children. You try birth control. What does that do for a woman? It gets into your mind. You're never sure. You look forward to the end of the month like doomsday. You can't plan. You can't say, like a man, "Sure, I'll go next week." You don't know what you'll be doing next week. You don't know that you won't be worrying, so you could kill yourself next week, dosing yourself with dope. You can't say, "I'm going to Yucatan next month." You might be getting a child. And what would you do with a child in the Yucatan? You tell me. Why don't you cut it out? It's hell to be a woman. But it's a damned sight worse to be a man's woman. Why don't you cut it out like I do. God damn it, be a man. (2-2-14)

Tony identifies birth control as an ineffective means of managing reproduction and criticizes the ownership implied in heterosexual relationships. Her solution is to instruct her love interest to “be a man.” While this may seem anti-feminist on the surface, this call for manliness can be interpreted as a rejection of normative femininity. One might view this instruction as an order for Emily to take control and transcend the conventions of her sex role. Indeed, one can view Tony’s lesbianism as an unconventional feminist response to this call for freedom and control.

As an extension of her anti-reproduction tirade, Tony maintains that if she could, she would “abolish sex. If I had my choice, I’d be born an orphan. I think if people have to bring kids into the world, the least they can do is to decently disappear afterwards. Think of all your life facing a man and woman and saying my visions, my dreams, my immortal soul depend on one instant of animal passion between two people in a bed” (1-3-7). According to Tony, the absentee parent is preferable to the present parent who only serves to remind its progeny of her or his conception. Tony’s anti-reproduction arguments turn into anti-heterosexual sex sentiments. Here, Dickinson’s dramaturgy falters because his characterization of Tony becomes increasingly uneven. Up until this point, his portrait of Tony makes clear the social and sexual benefits of freedom from domestic imperatives. But Tony’s more extreme views push her convictions beyond the realm of even the most radical feminism. And because some of her views do reflect feminist ideals (her initial arguments for birth control), Tony’s more radical views make her a convenient scapegoat for all feminist principles. What begins as a surprising challenge to the institution of American domesticity and traditional gender roles disintegrates into a ridiculous pro-orphan tirade that complicates, but does not preclude, an analysis of Tony as a feminist. Tony’s feminist views are not limited to the tyranny of reproduction. Dickinson uses Tony’s passionate disavowal of reproduction, a disavowal that represents a positive choice for

independent females from Tony's vantage point, as a springboard for anti-marriage and pro-career statements. Tony makes clear that if she is to succeed as a sculptor, she must forsake heterosexual love. She and Emily retreat to the farmhouse to work, and Tony tells Chet that she could not have accomplished work on her sculpture if she had been loving a man (2-3-8). This theme of matrimony/motherhood versus career is one that appears in subsequent Broadway drama with lesbian content. Although radical, Tony's feminism engages debates about the changing roles of females in American society. Tony does not merely bemoan the oppression of females, she explicates her views, draws upon contemporary cultural discourse, and makes persuasive arguments for reconsidering and rejecting mandates to marry, reproduce, and surrender one's will to a husband. Dickinson reminds theatre-goers of the social circumstances that inform Tony's opinions when Tony discusses with Chet the connections between motherhood and nationalism. Tony asserts that "[w]omen are being commercialized everywhere. Women must bear children for the country. That's all right. But why make a business of it? The National Congress of Mothers. Did you ever hear of anything so nauseating. Why not the National Congress of Fathers? Everything is based on woman" (2-3-11). The National Congress of Women did exist, but by the time Dickinson copyrighted his play in 1928, The National Congress of Women had become The National Congress of Parents and Teachers (1924) and had, in fact, broadened its scope to include fathers and others in care-giving positions. Tony's rhetoric makes an ambiguous statement about the validity of combining motherhood and nationalism to form a new rationale for the traditional domestic imperative to reproduce. Tony initially condones the move to view motherhood from a nationalistic perspective, stating that "[w]omen must bear children for the country. That's all right" and then attacks the commercialization of such unions which she finds "nauseating" because of the focus on females rather than males. Tony also notes that she, personally, "doesn't want to be considered a walking baby basket, nor to have every

man who looks at me think of me as a place of amusement” (2-3-7), dismissing heterosexual sex as a nothing more than a means of reproduction and in her opinion, male pleasure. What, then, are the alternatives to the domestic life Tony despises? While she does not verbally offer an alternative, Tony’s mere presence as a masculine female of feminist convictions signals a solution: lesbianism.

Lesbianism in the 1920s

Post World War I society saw a surge in speculations about changing sexual psychology and increased recognition of homosexuality, the result of the dissemination of sexological material into the realm of American popular culture. Jonathan Ned Katz, an historian of American gay culture, writes that “the link between medicine and fiction was complete” when a Dr. Noah E. Aronstam of Detroit wrote about *The Well of Loneliness* in a medical journal (Katz 449). After discussing Havelock Ellis’s introduction to the novel, Aronston notes that

[t]he world war with its great welter of blood and abundance of adventure, its exhaustion of all emotional centers, has left behind a populace unstable and undetermined as to subsequent standards. Human values have changed to such a degree that they cannot longer be applied to an ever changing society. New traits, sensations and emotions have gradually developed in the social structure whose previously made laws are not longer able to combat them. The sexual sphere has also suffered profound inversion. Heterosexual satiation has either given way to indifference or to the search for new and hitherto unknown pleasures. Anything that will whet the dull edge of the sensations is welcome. Small wonder then that this quest engenders new feelings and new thrills in a population that fails to react as it formerly did to old stimuli. (qtd. in Katz 450-451).

Aronstam's attribution of increased homosexuality to the cultural shifts following World War I parallels Thomas Dickinson's claim that the new psychological focus of drama (a focus that, for Dickinson's own writing, includes sexuality) stemmed from the aftermath of war. In his introduction to *Chief Contemporary Dramatists* (1930), Dickinson writes that "[t]he force that finally decreed the end of the old drama and the advent of the new was that epoch-making convulsion of psychologies of which the physical manifestation was the war" (vii-viii). These new psychologies made for richer, more dynamic dramatic realism. In *Winter Bound*, Emily and Chet share their memories of the war and discover that Emily was in charge of the hospital ward in France where Chet stayed when his foot was run over by a truck (1-3-18). Chet, who "[f]ought right up to the Armistice in the S.O.S.," serves as a constant reminder of the post-war climate in the United States in the play and as such, a reminder of the social and psychological forces shaping American culture after World War I (1-3-17).

In the aftermath of World War I, the most prominent figure in psychology and sexology was Sigmund Freud.¹⁹ In his book *Freud on Broadway: A History of*

¹⁹ The aftermath of the war not only saw an increased interest in sexuality and Freudian psychology, but it also seemed to bring female cross-dressers into the spotlight (perhaps an extension of the new interest in sexuality and Freud). Cross-dressing has been practiced by females for centuries. However, the attention garnered by female cross-dressers after World War I is particularly important given the dissemination of sexological material which generally identified masculine attire on females as an indication of lesbianism and prompted the subsequent fear of lesbianism in America. Valerie Arkell-Smith received substantial attention and condemnation in this era for her cross-dressing. Arkell-Smith lived in Great Britain for many years as Colonel Sir Victor Barker. Barker lived as a man, married a female, and passed herself off as a war hero. She was initially arrested for failing to appear in court on a bankruptcy summons, at which time her true sex was discovered and she was charged with (and convicted of) having entered a false statement in the marriage register (she stated she was male). Her story appeared in *The New York Times* in April 1929. The article quotes the recorder's (magistrate's) commentary on Barker's crimes: "You are an unprincipled, unscrupulous adventuress," said Sir Ernest Wild, the recorder, in passing sentence. "You have in the case before me profaned the House of God; you have outraged the decencies of nature and you have broken the law of man. You have set an example which, were you to go unpunished, others might follow" ("Woman Hero Sentenced"). Ironically, Arkell-Smith, as a male, had been tried and acquitted in the same court several years earlier for carrying a revolver without a license (Katz 452). When considering the case of Colonel Barker, historian Katz notes that the "outraged response to a woman marrying a woman contrasts with the much more calm, even tolerant response to such 'eccentricity' documented in earlier newspaper accounts. The outrage in 1929 arose from the new understanding that a female-female marriage might imply an

Psychoanalysis and the American Drama (1955), W. David Sievers chronicles the impact of Freudianism on American drama and offers one of the first glimpses into the relationship between American drama and homosexuality. By the 1950s, texts on sexuality had been increasingly widely disseminated in the United States for the past five decades, but homosexuality was still taboo and misunderstood. Sievers identifies the 1920s as “The Freudian Twenties” and asserts that “[t]he drama of the twenties makes vividly clear that one of the most striking changes in American *mores* brought about by psychoanalytic concepts has been the desentimentalization of the role of the mother” (76). Furthermore, Sievers contends that “[n]ext to the Oedipus complex, the psychoanalytic concept found most often in the drama of the twenties was the theme of sexual suppression and frustration” (79). Sievers identifies *Winter Bound* as the “somber and mature study” of two “girls”: one “essentially assertive and masculine” and “the other feminine” (94). He remarks that Chet is the neighbor who leads Emily “to see for the first time the inverted sexual undercurrent of her supposedly sexless retreat” (94). In many ways, *Winter Bound* epitomizes Sievers’ arguments about the influence of Freud on Broadway drama of the 1920s: motherhood is no longer sacred and sexual suppression and frustration have moved beyond the realm of heterosexuality.²⁰

Winter Bound: Feminism, Lesbianism, & Realism

In traditional realist drama, females are defined in terms of their relationships with male subjects and the conclusions of realist drama frequently reinscribe a sexual hierarchy that privileges males. Tony, however, occupies her own subject position in

erotic consummation (competitive with male-female relations), not intense romantic friendship” (452). *Winter Bound* plays on this cultural anxiety generated by such controversies. Like Arkell-Smith, Tony is a strong, masculine, figure who lives her life on the margins.

²⁰ I return to Freud’s theories and influence in greater depth in my examination of sexology and masculinity in Chapter Two.

Winter Bound. Dramaturgically, the script privileges Tony's position over that of Chet: the play takes place in the farmhouse for which Tony is paying, the play first establishes Tony's relationship with Emily before Chet is introduced (in the third scene), and Chet must woo Emily away from Tony. A cursory glance at the play might appear to suggest that the drama reestablishes what Dolan describes as "the dominant culture's inscription of traditional power relations between genders" (84). Emily marries Chet and Tony is left alone—Tony loses Emily to Tony's male competitor and heterosexuality prevails. But although Tony does not win the girl, she neither dies nor capitulates to heteronormativity. She is left alone, but not defeated. Emily, on the other hand, does capitulate to heteronormativity, but Dickinson leads audiences to believe that her fate will be somewhat dismal, given Tony's rather persuasive arguments regarding the oppression that necessarily accompanies heterosexual unions. *Winter Bound* offers audience members three options for females. The first two are embodied by Tony and Emily, respectively: 1) Tony chooses to make her life with another female and is deserted and 2) Emily chooses to make her life with a male, but has been warned that she will become a subservient, oppressed, baby-machine. The third option is not as readily apparent given its radical content: a female utopia altogether devoid of males. The only time when both Tony and Emily are sincerely happy together is after Emily has grieved the loss of an old beau. Emily expresses her loneliness and Tony responds to her with love and instructions for Emily to go to Tony's room to "[g]o to bed" (1-2-14). Before the arrival of Chet, Tony and Emily are content with their shared life. Despite Tony's ostensible distaste for "sex passion" (1-2-12) (discussed in the next chapter), the only time both Tony and Emily are peaceful and happy follows the end of Act I, scene 2 in which the two share this exchange:

Tony. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll get some supper and you can have it in bed. Go to bed in my room. It's warmer there.

Emily. You're sure you don't mind? It would be nice.

Tony. Mind! I should say not. It's fun to get supper. And I'll bring mine, and we'll eat together. I'm sorry I'm hard-bitten, kid. I don't mean to be. It's just my way. You go to bed.

Emily. I have been awfully lonely---at night. Will you lock up?

Tony. Trust me. I'll take care of you. I'll bring your supper.

Emily. Don't be long.

(Emily stands looking at Tony for a moment, like a friendly stranger; then turns and goes out into Tony's room. TONY stands in the middle of the floor, in deep perplexity and thought) (1-2-14)

Tony offers a warmer room; Emily takes it for reasons of loneliness “---at night”; Tony promises to take care of Emily, and Emily tells her not to take long before returning to the bedroom. Given the censorship of overt portrayals of sexuality on Broadway during this period, this scene is pivotal insofar as Dickinson finds covert ways of speaking of unspeakable intimacy—intimacy which seems to foster the couple's subsequent contentment. Immediately following this scene, the stage directions inform the actor and reader that “[a] great change has taken place in Emily since the last scene. She appears to be happy and contented” and has neatened up her appearance since she was last onstage (1-3-1). Dickinson seems to be using the stage directions to instruct actors on how to convey that which they cannot express in dialogue, given censorship of the stage. Once Emily hears a knock at the door, she begs Tony not to answer it. She pleads: “There he is now. Tony! Don't let him in. We've been so happy here. And quiet. Don't spoil it now. Please, Tony! [...] I ask you for the last time not to open that door. I ask you. If you do you'll be sorry. I tell you, you'll be sorry” (1-3-9). But Tony lets the stranger, Chet, into the home and, as Emily predicted, Tony and Emily pay the price. Chet tempts Emily from her same-sex Eden and disaster ensues. Emily finds herself riddled with guilt and passion while

Tony is consumed by anger and jealousy. The play's conclusion, however, is not emblematic of the play's overall feminism. To reduce a feminist reading of the play to an appraisal of the final scene ignores the realistically portrayed feminist struggles of characters that reflect and comment upon real feminist struggles of the day. Schroeder contends that realism was created to both reflect and comment upon social conditions and can "invoke analogues (if not exact replicas) of offstage conditions and demonstrate the social consequences of oppression" (36). Tony and Emily have not overcome oppression, but their struggles against it do mirror the socio-historical context in which Dickinson wrote the play. *Winter Bound* imagines alternatives to this oppression, but, in terms of its dramaturgy, realistically offers no singular solution. Brenda Murphy argues that the development of realism between the wars yielded a "denial of closure to the play's action," making "the illusion of reality complete" (194). In short, one might view *Winter Bound* as more realistic in its treatment of social conventions precisely because it acknowledges that these conventions are not easily dismantled or replaced.

Indeed, Tony's battle and survival challenge critical conceptions of how lesbians are frequently depicted in realist drama. In *Presence and Desire* (1993), Jill Dolan argues that "[t]he lesbians who survive in realism are the ones who look straight, who don't spin the sign system into the excess of butch-femme or other subcultural transgressions of sexual display" (172). Furthermore, "realism isolates, marginalizes, and sometimes murders the lone lesbian, whose position is untenable" (172). While Dolan is writing primarily about realist drama during the last quarter of the twentieth century, she does include Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour* (1934) in her analysis, casting a relatively broad net in terms of her consideration of lesbian drama from multiple decades. Dolan's assessment of the lesbian's position within realist drama is often true, supported by myriad plays in which the lesbian *does* look straight,

is isolated, and frequently *does* die. *Winter Bound*, however, complicates this trend in realism. Tony is incredibly masculine and, given Emily's femininity, Tony does "spin the sign system into the excess of butch-femme [...] transgression of sexual display."²¹ Tony does not commit suicide nor is she murdered. While Emily has chosen Chet instead of Tony, Tony is not isolated. Tony gives Emily and Chet her home and leaves the two of them. Tony makes her own decisions and actively leaves Emily, Chet, and the stage rather than passively be left by Emily and Chet. As if to debunk the notion that Tony might be leaving to kill herself, Dickinson writes that Emily, sobbing, yells, "Stop her!" and Tony replies, "I'm not going to kill myself, don't worry. I would be a boob!" (3-3-11). In fact, Tony's departure makes Emily "hysterical"; Emily can only "hope" she has made the right decision to stay with Chet (3-3-11). Chet tells Emily that Tony is "after something. She'll go through hell and high water to get it" (3-3-11). There is no indication in the play that Tony won't someday "win the girl" and the life she desires—just not in this chapter of her life, although not for want of trying. Tony's wooing, however, leaves room for improvement. She does not so much court Emily, as present their shared life as the best alternative to virtual domestic slavery. In fact, Tony's presence onstage as an identifiably lesbian character silently but insistently gestures toward lesbianism as a feminist alternative to domestic slavery. Tony embodies this unspoken solution, albeit one that fails to account for heterosexual desire. The actor playing Tony brings the lesbian body on stage and unhinges the text from the performance in the same manner articulated by Diamond in her reading of *Alan's Wife*. Tony's body, like Jean Creyke's, is a "speaking but unhearable body" (37). The lesbian body onstage achieves what Diamond contends *Alan's Wife* accomplishes: "[i]t does not dismantle the text as a unique source of meaning, but it destabilizes the relation between text and

²¹ Please see Chapter Two for a comprehensive investigation of Tony's masculinity.

performance, each contaminating the other” (37-38). In other words, Tony doesn’t need to say she is a lesbian and she doesn’t need to articulate lesbianism as a feminist alternative to female oppression; her lesbianism is signified by her (masculine) body. Her lesbianism “contaminates” the text insofar as the actor’s body in performance comments upon the text and emphasizes Tony’s sexuality. Tony’s body defamiliarizes that which ideology would make natural: heterosexuality, and serves as a referent for that which is strange, that which is not ideologically sanctioned: lesbianism. *Winter Bound* accomplishes this as a realist drama and in so doing, marries its feminist and lesbian content with its realism.

Wise Tomorrow

Wise Tomorrow premiered on Broadway on October 15th, 1937 and ran for only three performances.²² The play originally premiered in London and was produced in Baltimore before it made its Broadway debut. The identity of playwright Stephen Powys is a mystery. Three years before his death in 1979, playwright Guy Bolton wrote in a *New York Times* article that his wife, Virginia de Lanty, wrote under the name Stephen Powys. Powys’ play *Three Blind Mice* appeared on stage and in film in multiple adaptations and under a variety of titles in the 1930s and 40s.²³ Bolton’s friend and collaborator P.G. Wodehouse also used the pseudonym Stephen Powys for his and Bolton’s version of French playwright Sacha Guitry’s *Don’t Listen Ladies!* over a decade after *Wise Tomorrow*’s premiere.²⁴ Some even attribute *Wise Tomorrow* to Guy Bolton.²⁵ Regardless of who wrote *Wise Tomorrow*,²⁶ it is a play particularly

²² Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1937-38*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938. 380. Print.

²³ Bolton, Guy. “No Better Place.” *New York Times* Feb 15, 1976: L11. Print.

²⁴ McCrum, Robert. *Wodehouse: A Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004. 367. Print.

²⁵ Zimmerman, B. *Encyclopedia of Lesbian Histories and Cultures: Volume I*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000. 771. Print.

²⁶ I have been unable to find a copy of the play *Three Blind Mice* to compare this work with *Wise Tomorrow*. Unfortunately, a comparison with the screenplay version is not adequate for assessing

attuned to the socio-sexual climate that characterized its Broadway debut.

Wise Tomorrow, set in 1930s New York City, tells the story of a love triangle between two females and a male. Joan Campion, a young actor, plans to marry Peter Marsh after her swansong performance. Her life changes when she finds herself drawn back to the theatre by an aging, former star of the stage, Diana Ebury, who promises to mentor Joan and supervise her career. Diana competes with Peter for Joan's time and affection under the guise of artistic tutelage, and when this approach falters, she uses her failing health to keep Joan close to her and to prevent Joan's marriage to Peter. In the background, a host of characters dart in and out of the action of the play. Tony Campion (another female Tony, not to be confused with the Tony of *Winter Bound*), Joan's sister, loves Peter, but initially resigns herself to his unavailability and pursues a possible match with an alcoholic artist, Norman Weldon. Bob Ebury, Diana's estranged husband, longs for his wife to agree to a divorce so he can marry his longtime mistress, Helen Reitz. And Colley, Diana's rather stereotypically masculine, and seemingly lesbian secretary provides biting comic commentary on the antics of the entire cast of characters. Diana thwarts Joan's marriage to Peter and then dies, but her spirit lives on in Joan who declines to marry Peter. Bob and Helen are able to marry and the play's conclusion suggests a union between Tony and Peter as well.

Marital Misery and "Grubby Children That You're Not Allowed to Smack"

From *Wise Tomorrow*'s opening scenes, heterosexuality and reproduction are fodder for jokes, not paradigms of heteronormativity. Long before themes of lesbianism are apparent, Powys commences a witty appraisal of heterosexuality by juxtaposing

authorship because the screenplay, adapted from the play, was written by Brown Holmes, Lynn Starling, and Stephen Powys and it is impossible to determine each author's contributions.

Peter's patriarchal view of marriage with Tony's perspective on the institution. Peter dreams of an idyllic marriage and declares that he and Joan are "going to live in the country [...in] a grand house between Petworth and Haslemere—trout stream, swimming pool, all the gadgets" (18). Tony vows never to marry at all (perhaps because she cannot marry Peter). But Tony appears to be a feminist in thought and action: she eschews the constraints of female sex roles and rejects such a role for herself. She remarks that females "talk about [their feelings] instead of *feel* them" as a result of "Victorian survival" (21). Powys depicts Tony as a character who does not want simply to survive; she wants to live—fully and freely. When Peter invites Tony to share in his domestic idyll by asking her if she wants to live with him and Joan after they marry, Tony challenges him, asking: "You think that keeping one man happy is a two-woman job?" (22). She continues:

[T]he role of sister-in-waiting doesn't appeal to me. Before you know what's happening, you find yourself surrounded by a lot of grubby children that you're not allowed to smack. [...] I've seen some of these poor domestic understudies who get all the complaints and none of the caresses. And when there are guests you are introduced as –'Oh, by the way, this is my wife's sister'...I stoutly refuse to be an 'Oh-by-the-way.' (22)

Tony's reply to Peter's invitation seems to reject motherhood (or at least "grubby little children you're not allowed to smack") as well as a subservient position in his household. If one is not the wife of the household, one is a "poor domestic understud[y]," always a less privileged position because it falls outside of a female's prescribed sex role as wife and mother. Furthermore, Powys does not offer one example of a happy heterosexual marriage. Joan wants a career and ultimately forfeits her engagement to Peter in favor of her calling as an actor and perhaps her homosexuality; Helen Reitz chooses an affair with a married man over a marriage with a single man; Diana chooses a life on the stage rather than motherhood and at the

expense of her marriage;²⁷ and Diana's secretary, Colley, chooses a life with Diana instead of marriage. These characters embrace their independence and freedom and make choices that circumvent societal expectations of females during this era. Given her disdain for her marriage or the necessity to be married to have a career in theatre, it would seem that Diana succumbed to the pressures of marriage earlier in her life, but she wants a better life for Joan and, of course, she wants Joan. In arguing with Peter over Joan's fate, Diana rails against norms of matrimony and motherhood, making some of the strongest feminist statements of the play:

DIANA. Your think Joan's chance of happiness is confined to marrying *you*?
Rather egotistical, don't you think?

PETER. We had planned a future that seemed to hold everything we both wanted.

DIANA (*mockingly*). Love, marriage, children! The sacred reproductive instinct before which everything must bow... (75)

Diana rejects the notion that a female's happiness depends upon successful marriage and that her life ought to revolve around the maternal duties that typically follow marriage. Joan ultimately accepts these views as her own and embraces the freedoms afforded to her in making her life with another female.

Wise Tomorrow & Lesbianism

Wise Tomorrow premiered only eight years after *Winter Bound*, but it is important to note the increase in sexological material that hit the mainstream media during this period. This broader understanding of sexuality would have informed an audience's reception of *Wise Tomorrow* and is therefore worth a brief overview. In 1936,

²⁷ As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, the theatre is one of a select number of settings that, according to sexologists, foster the growth of homosexuality.

Random House published Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* and made this edition of the 1897 original available to all Americans. Ellis's text was a landmark study of homosexuality, and the accessibility of this book represents a leap in the dissemination of sexological material; Frank A. Davis's publication of the book had previously been available only to medical professionals (Katz 513). Later that year, the film version of Lillian Hellman's play, *The Children's Hour*, premiered under the name *These Three*, but without the lesbian content of the Broadway original. *The Children's Hour* examines a homosexual love triangle (a female in love with a female in love with a male) while *These Three* examines a heterosexual love triangle (two females in love with the same male). In his *New York Times* article, reviewer Frank S. Nugent compares the play with the film and discusses cinematic censorship of the play's lesbian themes. Nugent states that the film version "chooses (or the censors chose for it) to ignore any implication of an abnormal relationship between the two women school teachers who are its chief adult characters, and it progresses to what must be considered a happy and romantic ending" (22). Given the differences between the stage and film versions, Nugent writes that "Miss Hellman's job of literary carpentry is little short of brilliant" (22). In short, Nugent makes clear the fact that Hellman excised the lesbianism, bowdlerizing her own work. Hellman and/or the censors may have wanted to erase the lesbianism of the play version, but Nugent's *New York Times* article goes to great lengths to discuss this dramaturgical choice—just because lesbianism did not appear in the film did not mean critics were not discussing it. Another *New York Times* article, Alfred Kazin's 1937 review of Djuna Barnes's lesbian novel *Nightwood*, reveals hostility toward the depiction of lesbians. In the *New York Times Book Review*, Kazin writes that "[s]ooner or later, the thought must occur to any reader of this novel that its characters are freaks" because, for one reason, the lesbian characters "defraud themselves and each other in their romantic relationships." Such resistance to female same-sex relationships, according to Lillian

Faderman, was largely the result of “increasing hostility toward independent females that intensified in the midst of the depression [sic], and the continued spread of medical opinion [much of it originally published between 1890 and 1920] regarding the abnormality of love between women” (*Odd Girls* 94). Faderman notes that during this period, “more and more women continued to be made aware of the sexual potential in female same-sex relationships—through the great notoriety of *The Well of Loneliness* and the many works it influenced in the 1930s, through the continued popularity and proliferation of psychoanalytic ideas, and through a persistently though slow-moving lesbian subculture” (*Odd Girls* 93).²⁸

While *Wise Tomorrow* does not explicitly discuss lesbianism, critics identified it as a lesbian play nonetheless. Although the Padlock Law, which forbade depictions of homosexuality on stage, was in effect when *Wise Tomorrow* appeared on Broadway, Powys managed to write a lesbian drama in the guise of a romantic comedy, slipping *Wise Tomorrow* past censors and into the public purview. Reviewer Brooks Atkinson finds the lesbian theme “malodorous” (“The Play: Opening of Stephen Powys’s...”). He summarizes the play as follows: “It is the story of an evil-minded and treacherous old actress who falls in love with an attractive young actress and wrecks her life [...] and posthumously makes Joan hers by naming her as the heir to the Ebury property” (“The Play: Opening of Stephen Powys’s...”). Richard Watts Jr.,²⁹ who took a stab at *Wise Tomorrow* under a review entitled “More Bad News,” declares that the play “is a weak and fumbling work that has no possible virtue to recommend it.” Watts compares *Wise Tomorrow* with *The Green Bay Tree* by Mordaunt Shairp, which premiered on Broadway in 1933 and addresses a similar scenario about male homosexuality. Watt’s appraisal of *The Green Bay Tree* helps to elucidate his reading

²⁸ Please see Chapter Two for discussion of Radclyffe Hall’s *Well of Loneliness* (1928).

²⁹ The use of the “Jr.” is inconsistent across Watts’ publications.

of *Wise Tomorrow*. Watts writes:

In the “Green Bay Tree,” you will doubtless remember, a lonely and perverted man of middle years dominated a sensitive and uncertainly sexed younger man and, even after his death, maintained his hold over his protégé’s life. “Wise Tomorrow” shifts this unpleasant theme about and proceeds to tell the story of an aging actress, whose career has come to an end and who hopes to get a vicarious one by ruling the life of a youthful actress. In the end the older woman dies, but her hold is still so strong that she is able to prevent the marriage of the younger woman and keeps the girl her slave even after death. (“The Theaters: More Bad News”)

Watts does acknowledge that Diana wants more than a vicarious career from Joan as the comparison to *The Green Bay Tree* indicates. And even if Watts had not compared the two, his identification of distinctly lesbian content is clear: “There is a wide-eyed attempt to express the Lesbian theme in the new play, but it doesn’t even give the drama the box-office quality of being shocking” (“The Theaters: More Bad News”). *Variety* declares that the “[p]rogram announces this play as a comedy, which it is in treatment, although it has an underlying story constantly touching on homosexuality, but never quite saying so. Hints and situations continually recur, but a meticulously exacting censor could not legitimately raise any objection” (“Wise Tomorrow”). Indeed, it is the quick-pace and comic dialogue that consistently propel the drama through its more serious moments, including those that flirt with the sexuality of Diana, Joan, and Colley. The wit of Powys’ play makes the subject matter seemingly less threatening to audiences only recently acquainted with the popular discourse of lesbian sexuality. Dramaturgically, Powys seems to use comedy to displace potential anxiety over taboo themes of female homosexuality. This approach does not so much obscure the lesbianism of the play, but it deftly privileges form over content—one laughs at the characters’ wit and delivery, but cannot escape

the risqué content on which the humor is founded. For example, in the first scene, Tony asks her guests, Bob and Helen, where her sister is:

TONY (*kissing him*). Isn't Joan with you?

BOB. No. We went round to her dressing-room, but we found Colley guarding the door.

TONY. Colley?

HELEN. Don't you know Colley?

BOB. She's Diana's secretary. Has a taste for strange music and strong cigars. I met her the other day, she was wearing my old school tie. That shook me a bit.

HELEN. She curled her lip at us, and we curled ours right back. (23)

Here, Powys plays with the image of Colley as a cigar-smoking guard dog, but slides in an addition barb that is both funny and biting: Colley is wearing the school tie of her employer's/lover's estranged husband—and Bob sees her wearing it. Bob has been completely replaced. Powys has written the exchange as a series of off-the-cuff remarks, sliding Colley's masculinity (which would have been easily read as lesbianism)³⁰ into the humor and moving on. But lesbianism is not always fodder for humor in *Wise Tomorrow*.

Wise Tomorrow: Feminism, Lesbianism, & Realism

Wise Tomorrow challenges feminist critical assumptions about representations of lesbianism. Like *Winter Bound*, *Wise Tomorrow*, on the surface, seems to embody feminist claims of the incompatibility of dramatic realism and feminism: the evil lesbian character dies and four heterosexual characters are paired for marriage. Diana,

³⁰ Please see Chapter Two for an investigation of the relationship between lesbianism and masculinity.

like *Winter Bound*'s Tony, tries to prevent her beloved from marrying a man, but *Wise Tomorrow* departs from Dickinson's plot because Diana is successful in her attempts to prevent the marriage of her love interest. *Wise Tomorrow* contrasts heterosexual and homosexual lifestyles and despite the fact that the play does villainize Diana,³¹ it neither exalts heterosexuality nor condemns homosexuality. According to Dolan, "bourgeois realism reinstates the unitary, transcendent lesbian caught in a binary opposition with heterosexuality" (*Presence and Desire* 162). Lesbian plays from this early twentieth-century period, however, suggest a need to revise this view of the lesbian subject in dramatic realism. *Wise Tomorrow* suggests sexual and social alternatives to the patriarchal status quo. Dolan states that "[t]he lesbian subject most readable in realism is either dead or aping heterosexual behavior" (*Presence and Desire* 163). On the surface, *Wise Tomorrow* appears to reflect Dolan's assessment of the lesbian subject in realist drama. But a close reading complicates the trope Dolan describes. Such a reading demonstrates that the triad of lesbian characters in *Wise Tomorrow* embody an alternative space in which neither death nor heterosexual behavior necessarily accompanies nor functions as a consequence of lesbian identity.

Although Diana wins her beloved, she does not survive to enjoy a life with Joan, but Joan does survive and lives happily ever after with Colley. Colley represents another lesbian stereotype: the female-who-would-be-male. In contemporary terms, Colley might best be described as butch or queer, but the perceived dichotomous nature of sex and gender identities in the early twentieth century precludes this type of description (ideas of lesbianism were constructed in terms of masculinity by sexologists during this period). For my purposes here, I want to clarify the two extreme tropes—the lesbian who dies and the lesbian who appears and behaves in an identifiably masculine

³¹ Please see Chapter Three for an exploration of Diana as a villainous antagonist.

manner—so that I can theorize how the play offers a third and, for the era, surprising feminist possibility. *Variety* characterizes Colley as the “mannish secretary” and lest the actor playing Colley appear too sweet or too feminine, Powys has written into the script a precise account of who Colley is and how she behaves (“Wise Tomorrow”). The stage directions prefacing her entrance indicate that Colley “*is a woman of about thirty-five with a clever face. She dresses in a mannish style, tailored suit, collared blouse with striped man’s tie, etc. Her manner is self-assured and faintly sardonic*” (32). These stage directions are an important dramaturgical choice because they are more detailed than Powys’ directions for any other character. For instance, Tony is described only as “*a pretty girl in a dinner dress*” (14). While an audience would not be privy to these specifications and a director might choose to ignore stage directions not central to dialogue, Powys’ intentions for the character are clear. So masculine is Colley in her appearance that when a newsman says “Good night, ladies” to a room of women, Powys notes that he “*says this looking doubtfully at COLLEY, whose rather masculine appearance makes him uncertain whether he should include her*” (42). Audience members hear about Colley before they ever encounter her when Bob and Helen share the anecdote about Colley’s tie. As he prepares to leave the party, Bob warns Peter about both Diana and Colley; of Colley, he remarks that she is a “stony-hearted secretary...That woman wasn’t born, she was quarried!” (29). Colley faithfully protects and serves (like the collie her name suggests) Diana Ebury in a way that Diana’s estranged husband does not. Based on these two characters alone—Diana, who dies, and Colley, the masculine lesbian—*Wise Tomorrow* would seem to embody Dolan’s assessment of portraits of lesbianism in dramatic realism. But to Diana and Colley, one must add and explore the third depiction of lesbianism in *Wise Tomorrow*. Joan follows neither the path of Diana nor Colley. She does not marry Peter and then regret her marriage just as Diana regrets her marriage to Bob, nor does she try to assume the masculinity that would mark her as a lesbian and/or put her in a

position to try to usurp Peter's stereotypical and socially-condoned role as the husband-provider as Colley has. Joan represents a lesbian alternative to the stereotypes unimagined by many contemporary feminist critics: a feminine lesbian who pursues and wins the life she wants for herself.

The realist structure of *Wise Tomorrow* supports the play's final feminist confrontation. Bob and Helen are free to be together, and the play's last scene indicates that Peter and Tony will enjoy a life together, but so do Joan and Colley. Furthermore, Joan confronts Peter and explicitly rejects his patriarchal desires in favor of her own social, economic, and romantic desires. After Diana's death, Joan tells Peter that the life she had envisioned for herself was essentially an illusion (or perhaps a prescription provided for her by Peter); she remarks: "I realize now that the Joan Campion I used to picture romping with little children on a lawn simply doesn't exist! (*She laughs.*) It was only a character that I fancied myself playing. But I'm glad I realized in time that the part doesn't suit me" (106). These three sentences represent a concise response to the fears and criticisms of contemporary feminist theatre theory.

In the now classic *Feminism and Theatre* (1988), Sue-Ellen Case posits that

[r]ealism, in its focus on the domestic sphere and the family unit, reifies the male as sexual subject and the female as the sexual 'Other'. The portrayal of female characters within the family unity—with their confinement to the domestic setting, their dependence on the husband, their often defeatist, determinist view of the opportunities for change—makes realism a 'prisonhouse of art' for women. (124)

Joan, however, does identify opportunities for change and chooses a career instead of marriage. Audiences might expect the couple introduced at the beginning of the play to remain together in an example of comic realism, but *Wise Tomorrow* more faithfully mirrors real life in its depiction of Joan and Peter's split and Joan's

subsequent pairing with Colley. One could counter that Joan's relationship with Colley does ape heterosexuality insofar as this pair is of the feminine-masculine/femme-butch variety. However, feminine-masculine pairings subvert rather than reinscribe heterosexual norms because femininity and masculinity are written onto two females bodies, queering the heterosexual paradigm.³² While Case rejects realism, she does embrace the subversive qualities of butch-femme pairs in her equally canonical "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic" (1988): "In recuperating the space of seduction, the butch-femme couple can, through their own agency, move through a field of symbols, [...] playfully inhabiting the camp space of irony and wit, free from biological determinism, elitist essentialism, and the heterosexist cleavage of sexual difference" (298). Furthermore, Joan's relationship with Colley makes Joan the sexual subject whom Case identifies as male in realism. Joan's relationship undermines patriarchal norms and/or lesbian reinscriptions of masculine-feminine pairings because Joan, as the recipient of Diana's legacy, is the breadwinner in her relationship with Colley even though Colley acts as her protector.³³ After Diana's death, and despite her stony presentation, Colley affectionately refers to Joan as "darling" (106). "Darling" rolling off of Colley's tongue is more meaningful than Diana's endearments because Colley is not an actor and does not use the language of the theatre diva. Joan tells her former fiancé, Peter: "When you're in my position there are such tremendous demands made on you—you must find someone to protect you—to act as a shield" (106). Ironically and tellingly, Joan chooses Colley for this role, not Peter. Joan assumes Diana's career and persona and also takes up Diana's relationship with Colley. Powys tells the actor playing Joan and readers a great deal about who Joan has become when he offers the following stage directions: "[s]he kisses her finger-tips in a gesture

³² These masculine-feminine pairings are best understood through the historically appropriate lens of sexology, but the confines of space in this chapter prevent a full explanation. Please see Chapter Two for an account of the relationship between masculinity, lesbianism, and sexology.

³³ Other traditional binaries are resisted throughout the play. For example, Diana controls her relationship with Bob and she will not consent to a divorce to permit him to marry Helen.

reminiscent of DIANA” (106). This ghosting of Diana challenges expectations of roles for young females of this milieu. Right after she explains to Peter that the role of wife and mother does not suit her, she calls to Colley to tell her that she is going and Colley responds with a “Right-o, darling,” hinting at what might be a new lesbian domesticity—one the censors would condemn (106). Joan wants it all; she self-identifies as “the greedy dog of ‘Aesop’s Fables’” (59). A marriage to Peter would have meant adapting to Peter’s chosen lifestyle; a partnership with Colley means that Joan’s career will be privileged and Joan will support Colley. Joan is the happy lesbian feminist of realism.

Love of Women

Just two months after the premiere of *Wise Tomorrow*, Aimee and Philip Stuart’s lesbian-themed *Love of Women* made its Broadway debut on December 13th, 1937 and ran for eight performances.³⁴ Although the play is set in Britain and premiered in London, its expression of feminism fits equally neatly into the political landscape of the United States during this era. The play tells the story of Brigit Wingate and Vere Malcolm who work together as a playwriting team. Brigit and Vere are enjoying the success of their first hit while beginning work on a second play when Dr. John Bourillion appears on the scene in an attempt to persuade Brigit to marry him. Paralleling the love triangle in *Winter Bound*, *Love of Women* ends with the triumph of the male suitor over his somewhat masculine female counterpart for the love of the feminine object of desire. Vere finds herself alone when Brigit makes a last minute decision to marry and leave with John. But, unlike *Winter Bound*, Vere already has another female pining for her affection, Jacqueline, the seventeen year old daughter of

³⁴ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1937-38*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938. 402. Print.

Lord Stormont, Vere and Brigit's landlord.

Masculinity & Femininity

An understanding of the play's expression of feminism, including the manner in which it depicts gender and sex roles, necessitates an examination of masculine and feminine roles as applied to the play's same-sex couple, Brigit and Vere. The dramatists describe Brigit as "an attractive, feminine woman of about twenty-seven. Her clothes, although suitable for the country, are new and expensive" (1.15). Conversely and tellingly, they describe Vere as "a woman of about thirty-five, less 'feminine' than Brigit but with nothing actually masculine about her. She is perfectly turned out in a tailored suit and a felt hat" and was raised in Greece (1.16, 1.12). What are the Sapphic implications of Vere's Greek upbringing? Do the Stuarts presume a shared cultural understanding of gender constructions? Why is her Greek upbringing even mentioned in the stage directions if it were not meant to inform an actor's portrayal of Vere? In an era of censorship, the playwrights' description of Vere's "less feminine" appearance and Greek upbringing might well be a signal to the actor, a way of reaching an audience without explicitly discussing lesbianism. Additionally, the Stuarts' decision to gauge Vere's femininity in terms of Brigit's femininity exposes the cultural and dramaturgical necessity to mark comparatively the women's bodies.³⁵ Vere, like Tony in *Winter Bound*, possesses a stereotypically masculine strength and capability that often shame her male counterparts. In one particularly Freudian scene, Brigit's father offers to uncork a bottle of whiskey, but Vere declines his offer. The stage directions indicate that she "[p]uts [the] bottle between her knees and pulls [the] cork dexterously" (1.27). Not only does Vere not need the assistance of a male, but

³⁵ Please see Chapter Two for an explanation of why masculinity in a female would almost always be read as lesbianism at this time.

she makes herself his rival, “dexterously” uncorking her masculinity, the bottle-as-phallus between her legs, in front of Brigit’s father. As if to reinforce this symbolism, Mr. Wingate remarks that “[o]ne couldn’t fail to notice the expert way she drew the cork” to which Vere’s friend, James, replies: “At the moment, I must confess I have seldom seen a more pleasant sight or heard a more pleasant sound” (1.27). In contrast to the more passively affectionate Brigit, Vere assumes the role of wooer, the romantic role that stereotypically befits her masculinity. Vere initiates the only kiss between Vere and Brigit, picks Brigit flowers for her bedroom, offers Brigit her jacket when she suspects Brigit is cold, etc. Vere behaves in what her competitor, John, deems an “unfeminine” fashion (2.3).

Frames of Reception

Unlike Tony of *Winter Bound*, Vere is not ultra-masculine nor does she rail against matrimony and reproduction, and unlike Joan of *Wise Tomorrow*, she enjoys no true measure of happiness as the play concludes. In “Mimesis, Mimicry, and the ‘True-Real’” (1989), Elin Diamond writes that realism’s “fetishistic attachment to the true referent” conceals “historical contradictions, while reaffirming the ‘truth’ of status quo” (366). By its very nature, realism purports to give audience members a true depiction of (usually bourgeois) life. In postmodern terms, such a true depiction is impossible because the web of signification is infinite as is, necessarily, the meaning of each sign in numberless contexts. The identification process inherent in realist drama obscures material conditions, including the very production of theatre itself. In essence, realism cannot be trusted because signs and their meanings are ephemeral. *Winter Bound* and *Wise Tomorrow* serve as vehicles for the critique of the material conditions that continue to oppress females even after they won the vote in the United States. And while *Love of Women* can be viewed as another case study for these

arguments, it most persuasively demonstrates how realism can *reveal* the historical contradictions that Diamond contends are *concealed* by the form. *Winter Bound* critiques the material conditions that Tony identifies as those which most oppress females, but because of Tony's radical stances and ulterior motives, her character might alienate an audience. An audience might view her feminist pronouncements as suspect or reject them all together. Vere, on the other hand, is an immensely likable character—one with whom an audience might readily sympathize and, perhaps, identify. Vere, however, is not the source of *Love of Women's* expression of feminism. Tony spends the duration of *Winter Bound* on a soapbox. Vere does not. *Love of Women* reveals the conditions of females' oppression without sacrificing the likeability or credibility of its ostensible heroine, Vere. Diamond cautions against "the spectator's invitation to rapturous identification with a fictional imago" because this type of identification serves the ideological status quo ("Mimesis, Mimicry..." 366). But what if a spectator's identification disrupts the status quo? *Love of Women* demonstrates how a spectator's identification with a character, in a play that subtly reveals the oppression of that character, need not obscure material conditions nor reinscribe the (patriarchal) status quo.

Before I examine spectatorial identification in *Love of Women*, I want to frame the relationship between realism, lesbian drama, and reception. In her essay, "Constructing the Spectator: Reception, Context, and Address in Lesbian Performance" (1986), Kate Davy examines the relationship between lesbian performers and spectators. Davy suggests that "[a] change in content, form, and style together with a change in the way a performance constructs its spectator may put enough pressure on the seams of the representational apparatus to cause a tear in its fabric" (45). This change is embodied, for Davy, by contemporary lesbian performance artists and groups like Holly Hughes and Split Britches. According to

Davy, “[s]ince it is generally agreed that representation is grounded, seemingly inextricably, in the dynamics of sexual difference, and since heterosexuality is the cultural and social institution where this difference is played out, it may be necessary to obliterate the heterosexual model in representation as the first step in bringing about radical change” (47). But must existing models be obliterated? I suggest that Davy’s call for a “change in content, form, and style together with a change in the way a performance constructs its spectator” need not entail an obliteration of existing models of representation. The malleability of realism affords an opportunity to produce feminist work in a traditional form. Specifically, lesbian drama already represents a change in content: the lesbian subject is neither a secondary stock character nor a replication of traditional male protagonists. Furthermore, lesbian drama of this period often breaks from or subverts the villainization or death of lesbian characters, thus changing the form of lesbian representation, but not the genre of realism. In terms of style and reception, this drama constructs a sympathetic spectator who may not see her/himself as a lesbian, but can identify with the lesbian character’s struggle against injustice (romantic injustice, social injustice, etc.). An audience member can both sympathize with the lesbian character who sometimes loses her love and identify with her plight. This sympathetic reception (evident in critical responses to the play) transforms the potential of realism for social change and indicates a complex set of possibilities beyond the options of either accepting the heteronormative aspects of realism or rejecting realism as a genre incompatible with progressive expressions of feminism and lesbianism. Accordingly, one must also acknowledge that the short run of *Love of Women* might indicate a rejection of identification on the part of audience members at the time even if the narrative, dramaturgically, fosters such identification.

Domestic Despair

Before Brigit and Vere ever appear onstage, the Stuarts paint a bleak picture of matrimony through their characterization of the marriage of the Wingates, Brigit's parents. The Wingates epitomize Victorian marriage: Brigit's father is "the rector of a fashionable church in Bath" and his wife is his submissive counterpart (1.7). Mrs. Wingate is so submissive that when she offers an insight for which her husband did not ask her, the stage directions indicate that she is "embarrassed because she spoke" and when she later offers a benign comment out of turn, the stage directions indicate that Mr. Wingate "glares at her" (1.7, 1.9). Within the first few moments of the play, the Stuarts establish the power dynamic between husband and wife—the only husband and wife portrayed in the play. Shortly thereafter, the playwrights offer some conspicuous dialogue about Mrs. Butters, who has been taking care of Brigit and Vere's cottage while they have been enjoying their theatrical success in the United States. Philip and Jacqueline, the children of Brigit and Vere's landlord, tell Brigit's parents that Mrs. Butters has been keeping the cottage aired and finds herself now "laid low with her seventh" (1.9). Philip remarks: "Grim, isn't it? Of course you must know, they've never been able to afford a servant" (1.9). How an audience would interpret Philip's line depends entirely upon the actor's delivery, but the text permits two readings of exactly what warrants the descriptor of "grim": is it Brigit and Vere's (or the Butters'—the antecedent is unclear) inability to afford a servant or the fact that Mrs. Butters is now "laid up with her seventh"? Thus far, neither marriage nor child-rearing shines as enviable institutions although Jacqueline does tell Brigit's parents that Brigit would like to have children of her own—but she stipulates one subversive caveat. Jacqueline explains that Brigit "says she's like to have lots [of babies] if it weren't for them having to have a father" at which Mrs. Wingate "gasps" and a "long silence" ensues (1.10). Despite the play's twentieth-century setting, both Brigit and

Vere spend the duration of the play chafing under the Victorian dictates of marriage and motherhood and Brigit finally succumbs to what Vere fears will be the life of Mrs. Wingate and/or Mrs. Butters.

Brigit's parents have made their visit for the specific purpose of asking their daughter to end her relationship with Vere. Brigit's parents confront her about rumors that her relationship with Vere extends beyond a professional one and read to her from a letter they received from a friend worried about Brigit's reputation:

I feel you should know that in a certain set here in London—I have heard Edith's [Brigit's] name coupled with another woman's—in a most shocking way. I am sure this talk is malicious and untrue—but like a pebble thrown into a pool, its ripples will widen even until it strikes you [Mr. Wingate] and your good work [as the “rector of a fashionable church in Bath” (1.7)]. Perhaps you could persuade Edith to sever her present associations and come home until these stories are forgotten. She has her future to think of—Such gossip as this would cut her off from the happiness of marriage and all its gifts. (1.32)

Brigit identifies this gossip as “an insult” but Vere responds: “There's bound to be that sort of gossip, I'm afraid, when two (with a little smile) not exactly hideous women set up house together” (1.33). Brigit and Vere accuse Mr. Wingate of fearing only the consequences of the rumor on his own reputation. Vere takes the news of these rumors in stride and with humor, but Brigit lashes out calling the rumors—which she states her parents believe—to be “disgusting” and “wicked” (1.35). Brigit tells her parents, “Living with Vere's been the happiest time of my life—the only happy time of my life!” but then blurts out that she is engaged (news to all present, including Vere) (1.36). While Vere's lesbianism is more apparent throughout the play, Brigit's sexuality is ambiguous. She may be homosexual, heterosexual, or bisexual. She does not verbally identify as lesbian, but does express love for Vere and a desire to live

with her. One can, at best, speculate about Brigit's sexuality as the evidence offered by the playwrights is ambiguous, thus enhancing the conflict and suspense of *Love of Women*.

After her parents depart, Brigit explains to Vere that she has not accepted John's proposal and that his "impudence" may have "carried [her] off [...her] feet" (1.38). John arrives at their door shortly thereafter and Vere and Brigit's relationship is doomed. John does not exactly endear himself to anyone other than Brigit and spends the entire play trying to mold Brigit into the wife and mother he desires her to be. When Brigit speaks of the longevity of her relationship with Vere, John tells her: "You're trying to analyze things darling, and thank God it's not your type" (2.7); when she taps her hand on the table, he removes her hand (2.9); when she stresses how important it is for John to get along with Vere, John suggests that Brigit has permitted her friendship with Vere to make her into "something she was never meant to be," namely, an independent female and/or a lesbian (3.11). John tells Brigit that if she will give her love to him, he will "make a woman out of [her]" (3.11) and with some fight still in her, Brigit replies: "You'd make a wife out of me—sitting up over your shop" (3.12). The dialogue that ensues, while likely offensive to feminists of both the 1930s and today, starkly depicts the lifestyle that so many feminists eschewed in favor of freedoms unavailable to them in traditional domestic settings:

JOHN. Not just sitting either. Your life will be full of a lot of obligations you don't like—not too much of the things you do like—but if you'll give it a fair chance, you'll find it has a richness you'll never get from your typewriter.

Wait 'till you get some babies.

BRIGIT. I don't want any babies!

JOHN. Why?

BRIGIT. Oh I don't want to reproduce MY family—children like mother or

father or me.

JOHN. Courage madam, with any luck they'll take after me. (3.12)

After this conversation, Brigit declines his offer of marriage only to accept it when John prepares to leave.

Vere argues against John's intentions for Brigit, but because she is arguing for a better, more free life for Brigit, her rhetoric is more easily digested, unlike the radicalism of *Winter Bound's* Tony. Additionally, the Stuarts establish Vere as a female who will not be owned and controlled like Mrs. Wingate. For instance, both Jacqueline and Philip vie for Vere's affections, and Philip angrily accuses Vere of befriending no one but Brigit. He tells Vere that "you can't wash out men altogether" (1.21). Tellingly, in the Shubert Archive's manuscript, the word "men" is penciled in over the typed word "sex," suggesting that while the character may have washed out men, she may not have washed out sex with other females. Vere responds with laughter and asks Philip if he doesn't think that "work and ideas and friendship are enough" (1.21). So begins the explanation of Vere's personal, professional, and sexual ideologies. Vere certainly advocates equality between the sexes, first evident when Mr. Wingate asks her if she doesn't think that "to drink when she's tired is a rather pernicious habit for a woman"; Vere replies "No more than for a man, Mr. Wingate" (1.28). Later during this same scene, Mr. Wingate (ever the symbol of heterosexual white male privilege and dominance, not to mention the Church) confesses that he "hesitates to turn a lady [in this instance, he refers to Vere] out of her own drawing room" when he wishes to speak privately with his daughter; Vere quips "This is not much of a drawing room and I very much doubt if I'm a lady" (1.29). One might surmise that Vere does not view herself as a lady because of Vere's more stereotypically masculine traits, but one might also contend that she does not view herself as a lady insofar as the term and position of a "lady," during the late nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries, according to social historian Jean V. Matthews, involved “an increasingly restrictive code of etiquette as to how a woman should behave and how she should be treated” (10). Matthews elaborates: “The codes of ladydom were the means by which middle-class women ranked and judged each other and which governed and rendered stiff and uneasy the relations between the sexes” (10). From this vantage point, Vere is decidedly *not* a lady.

After Brigit has consented to marry Dr. John Bourillion, Vere objects to John’s plans for his wife, telling him: “Those upper rooms are a bit shabby. You took them over from the last tenant who spent quite a lot on them in the ‘nineties’. Now they’ll be done up again for the bride. She’ll be allowed to choose all the decorations herself—then you’ll install her. You’ll expect her—my Brigit to be happy—You’ll be damned annoyed if she’s not” (2.30). Vere stresses that Brigit will “be allowed” to choose the decorations; the Stuarts’ diction demonstrates that Brigit will require her husband’s permission to perform even the most domestic of tasks and afterward, John will “install” her like an appliance, an inanimate object, in his home. This is not the future Vere wants for Brigit. The Stuarts leave it to their audiences to decide whether John has scared Brigit into believing that Vere has made her into a lesbian and/or brainwashed Brigit into believing that they ought to marry or whether Brigit sincerely loves John and was only temporarily infatuated with Vere. Regardless, the play favors Vere’s position, encouraging audience members to sympathize with her over the arrogant and, at times, despicable John, who is wholly unlikable.

Love of Women: Feminism, Lesbianism, & Realism

Despite Vere’s difference (read: unconventional appearance and behavior), the play does not favor Vere’s position at the expense of her difference from heteronormativity.

Vere's difference is consistently reiterated as the Wingates and John blame her for Brigit's newfound independence and identify her as something other than a true woman. When James suggests that Brigit might truly love John, Vere replies with one of the most romantic defenses of (her own) lesbianism:

Oh---a flirtation. She's had them before. She'd come back to me. Even if the physical thing should last, which it doesn't always, no man ever gives a woman his whole heart. He separates her from his other interests. But women grow in understanding, in tenderness, in consideration. James, there is never a morning that I don't try to make Brigit's day a happy one. What man does that after five years? I've succeeded so far. I'll get her over this, you'll see.

(3.16B)

Vere distinguishes between what a man can give Brigit and what she, as a woman, can give Brigit, and she notes that she has succeeded in achieving what she surmises no man could achieve after five years. Vere goes on to tell James that she (Vere) "is no different from any normal woman" but follows this statement up with the question, "And yet I love Brigit more than I could love any man in the world. What does that mean, James? What sort of person am I?" (3.18B). Not only does Vere love Brigit more than she could love any man, she suspects that this love makes her different. Crossed out in the prompt copy at the Schubert Archive (so one can assume this line never made it onstage in the Broadway production), Vere asks James, "Do you think my love for Brigit has been unnatural?" (3.19). After Vere questions what sort of person she is, James tells her that "Nature's made us in as many patterns as the snow flakes. In human beings there's no such thing as just black or white. There's some of both sexes in each of us. Happiness I suppose rather depends upon the balance" (3.19). Vere's masculinity, her pursuit of Brigit, and her own self-questioning mark Vere as different from the other heterosexual characters in the play. Audience

members may sympathize with Vere, but this does not elide her difference nor erase her lesbianism.

A careful reading of reviews of *Love of Women* reveals subtle clues to critics' sympathy for Vere, despite their less-than-favorable assessments of the play. In his review of *Love of Women*, Richard Watts Jr. quickly notes that Vere, played by Valerie Taylor, is married to Hugh Sinclair, the actor who plays John Bourdillion. The *Variety* review of the play provides the same information. Already readers can rest assured that the actor playing the overtly lesbian role is a married female (and by extension, to 1930s audiences, presumably heterosexual). Watts first asserts that the play

is a hollow and aimless work that has been so carefully cleansed of its dangerous sex matters that it has lost whatever dramatic point it may once have possessed. In the current version it is a very mild little comedy. At one time it apparently treated with more or less daring, of a topic that appears to be fascinating English playwrights with greater and greater frequency. ("The Theaters: The Girls")

Although I have not yet found a script of the play as it was produced in England, there are only a few handwritten changes to the prompt copy for the New York production. This copy of the play explicitly deals with the lesbian theme in a daring fashion given the date of the play's 1937 Broadway premiere. Although it is impossible to know exactly what Watts saw on stage, one cannot reconcile his appraisal of the theme with the Broadway prompt script. Watts goes on to attribute the lesbianism of which the play has been "cleansed" to foreign tastes:

It seems like but a few weeks ago that we encountered the same theme in a terrible British play called "Wise Tomorrow." Of course two American plays about gangsters would, if produced in London, cause reviewers there to accuse

us of being a nation of professional gunmen. I hope, however, that you will draw no conclusion about the state of the Empire when you hear that “Love of Women” tells, as did the earlier work, of an unnatural love between two women, and of the desperate efforts of a young man, who loves one of them, to break it up. (“The Theaters: The Girls”)

Watts first notes that “unnatural” love between two females “fascinates” British playwrights and then skillfully pairs *Love of Women* with another British play, *Wise Tomorrow*, and draws parallels between lesbians in Britain with gangsters in the United States, making lesbianism a distinctly British rather than American phenomenon. Watts playfully writes that he “hopes” his readers will draw no conclusions about the state of the Empire, identifying the play’s theme as a reflection of British culture, not American culture. Here Watts mediates fear of lesbianism by displacing it abroad, never once mentioning that the rumors about Vere and Brigit’s relationship begin after their stay in the United States. Watts implies that plays addressing homosexuality by British authors reflect “the state of the Empire.” He then somewhat ambiguously writes that “the play toys gingerly with its lesbian theme and pushes it [...] aside carefully.” What does this mean? *Love of Women* does not toy “gingerly” with its lesbian theme nor does it at any point push it aside carefully. Watts himself acknowledges the centrality of lesbianism to the play when he writes that Brigit “finally prefers the doctor” over Vere, emphasizing the play’s love triangle. Watts’ review seems to speak most clearly to his own ambivalence about or struggle with the play’s lesbianism. He alternately laments the bowdlerization of the “dangerous sex matter” and displaces the lesbianism he has just argued has been “cleansed” from the play.

Despite his distaste for the play, Watts does reveal his sympathy for Vere at the end of his review. He notes that the actor portraying her “makes this lonely lesbian lady of

the fable a touching and sympathetic figure” (“The Theaters: The Girls”). In viewing Vere as “touching and sympathetic,” Watts finds Vere worthy of sympathy because she is heartbroken by Brigit’s departure and deserves the love Brigit bestows upon John. Does sympathy for Vere defamiliarize what ideology makes normal and inescapable without estrangement-effects and meta-theatrical devices that draw attention to performance—of a character and of the self—as performance? Does the realism of *Love of Women* achieve Brecht’s *verfremdungseffekt*? Diamond contends: “Understanding gender as ideology—as a system of beliefs and behavior mapped across bodies of women and men which reinforces the status quo—is to appreciate the continued timeliness of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the purpose of which always is to denaturalize and defamiliarize what ideology—and performativity—makes seem normal, acceptable, inescapable” (*Unmaking Mimesis* 47). *Love of Women* indeed defamiliarizes what ideology makes normal by dramaturgically positioning and privileging this lesbian protagonist against her heterosexual rival. And while *Love of Women* does not achieve *verfremdungseffekt* via traditional Brechtian methods, it achieves *verfremdungseffekt* nonetheless. Heterosexuality is the status quo—it is the only “normal” and condoned sexuality, but *Love of Women* makes the lesbian subject the character with whom one can most easily identify insofar as Vere’s character positions an audience with her against her heterosexual opponent, John. Watts finds Vere “touching” against ideological mandates which would demand support of and/or identification with John. Brecht writes that “[i]f art reflects life it does so with special mirrors. Art does not become unrealistic by changing the proportions but by changing them in such a way that if the audience took its representations as a practical guide to insights and impulses it would go astray in real life” (204). Hence, audiences would not find their non-normative ideological identification with a lesbian character mirrored back to them within the dominant, heterosexual paradigm. This identification has made the dominant paradigm strange and one cannot bridge the two

without purposefully making social change, shifting the paradigm. *Love of Women's* realism does not fit neatly into the realism vs. anti-realism dichotomy or the Lukacs vs. Brecht debate. *Love of Women*, like the other plays studied in this chapter, complicates contemporary feminist criticism and pushes at the boundaries of how feminist critics conceptualize realism and its limitations. *Love of Women* is a realist play, but it also employs estrangement effects insofar as it turns ideology on its head and makes strange the very sexual imperatives and norms that govern culture. Additionally, the feminism of each of these plays provides a foundation for a further analysis of the manner in which lesbian dramas from this period also reframe lesbian sexuality and the socio-sexual role that the lesbian was expected to fulfill based on sexological constructions of female homosexuality.

WORKS CITED

- Aston, Elaine. *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Aston, Elaine and Geraldine Harris, Eds. *Feminist futures?: theatre, performance, theory*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006. Print.
- Atkinson, Brooks. "The Play: Opening of Stephen Powys's 'Wise Tomorrow,' Which Was Done in London Last Year." *New York Times* 16 Oct. 1937. Print.
- Bolton, Guy. "No Better Place." *New York Times* 15 Feb. 1976: L11. Print.
- Brecht, Bertolt. *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*. Ed. & Trans. John Willett. New York: Hill and Wang, 1992. Print.
- Brown, John Mason. "The Play: 'Winter Bound,' a Baffling and Inexpert Study of Abnormality Comes to the Provincetown Playhouse's Uptown Playhouse." *New York Evening Post* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.
- Carey, Henry R. "This Two-Headed Monster—The Family." *Harpers*. Jan. 1928: 162-171. *Antifeminism in America: Redefining the New Woman, 1920-1963*. Eds. Angela Howard and Sasha Ranae Adams Tarrant. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997. 96-105. Print.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminism and Theatre*. New York: Routledge, 1988. Print.
- . "Toward a Butch-Femme Aesthetic." *Making A Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre*. Ed. Lynda Hart. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 282-299. Print.
- Cott, Nancy F. *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987. Print.
- Curtin, Kaier. "*We Can Always Call Them Bulgarians*": *The emergence of lesbians and gay men on the American stage*. Boston: Alyson Publications, 1987. Print.
- Davy, Kate. "Constructing the Spectator: Reception, Context, and Address in Lesbian Performance." *Performing Arts Journal* 10:2 (1986): 43-52. Print.
- Diamond, Elin. "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True-Real.'" *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. Eds. Lynda Hart & Peggy Phelan. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. 363-382. Print.

- . *Unmaking Mimesis: Essays on Feminism and Theater*. London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Dickinson, Thomas, ed. *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930. Print.
- . *Winter Bound*. MS. New York Public Library. Print.
- Dolan, Jill. "Feminist Performance Criticism and the Popular: Reviewing Wendy Wasserstein." *Theatre Journal*. 60.3 (2008): 433-457. Print.
- . "'Lesbian' Subjectivity in Realism: Dragging at the Margins of Structure and Ideology" *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Ed. Sue-Ellen Case. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. 40-53. Print.
- . *Presence and Desire: Essays on Gender, Sexuality, and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. Print.
- . *The Feminist Spectator as Critic*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. Print.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- . *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendships and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Quill, 1981. Print.
- Forte, Jeanie. "Realism, Narrative, and the Feminist Playwright—A Problem of Reception." *Modern Drama* 32:1 (March 1989): 115-127. Print.
- Gordon, Linda. "Who Is Frightened of Reproductive Freedom for Women and Why?: Some Historical Answers." *Frontiers: A Journal of Women's Studies* 9:1 (1986): 22-26. Print.
- Howes, Ethel Puffer. "The Meaning of Progress in the Woman Movement." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 143: Women in the Modern World (May 1929): 14-20. Print.
- Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1983. Print.

- Kazin, Alfred. "An Experiment in the Novel: Djuna Barnes, in "Nightwood," Makes a Strange Excursion in the Technique of Fiction." *New York Times* 7 Mar. 1937: 98. Print.
- Lukacs, Georg. "Realism in the Balance." *Aesthetics and Politics: Theodor Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Ernst Bloch, Bertolt Brecht, Georg Lukacs*. Translation Editor: Ronald Taylor. London: Verso, 1977. Print.
- Lunn, Eugene. *Marxism & Modernism: an historical study of Lukacs, Brecht, Benjamin and Adorno*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984. Print.
- Macy, John. "Equality of Woman with Man: A Myth—A Challenge to Feminism." *Harpers*. Nov. 1926: 705-13. *Antifeminism in America: Redefining the New Woman, 1920-1963*. Eds. Angela Howard and Sasha Ranae Adams Tarrant. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1997. 35-44. Print.
- Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1929-30*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1930. Print.
- . *The Best Plays of 1937-38*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938. Print.
- . "'Winter Bound' Agitates Suspicious: A Fine Experimental Drama Is Entitled to a Fair Hearing." *New York Daily News* 28 Nov. 1929. Print.
- Matthews, Jean V. *The Rise of the New Woman: The Women's Movement in America, 1875-1930*. Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003. Print.
- McCrum, Robert. *Wodehouse: A Life*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004. Print.
- Murphy, Brenda. *American Realism and American Drama, 1880-1940*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987. Print.
- Nugent, Frank S. "The Screen: Heralding the Arrival of 'These Three,' at the Rivoli—'Charlie Chan at the Circus.'" *New York Times* 19 Mar. 1936: 22. Print.
- "Plays on Broadway: Love of Women." *Variety* 15 Dec. 1937. Print.
- Powys, Stephen. *Wise Tomorrow*. London: Samuel French, 1927. Print.
- Sanger, Margaret. *Woman and the New Race*. New York: Bretano's, 1920. Print.
- Schroeder, Patricia R. *The Feminist Possibilities of Realism*. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson, 1996. Print.
- Sievers, W. David. *Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama*. New York: Hermitage House, 1955. Print.

Stuart, Aimee and Philip Stuart. *Love of Women*. Ms. The Shubert Archive. Print.

Watts, Richard Jr. "The Theaters: More Bad News." *New York Herald Tribune* 16 Oct. 1937: 10. Print.

---. "The Theaters: The Girls." *New York Herald Tribune*. 14 Dec. 1937: 20. Print.

---. "'Winter Bound' Is Provincetown Players' Offering: Study in Feminine Psychology at Garrick Is Confusing to Opening Audience." *New York Herald Tribune* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.

"Wise Tomorrow." *Variety* 10 Mar 1937. Print.

"Woman Hero Sentenced: Londoner Who Posed as Colonel Must Spend Nine Months in Jail." *New York Times* 26 April 1929: 8. Print.

Zimmerman, B. *Encyclopedia of Lesbian Histories and Cultures: Volume 1*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000. Print.

CHAPTER TWO

The Masculine Menace: Lesbian Masculinity in Broadway Plays of the 1920s & 1930s

*“You’ll be the bride...a beautiful bride...It’s Sabbath eve and you are sitting with your papa and mamma at the table...I—I am your sweetheart...your bridegroom, and I’ve come as your guest. Eh, Rifkele? Do you like that game?”*³⁶

Manke, in Sholom Asch’s *The God of Vengeance*

*“To scrutinize means to search: I am searching the other body’s, as if I wanted to see what was inside it, as if the mechanical cause of my desire were in the adverse body (I am like those children who take a clock apart in order to find out what time is).”*³⁷

Roland Barthes

In her groundbreaking book *Female Masculinity*, Judith Halberstam writes:

Inversion as a theory of homosexuality folded gender variance and sexual preference into one economical package and attempted to explain all deviant behavior in terms of a firm and almost intuitive belief in a binary system of sexual stratification in which the stability of the terms “male” and “female” depended on the stability of the homosexual-heterosexual binary. (82)

Halberstam provides a taxonomy of female masculinity of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and states that she aims “to account for one very specific strand of gender variance without assuming that it neatly corresponds to contemporary formulations of the coincidence of sexual and gender variance” and “to allow for the multiple histories of nonnormative subjects” (57). Furthermore, Halberstam argues for a “perversely presentist model of historical analysis, a model, in other words, that avoids the trap of simply projecting contemporary understandings back in time, but one that can apply insights from the present to conundrums of the past” (52-53).

³⁶ Asch, Sholom. *God of Vengeance*. Trans. Isaac Goldberg. Boston: The Stratford Co., 1918. 62. Print.

³⁷ Barthes, Roland. *A Lover’s Discourse*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983. 71. Print.

Drawing upon Halberstam's perversely presentist methodology and focusing on the "coincidence of sexual and gender variance," one can better understand the dynamic and often problematic relationship between masculinity and lesbianism in drama on Broadway in the 1920s and 30s. While Halberstam articulates the reality of specific masculine female identities, one can fruitfully explore the predominant perception of female masculinity as it existed in the American popular imaginary in the 1920s and 30s as a way of reading lesbian drama on Broadway during the same era. As a result of the dissemination of sexological material into American popular culture by newspapers, novels, magazines, etc. (see more below), female masculinity came to be understood as the prime signifier for lesbianism. The evolution and dissemination of sexology are founded on one paradoxical principle: the more taboo the topic, the greater the volume of discourse to describe and discuss the topic. The more language generated to describe alternate sexualities (any sexuality other than fetish-free heterosexuality), the greater the imperative to suppress and/or censor representations of these sexualities insofar as they signified a departure from heteronormativity. The dramatists of the Broadway plays studied here simultaneously contribute to the very sexological discourse that aims to control alternate sexualities and struggle to use this discourse to escape its sexual oppression. Amidst this frenzy of language and the social imperative to identify and manage alternative sexualities, Broadway writers give birth to a series of lesbian characters that undermine and frequently reverse dominant sexological assumptions about the nature of and threat posed by lesbianism. These plays, when read comparatively, reveal a culturally subversive hierarchy of threatening lesbian types based on theoretical and historical constructions of masculinity. Contrary to the bulk of popular sexological discourse from this period, the most masculine lesbian characters emerge posing the least threat to heteronormativity, while the most feminine lesbian characters surreptitiously advance radical ideas about sexuality and feminism. Chapter One explores the manner in

which lesbianism on Broadway posed a considerable threat to the status quo and often advocated jobs for females, reproductive freedom, and equality for females in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships.

In *Making Sexual History* (2000), social historian Jeffrey Weeks challenges the use of French theorist and historian Michel Foucault as “the fount and origin” of current work on sexuality (53). Weeks writes:

I am struck, for example, by the reception of queer theorists such as Eve Sedgwick (1985, 1990) and Judith Butler (1990, 1993) in recent writing about the body and sexuality (especially in literary studies) in the Anglo-Saxon world, when to this perhaps jaundiced eye, they are not saying anything fundamentally different from what some of us have been trying to say for twenty-five years or so, inspired in large part by a reading of Mary McIntosh’s ‘The Homosexual Role’ (1981), which was first published in 1968. (53)

In this groundbreaking essay, McIntosh distinguishes between viewing homosexuality as a condition and perceiving it as a social role. McIntosh articulates how the conception of homosexuality as a condition permits a practice of social labeling and, consequently, social control. She posits that the social labeling of homosexuals as “deviant” operates as a means of social control in two fundamental ways:

In the first place it helps to provide a clear-cut, publicized, and recognizable threshold between permissible and impermissible behavior. This means that people cannot so easily drift into deviant behavior. Their first moves in a deviant direction immediately raise the question of a total move into a deviant role with all the sanctions that this is likely to elicit. Secondly, the labeling serves to segregate the deviants from others and this means that their deviant practices and their self-justifications for these practices are contained within a relatively narrow group. The creation of a specialized, despised, and punished

role of homosexual keeps the bulk of society pure in rather the same way that the similar treatment of some kinds of criminals helps keep the rest of society law-abiding. (183-184)

McIntosh further contends that viewing the homosexual as possessing a social role rather than a condition,

enable[s] us to handle the fact that behavior in this sphere does not match popular beliefs: that sexual behavior patterns cannot be dichotomized in the way that the social roles of homosexual and heterosexual can. It may seem rather odd to distinguish in this way between role and behavior, but if we accept a definition of role in terms of expectations (which may or may not be fulfilled), then the distinction is both legitimate and useful. (184)

Whether or not a homosexual fulfills the expectations of others (both heterosexual and homosexual) is “a matter for empirical investigation rather than *a priori* pronouncement” (185). McIntosh provides a useful lens through which theories of sexuality in the twentieth century can be re-assessed using Halberstam’s perversely presentist model. In other words, without projecting McIntosh’s scholarship back onto late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories of sexuality, one can fruitfully use her work as a tool for clarifying and offering new perspectives on the meaning and effects of such sexological discourse. In so doing, one learns how lesbian drama from this period undermines the discourses created to describe and frequently segregate sexual Otherness. The expectations of the homosexual role about which McIntosh writes and against which one can compare portraits of lesbianism on Broadway are epitomized by the work of sexologists writing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Specifically, this investigation explores three types of lesbians: the masculine lesbian who embodies social expectations of her roles as a female and a lesbian, the masculine lesbian whose self-identification (as something other than a woman) confounds social expectations of these roles, and the feminine lesbian who

completely fails to fulfill social expectations of such roles. Employing McIntosh's theory of the homosexual role as an interpretative device highlights the manner in which lesbianism on Broadway reinscribes stereotypes of lesbian masculinity while also challenging the means by which society policed female homosexuality and the threats posed by it. An examination of lesbianism in Sholom Asch's *The God of Vengeance* (premiering on Broadway in 1923), Thomas Dickinson's *Winter Bound* (1929), and Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive* (1926),³⁸ necessitates an explanation of the sexological and popular culture contexts in which the plays are read here.

Sexology in Popular Culture

In 1868, Wilhelm Griesinger, a German psychiatrist, defined same-sex desire as a constitutional nervous disease. One year later, Carl von Westphal, another German psychiatrist, published the first study of same-sex desire, or as he termed it, contrary sexual feeling. Less than a decade later, Richard von Krafft-Ebing published a landmark essay, "Certain Anomalies of the Sexual Instinct," which outlined the first of many classificatory systems of sexuality. Same-sex desire acquired myriad descriptors in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century including: uranism, contrary sexual feeling, homosexuality, sexual inversion, sexual perversion, etc. Although each does involve same-sex desire, the language indicates a variety of theoretical underpinnings as well as moral attitudes. For instance, the term "sexual perversion" connotes immorality and vice while "sexual inversion" connotes a psycho-sexual condition and is a term which does not immediately convey moral judgment. The greatest polarity in sexological research divided those who believed

³⁸ I have chosen to examine these three plays in the order listed (rather than in chronological order) in order to build and enhance an argument that begins with female masculinity and ends with female femininity.

same-sex desire was congenital and those who believed it was acquired; however, sexologists often came to change their views over time and frequently contradicted themselves. British sexologist Havelock Ellis, for example, proposed that homosexuality could be either congenital or acquired (Ellis 193). Four seminal sexological texts published in English provide a foundation for the ideas disseminated in American popular culture: the first English edition of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1892), Havelock Ellis's *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (1897, just one year after its publication in German), Edward Carpenter's *The Intermediate Sex* (1908), and Sigmund Freud's "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality" (1920). Krafft-Ebing represents a group of sexologists who pathologized homosexuality. Krafft-Ebing describes the inverted sexual instinct as that "which is the exact opposite of that characteristic of the sex to which the individual belongs" (187) and Ellis defines inversion as "sexual instinct turned by inborn constitutional abnormality toward persons of the same sex" (1). For Krafft-Ebing, homosexuality is the result of a diseased nervous system, a hereditary defect, or a form of degeneration. Accordingly, Krafft-Ebing differentiates between perversion (degenerative homosexuality) and perversity (acquired homosexuality); he identifies perversion as a disease while he views perversity as a vice (53). These terms, when transplanted from Krafft-Ebing's medical writing into the realm of American popular culture, would lose their fine nuances. In popular culture, the words "perversion" and "perversity" carried with them assumptions of vice rather than connotations of legitimate medical illness. Ellis also distinguishes between authentic homosexuality and acquired homosexuality, but unlike Krafft-Ebing, Ellis theorizes that inversion stems from a congenital predisposition and is not hereditary (193). The homosexuality of Ellis's own wife, Edith, may have contributed to this interpretation of inversion. Another sexologist with a personal stake in his research, Edward Carpenter, himself a homosexual, treats homosexuals, those of the "intermediate" sex

(also known as the “third sex”), with the most compassion. Carpenter views homosexuality as natural, benign, and “ineradicable” (23). Conversely, Freud advances a psychogenic argument and posits that homosexuality results from a perversion of desire in early childhood. Freud, most often thought of as a psychoanalyst (as opposed to a sexologist), certainly engages the discourse of sexology in his studies of the origins and manifestations of homosexuality. In fact, Ellis and Freud were contemporaries whose work influenced one another’s despite Ellis’s belief in congenital inversion and Freud’s belief in a sex drive constructed of unconscious desires. Weeks states that Freud’s recognition of “the importance of sexual drives in the aetiology of neuroses led him directly into the same field as Ellis” (*Sex, Politics & Society* 152).

In addition to drawing distinctions between acquired and congenital homosexuality, sexologists further specified a taxonomy of female homosexuality by creating a hierarchy of lesbianism, the primary criteria for which are varying degrees of masculinity. Feminine lesbians, if mentioned at all, were the least threatening and sometimes characterized as weak heterosexual females. Masculine lesbians, at the other end of the spectrum, were the most threatening because of their purported desire for the status of males, masculine clothing, male power, and other females. Indeed, sexologists’ understanding of female homosexuality was founded upon heterosexual norms and sex and gender binaries. This constituted the “economical package” of combined gender variance and sexual preference described by Halberstam. Krafft-Ebing articulates four categories of lesbians. The first category includes females who “do not betray their anomaly by external appearances nor by mental (masculine) sexual characteristics” (263). In the second category of lesbians, “viraginity” according to Krafft-Ebing, is characterized by a presence of masculinity “analogous to effeminacy in the male”; these females exhibit a “strong preference for male

garments” (264). Krafft-Ebing describes categories three and four collectively and notes that females of these categories “desire to adopt the active role towards the beloved person of the same sex”; furthermore, this desire “seems to invite the use of the priapus” (265). The “extreme grade of degenerative homosexuality” characterizes a female whose “feminine qualities” are evident only in the “genital organs” and whose “thought, sentiment, action, even external appearance are those of the man” (264). Krafft-Ebing remarks that “[o]ften enough does one come across in life such characters whose frame, pelvis, gait, appearance, coarse masculine features, rough deep voice, etc., betray rather the man than the woman” (264). Social historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg observes that

Krafft-Ebing’s lesbians seemed to desire male privileges and power as ardently as, perhaps more ardently than, they sexually desired women. For Krafft-Ebing, social perversion preceded and signaled the onset of sexual perversion. In case study after case study, he focused on social not sexual desires. [...] Krafft-Ebing made gender inversion physiologically manifest. The women who “aped” men’s roles looked like men. But even more, having rooted social gender in biological sexuality, Krafft-Ebing then made dress analogous to gender. Only the abnormal woman would challenge conventional gender distinctions—and by her dress you would know her. [...] In this way Krafft-Ebing, through the creation of a new medico-sexual category, the Mannish Lesbian, linked women’s rejection of traditional gender roles and their demands for social and economic equality to cross-dressing, sexual perversion, and borderline hermaphroditism. A new metaphoric system was born, in which physical disease again bespoke social disorder. (271-272)

Krafft-Ebing and his fellow sexologists blend social, sexual, physical, and cultural characteristics in their descriptions of lesbians, thus eliding all distinctions between gender, sex, and sexuality. Females who wear masculine clothing, engage in

masculine pursuits (including the pursuit of females), and work to achieve the power and freedom reserved for males exhibit, according to sexologists, the traits of lesbianism, and, by extension, the feminism of the New Woman and her successors.

Havelock Ellis continues Krafft-Ebing's identification of lesbianism with masculinity and offers a similar spectrum for classifying and understanding female homosexuality. In the first group of females described by Ellis, "homosexuality, while fairly distinct, is only slightly marked" (133). These are the females to whom the actively inverted female is most attracted. Ellis writes:

These women differ, in the first place, from the normal, or average, woman in that they are not repelled or disgusted by lover-like advances from persons of their own sex. They are not usually attractive to average men, though to this rule there are many exceptions. Their faces may be plain or ill made, but not seldom they possess good figures: a point which is apt to carry more weight with the inverted woman than beauty of the face. Their sexual impulses are seldom well marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature. On the whole, they are women who are not very robust and well developed, physically or nervously, and who are not well adapted for child-bearing, but who still possess many excellent qualities, and they are always womanly. One may, perhaps, say that they are the pick of the women whom the average man would pass by. No doubt, this is often the reason why they are open to homosexual advances, but I do not think it is the sole reason. So far as they may be said to constitute a class, they seem to possess a genuine, though not precisely sexual, preference for women over men, and it is this coldness, rather than lack of charm, which often renders men rather indifferent to them. (133)

I quote Ellis at length because of the singularity of this description of the feminine lesbian who frequently had no place in sexologists' taxonomies because of her

passivity and lack of masculinity. The actively inverted lesbian, on the other hand, “differs from the woman of the class just mentioned in one fairly essential character: a more or less distinct trace of masculinity” (133). Actively inverted lesbians are, to varying degrees, masculine in dress, habit, and sexual desire. Although the feminine lesbian is mentioned in the work of some sexologists, her mere existence contradicts the core belief of many sexologists: lesbians are masculine. In her essay, “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman” (1984), Esther Newton writes that Ellis’s description of the feminine lesbian, an “extraordinary mix of fantasy, conjecture, and insight” clashes with Ellis’s “insistence that ‘the chief characteristic of the sexually inverted woman is a certain degree of masculinity.’ No mention is made of ‘congenital’ factors in regard to this ‘womanly’ invert, and like most examples that do not fit pet paradigms, she is dropped” (288). Ellis’s inclusion of the feminine lesbian is noteworthy for its uniqueness and because it made the intense romantic friendships of the Victorian era deeply suspect. Smith-Rosenberg argues that Ellis provided the theoretical underpinning for conservative attacks upon the New Woman as sexually perverted and socially dangerous. Ellis rejected Krafft-Ebing’s insistence that a male soul resided in a lesbian’s body as physiological nonsense. [...] More clearly than any writer before Freud, Ellis insisted that a woman’s love for other women was in itself sexual and “inverted.” [...] Nor did the female sexual invert have to engage in overt genital arousal. Women could experience their love for other women as the most innocent and tender of platonic involvements. The lesbian, Ellis explained, frequently did not understand the nature of her sexual impulses. (275)

Intimacy between females, no matter what its nature, drew the attention of the medical community, and shortly thereafter, by way of the dissemination of sexological material into American popular culture, it drew the attention and condemnation of large segments of the American population.

The vocabulary employed by sexologists to describe female homosexuality swiftly made its way into the American common vernacular. Newspaper articles and reviews covering Broadway productions addressing lesbian themes in the 1920s and 30s are littered with the terms “anti-lesbian,” “sex perversion,” “sex degeneracy,” “sex-eccentricity,” “unnatural affection,” and “Lesbianism,” among others.³⁹ The lesbian content of the plays was clear to audiences and critics because the plays draw heavily upon characteristics of the lesbian laid out by sexologists and then popularly disseminated. In *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity* (2000), Lisa Duggan studies Alice Mitchell’s infamous slaying of her lover, Freda Ward, in Memphis, Tennessee in 1892. Duggan studies the work of sexologists and discusses its dissemination into popular culture in the three decades directly preceding the emergence of lesbianism on Broadway. She writes:

The developing newspaper narratives of lesbian love murder interacted extensively with the emerging literature of scientific sexology from the 1890s through the first two decades of the twentieth century. [...] The mass circulation press expanded most rapidly and dramatically in U.S. cities, while the literature appeared first in continental Europe and Great Britain, especially Germany, in a climate of competitive nationalism at the turn of the century. Uneven borrowings across these geographic boundaries produced concepts of sexuality and new sexual “types” sometimes perceived as nationally distinctive. (156-157)

³⁹ These terms are used in the following articles, respectively:

Brown, John Mason. “Two on the Aisle: ‘Love of Women’ Staged By the Messrs. Shubert.” *New York Post* 14 Dec. 1937. Print.

“Padlocks For Stage Voted By Senate.” *New York Times* 24 Mar. 1927. Print.

“Padlocks For Stage Voted By Senate.” *New York Times* 24 Mar. 1927. Print.

Hammond, Percy. “The Theaters: ‘The Captive,’ an Expert Play, Dealing With a Subject Too Odd for a Polite Reviewer.” *New York Herald Tribune* 30 Sept. 1926: 14. Print.

Atkinson, Brooks. “The Play: ‘The Children’s Hour,’ Being a Tragedy of Life in a Girls’ Boarding House.” *New York Times* 21 Nov. 1934. Print.

Waldorf, Wilella. “Forecasts and Postscripts: Edith Barrett to Play a Role in ‘Wise Tomorrow.’” *New York Post* 17 Sept. 1937. Print.

The Mitchell-Ward murder trial detailed by Duggan is a prime example of this. Duggan informs readers that “the murder of Freda Ward by Alice Mitchell almost immediately exceeded the local context. Reports in the local newspapers were re-routed through the interconnected mass circulation press, forming one basis for a new discourse of sexual difference” (25). Perceptions of the trial were informed by the popularization of European literary and medical texts even though the Mitchell-Ward crime became known as distinctly American (26). In short, Duggan traces American understanding of lesbianism as a direct result of sexology-as-popular-culture.⁴⁰ Dugan further comments, “[t]he sexually defined subcultures that proliferated during the twentieth century produced new vocabularies, types, and explanatory frameworks, many of them complexly intertwined with the evolutionary frameworks of sexology, as well as some quite independent of them” (179). Ironically, the Alice Mitchell trial appeared as a case study, drawn from Frank Sim’s account of it in the *Memphis Medical Monthly*, in later editions of Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*, making complete the circle of sexology in popular culture and popular culture (as case studies) back into the realm of sexology (163).

The lesbian play *The Captive* by Edouard Bourdet premiered on Broadway in 1926 and reviews of this early lesbian drama demonstrate how sexology had moved from the realm of the medical community into the realm of popular culture. John Anderson’s *New York Post* review of *The Captive* ties the drama back to sexology and contends that the play “may look like Dr. Freud” because of its lesbian themes (“‘The Captive’ Arrives at Last at the Empire Theatre”). A week later, *Variety* attempts to educate its readers about lesbianism. The reviewer informs readers that

⁴⁰ As early as the 1890s, female masculinity was tied to lesbianism. In her discussion of the context for the Mitchell-Ward trial and its reception, Duggan asserts that “[t]he mannish woman [of the 1890s] sought various male prerogatives. Through ‘masculine’ clothing she increased her public mobility; through professional or artistic aspirations she sought economic independence; through her romantic escapades she placed herself in courtship or domesticity in the masculine position” (28).

“The Captive” is a homosexual story, and in this instance the abnormal sex attraction of one woman for another. “Ladies” of this character are commonly referred to as Lesbians. Greenwich Village is full of them, but it is not a matter for household discussion or even mention. There are millions of women, sedate in nature, who never heard of a Lesbian, much less believing that such people exist. (“The Captive”)

The reviewer further contends that “[t]he case of a married woman leaving her husband for another woman is recorded in Kraft [sic] Ebbing’s [sic] book, ‘Psychopathia Sexualis.’ There are other recorded instances” (“The Captive”). What makes this review so noteworthy is the convergence of drama (*The Captive*), sexology (Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*), and popular culture (the *Variety* review itself). While one might speculate about how familiar an audience might be with sexological material, reviews such those in the *New York Post* and *Variety* demonstrate that sexology had made its way into American popular culture and provided audience members with a lens through which they might understand and evaluate depictions of homosexuality. A 1924 *New York Times Book Review* piece on Sylvia Stevenson’s novel *Surplus* attributes the existence, or at least the expression, of lesbianism to the dissemination of sexological discourse, specifically, that of Freud. In its description of the novel’s ostensibly lesbian protagonist, Sally Wraith, the reviewer explains:

Fifty years ago [1874] such a novel...would have been impossible, for girls fashioned of such emotional timbre as Sally Wraith simply did not exist. Or if they did exist they never dared to express themselves. It is only in modern times and since Dr. Freud flung the gates open to many a chafing inhibition that the Sally Wraiths began seriously “expressing” themselves. (qtd. in Katz 408-409, brackets and ellipses in original)

The arrival of “Dr. Freud” ushered in a new era of sexual awareness:

[t]he year 1909 is significant as the beginning of the formal introduction of Freudian psychology into America. A year before, Dr. A.A. Brill, one of Freud's inner circle, returned to America and began the practise [sic] of psychoanalysis in New York, and in the same year another disciple, Dr. Ernest Jones of Toronto, began publishing in the psychological journals a series of articles on Freud's theories. Then Professor G. Stanley Hall, President of Clark University, at Worcester, Massachusetts, invited Freud to speak at the 20th anniversary celebration of the founding of Clark. (Sievers 35-36)

While the dissemination of sexology was by no means limited to the work of Freud, for many, according to W. David Sievers, author of *Freud on Broadway*, "the name Sigmund Freud has become the chief identification for the entire movement [of psychoanalysis and related fields of study]" (18). Sievers goes on to note that between

1908 and 1910 a considerable body of Freudian theory was made available in English. Dr. Brill's translations of Freud began with *Selected Papers on Hysteria* in 1909, and the Clark University lectures were reprinted in 1910. By then literary magazines, too, had discovered Freud and had begun his popularization. *Current Literature*, *Forum*, *McClure's*, *The American Magazine*, *Century*, *Dial*, and *The Nation* all treated psychoanalysis with such titles as: Masters of the Mind[:] Remarkable Cures Effected by Four Great Experts Without the Aid of Drugs or Surgeon's Tools" (38)

Sexology had made its way into the popular imaginary and lesbianism constituted news. For example, at least twelve articles regarding the controversy over Radclyffe Hall's lesbian novel *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) appeared in the *New York Times* between August 1928 and April 1929.⁴¹ And in 1930, a new code of standards was

⁴¹ "To Print Banned Book Here; Alfred Knopf Gets American Rights to 'Well of Loneliness.'" *New York Times* 30 Aug 30 1928: 36. Print.

adopted by the Motion Picture Producers and Distributers [sic] Association (MPPDA, later the Motion Pictures Association of America). The *New York Times* reported that Will Hays, President of the MPPDA from 1922 to 1945 and champion of the new code (also known as the Hays Code), felt that “the screen, which reflects the art of the multitudes, with its vast popular appeal, owes a definite responsibility to public morals” (“Code of Conduct...” 1). The code provides that “the sanctity of the institution of marriage and the home shall be upheld” and that “[s]ex perversion or any inference of it is forbidden on the screen” (“Code of Conduct...” 1, 18). Not only did the code use the language of sexology (“sex perversion”), it identified homosexuality as a moral threat and consequently banned even the inference of homosexuality in films. The descriptions of lesbianism offered by sexologists became the framework for cultural expectations of lesbians. Sexologists provided lay people with a language for discussing and understanding female homosexuality, and, in doing so, defined the lesbian. McIntosh writes that the conception of homosexuality as a condition and the behavior that such a conception supports “operate as a form of social control in a society in which homosexuality is condemned” (183). America’s public responses to

-
- “Shaw and Wells Rap Seizure of Sex Novel; Question England's Right to Ban French Copies of Book Voluntarily Withdrawn in Britain.” *New York Times* 6 Oct 6 1928: 6. Print.
- “Book Censorship Urged For England; Home Secretary Wants Authority to Ban Any Volume He Deems Indecent.” *New York Times* 4 Nov 4 1928: 60. Print.
- “40 British Literati to Uphold Banned Book; They Appear in London Court, but Magistrate Refuses to Hear Them.” *New York Times* 10 Nov 1928: 4. Print.
- “Holds Hall Book Obscene; London Judge Orders Police to Destroy Copies of ‘Well of Loneliness.’” *New York Times* 17 Nov 1928: 6. Print.
- “Publishers Lose Appeal; British Court Upholds Seizure of Radclyffe Hall's Novel.” *New York Times* 15 Dec 1928: 4. Print.
- “Police Seize Novel by Radclyffe Hall; Publishers Summoned After a Raid.” *New York Times* 12 Jan 1929: 3. Print.
- “Publisher Is Arraigned; Court to Read ‘Well of Loneliness’ Before Deciding Friede's Case.” *New York Times* 23 Jan 1929: 7. Print.
- “Defers Hearing on Books; Court Sets Covici, Friede Case for Feb. 19.” *New York Times* 6 Feb 1929: 12. Print.
- “Novel ‘Loneliness’ Is Ruled Obscene; Magistrate Holds Publishers of Radclyffe Hall Book for Trial on Charge.” *New York Times* 22 Feb 1929: 11. Print.
- “‘Well of Loneliness’ Cleared in Court Here.” *New York Times* 20 Apr 1929: 25. Print.
- “Customs Seeks to Bar ‘Well of Loneliness’; M.L. Ernst Files Federal Suit Over Novel Held Not Obscene by Special Sessions.” *New York Times* 16 May 1929: 18. Print.

lesbianism—including social control—and the ways in which Broadway dramas both employed sexological stereotypes and simultaneously offered surprising lesbian alternatives to the frequently feared and despised masculine lesbian constitute the focus of my investigation.

A Racy Lesbian Brothel Drama in Context

The first masculine lesbian character to grace the boards of Broadway made her entrance in what may well be the first play with lesbian themes to appear on Broadway, Sholom Asch's *The God of Vengeance*, which premiered on Broadway in February 1923 after running at the Provincetown Theatre⁴² in Greenwich Village in December of 1922. In *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900-1920*, Katie Johnson concisely summarizes *The God of Vengeance's* pre-Broadway history:

Asch's drama, originally entitled *Gott fun Nekoma* in Yiddish, had played throughout Europe after its 1907 premiere at Max Reinhardt's *Deutsches Theater* in Berlin. *Gott fun Nekoma* had also played successfully in the United States for seventeen years in Yiddish. And, once translated into English, it was still untouched by controversy when it ran at the Provincetown Theatre in the Village. Only when the English version moved to an uptown venue (The Apollo Theater) did Asch's creation encounter problems. (196)

The play, translated by Isaac Goldberg, explores the failed attempts of a brothel owner (Yekel) and his wife (Sarah), a former prostitute, to raise their daughter (Rifkele),

⁴² All reviews of the play and Burns Mantle's *The Best Plays of 1922-1923* identify *The God of Vengeance's* Greenwich theatre as the Provincetown Theatre, not the Provincetown Playhouse. The Provincetown Playhouse and the Provincetown Theatre are one and the same location as evidenced by an ad for *The God of Vengeance* in the *New York Times* on December 26, 1922 that names the theatre as "Provincetown Thea." at "133 McDougall Street" (17). 133 McDougall Street (usually spelled MacDougal or Macdougall) was the address for the Provincetown Playhouse. Perhaps the 1922 dissolution of the Provincetown Players sparked a name change for the venue or an uncoupling of the theatre's name from those previously associated with the Provincetown Players.

without sin as a perfect Jewish daughter. Their attempts are thwarted when Rifkele runs away with one of her father's female prostitutes, Manke. When Rifkele is returned to her father, he dooms her to a life of prostitution, banishing her to the basement brothel because she is no longer pure and pious. It is unclear whether or not Rifkele has been prostituted to a man and/or has had sex with Manke. Rifkele and Manke share the most overtly sexual relationship among plays with lesbian content on Broadway during the first half of the twentieth century. The first act ends with stage directions indicating that Manke "passionately" kisses Rifkele who is conversing with her off-stage mother about Rifkele's potential fiancé (35). Asch also instructs that Rifkele, when she replies to her offstage mother, is "*in Manke's embrace, caressing Manke's cheeks*" (35). Asch's stage directions unequivocally depict Manke and Rifkele's relationship as a sexual rather than platonic one. While a director might choose to ignore these directions, the scene would fall flat without them. The first act culminates in the kiss Rifkele and Manke share and, dramaturgically, this sets the tone for the rest the play. Audiences can quickly discern that the obstacle to Rifkele's marriage to a pious Jew will not be her parents' ownership of a brothel, but Rifkele's love for one of their prostitutes. The play is but one of "fifty plays featuring prostitutes [...] produced in New York City" (Johnson 1). Johnson identifies prostitutes and fallen women as "veritable obsessions of Progressive Era (1900-1918) American culture" and asserts that "[a]t the turn of the twentieth century, plays about prostitutes and fallen women were so popular that they may be said to constitute a genre—the brothel drama" (1). *The God of Vengeance* adds even more titillation to the genre by depicting a distinctly lesbian brothel drama.

At this particular historical moment, lesbianism was in the news and would have informed a Broadway audience's reception of *The God of Vengeance*. In 1915, Margaret Anderson, the editor of *The Little Review* and a lesbian, published what

historian Jonathan Katz identifies as “the earliest militant defense of homosexuality known to have been published by a lesbian in the United States” (363-364). Ironically, Anderson’s article was a critique of a talk given by Edith Ellis, the lesbian wife of sexologist Havelock Ellis. Edith Ellis gave many lectures, often on sex and eugenics, and certainly advocated a tolerance and respect for homosexuality, although she never spoke publicly as a lesbian, according to Katz (359-366). If, however, *The Little Review* or Ellis’s publicized lectures were not on one’s radar, *The New York Times Book Review* frequently featured coverage of novels with lesbian themes such as Clemence Dane’s *Regiment of Women* (reviewed in 1917) and J.D. Beresford’s *House-Mates* (reviewed in 1917) (Katz 371-172, 377). In 1921, the *New York Times* ran an article on the Boston arraignment of Ethel Kimball, a twenty-nine year old who was arrested for living as a man and marrying a female after a two-year courtship. Kimball said that she “wore men’s clothes because [she] wanted to approach life’s problems from a man’s viewpoint” (“Girl Posed As Man” 5). A year later, a *Washington Post* headline proclaimed: “How to Be Healthy: Why Your Doctor is the One to Give Vital Sex Knowledge” and its author, Royal S. Copeland, M.D., the Commissioner of Health for New York City, states that “[s]ome teaching in so-called sex hygiene proceeds from persons who are sexually abnormal, defective, depraved or otherwise unsuitable for such teaching, and the effect of their efforts is often calamitous for those whom it is sought to protect and enlighten” (8).⁴³ As issues of lesbianism, female cross-dressing, and sexual abnormality found their way into popular publications and helped form a popular notion of the lesbian, cultural expectations of masculine lesbian behavior became more solidified. According to

⁴³ It is unclear what, if anything, prompted this article. And if this statement were not enough to make Dr. Copeland’s advice somewhat suspect, he answers health questions in this same column. A seventeen and a half-year old asks him what her correct height and weight should be—and he answers (she should be 5’3 and weigh 118 pounds—although he notes that height and weight are a matter of “individuality”). If height and weight are a function of age, who knows how he would account for the “defective” and “depraved” sex education teachers.

Mary McIntosh, the establishment of these cultural expectations is a necessary prerequisite for the subsequent segregation of homosexuals from the rest of society. These cultural expectations also provide one with a lens through which to read and understand the depiction and reception of lesbianism in a specific socio-historical context. But Asch's *The God of Vengeance* poses a particular challenge to this type of reading because of the controversy surrounding exactly what audiences saw on Broadway when they attended a performance of Asch's play.

In her article, "Lesbian Love Comes to Broadway," Johnson argues that the version of *The God of Vengeance* which appeared on Broadway was an edited version which did not include some of the lesbian love scenes found in the original and in the 1918 Goldberg English translation. Johnson bases her claims on a 1923 prompt book and trial transcripts regarding the prosecution of the play's producer (Harry Weinberger) and cast members for immoral performances. In March 1923, Weinberger and twelve cast members were indicted on a charge of "giving an obscene and immoral play," according to the *Times* ("Suppress 'Reigen'" 8). During the subsequent trial, Weinberger objected to the District Attorney's insistence upon using the 1918 Goldberg translation, rather than expurgated version, in his prosecution. The expurgated version was never published and Johnson does note that Goldberg's 1918 translation was the version sold in the lobby of the Apollo Theatre during the play's Broadway run. Johnson writes:

The 1923 script reveals a stunning fact: the lesbian love scene was never performed. Moreover, careful consideration of the court transcripts reveals that the 1923 production, directed by lead actor Rudolf Schildkraut, omitted the supposed incendiary dialogue, as well as other, more overt, references to lesbian lovemaking. During the obscenity trial, Harry Weinberger (the producer of the show and the defense lawyer for all indicted) repeatedly denied

that this dialogue took place. For example, in response to the District Attorney's question, "Didn't she say, 'Come with me; we will sleep together every night?'" Weinberger replied, "They never said it at the Provincetown or the Greenwich Theatres⁴⁴ or the Apollo, and what's more, you know it very well."

Johnson raises the question, "[W]hy, in spite of the censored scene, did so many people—including the prosecuting attorney—believe the controversial scene was in the play?" She contends that Goldberg's 1918 translation "supplanted the Apollo performance as the 'authentic' artifact." I, however, want to offer other possibilities. Perhaps the actions on stage, in lieu of the original dialogue, conveyed the meaning of this "objectionable" scene. Perhaps the prompt book used for the trial was not the version performed onstage. Perhaps Weinberger lied. Although Weinberger denied that the lesbian love scene appeared at the Provincetown and the Apollo, a review of the Provincetown production appearing in *Theatre Magazine* contradicts Weinberger's claims. In his April 1923 review of the play (during its Broadway run), Arthur Hornblow writes:

The Jewish god is a horribly cruel one in this instance. He thwarts the father's purpose by having his pure young daughter fall into the clutches of Lesbians and the audience is treated to a nightgown scene in which the women make overtures to each other which go so far beyond the pale of what is permissible that I can only voice my astonishment at the authorities allowing a thing of this sort to be continued before heterogeneous audiences, comprised of individuals young and old who go to the theatre to be entertained and without any conception of what they may be asked to witness. (68)

In the nightgown scene of which Hornblow writes, Manke entreats Rifkele to sleep

⁴⁴ I have found no evidence to suggest that the play was transferred to other Greenwich Village theatres. It appears to have been moved directly from the Provincetown to the Apollo.

with her and run away with her. Clearly some version of the scene Weinberger said was excised appeared when Hornblow saw the play. It seems plausible that this scene would have remained in the play until the play was condemned and subsequent litigation commenced. As it is impossible to discern exactly what appeared on stage in 1922 and 1923 and as both the prosecuting attorney and critic Arthur Hornblow make specific mention of the lesbian love scene, it seems likely that this scene did appear onstage. Consequently, I will be using Goldberg's 1918 translation—the version sold in the lobby of the Apollo Theater—for my analysis of *The God of Vengeance*.

Manke as Seducer

Manke's profession as a prostitute would seem to require a certain degree of femininity to attract her heterosexual male clientele. Thus, Manke's masculinity relates more to her behavior than her appearance and is revealed in her desire to act as Rifkele's masculine suitor. The second act commences with a clandestine meeting between Rifkele and Manke in the brothel after Yekel has fallen asleep. This is the infamous lesbian love scene disputed during the trial. Manke first relates the story of their shared wedding night:

MANKE You'll be the bride...a beautiful bride. It's Sabbath eve and you are sitting with your papa and mamma at the table... I—I am your sweetheart...your bridegroom, and I've come as your guest. Eh, Rifkele? Do you like that game?. You're sitting at the Sabbath table with your father and your mother. I'm the bridegroom, your bridegroom come to visit you. Would you like that, Rifkele, would you?

RIFKELE, *nodding*. Yes, I do.

MANKE Wait, now; wait. Your father and mother have gone to sleep. The sweethearts met here at the table...We are bashful...Eh?

RIFKELE, *nodding*. Yes, Manke.

MANKE Then we come closer to one another, for we are bride and bridegroom, you and I. We embrace. (*Places her arm around Rifkele.*) Ever so tightly. And kiss, very softly. Like this. (*Kisses Rifkele.*) And we turn so red,—we’re so bashful. It’s nice Rifkele, isn’t it?

RIFKELE Yes, Manke...Yes.

MANKE, *lowering her voice, and whispering into Rifkele’s ear*. And then we go to sleep together. Nobody sees, nobody hears. Only you and I. Like this. (*Clasps Rifkele tightly to herself.*) Do you want to sleep with me tonight like this? Eh?

RIFKELE, *looking about nervously*. I do...I do...

MANKE, *drawing Rifkele closer*. Come...Come... (62-63)

Despite Manke’s feminine physical appearance in this scene—she is “half-dressed, with a shawl thrown over her” and wears “colored stockings”—she assigns to herself a masculine role and makes all the physical advances toward Rifkele: she places her arm around Rifkele, kisses Rifkele, clasps Rifkele to her body, and then draws her even closer. The English translation that appeared on Broadway depicts Manke as a masculine lesbian. In his preface to the Goldberg translation, Abraham Cahan, a Yiddish-language writer and translator, “Editor of the Jewish Daily Forward and author of ‘Yekl,’ ‘The White Terror and the Red,’ [and] ‘The Rise of David Levinsky,’” writes that “Dr. Isaac Goldberg’s translation is not only a thoroughly correct and felicitous equivalent of the original, but a piece of art in itself” (iii, vii). The depiction of Manke in *The God of Vengeance* reflects the manner in which American popular culture conceives of the masculine lesbian—in heteronormative terms. And it is these heteronormative terms that provided a frame—informed by the dissemination of European sexological work—for the American reception of this European work. Sexologists offered theories of female homosexuality that rely on a

masculine-active/feminine-passive binary. Lesbianism, in essence, is understood only insofar as it seems to mirror heterosexual pairings, according to sexologists. Havelock Ellis posits that “[t]he inverted woman’s masculine element may, in the least degree, consist only in the fact that she makes advances to the woman to whom she is attracted” (134). And perhaps even more telling, Krafft-Ebing writes that “[t]hese creatures [lesbians] seek, find, recognize, love one another, often live together as ‘father’ and ‘mother’ in pseudo marriage” (264-265). Manke’s seduction, however, is not limited to this idyllic notion of a happy marriage.

Manke “*speaks with restrained passion and love,--softly, but with deep resonance*” and woos the shy and girlish Rifkele:

Are you cold, Rifkele darling? Nestle close to me...Ever so close... Warm yourself next to me. So. Come, let’s sit down here on the lounge. (*Leads Rifkele to a lounge; they sit down.*) Just like this...Now rest your face snugly in my bosom. So. Just like that. And let your body touch mine...It’s so cool...as if water were running between us. (*Pause.*) I uncovered your breasts and washed them with the rainwater that trickled down my arms. Your breasts are so white and soft. And the blood in them cools under the touch, just like white snow,—like frozen water...and their fragrance is like the grass on the meadows. And I let down your hair so...(*Runs her fingers through Rifkele’s hair.*) And I held them like this in the rain and washed them. How sweet they smell...Like the rain itself...(*She buries her face in Rifkele’s hair.*) Yes, I can smell the scent of the May rain in them...So light, so fine...And fresh...as the grass on the meadows...as the apple on the bough...So. Cool me, refresh me with your tresses. (*She washes her face in Rifkele’s hair.*) Cool me,—so. But wait...I’ll comb you as if you were a bride...a nice part and two long, black braids. (*Does so.*) Do you want me to, Rifkele? Do you? (61-62)

This pivotal scene represents a veritable sex scene punctuated by references to sexual arousal veiled as running water, rainwater, white snow, frozen water, and May rain. If Rifkele's hair is read as a stand-in for her pubic hair and/or vagina, the sex scene is complete: Manke takes Rifkele to the lounge, describes caressing Rifkele's breasts, buries herself in Rifkele's hair, parts her hair, and then asks Rifkele if she wants her. Rifkele is the forbidden fruit, "the apple on the bough," and Manke plucks the fruit from its bough and consumes it. Manke continues this seduction with an invitation to run away from the brothel. She tells Rifkele that once they have run away together, they will "dress just like the [army] officers and go horse-back riding" (64). Manke's desire for Rifkele aside, why might Manke want to dress like an officer and ride around on horses? According to Richard von Krafft-Ebing:

[t]he female homosexual may chiefly be found in the haunts of boys. She is the rival in their play, preferring the rocking-horse, playing at soldiers, etc., to dolls and other girlish occupations. The toilet is neglected, and rough boyish manners are affected. Love for art finds a substitute in the pursuits of the sciences. At times smoking and drinking are cultivated even with passion. [...] The masculine soul, heaving in the female bosom, finds pleasure in the pursuit of manly sports, and in manifestations of courage and bravado. (264)

Using this assessment of lesbian personalities as his foundation, Krafft-Ebing conjectures that when "viraginity [masculinity in a female] is fully developed, the woman so acting assumes a definitely masculine *role*. In this grade modesty finds expression only towards the same but not the opposite sex. In such cases the sexual anomaly often manifests itself by strong marked characteristics of male sexuality" (264). Krafft-Ebing goes on to assert that when "viraginity prevails marriage is impossible" because the thought of heterosexual intercourse "arouses disgust and horror" in a lesbian (265). Rifkele is, after all, running away not only from her parents, but also the arranged marriage they intend for her. Even if she is not

masculine in appearance (except for her wish to dress as a soldier), her desire for Rifkele as well as her enactment of this desire mark Manke as a lesbian according to sexological constructions of lesbianism. Indeed, both Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter concur with Krafft-Ebing's assessment of the masculine lesbian as a female with a preference for stereotypically masculine attire.⁴⁵ Ellis and Carpenter identify a masculine lesbian's role as wooer of her beloved as a part of her sexual identity.

According to Ellis, actively inverted lesbians possess "masculine traits" that "are a part of an organic instinct" which prompts such lesbians to make advances toward the women they desire (134). Carpenter characterizes masculine lesbians in much the same fashion. He describes the extreme type of homogenic female (the term Carpenter uses with respect to masculine lesbians) as "a rather markedly aggressive person, of strong passions, masculine manners and movements, practical in the conduct of life, sensuous rather than sentimental in love, often untidy [...] while her love (generally to rather soft and feminine specimens of her own sex) is often a sort of furor, similar to the ordinary masculine love, and at times almost uncontrollable" (31). Additionally, Manke's deeper voice—Asch specifically states that she speaks with "deep resonance"—reflects one physical manifestation of female inversion according to Havelock Ellis (144) while her "sensuous" rather than "sentimental" courting of Rifkele mirrors Edward Carpenter's description of masculine lesbians (31). I have discovered no evidence to suggest that Asch intended to model his portrait of Manke on sexological constructions of lesbianism, which raises the question: What is at stake in terms assessing authorial intention and sexological influence with respect to depictions of lesbianism?

⁴⁵ Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. 140-141. Print.
Carpenter, Edward. *The Intermediate Sex*. 3rd Ed. London: George Allen & Co., 1912. 31. Print.

Evidence of authorial intention provides another layer of meaning for a text and permits a comparative reading of what the play does versus what the author states s/he wants it to do. In the absence of such evidence, one can evaluate what the play does, but not its position in a matrix of sexological and cultural constructions of female homosexuality. In other words, one cannot know whether the play purposefully draws upon (and perhaps subverts) sexological conceptions of lesbianism or whether it draws upon cultural and literary tropes of lesbianism that do not necessarily correspond with the work of sexologists. When available, this sort of information is critical. I have already documented the dissemination of sexology in popular culture to frame a discussion of how and why Broadway plays about lesbianism alternately embody, transform, and contest popular discourses about homosexuality. My aim therefore is not just to demonstrate that these plays reflect sexological conceptions of lesbianism, but to study *how* they engage this discourse—whether intentionally or unintentionally—and *why* this dynamic between theatre and sexology is culturally significant. This relationship is exceptional insofar as it serves as a barometer for understanding lesbianism in America and constructing a history of lesbianism on Broadway.

For instance, reading Manke through a Freudian lens puts rather a fine point on her masculinity and desire for Rifkele and provides a foundation for evaluating how her visibility paradoxically neutralizes the threat she might pose to the heteronormative status quo. In his assessment of the personality of the young woman he used as a case study for “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality,” Freud asserts that

[s]ome of her intellectual attributes also could be connected with masculinity: for instance, her acuteness of comprehension and her lucid objectivity, in so far as she was not dominated by her passion; though these distinctions are conventional rather than scientific. What is certainly of greater importance is

that in her behavior towards her love-object she had throughout assumed the masculine part: that is to say, she displayed the humility and the sublime over-estimation of the sexual object so characteristic of the male lover, the renunciation of all narcissistic satisfaction, and the preference for being lover rather than beloved. She had thus not only chosen a feminine love-object, but had also developed a masculine attitude towards this object. (132)

The masculine attitude described by Freud is an exceptionally fitting description of Manke's behavior toward Rifkele. Though feminine in appearance, Manke adopts the masculinity that sexologically, and subsequently socially, mark her as a lesbian, but she poses little threat to the American society that condemns her for her sexuality because she can be easily identified and segregated from society as a lesbian and, of course, as a prostitute as well.⁴⁶ Furthermore, Manke's Judaism would serve to segregate her even further from her society during this era. While it is not clearly stated that Manke is a Jew, one can speculate that she probably is based on the fact that she is not identified as a Gentile within the Jewish community depicted in this Yiddish play. Manke's Judaism warrants consideration as a factor compounding her alienation from heteronormative Christian society. Anti-Semitism was prevalent in America at this time. Historian Eric L. Goldstein notes that

racial images of the Jew during this period [the Progressive Era] presented a mixed bag: Sometimes he (the image was usually male) was cast as the embodiment of progressive business techniques, an exemplar of all that was good about the nation's industrial capitalist ethos. On the other hand, he was also seen as the representative of many of modernity's ills—a physical weakling, a carrier of disease, someone who placed personal gain above the "finer virtues" of polite society. In many respects, the racial discourse about

⁴⁶ For an analysis of Manke as a prostitute, see Katie Johnson's *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900-1920* (2006).

the Jew, with its mix of identification and repulsion, reflected Americans' own uncertainties about their changing world. (390-391)

While Goldstein focuses on stereotypes of Jewish males, one can extend components of this representation to females as well. While Jewish males were frequently considered effeminate, Jewish females were sometimes stereotyped as deceptively feminine figures who were, in their tastes and desires, more masculine and sexual. In *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race*, Ann Pellegrini describes “the *belle juive*, a stock character in the nineteenth-century imagination of Jewish femininity” (45). Pellegrini contends that

[t]he *belle juive* was a deceptively feminine figure, “deceptive” because her beauty concealed her powers of destruction. She was the ultimate femme fatale, drawing Gentile men in to their doom. Nineteenth-century stereotypes of the *belle juive* not only cross in places stereotyped images of “other” black women—hypersexual, exotic, dangerous—but also anticipate Freud’s later description of femininity *tout court* as the “dark continent.” (45)

Moreover, Pellegrini argues: “The hyperbolic femininity of the *belle juive* conceals her perverse masculinity” (45). And while Pellegrini focuses her application of this stereotype to actor Sarah Bernhardt, Pellegrini’s description of the “powerful, and destructive, image of the manly and far too emancipated Jewess” whose “sexual tastes run wild” might also be applied to Manke. Manke, a triple threat Jewish lesbian prostitute, would seem to epitomize rationales for segregating those made Other by their difference(s). But a lesbian who can be identified based on her appearance and behavior is a lesbian who can be controlled insofar as society can marginalize and stigmatize her. Or, to read Manke through McIntosh’s work, Manke represents the homosexual who has transgressed “a clear-cut, publicized, and recognizable threshold between permissible and impermissible behavior” and thus can be “segregate[d]” as a “deviant” from the rest of society (183). Whatever threat the lesbian poses can be

vanquished as quickly as the lesbian can be identified. The visibly masculine lesbian is not a disguised interloper; the feminine lesbian is. In *The God of Vengeance*, Rifkele, as a feminine lesbian, poses the greatest social threat if read through McIntosh. McIntosh states that “[i]n modern societies where a separate homosexual role is recognized, the expectation, on behalf of those who play the role and of others, is that a homosexual will be exclusively or very predominantly homosexual in his feelings and behavior” (184-185). In essence, the expectation is that all lesbians will behave in the same fashion—the masculine lesbian plays the homosexual role and thus meets society’s expectations of her. Theorizing the masculine lesbian as a butch, Lynda Hart offers the following salient appraisal of butch visibility: “[W]ithin the terms of the specular economy only the butch is a ‘real’ lesbian, but she paradoxically attains her status in the real through her consummate imitation. Her ‘reality’ as a lesbian is based on her ability to foreground the counterfeiting of gender; ‘seeing’ her thus points to the real as merely another formation of the imaginary” (125). The specular nature of the masculine lesbian firmly roots her in a phallogocentric economy. Her masculinity marks her as a would-be usurper of heterosexual male privilege in a social economy founded upon the supposed synonymous nature of masculinity and maleness—the conflation of gender and sex.

Repercussions

Five months after the premiere of *The God of Vengeance*, in the court of General Sessions in New York City, a jury of twelve citizens agreed with Arthur Hornblow’s denunciation of the play. Under the headline “GUILTY!,” *Theatre Magazine* reported that the jury “brought in a verdict finding the producer and the actors of *The God of Vengeance* guilty of having produced and taken part in an immoral play. The producer and leading actor were fined and the others discharged under a suspended sentence” (Gillmore 25). Remarkably, the play’s content was denounced not only by

the jury, but in theatrical circles as well. Before announcing the verdict, *Theatre Magazine* reminds its readers that in the June issue of the magazine, “it was stated editorially that: ‘It is time playwrights, players, and theatre managers who have the interest of their profession at heart, call a halt and consider seriously, before it is too late, how far the present license in stage dialogue and situation shall be allowed to go’” (Gillmore 25). Burns Mantle went so far as to displace the lesbian content of the play in what might be deemed an anti-Semitic or xenophobic (or both) comment (“Father in Double Role...”). Mantle says that *The God of Vengeance* is “[a]n ugly story and hopelessly foreign to our Anglo-Saxon taste and understanding” (“Father in Double Role...”). Mantle’s comment seems like simple scapegoating: What is it that he believes is so ugly and foreign to Anglo-Saxon tastes? Prostitution? Homosexuality? Judaism? These topics are not unique to *The God of Vengeance*. Manke’s masculinity as well as her desire to pursue a more masculine lifestyle outside of the brothel make her (and the drama) an easy target for those policing the moral and sexual content of Broadway plays. Ironically, because Manke is readily identifiable as a masculine lesbian, the moral, social, political, and sexual threats she poses can be managed because Manke meets the expectations of the role of the lesbian. Manke is less threatening to the extent that she can be identified and marginalized as a lesbian, perhaps limiting her ability to seduce other females from the conventions of heterosexual marriage and reproduction.

While Manke’s masculine lesbianism represents sexological conceptions of female homosexuality, the critical response to the lesbianism depicted in the play prefigures the critical response to the emergence of one of the most masculine lesbians in literature during this era. In “The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman” (1984), Esther Newton contends that “[w]ithout question, the most infamous mannish lesbian, Stephen Gordon, protagonist of *The Well of Loneliness*

(1928), was created not by a male pornographer, sexologist, legislator, or novelist, but by Hall, herself an ‘out’ and tie-wearing lesbian” (282). Furthermore, Newton argues that from about 1900 on, the mannish lesbian “became the public symbol of the new social/sexual category ‘lesbian’” (283). The publication of the British novel *The Well of Loneliness* (complete with introductory commentary by Havelock Ellis) provoked obscenity trials in both England and the United States and so infamous (and popular) was the censorship scandal and the novel that within five years of its publication, four parodies of the novel appeared: Beresford Egan’s *Sink of Solitude* (1928), Henry von Rhau’s *Hell of Loneliness* (1929), Percy Reginald Stephensen’s *Well of Sleevelessness: A Tale for the Least of These Little Ones* (1929), and Robert Leicester’s *Hell of Comeliness* (1933).⁴⁷ Given *The God of Vengeance*’s critical reception, it should come as no surprise that six years later, the British and American public found Hall’s novel obscene. Just as Yekel condemns Rifkele for her sins, the critics condemned the play for its explicit depiction of lesbianism. Both *The New York Times* and *The Daily News* suggest that perhaps Greenwich Village is the best and only place for a play of such ugliness to be received.⁴⁸ Greenwich Village’s reputation as a haven for the sexually deviant confirms a cultural awareness of homosexuality as well as a recognition of New York City, specifically the Village, as a nexus of publicly lived and acknowledged homosexuality and bisexuality. Inexpensive rent and restaurants, a community of artists, and a toleration of nonconformity, according to historian George Chauncey, made Greenwich Village the ideal home for gays and lesbians seeking a more secure sexual bohemia (229). Chauncey goes on to note that “[t]he frequent references by critics to the ‘long-haired men’ and ‘short-haired women’ of the Village sometimes constituted [...] accusations

⁴⁷ Behling, Laura L. *The Masculine Woman in America, 1890-1935*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 133. Print.

⁴⁸ Corbin, John. “The Play: Religion in the Slums.” *The New York Times* 20 Dec. 1922.
Mantle, Burns. “Father In Double Role Gets Ovation: Sire of Jewish Actor Stars in Ugly Drama.” *Daily News* 21 Dec. 1922: 20. Print.

of perversity, only slightly veiled, since the gender reversal implied by such images directly evoked the semiotic codes that denoted sexual perversion” (229). Lillian Faderman, an historian of American lesbian culture, states that the presence of such short-haired women in the Village constitutes “some of the earliest public manifestations of a non-working-class white American lesbian subculture” (83). The Village, however, was about to face some restrictions on lesbian visibility—on stage, at least.

Toward Transgression

More threatening than Manke, but still not as threatening as future lesbian characters, Tony Ambler of Thomas H. Dickinson’s play *Winter Bound* presents a peculiar set of challenges to reading her character’s sexuality. *Winter Bound* premiered on Broadway on November 12th, 1929.⁴⁹ It is crucial to note that by the time *Winter Bound* premiered, legislation regarding indecency onstage had changed. Before one can study Tony’s masculinity in its socio-historical context, it is important to highlight what was happening in the world of Broadway theatre between *The God of Vengeance*’s Broadway premiere and the premiere of *Winter Bound*. Productions of Edouard Bourdet’s *The Captive*,⁵⁰ Jane Mast’s *Sex* (starring Mae West and written by Mae West under the pseudonym “Jane Mast”), and William Francis Dugan’s *The Virgin Man* in 1927 prompted censorship legislation in New York, namely the Padlock Law, which essentially prohibited depictions of homosexuality onstage. On March 24th, 1927, *The New York Times* reported that the state Senate had passed the Wales Stage Regulation bill, also known as the Padlock Bill (and, later, the Padlock Law),

⁴⁹ Please see Chapter One for a summary of this play and a discussion of its lesbian content.

⁵⁰ Ironically, Arthur Hornblow, the critic who lambasted *The God of Vengeance* for its immoral content, went on to translate the lesbian drama *The Captive* by Edouard Bourdet. *The Captive* appeared on Broadway three years after the publication of Hornblow’s review of *God of Vengeance* and would ignite a firestorm of controversy that led to new censorship laws regarding the content of plays.

“aimed at indecent plays” (“Padlocks For Stage”). The article quotes Senator William L. Love of Brooklyn who feared that the legislation was weak; he argued that the bill was “a slap on the wrist when a good man-sized punch in the jaw is what is needed. When sex degeneracy and sex perversion have been shown on stage it is time to call a halt” (“Padlocks for Stage”). The bill gave the Municipal License Commissioner the power to revoke a theatre’s license for up to a year’s time after a conviction for producing an indecent play. Any person associated with such a production, under the bill, was liable for the content on stage and could be prosecuted. The *Times* article succinctly summarizes the scope of the bill:

The production of any drama depicting or dealing with sex perversion or degeneracy is made illegal, and conviction may be based on only a part of the play. The definition of a play is enlarged to cover almost every kind of an exhibition, and the number of persons connected with an immoral drama who may be prosecuted is extended to include practically every one associated with the production. (“Padlocks For Stage”)

New York City newspapers provided detailed coverage of the plays raided, the battle over censorship, and every legislative turn that eventually resulted in the passage of the Wales Stage Regulation bill. Because of the news coverage and discourse regarding sexuality and censorship generated by the struggle between the producers of seemingly salacious culture and those who would have that culture eradicated, far more Americans were exposed to the content of and attempts to censor “indecent plays” than the number of Americans attending these plays.

Over a year and a half after the passage of this legislation, *Winter Bound* premiered and provoked more confusion than censorship. The confusion was perhaps the result of an inept script. *Winter Bound* ran for thirty-nine performances on Broadway and

was not well received by critics.⁵¹ Richard Watts, in his review of the play, asserts that *Winter Bound* is “a bad play, confused, tedious, hysterical and uncertain” (“Winter Bound’ Is Provincetown...”). As though written in defense of his own playwriting, Dickinson, an established editor of drama, but lesser-known playwright, offers the following in his introduction to *Chief Contemporary Dramatists: Third Series* (1930):

Even the crudeness occasionally to be found in the American theater is to be preferred to the neatly tailored, factitious work fashioned by the old-line playwrights in England for American consumption. Innovation does not imply merit; on the other hand neither does convention, and in the theater of our times the presumption is on the side of the man who dares. One could mention a dozen plays written in America in as many years in which the objective has been beyond the powers of the dramatist. The American theater is the better because these experiments were made. (vii)

Dickinson’s own objective may have been beyond his powers as a dramatist, but his subject matter was certainly daring when produced in 1929 (and copyrighted a year earlier) and his experiment reveals radical ideas about gender and sexuality.

Dickinson’s portrait of Tony Ambler is a portrait of masculinity. Whereas Manke courted the object of her affections while aspiring to achieve even greater masculinity in dress, activity, etc. by imagining herself as a soldier, Tony epitomizes every facet of masculinity and objects to being called a woman. In 1929, Tony was perceived as a masculine lesbian—a true invert: a male psyche in a female body, as reviews of the play demonstrate. The manner in which Dickinson has crafted this super-masculine character warrants closer inspection before turning to these reviews.

⁵¹ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1937-38*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938. 380. Print.

The Masculine Lesbian

In *Winter Bound*, Tony fights for the affection of Emily who is gradually seduced by their neighbor, Chett. First and foremost, despite her female body, Tony does not identify as a woman and has assumed a traditionally male name. For the purposes of Tony's self-identification, it is important to note that during the first half of the twentieth century, "female" and "woman" were considered somewhat synonymous terms (as they still are today, despite efforts to distinguish between sex and gender). In the second scene of the play, Tony chastises Emily for calling her a woman in an exchange about menstruation (a function of sex, not gender):

EMILY (Breaks out) I want to be let alone.

TONY (Ponders a little) It's too bad, kid. It's that time of the month, eh?

EMILY Worse luck.

TONY I might have known it. I forgot. It's too damned bad. I'm sorry, kid. It's what you women are up against.

EMILY Don't say "You women" to me. I can't stand it.

TONY Why not? You are a woman, aren't you?

EMILY If I am, so are you.

TONY I'll be damned if I am. Not your kind anyway. (1-2-6 – 1-2-7)

Later in the play, Tony reiterates her reluctance to identify as a woman; she says: "I'd hate to think I was a woman." (1-3-5). Her masculinity makes her something other than a woman—something she cannot name. Dickinson provides stage directions describing Tony when she makes her first appearance in the play; he writes that she is

a virile looking creature in blouse and short trousers; 28 years old; Fiji Island bobbed hair under a battered felt hat; high cheek bones; no breasts, lanky arms.

A wayward spirit with strange impulses, a loving, if sometimes harsh

directness in her manner, great magnetism, cynicism and selfishness. SHE carries a whip. Her heartiness is just a little horsy and affected. (1-6)

Again, like Asch's stage directions for *The God of Vengeance*, these stage directions indicate what needs to be made visible in the absence of explicit discussions of lesbianism. The stage directions are a key for unlocking a world of symbols. Given new censorship legislation, it would be impossible for Tony to announce her sexuality on a Broadway stage so instead Dickinson details in his stage directions the visual clues necessary for an audience to understand that which is unspoken. Dickinson's description of Tony illustrates her masculinity and sexuality—not to mention the sexual proclivities symbolized by her whip. Like a stereotypical male, she has no breasts and appears "virile." Her manner is characterized by its "harsh directness." In terms of her sexuality, Dickinson comments that she is a "wayward spirit with strange impulses." Tony is so masculine in her appearance that she is, in fact, mistaken for a male by her neighbor, Chet Williams, who refers to her as "fella" (and even at times as "him" and "son") and continues to do so once he has been apprised of her sex. Chet asks Emily "what" Tony is after he has learned that she is a female, perhaps inquiring after her sexuality, but Emily answers that Tony is a woman and the conversation is cut short by Tony's entrance. Here, Dickinson's dialogue subtly underscores what he has established in his stage directions: Tony is strange insofar as she does not meet Chet's (and probably audiences') expectation of a "woman." So extreme is Tony's masculinity that Chet notes she watches over Emily "worse than if he was a real man" (2-1-11). And tellingly, when Tony misbehaves, Emily chastises her in terms of her masculinity: when Tony embarrasses Emily in front of Chet, Emily tells Tony that "[t]here isn't a man in the world that would have done a thing so mean" (2-1-17). Throughout the play, Tony exhibits stereotypically masculine behaviors. She fixes cars (including those her male counterparts are unable to repair) and takes care of both her own and Emily's finances, exhibiting the preference for masculine pursuits

outlined by Krafft-Ebing.⁵² Not only is Tony masculine, she is *more* masculine than the other male characters in the play. As though Tony's words and actions, in addition to his initial stage directions about her appearance, were not enough to ensure a masculine portrait of this character, Dickinson adds even more stage directions that stress Tony's masculinity and provide a narrative for her behaviors and desires beyond the performed script. In short, the stage directions indicate the psychology behind the character. For example, Dickinson writes that Tony takes badly "every opposition to her captious will. HER face darkens, her eyebrows lower, her eyes begin to glow. Her friends know these signs. They react to them after fashions of their own. Some fear them, and wilt at once. Others use with Tony those measures of feminine indirectness and poised control that women through the ages have employed with men" (1-10). Tony is angry, willful, and threatening, stereotypically masculine attributes. Dickinson also uses these stage directions to tell readers what type of female can (metaphorically) successfully penetrate Tony's tough exterior. More often than not, it is "feminine indirectness and poised control" to which Tony, and, according to Dickinson, most men, are receptive. Indeed, her object of affection, Emily, is described as "[t]horoughly feminine" and the stage directions indicate that she acts in a "housewifely way" (1-1, 1-19). While I believe Dickinson's dialogue sufficiently establishes Tony's difference, his stage directions buttress a reading of why Tony's masculinity is of paramount importance for deciphering her sexuality, often relayed in images and behaviors instead of words.

Freud contends that female homosexuals adopt a masculine attitude toward their love object and Tony does just this. Tony tells Emily, "I've got to take care of you" (1-2-

⁵² Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Trans. Franklin S. Klaf. Translated from the 12th German Ed. New York: Bell, 1965. 264. Print.

11). Emily says that she can take care of herself and verbalizes the husband/wife dynamic that the two share:

EMILY. We might as well be man and wife the way you jaw at me.

TONY. There's one difference anyway. We don't eat each other up with sex passion.

EMILY. How do you know we don't eat each other up? (1-2-12).

Although Tony consistently denies romantic or sexual feelings for Emily, despite the overtly (oral) sex connotations of “eat each other up with sex passion,” her behaviors would seem to belie her denials. Tony even says to Emily: “You can't keep your fingers idle. Just like a wife” (1-3-3). And when their visitors leave at the end of the first scene, Tony remarks that they are “[a]lone at last. Gosh, that's what the honeymooners say, isn't it?” (1-19). The pair interacts like a stereotypical married couple. Only in a moment of vulnerability does Tony query Emily about her feelings (1-3-6); once Tony is confident that Emily wants to be with her (and has chosen Tony over her last male love interest), Tony again launches into a speech about the benefits of avoiding sex passion. Emily again rebuffs her and tells her: “If you aren't owned by a man, you're owned by a woman. And if you don't own a man, you own a woman. Sex has nothing to do with it” (1-3-7). Later in the play, Emily directly tells Tony that Tony wants someone “to play wife” to her (2-2-13). And tellingly, when Tony is calling Emily's name in search of her, Tim, a hired hand, asks Tony, “Was you looking for your partner?” (1-2-2). The connotation of the word “partner” here is ambiguous, but implies something more than friendship. Dramaturgically, Dickinson leaves readers and audiences wondering what Tim thinks of the nature of the partnership between Tony and Emily. In fact, the two cannot escape constant clarification and revision of the nature of their relationship and they continue to skirt around exactly what they desire from one another for the duration of the play. What does Tony want? Tony's desires are effectively read through her artwork. Tony

works on a sculpture which she hopes will represent “[a] woman with no hips and no breasts. A woman who comes into the world for some other reason but to excite men to make babies” (2-2-11). The alternative to exciting men and making babies would seem to be either asexuality or homosexuality, or some shade of grey in between these two types of desire (or lack thereof). Critics certainly picked up on these themes, but also noted that the play does not make explicit Tony’s lesbianism. I argue that Dickinson made it just evident enough to catch the attention of audiences, but left the dialogue ambiguous enough to circumvent censorship.

The Critics Weigh In

In his review of the play, Richard Watts Jr. notes that “[t]here was considerable confusion at the Garrick Theater last night concerning the intentions of Mr. Thomas Dickinson, the author of ‘Winter Bound.’ Miss Aline MacMahon, who played the leading role [Tony] seemed in less doubt than the playwright about the motives of the heroine” (“‘Winter Bound’ Is Provincetown...”). Watts goes on to compare the play with Edouard Bourdet’s unambiguously lesbian drama *The Captive* (discussed below), thus demonstrating that as inexperienced and uneven as the playwriting of *Winter Bound* is, its taboo content is obvious. Similarly, a *New York Times* review contends that Dickinson’s play “simmers about its theme without ever bringing it into focus” but suggests, like Watts’s review, that the play addresses “a theme of twisted impulses that wandered vaguely along the path of ‘The Captive’” (“‘Winter Bound’ Moves”). Furthermore, the *Times* observes that Aline MacMahon, the actor playing Tony, “brings a well-molded and decisive assurance that illuminates, at least in part, a character that is as ill-defined as the play itself” (“‘Winter Bound’ Moves”). In his *New York Evening Post* review, John Mason Brown writes that *Winter Bound* “came to the Garrick last evening, lumbering down that brimstone path which leads to ‘The

Well of Loneliness” and “is set against such a memorable statement of the same problem as Edouard Bourdet made in ‘The Captive,’” (the last controversial Broadway play that endeavored to explore lesbianism) (“The Play: ‘Winter Bound’...”). Brown succinctly states that the play is Dickinson’s “study in abnormality.” Although Dickinson may not have made his lesbian themes as explicit as other plays addressing similar subject matter, critics easily identified the homosexual content.

Just as critics were quick to recognize the homosexual or homosexually-inclined relationship shared by Tony and Emily, they certainly noted Tony’s extreme masculinity. The *New York Evening Post* review juxtaposes Tony’s masculinity with Emily’s femininity, further highlighting the homosexuality of the pair (since female homosexual pairs were traditionally conceived of in terms of one masculine and one feminine female). Brown describes Tony as a “sculptress [...] whose dress and point of view are so masculine that Mr. Dickinson describes her as a ‘boy that never grew up, and that has no heart in him.’ The other is Emily Fullbright, a completely feminine girl who is for the time being under Tony’s domination” (“The Play: ‘Winter Bound’...”). Brown’s descriptions of Tony and Emily are noteworthy for different reasons. By highlighting Dickinson’s characterization of Tony as a “boy that never grew up,” Brown references, perhaps unintentionally, the Broadway history of *Peter Pan*, the title role of which was played by a female since *Peter Pan*’s 1905 debut.⁵³ In fact, lesbian actor Eva Le Gallienne played Peter Pan on Broadway in a run than

⁵³ In *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*, Stacy Wolf provides a lesbian reading of Mary Martin in *Peter Pan*. Wolf founds her reading of Martin on the tradition of female actors playing boys onstage. Wolf argues that “Wendy plays out the lesson of cult-of-true-womanhood femininity: she is dependable and a caretaker; she tells stories, makes a home for the Lost Boys, falls in love with Peter Pan, and is easily replaced by her daughter, Jane, who learns femininity equally well when Peter returns to the Darling house a generation later” (74). When Wendy decides to return home from Never Never Land, Peter is “heartbroken,” but he refuses to go with her because he is afraid to grow up. Consequently, Wolf views *Peter Pan* as “an explicit rejection of heterosexuality” because “[i]f the play equates growing up with becoming heterosexual, then Peter’s not wanting to grow up is precisely about not wanting to be or become heterosexual” (75).

ended in December 1928, less than a year before the opening of *Winter Bound*. In his assessment of Emily, Brown dismisses any possibility of Emily's bisexuality or homosexuality—because the face of lesbianism is one of masculinity—in favor of reading her as a heterosexual victim of Tony's aggressive possession of the young woman.⁵⁴ As if to assure audiences that the play eventually finds some sort of moral ground, Brown reveals the play's ending and identifies the play's central conflict as “the struggle for the possession of Emily which is fought between Tony and a farmer named Chet Williams, to whom Emily is eventually married.” The *New York Times* echoes Brown's assessment of Tony and describes her as “a sculptress, assertive, robust, ‘like a boy that never grows up,’” who is “dominant with a strength made expressive in pity, tenderness, and contempt” (“‘Winter Bound’ Moves”). The most comprehensive statement of Tony's masculinity, however, is also the shortest. Adding a slight twist to a clichéd expression, Burns Mantle pinpoints Tony's masculine behavior and attire and identifies her masculinity with respect to her feminine counterpart, Emily; Mantle writes, simply, that Tony “wears the overalls.”

Tony's masculinity frequently pivots on her relationship with Emily, so it is important to clarify exactly how this relationship was interpreted. While *Winter Bound* is not as explicitly sexual as *The God of Vengeance*, it nonetheless depicts the competition between a male, Chet, and a highly masculine female, Tony, for the love of a feminine female, Emily. Tony and Emily argue about whether or not sexual passion prompts their frequent quarrels⁵⁵ and I contend that because the two characters do argue about the nature of their relationship and do consistently discuss sex, their relationship is not a nineteenth-century romantic friendship, but a contested lesbian relationship.

Sexologists would not even identify it as a *contested* lesbian relationship; more likely,

⁵⁴ Please see Chapter Three for an analysis of lesbian villainy.

⁵⁵ Dickinson, Thomas. *Winter Bound*. MS. New York Public Library. 1-2-12. Print.

they would simply identify Tony as a masculine female with a relatively weak sex drive who desires to possess another female. Krafft-Ebing notes that “kissing and embraces [...] satisfy those of a weak sexual instinct” because she is so masculine (265). Only one reviewer, Burns Mantle, interpreted the play as anything other than a dramatic investigation of lesbianism. Mantle contends that the play tells the story of “certain misunderstood females [who] are none the less clean of mind and purpose” (“‘Winter Bound’ Agitates Suspicious...”). Believing themselves to be “sufficiently advanced to deny nature and fly away from a sex-burdened world,” Tony and Emily “pursue their search for that serenity and spiritual contentment which is happiness,” according to Mantle. But even Mantle’s review leaves room for a lesbian interpretation of the play. Tony and Emily are *not* “sufficiently advanced to deny nature and fly from a sex-burdened world”; Tony becomes possessive of Emily and Emily develops a physical desire for Chet and begins seeing him without telling Tony. Furthermore, despite his contention that Tony is “clean of mind and purpose,” Mantle describes Tony as “the less normal” of the Tony-Emily pair, one who “assumes a dictatorial command of the situation” and “wears the overalls.” Mantle’s diction suggests that Tony protects and acts on behalf of Emily (albeit in a dictatorial fashion). Although he does explicitly consider the pair to be a couple, his diction implies that he identifies their relationship as something more than friendship. Mantle’s review gestures toward the lesbian interpretation of the play that pervaded newspapers when *Winter Bound* premiered. Reviewers of the play acknowledge the confusion about Tony’s sexuality and the exact nature of her relationship with Emily, but they all understand the play as a distinctly lesbian piece of drama.

Within the frame of the homosexual role as outlined by McIntosh, Tony fulfills the expectations of the lesbian in terms of her masculinity, but her character suggests the existence of an alternate space in which sexological binaries are insufficient criteria to describe Tony’s sexuality and gender. Tony asserts that she is not a woman. This

contention offers the possibility that she is something other than the masculine lesbian described by sexologists and understood in popular culture because Tony denies her sex, thus complicating attempts to label her a lesbian. Dickinson has crafted a character who defies neat categorization in an era in which transgendered and queer identities lacked a clear vocabulary and were frequently understood in terms of inversion (“a theory of homosexuality [which] folded gender variance and sexual preference into one economical package” according to Halberstam) rather than more complex sex/gender/sexuality triangulations (82). Referencing McIntosh’s article, “Queer Theory and the War of the Sexes,” Jeffrey Weeks praises McIntosh’s “insight that the history of homosexuality cannot possibly be a history of a single homogeneous entity, because the very notion of homosexuality is dependent on at the very least a binary notion of gender. Without binarism, the concepts of homosexuality and heterosexuality could not possibly exist—though what we call ‘homosexual behaviour’ no doubt does” (*Making Sexual History* 63). Tony’s seemingly homosexual behavior transgresses the boundaries of the permissible, but her expression of gender does not fulfill sexologists’ expectations of the homosexual role. Dickinson has created a multi-faceted masculine female who simultaneously embodies many of the stereotypes constructed by sexologists and turns those stereotypes on their heads because of her insistence that she is not a woman.⁵⁶

Femme Threat

Given all of the rhetoric regarding female masculinity and its relationship to lesbianism according to sexologists, what can one make of the feminine lesbian who exhibits no masculine qualities but does desire other females? Although McIntosh

⁵⁶ I have not found any examples from this period of overtly masculine lesbian characters who acknowledge their masculinity and simultaneously and explicitly embrace their “womanhood.”

advocates the separation of the homosexual role and homosexual behavior, sexologists collapse the two and consequently had little to say with respect to the feminine lesbian. If, however, one does separate the role from behavior, then the feminine lesbian might challenge the very ways in which homosexuality is ordered and socially controlled. Her existence is typified by Irene De Montcel of Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive*. *The Captive* was translated from the French by Arthur Hornblow based on Bourdet's original play, *La Prisonniere*; the English translation premiered on Broadway in September of 1926 and ran for 160 performances.⁵⁷ Ironically, Hornblow lambasted *The God of Vengeance* for its immoral content, but in a *New York Herald Tribune* article by Percy Stone, Hornblow claims that those associated with the production of *The Captive* "could convince any intelligent people that the play [*The Captive*] is not dangerous" ("Bourdet Didn't Try to Shock When He Wrote 'The Captive'"). *The Captive* tells the story of a young woman, Irene De Montcel, who struggles with her love for another woman, Madame D'Aiguines. Irene tries to overcome her lesbianism by marrying a man long in love with her, Jacques Virieu. Monsieur D'Aiguines warns Jacques of Irene's and his own wife's true (lesbian) natures, but Jacques marries Irene despite the warning. Ultimately, their marriage fails (Jacques cites Irene's frigidity as a contributing factor to the union's failure) and Jacques returns to his former flame, Françoise Meillant (whom he left for Irene), and Irene after "caress[ing]" the flowers Madame D'Aiguines sent her, leaves her home and life with Jacques, and abandons attempts to squash her sexuality in favor of a life with Madame D'Aiguines.

Irene De Montcel is the most thoroughly feminine lesbian to appear on Broadway during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. She is described as "brilliant," "cultured," and

⁵⁷ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1926-1927*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1928. 390. Print.

“attractive” by her sister Gisele (11). When she first appears, the stage directions, yet again a guide for what the playwright wants to make visible or known to audiences outside of the dialogue, indicate that Irene is “smartly dressed” and wears a bunch of violets, presumably a gift from her lesbian love interest given Irene’s fixation on them (14). Although sexologists and American popular culture identified the masculine lesbian as *the* lesbian, the works of Havelock Ellis and Edward Carpenter do make passing reference to more feminine lesbians. One of the most compelling reasons for Ellis’s inclusion of more feminine lesbians in his study might be the homosexuality of his own wife, Edith. Of feminine lesbians, Ellis remarks that “[t]heir sexual impulses are seldom well marked, but they are of strongly affectionate nature...they are women who are not very robust and well developed, physically or nervously” and while they do not normally find themselves attracted to men, there may exist exceptions (133). Recall that Ellis asserts that feminine lesbians have “faces [which] may be plain or ill made, but not seldom they possess good figures” and, unlike their “actively inverted” counterparts, are “always womanly” (133). These are the women “whom the average man would pass by” (133). In essence, a shapely figure and an ugly face make a female turn to other females for affection because almost no male will have her. In a prescient move, Edward Carpenter distinguishes between the “homogenic female” (a.k.a. the masculine lesbian) and the “homogenic *woman*” (a.k.a. the feminine lesbian), anticipating the separation of sex and gender in contemporary feminist and queer theory (30, 35, italics in original). The “more normal” homogenic woman has a “thoroughly feminine and gracious” body “with the rondure and fullness of the female form” (35-36). By and large, however, feminine lesbians were considered vulnerable heterosexual women, susceptible to the romantic overtures of masculine lesbians. These vulnerable heterosexual women were viewed as weak females in need of a male suitor to set them on the proper path of heterosexual desire.

Obviously, Irene's beauty and feminine allure put her at odds with the feminine lesbian persona presented by Ellis. Gisele comments upon her sister's good looks and both Jacques' and Madame D'Aiguines' undying love for her serves as a testament to her magnetism, as do the three suitors whom Irene has turned down in the space of less than a year.⁵⁸ No one suspects that Irene is a lesbian; in fact, her father, her sister, and Jacques believe that she is having an affair with Monsieur D'Aiguines, rather than with his wife. When Monsieur D'Aiguines reveals to Jacques that Irene's love is for his wife, the true threat of the feminine lesbian is revealed, one that surpasses that of the masculine lesbian. Monsieur D'Aiguines exclaims:

Understand this: they are not for us. They must be shunned, left alone. Don't make my mistake. Don't say, as I said in a situation almost like yours, don't say: "Oh, it's nothing but a sort of ardent friendship—an affectionate intimacy...nothing very serious...we know all about that sort of thing!" No! We don't know *anything* about it! We can't begin to know what it is. It's mysterious—terrible! Friendship, yes—that's the mask. Under cover of friendship a woman can enter any household, whenever and however she pleases—at any hour of the day—she can poison and pillage everything before the man whose home she destroys is even aware of what's happening to him. When finally he realizes things it's too late—he is alone! Alone in the face of a secret alliance of two beings who understand one another because they're alike, because they're of the same sex, because they're of a different planet than he, the stranger, the enemy! Ah! If a *man* tries to steal your woman you can defend yourself, you can fight him on even terms, you can smash his face in. But in this case—there's nothing to be done—but *get out* while you still have strength to do it! And that's what you've got to do! (149-150)

⁵⁸ Bourdet, Edouard. *The Captive*. Ed. & Trans. Arthur Hornblow. New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1926. 10. Print.

Feminine lesbians use social norms and mores to gain proximity to their love interests without the knowledge of those males involved: husbands. D'Aiguines articulates the cultural shift that left America in such a panic; after the dissemination of sexological material in popular culture, the close female friendships and Boston marriages of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries became suspect because intimacy between females now carried with it sexual potential. Though the females about which D'Aiguines writes are married, there is no evidence in these passages to suggest that they are happily heterosexual; on the contrary, according to D'Aiguines, lesbians frequently and unscrupulously marry for socio-economic reasons.⁵⁹ Under the guise of heretofore commonplace female friendship, lesbians are destroying domestic life, allying themselves against males ("forming a secret alliance of two beings"), and males can do nothing about it because they cannot "smash [...] in" the face of a female as they can a male because social mores forbid it. Havelock Ellis had presented a line of argument nearly thirty years earlier that warned of this very threat. Homosexuality, he writes, "is less easy to detect in women; we are accustomed to a much greater familiarity and intimacy between women than between men, and we are less apt to suspect the existence of abnormal passion" (121). Culturally, however, this small component of Ellis's work was never broadly disseminated; the abundance of work on the masculine lesbian completely overshadowed those who mentioned (usually only in passing) the possibility of congenital feminine lesbians. Ellis continues, "for the most part men seem to have been indifferent toward it [female homosexuality]; when it has been made a crime or a cause for divorce in men, it has usually been considered as no offense at all in women" (121). The feminine lesbian, because she is not visibly masculine (and thus marked), cannot be easily identified, classified, and controlled, unlike the masculine lesbian subject. The real threat of

⁵⁹ Bourdet, Edouard. *The Captive*. Ed. & Trans. Arthur Hornblow. New York: Brentano's Publishers, 1926. 148. Print.

female homosexuality lies not with the masculine lesbian would-be usurper, but with the feminine lesbian, as evidenced by the eight exclamation points in Monsieur D'Aiguines' fearful warning.

Surreptitious Socio-Sexological Subversion

The Captive presents two sizeable challenges to social norms: the feminine Irene is unrecognizable as a lesbian in the collective consciousness of American popular culture because neither sexological nor social constructions of lesbianism accounted for feminine lesbians. From both a sexological and social perspective, feminine females had to be heterosexual because they lacked masculinity, the mark of inversion. And Irene is the only lesbian to appear on Broadway in the 1920s and 30s who is not thwarted in her attempt to pursue her lesbianism. Every other lesbian protagonist finds herself sentenced to potentially grim fates. Historian Martha Vicinus asserts that the mannish lesbian

became the identified deviant “invert” in the later- nineteenth- and early twentieth-century work of such sexologists as Richard von Krafft-Ebing, Havelock Ellis, and Sigmund Freud. [...] None of these familiar types includes what we would now call the “femme” of the butch-femme couple. Like the younger woman in a Sapphic romance, she was presumed to be only an occasional lover of women—someone who could [...] be lured away from her aberration by a handsome man. (480)

Irene's lesbianism represents a passing homosexuality or an invisible homosexuality because her femininity obscures her lesbianism in many sexological taxonomies. Although one might argue that Irene succumbs to her lesbianism rather than embraces it, she nonetheless leaves her miserable, frigid marriage with Jacques for a life with her true love, Madame D'Aiguines. Precisely because Irene does survive her

lesbianism and chooses to abandon heterosexuality in favor of homosexuality, *The Captive* transgresses lines of decency. Irene does not play the role of the lesbian. In defying the specular expectations of this role, she prevents society from identifying and segregating her from non-deviant males and females. If, however, the play would not punish its lesbian protagonist (as all prior and future plays would), the censors would. Helen Menken, the actor playing Irene, was arrested and only after securing an injunction from the New York State Supreme Court did the play continue its run. In a *New York Tribune* article published almost ten years after her arrest, Menken describes the arrest in great detail and says, “I’m absolutely certain that ‘The Captive’ wouldn’t create even a ripple of excitement here and now [June 1935]. The subject has been written about since with amazing frankness and nobody seems the worse for this freedom of discussion. ‘Other days—other morals.’ How true the old saw is” (“Helen Menken Recalls” 4). Furthermore, Menken asserts that if director Gilbert Miller had not “decided to end the run of the play” the day after the arrest, “[b]eyond all question the piece would have run a year. The box office turned back more than \$30,000 in cash and we were all thrown out of jobs” (“Helen Menken Recalls” 4).

When read comparatively, *The God of Vengeance*, *Winter Bound*, and *The Captive* reveal that masculinity is not an accurate gauge of the threat posed by female homosexuality. The elaborate sexological system of classification of female homosexuals bespeaks the ineffectual sort of social labeling outlined by McIntosh. Manke and Tony participate in and reinscribe the system that constitutes both as lesbian subjects, but Tony’s refusal to identify as a woman gestures toward an identity politics and freedom that undermine the constitution of the lesbian role. Irene’s femininity and refusal to capitulate to heterosexuality and related social expectations place her outside of the system that establishes the power relationships between sex, gender, sexuality, and hegemonic discourse. Her femininity also allows her to pass in

heterosexual culture, making her more dangerous—insofar as she can escape social control—than the masculine lesbian who is more visibly identifiable. Irene's character indicates a quasi-utopic space wherein sex, gender, and sexuality are reconfigured with respect to a female's position in American society in the 1920s and 30s. The implications of this reconfiguration for social norms are immense. In the next chapter, I will draw upon depictions of feminism and masculinity on Broadway in a discussion of how portraits of lesbian antagonists, in conversation with eugenic discourse, informed lesbian drama on Broadway and twisted triangulations of homosexual and heterosexual desire.

WORKS CITED

- “40 British Literati to Uphold Banned Book; They Appear in London Court, but Magistrate Refuses to Hear Them.” *New York Times* 10 Nov 1928: 4. Print.
- Anderson, John. “‘The Captive’ Arrives at Last at the Empire Theatre.” *New York Post* 30 Sept. 1926. Print.
- Asch, Sholom. *God of Vengeance*. Trans. Isaac Goldberg. Boston: The Stratford Co., 1918. Print.
- Barthes, Roland. *A Lover’s Discourse*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Hill and Wang, 1983. Print.
- Behling, Laura L. *The Masculine Woman in America, 1890-1935*. Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 2001. 133. Print.
- “Book Censorship Urged For England; Home Secretary Wants Authority to Ban Any Volume He Deems Indecent.” *New York Times* 4 Nov. 1928: 60. Print.
- Bourdet, Edouard. *The Captive*. Ed. & Trans. Arthur Hornblow. New York: Brentano’s Publishers, 1926. Print.
- Brackett, Charles. “Preferences and Eccentricities.” *The New Yorker* 9 Oct. 1926: 33. Print.
- Brown, John Mason. “The Play: ‘Winter Bound,’ a Baffling and Inexpert Study of Abnormality Comes to the Provincetown Playhouse’s Uptown Playhouse.” *New York Evening Post* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.
- Carpenter, Edward. *The Intermediate Sex*. 3rd Ed. London: George Allen & Co., 1912.
- Chauncey, George. *Gay New York: Gender, Urban Culture, and the Making of the Gay Male World, 1890-1940*. New York: Basic Books, 1994. Print.
- “Code of Conduct for Films Revised: Hays Announces the Aim Is to Reflect Better Standards—Ban Ridicule of Law.” *New York Times* 1 April 1930: 1, 18. Print.
- Copeland, Royal S. “How to Be Healthy: Why Your Doctor Is the One to Give Vital Sex Knowledge.” *The Washington Post* 11 Oct. 1922: 8. Print.
- Corbin, John. “The Play: Religion in the Slums.” *The New York Times* 20 Dec. 1922.

- “Customs Seeks to Bar ‘Well of Loneliness’; M.L. Ernst Files Federal Suit Over Novel Held Not Obscene by Special Sessions.” *New York Times* 16 May 1929: 18. Print.
- “Defers Hearing on Books; Court Sets Covici, Friede Case for Feb. 19.” *New York Times* 6 Feb 1929: 12. Print.
- Dickinson, Thomas, ed. *Chief Contemporary Dramatists*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1930. Print.
- . *Winter Bound*. MS. New York Public Library. Print.
- Duggan, Lisa. *Sapphic Slashers: Sex, Violence, and American Modernity*. Durham, Duke University Press, 2000. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. Print.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. “The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality.” *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. 1.2 (1920): 125-149. Print.
- Gillmore, Frank. “Stage Immorality and the Actor: A Frank Discussion of Present Day Theatrical Problems from the Players’ Standpoint.” *Theatre Magazine* (Aug. 1923): 25. Print.
- “Girl Posed as Man 2 Years and Married.” *New York Times* 16 Dec. 1921: 5. Print.
- Goldstein, Eric L. “The Unstable Other: Locating the Jew in Progressive-Era American Racial Discourse.” *American Jewish History* 89.4 (2002): 383-409.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. Print.
- Hart, Lynda. “Identity and Seduction.” *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. Eds. Lynda Hart and Peggy Phelan. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. Print.
- “Helen Menken Recalls Captive and Her Arrest.” *New York Tribune* 9 June 1935: 2, 4. Print.
- “Holds Hall Book Obscene; London Judge Orders Police to Destroy Copies of ‘Well of Loneliness.’” *New York Times* 17 Nov 1928: 6. Print.

- Hornblow, Arthur. "Mr. Hornblow Goes To The Play." *Theatre Magazine* (Apr. 1923): 20, 68. Print.
- Johnson, Katie N. *Sisters in Sin: Brothel Drama in America, 1900-1920*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Print.
- . "When Lesbians Come to Broadway." *The Gay & Lesbian Review*. May-June 2007: n. pag. Web. 11 Jan. 2010.
- Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994. Print.
- Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. *Psychopathia Sexualis*. Trans. Franklin S. Klaf. New York: Bell Publishing Company, Inc., 1965. Print.
- "Legislature Gets Play 'Padlock Bill.'" *New York Times* 19 March 1927. Print.
- Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1926-1927*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1928. Print.
- . *The Best Plays of 1937-38*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1938. Print.
- . "Father in Double Role Gets Ovation: Sire of Jewish Actor Stars in Ugly Drama." *New York Daily News* 21 Dec. 1922: 20. Print.
- . "'Winter Bound' Agitates Suspicious: A Fine Experimental Drama Is Entitled to a Fair Hearing." *New York Daily News* 28 Nov. 1929. Print.
- McIntosh, Mary. "The Homosexual Role." *Social Problems* 16.2 (Autumn, 1968): 182-192. Print.
- Newton, Esther. "The Mythic Mannish Lesbian: Radclyffe Hall and the New Woman." *Hidden From History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. Eds. Martin Bauml Duberman, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey. Markham (Ontario): New American Library, 1989. 281-293. Print.
- "Novel 'Loneliness' Is Ruled Obscene; Magistrate Holds Publishers of Radclyffe Hall Book for Trial on Charge." *New York Times* 22 Feb 1929: 11. Print.
- "Padlocks For Stage Voted By Senate." *New York Times* 24 March 1927. Print.
- Pellegrini, Ann. *Performance Anxieties: Staging Psychoanalysis, Staging Race*. New York: Routledge, 1997.

- “Police Seize Novel by Radclyffe Hall; Publishers Summoned After a Raid.” *New York Times* 12 Jan 1929: 3. Print.
- “Publisher Is Arraigned; Court to Read "Well of Loneliness" Before Deciding Friede's Case.” *New York Times* 23 Jan 1929: 7. Print.
- “Publishers Lose Appeal; British Court Upholds Seizure of Radclyffe Hall's Novel.” *New York Times* 15 Dec 1928: 4. Print.
- “Shaw and Wells Rap Seizure of Sex Novel; Question England's Right to Ban French Copies of Book Voluntarily Withdrawn in Britain.” *New York Times* 6 Oct. 1928: 6. Print.
- Sievers, W. David. *Freud on Broadway: A History of Psychoanalysis and the American Drama*. New York: Hermitage House, 1955. Print.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Knopf: 1985. Print.
- Stone, Percy N. “Bourdett Didn't Try to Shock When He Wrote 'The Captive.'” *New York Herald Tribune* 12 Dec. 1922. Print.
- “Suppress 'Reigen,' Sumner Demands.” *New York Times* 8 March 1923: 8. Print.
- “The Captive.” *Variety* 6 Oct. 1926. Print.
- “To Print Banned Book Here; Alfred Knopf Gets American Rights to 'Well of Loneliness.'” *New York Times* 30 Aug. 1928: 36. Print.
- Vicinus, Martha. “They Wonder to Which Sex I Belong: The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity.” *Feminist Studies* 18.3 (Autumn 1992): 467-497. Print.
- Watts, Richard Jr. “The Theaters: The Girls.” *New York Herald Tribune*. 14 Dec. 1937: 20. Print.
- . “‘Winter Bound’ Is Provincetown Players’ Offering: Study in Feminine Psychology at Garrick Is Confusing to Opening Audience.” *New York Herald Tribune*. 13 Nov. 1929. Print.
- Weeks, Jeffrey. *Making Sexual History*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. Print.
- . *Sex, Politics & Society: The regulation of sexuality since 1800*. 2nd Ed. London: Longman, 1989. Print.

“‘Well of Loneliness’ Cleared in Court Here.” *New York Times* 20 Apr 1929: 25.
Print.

“‘Winter Bound’ Moves Along Devious Paths.” *New York Times* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.

Wolf, Stacy. *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical*.
Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002. Print.

CHAPTER THREE

Sapphic Scheming: Lesbian Antagonists on Broadway, 1920-1945

*“Under cover of friendship a woman can enter any household, whenever and however she pleases—at any hour of the day—she can poison and pillage everything before the man whose home she destroys is even aware of what’s happening to him. When finally he realizes things it’s too late—he is alone!”*⁶⁰

Monsieur D’Aiguines, in Edouard Bourdet’s *The Captive*

*“[A]ll other forms of sexuality (nonreproductive, fetishistic, homosexual) became organically “unnatural,” atavistic, degenerate—symbols of social disorder.”*⁶¹

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg

Drama on Broadway in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s presents an array of lesbian antagonists. I employ the term “antagonist” to mean more than just the character who opposes the protagonist in a piece of literature. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, an antagonist is “[o]ne who contends with another in an athletic contest, a battle, or struggle for the [sic] mastery; an opponent, an adversary.” In lesbian drama on Broadway in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, one can view lesbian antagonists in terms of their competitions with males for the love of other females as well as their general opposition to, and struggles with, those characters in the play who represent heteronormativity. In this way, one might view the lesbian antagonist as a character displaced and marked as Other by those she opposes and/or those who oppose her difference. She is both a personal antagonist (battling a specific character) and a social antagonist (challenging and opposing social norms). The lesbian antagonist in the plays studied here attempts to seduce the object of her affection and often does so under the auspices of female friendship, posing a threat to heteronormativity because

⁶⁰ Bourdet, Edouard. *The Captive*. Ed. & Trans. Arthur Hornblow. New York: Brentano’s Publishers, 1926. 149. Print.

⁶¹ Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Knopf: 1985. 40. Print.

she uses a socially sanctioned relationship as a guise for pursuing a relationship perceived as deviant. Her deviousness is consistently portrayed as a function of her sexuality. She displaces the male “entitled” (in terms of a phallogocentric paradigm) to the female and upsets social order, fulfilling her role of personal and social antagonist. To understand how the lesbian antagonists of Broadway drama from this era are displaced and marked as Other, one can productively read them through eugenic, sexological, and literary lenses. These three lenses highlight the lesbian antagonist’s difference within both the socio-historical environment of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s and literary traditions.

In her appraisal of the relationship between eugenics and sexology, social historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg sees

social Darwinism, eugenics, sexology all as parts of a metaphoric discourse in which the physical body symbolized the social body, and the physical and sexual disorder stood for social discord and danger. Within this analytic framework, the sexologists, by insisting that conventional sexuality (heterosexual, monogamous, reproductive, quintessentially bourgeois, as Michel Foucault reminds us) constituted the apex of human sexual evolution, made heterosexuality both essential to and symbolic of social order. Within their evolutionary model, all other forms of sexuality (nonreproductive, fetishistic, homosexual) became organically “unnatural,” atavistic, degenerate—symbols of social disorder. (40)

Accordingly, one can view lesbians as embodiments and instruments of “social disorder.” Not only were lesbians—almost always masculine, according to sexologists—evolutionary aberrations, they also posed a threat to heteronormativity for those who viewed lesbians as predators who might infect weak, heterosexual females. This supposed predatory nature gave birth to descriptions of lesbians

indicative of social fears regarding female homosexuality. Eugenic and sexological readings of lesbian antagonists dovetail to reveal a shared perception of lesbians as abnormal, base, and immoral females and, consequently, as a threat to social order. In other words, according to both sexologists and eugenicists, lesbianism predisposes a female toward being a social antagonist: a lesbian's base nature puts her at odds with the society in which she lives and furthermore marks her as a threat to the social status quo. The implications of the work of sexologists and eugenicists are more than "scientific"; they are moral. A companion literary reading suggests how one might complicate understandings of this threat to view it as a progressive depiction of lesbian power and a departure from the traditional love-triangle tropes that frame the lesbian's suspect behavior in narratives. Edouard Bourdet's *The Captive* (premiering on Broadway in 1926), Stephen Powys' *Wise Tomorrow* (1937), and Dorothy and Howard Bakers' *Trio* (1944) offer different and valuable perspectives on the relationship between lesbian antagonists and cultural constructions of lesbian identity.

Eugenic & Sexological Lenses

Eugenics, the study (and practice) of trying to improve the species by means of selective breeding, and sexology, the study of human sexuality, were two popular scientific (and, at times, pseudo-scientific) areas of inquiry of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The dynamic shared between these two fields of study turns on the threat posed by homosexuality to the improvement of the human species. Consequently, eugenic conceptions of what constituted "health" often informed sexological explications of lesbianism. Francis Galton coined the term "eugenics" and published his thoughts on the improvement of the human race in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and its Development* (1883). Galton's book draws upon his half-cousin Charles Darwin's work in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) which theorizes the

evolutionary continuity between animals and humans.⁶² In essence, eugenics proposes that the human race can be improved as a result of selective reproduction—the reproduction by couples of superior heredity and the prevention of reproduction by those with undesirable traits. Undesirable traits could range from mental illness to physical deformity, but could also be racial and sexual in nature, depending on the eugenicist’s or sexologist’s perspective. As social historian Jeffrey Weeks states, “[t]he supreme danger of all eugenics arguments is that they are filtered through the dominant sectors of society. It is they who decide whether the population is too large or small, which part of it is superior or inferior, which people have to limit their procreation” (43). In “Research in Eugenics” (1921), Charles B. Davenport, the Director of the Station for Experimental Evolution established by the Carnegie Institution of Washington, argues:

The human species must eventually go the way of all species of which we have a paleontological record; already there are clear signs of a wide-spread deterioration in this most complex and unstable of all animal types. A failure to be influenced by the findings of the students of eugenics or a continuance in our present fatuous belief in the potency of money to cure racial evils will hasten the end. But if there be a serious support of research in eugenics and a willingness to be guided by clearly established facts in this field, the end of our species may long be postponed and the race may be brought to higher levels of racial health, happiness, and effectiveness. (397)

Davenport does not focus on sexuality, but instead concerns himself with related concepts of fecundity, hereditary “mental and temperamental characteristics,” and “the effect of a mixture of races upon a country” (394, 396). And while he writes in terms of “the human species,” his essay suggests a concentration on white Americans as he

⁶² Providing a foundation for future eugenic research, Darwin draws upon a history of selective breeding among animals and plants.

expresses anxiety about “a migration of all sorts of races in such numbers, over so great a distance” to the United States and advocates carefully selecting which immigrants should be allowed to enter the United States (395-396). But Davenport’s work, typical of eugenics tracts, does relate to sexology. According to Davenport, eugenics can “cure racial evils” and, in doing so, postpone the demise of the human race, most specifically the eugenically superior components of the human race. One threat, among many, to achieving what Davenport identifies as “higher levels of racial health” was homosexuality.

Theatre scholar Laurence Senelick provides a concise overview of changing perceptions of human abnormality and degeneration; he writes:

Max Nordau⁶³ called it "degeneracy" (*Entartung*) at the turn of the last century; "sexual anarchy" is how Elaine Showalter [a feminist literary critic] labels it at the turn of ours. Millennial feeling in the 1890s was sensed not so much as a crisis in the political or social establishments as a psychic malaise affecting what would once have been called "the passions" or "the bump of amativeness." As a token of the new dispensation, it was now known as Sex. John Fout [a social historian] has pointed out that "the period beginning around 1890 is a 'new,' historically specific stage in the history of sexuality (concurrent with trends across the industrialized west)." Controversies over divorce reform, disease prevention, female prostitution, and the regulation of public and private behavior were aired not only in scientific works but in popular journalism; forensics, clinical practice, and eugenics joined jurisprudence in classifying newly discovered or identified variations of human abnormality. (201)

By the early twentieth century, what Senelick identifies as the “regulation of public

⁶³ Max Nordau was a writer, philosopher, physician, co-founder of the World Zionist Organization, and author of *Degeneration* (1895), an attack on what he deemed degenerate art.

and private behavior” included attempts to identify and marginalize lesbianism. Scientifically, homosexuality could be viewed as degenerative insofar as it was thought to blur gender differentiation (in the form of feminine males and masculine females) and precludes the propagation of the species. In her persuasively argued essay, “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body” (1994), Siobhan Somerville explains how the discourses of eugenics and sexuality inform one another. Somerville writes that gender

was crucial to Darwinist ideas. One of the basic assumptions within the Darwinian model was the belief that, as organisms evolved through a process of natural selection, they also showed greater signs of differentiation between the (two) sexes. Following this logic, various writers used sexual characteristics as indicators of evolutionary progress toward civilization. (255)

As Chapter Two demonstrates, sexologists understood lesbianism in terms of masculinity. From a eugenic perspective, lesbian masculinity is an indication of hereditary degeneration because the masculine lesbian does not show clear signs of sex differentiation; instead she blurs female/male, feminine/masculine dichotomies. Sexology frequently employed the language and premises of eugenics in its investigations of sexuality. This is perhaps most evident in the work of sexologists Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis. Both understood lesbians in terms of their masculinity and ranked the bodies of their lesbian case studies in an effort to create a hierarchy of degeneration: the more masculine the body, the greater the degeneration.⁶⁴

In *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Krafft-Ebing paid particular attention to the physical condition of those who provided the lesbian case studies for his investigation. In a

⁶⁴ Please see Chapter Two for an analysis of lesbian masculinity.

few instances, Krafft-Ebing reveals his own expectations of physical masculinity in lesbians when he notes that nothing in the “external appearance of this lady [...] in the least betrayed her anomaly,” and in another case, he comments that the subject exhibits a “[f]eminine pelvis, large mammae, [and] no indication of a beard” (266, 271). When one subject died of tuberculosis, Krafft-Ebing records: “Weight of brain 1150 grammes. Skull slightly asymmetrical. No anatomical signs of degeneration. External and internal genitals without anomaly” (276). Given the lesbianism of these subjects, Krafft-Ebing is surprised that the females’ bodies do *not* betray their “anomaly.” In other words, there is no reason to note the absence of a beard unless one is specifically searching for it. Some case studies, however, offered evidence of the coincidence of masculine physiognomy and lesbianism expected by sexologists. Krafft-Ebing writes of one subject who exhibits a combination of masculine and feminine “physical and psychical secondary sexual characteristics”: “her gait and carriage, severe features, deep voice, robust skeleton, powerful muscles and absence of adipose layers bore the stamp of the masculine character. The pelvis also (small hips), distance of the spine 22cm, of the cristae 26cm, and of the trochanters (ball of the hip bones) 31 cm, approached the masculine figure. Vagina, uterus, ovaries normal, clitoris rather large” (278). Somerville contends that although

Krafft-Ebing could not draw any conclusions about somatic indicators of ‘abnormal’ sexuality, physical examinations remained a staple of the genre. In Ellis’s *Sexual Inversion*, case studies often focused more intensely on the bodies of female ‘inverts’ than those of their male counterparts. Although the specific sites of anatomical inspection (hymen, clitoris, labia, vagina) differed, the underlying theory remained constant: women’s genitalia and reproductive anatomy held a valuable and presumably visual key to ranking bodies according to norms of sexuality. (253)

This “ranking” of bodies was the work of eugenics. Havelock Ellis recorded, in

minute detail—more minute than that of Krafft-Ebing—the measurements of his subjects’ genitalia in *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (1896). The case of Miss M. serves as a prime example of Ellis’s obsession with his theories of the connection between physical “abnormality” and lesbianism. After listing Miss M.’s pelvic, neck, and height measurements, Ellis details her sexual organs:

(a) Internal: Uterus and ovaries appear normal. (b) External: Small clitoris, with this irregularity, that the lower folds of the labia minora, instead of uniting one with the other and forming the frenum, are extended upward along the sides of clitoris, while the upper folds are poorly developed, furnishing the clitoris with a very scant hood. The labia majora depart from normal conformation in being fuller in their posterior half than in their anterior part, so that when the subject is in the supine position they sag, as it were, presenting a slight resemblance to fleshy sacs, but in substance and structure they feel normal. (136)

In short, when Miss M. lies down, her labia sag and resemble testicles, demonstrating, for Ellis, a physical manifestation of her masculine desire for females.

Ellis’s study of lesbianism as degeneration (a term which predates Nordau’s work) can be understood on the level of physical case studies like Miss M., but also within the broader context of a eugenics philosophy. In *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*, Havelock Ellis provides readers with numerous examples of lesbianism in non-white, nonwestern cultures (122-125). Ellis presupposes the inferiority of “lower” [read: non-white, non-western] races and then explicates how lesbianism functions among such racial populations: “the same kind of [homosexual] aberrations that are found among men in lower races are also seen in women, though they are less frequently recorded” (122). Ellis notes that “homosexual practices certainly, and probably definite sexual inversion, are very wide-spread among women in very many

and various parts of the world, though it is probably that, as among men, there are variations—geographical, racial, national, or social—in the frequency or intensity of its obvious manifestation” (125). This statement is vague; what, exactly, are these geographical, racial, national, and social variations? Is Ellis suggesting that lesbianism is more common among the “lower races”? Ellis discusses plenty of examples of lesbianism in western nations, but, perhaps tellingly, Ellis shifts his discussion of lesbianism among the lower races to a study of lesbianism in European “prisons and lunatic asylums,” locations in which one could ostensibly find other inferior females: the corrupt and mentally ill (125).⁶⁵ This undercurrent of eugenics is not surprising. Ellis was well-acquainted with the work of Francis Galton, and according to Weeks, Ellis’s interest in Galton’s work was “longstanding” (43). Furthermore, Galton’s work is cited by Ellis in his essay, “Women and Socialism” (1884); here, Ellis refers to Galton as an “original and bold [...] investigator” of eugenics (*Views and Reviews* 18). In “Women and Socialism,” Ellis argues that the satisfaction of sexual desires is

a thing that concerns the race, that is bound up with the advance of human life; since it may be physiologically demonstrated that it is not possible for one-half of the race to be oppressed and undeveloped and the other not be dragged down too. The sexual relations of the individual, therefore, concern not only the individual himself in all his relations, but they concern more than the individual. And the chief ethical demand on the sexual relations to-day is that these larger bearings should be recognised; that the sexual relations should be finally rescued from the degradation into which they have fallen; that they should be treated with a full consciousness of their wide human bearings for

⁶⁵ In “Women and Socialism” (1884), Ellis clearly conveys his sense of a racial hierarchy when discussing brain size: “It is a remarkable fact that not only is there less difference between the brains of a negro and negress and those of a civilized man and woman, but that difference varies in civilized countries in a very significant way” (*Views and Reviews* 10). The “negro” and “negress” are different from other males and females because they are not “civilized.”

the individual and for the race. (*Views and Reviews* 15)

While Ellis is arguing against the sexual oppression of females (but not for their political rights) and for a discourse of human sexuality (which he would go on to create), his claim that sexual relations affect both the individual and “the race” and are “bound up with the advance of the human life” reveals a eugenic orientation. For Ellis, as early as 1884, an individual’s sexuality was viewed in terms of its relationship to race and human advancement. And according to Ellis, birth control was key to the advancement of the human species. In *Essays in War-Time: Further Studies in the Task of Social Hygiene* (1917), Ellis asserts that “there can be no doubt that birth control is not only a precious but an indispensable instrument in moulding the coming man to the measure of our developing ideals. Without it we are powerless in the face of the awful evils which flow from random and reckless reproduction” (241). But, of course, for eugenics, as a movement, to succeed, females needed to embrace their role as procreators. Weeks notes that while Ellis did advocate for females’ control of their own sexuality, “the whole point of his arguments was to confirm women in their exclusive child-bearing role. Ellis recognized the necessity of women controlling their own sexuality but this was theoretically and practically hampered by a prior commitment to the sort of social role women should perform” (45). Weeks elaborates and notes that, for Ellis, “it was through the family that the future of the human race could be ensured. [...] By an apparent paradox, the writer who had first achieved notoriety as an advocate for sexual freedom ended his career as the liberal advocate of a reformed family, where social roles are cemented rather than questioned” (46-47). Indeed, many sexologists’ attempts to understand sexuality led to a codification of sexuality in which non-heterosexual (and fetish-free) sexualities carried with them connotations of abnormality and, sometimes, moral degeneracy.

Along these lines, Sigmund Freud, in his study of a case of homosexuality in a young

female, notes that the young lesbian “disdained no means of deception, no excuses and no lies that would make meetings with her [female love interest] possible and cover them” (126). In brief, her lesbian sexuality and deception go hand in hand: science dictates morality. Offering a broader generalization, Laurence Senelick writes that “[f]rom the publication of Richard von Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis* in 1886, an awareness of the varieties of sexual activity coexisted with a fear that these newly conspicuous variations bespoke a corresponding moral degeneration of society” (212). Thus, the eugenic “baseness” of the masculine lesbian implies a certain degree of immorality and this immorality threatened prevailing social order. Weeks writes that “[i]t was the concept of homosexuality as a disease or mental illness which first grabbed the attention of ‘medical authorities’, who could then conceptualize homosexuality as a characteristic sign of individual mental derangement, derived from morbid ancestors or from corruption” (24). According to Weeks, “Krafft-Ebing brought this trend to its peak by seeing homosexual behaviour as a fundamental sign of ‘degeneration’ and a product of ‘vice’ working on ‘tainted’ individuals” (24). In essence, the lesbian’s eugenic degeneration was evident by her masculinity and her physical degeneration denoted a baseness in her morality. This perception of moral baseness in lesbians is apparent in a range of literary lesbian antagonists who challenged the socio-sexual and moral status quo.

A Literary Lens

In *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture* (1993), Terry Castle provides an insightful means of theorizing lesbian desire in contemporary literature. Castle’s theories of lesbian desire stem from her reading and revision of the work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire* (1985). To understand Castle’s revision of Sedgwick, one must

first examine Sedgwick's core argument. Sedgwick explicates a male-female-male homosocial paradigm in which females are socio-sexual commodities which help to assuage the homosexual threat posed by male homosocial bonding; in Sedgwick's model, the two male components of the triangle are the true partners. Sedgwick's book deals exclusively with male-female-male triangles in literature and excludes female-male-female triangulations because Sedgwick contends that

the diacritical opposition between the "homosocial" and the "homosexual" seems to be much less thorough and dichotomous for women, in our society, than for men. At this particular historical moment, an intelligible continuum of aims, emotions, and valuations links lesbianism with the other forms of women's attention to women: the bond of mother and daughter, for instance, the bond of sister and sister, women's friendship, "networking," and the active struggles of feminism. The continuum is crisscrossed with deep discontinuities—with much homophobia, with conflicts of race and class—but its intelligibility seems now a matter of simple common sense. However agonistic the politics, however conflated the feelings, it seems at this moment to make an obvious kind of sense to say that women in our society who love women, women who teach, study, nurture, suckle, write about, march for, vote for, give jobs to, or otherwise promote the interests of other women, are pursuing congruent and closely related activities. Thus the adjective "homosocial" as applied to women's bonds [...] need not be pointedly dichotomized as against "homosexual"; it can intelligently denominate the entire continuum. (2-3)

I quote Sedgwick at length to do complete justice to her rationale for the inapplicability of her theory to female bonds and female-male-female triangulations. Sedgwick's notion of a continuum linking "lesbianism with other forms of women's attention to women" relies heavily on Adrienne Rich's idea of a "lesbian continuum,"

a term Rich coined in her essay “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980), although Rich is mentioned only once in an endnote in Sedgwick’s piece. But Sedgwick doesn’t discuss this continuum within the context of feminist theory and criticism as Rich does; Sedgwick writes that the acceptance of such a continuum is “now a matter of simple common sense.” And yet almost immediately after the publication of Rich’s essay, scholars challenged Rich’s view of a lesbian continuum which includes “a range—through each woman’s life and throughout history—of woman-identified experience, not simply the fact that a woman had had or consciously desired genital sexual experience with another woman” (239). For instance, in “Patriarchy, Sexual Identity, and the Sexual Revolution” (1981), Ann Ferguson argues that Rich’s model “does not allow us to understand the collective and social nature of a lesbian identity as opposed to lesbian practices and behaviors” and “undervalues the important historical development of an explicit lesbian identity connected to genital sexuality” (160). Rich’s essay was controversial and, for many, not a matter of “common sense,” but a narrowly focused lesbian feminist treatise.

Castle opposes Sedgwick’s move to use “the adjective ‘homosocial’ as applied to women’s bonds [...to] intelligently denominate the entire continuum” and contends that by this “disarming sleight of phrase, an entire category of women—lesbians—is lost to view” (71). Indeed, Sedgwick’s claim that the term “homosocial” can denominate the entire continuum of female-female relationships elides lesbian history. Homosociality and homosexuality can be as distinctly different in lesbian culture as in gay male culture. In short, to “write about” and “vote for” females are not “closely related activities” to lesbian desire and sex. Furthermore, Sedgwick does not preface her work by saying that female-female relationships during the periods she studies in *Between Men* (the English Renaissance through the nineteenth century) function differently from male-male bonding. One could argue that the emergence of sexology

and the language of homosexuality during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries changed perspectives of female-female relationships, but Sedgwick doesn't. Instead, she prefaces her comments by situating them within "this particular historical moment," presumably just before the 1985 publication of her book. Castle acknowledges that "the canon of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century English and American fiction [...] constitute[s] a brief against male homosexuality (Sedgwick's point), so they also constitute, even more blatantly, a brief against female homosociality. Even in works in which female homosocial bonds are depicted, these bonds are inevitably shown giving way to the power of male homosocial triangulation" (73). To remedy what Castle views as Sedgwick's privileging of male-female-male triangulation, Castle suggests how one might revise Sedgwick's triangles to accommodate lesbian desire.

Castle proposes that twentieth-century lesbian fiction offers an alternative to both the continuum and male homosocial triangulation theorized by Sedgwick. She notes that to "'get the point' of *female-female* desire," means "undoing, if only imaginatively, the very structure she [Sedgwick] is elsewhere at such pains to elaborate: the figure of the male homosocial triangle itself" (72). Furthermore, "[f]emale bonding, at least hypothetically, destabilizes the 'canonical' triangular arrangement of male desire, is an affront to it, and ultimately—in the radical form of lesbian bonding—displaces it entirely" (72). Castle argues that if homosocial female-female bonding becomes lesbian female-female bonding, the male term drops out and male bonding becomes impossible because there are no males with whom to bond (and, I add, no females left to facilitate the male-male bonding). Castle explores Sylvia Townsend Warner's novel *Summer Will Show* (1936) as an example of the "breakup of the supposedly 'canonical' male-female-male erotic triangle" and of "subverted triangulation, or erotic 'counterplotting'" (74). I will employ an expansion of Castle's critique of

Sedgwick as a means of deconstructing portraits of lesbian antagonists in Broadway drama and identifying the progressive connotations of such portraits. The female-male-female triangulation is a convenient literary structure by which one can evaluate the socio-sexual threat posed by lesbian antagonists—especially when the lesbian antagonist surpasses the limits of homosociality, moves into the realm of homosexuality, and claims for herself the second female of the triangle, depriving the male of his patriarchal right and rejecting heteronormativity.

The Invisible Lesbian Antagonist

The first and one of the most dynamic lesbian antagonists in Broadway drama from 1920 to 1945 never actually appeared onstage: Madame D'Aiguines of Edouard Bourdet's drama *The Captive*.⁶⁶ Productions of *The Captive*, *Sex*, and *The Virgin Man* in early 1927 prompted censorship legislation in New York, the Padlock Law, which essentially prohibited depictions of homosexuality onstage.⁶⁷ In April of 1927, *The New York Times* reported that

[i]n approving the Theatre Padlock bill Governor Smith said he was satisfied that the powers conferred upon local licensing authorities would be wisely and discreetly used and that no one would be unjustly deprived of his property.

Under the new statute the license authorities will have power to padlock a theatre for one year if the owner, producer, manager or an actor is convicted of permitting an obscene, indecent, immoral, or impure play. (Wahn 12)

Prior to the passage of the Padlock Bill, Arthur Garfield Hays, counsel for Horace B. Liveright (who bought the play after the New York police raided it), defended *The Captive* and stated that according to Liveright,

⁶⁶ Please see Chapter Two for a summary of *The Captive*.

⁶⁷ Please see Chapter Two for more information about the Padlock Law.

there is not a word, line, or thought in the play that could or would excite lustful emotion [...] on the contrary, it is a literary masterpiece of high social value. The subject matter of “The Captive” has been dealt with in some of the most famous classics of history. The matter is handled in a delicate, artistic, subtle and inoffensive manner. There is not an offensive or vulgar line in the play, nor is there any obscene or unrefined situation or action. (“Legislature Gets Play...”)

Indeed, given that Madame D’Aiguines, half of the lesbian relationship around which the play’s plot revolves, never even appears onstage, one could argue that the play presents no obscene situation if obscenity is conceived of in terms of lesbian lovers sharing the stage. But Bourdet turns Madame D’Aiguines’ absence to his dramaturgical advantage, suggesting a more powerful and lustful lesbian relationship than he could have explicitly portrayed on stage.

In *The Captive*, Irene struggles with her love for the married Madame D’Aiguines (whose husband is aware of her sexuality and remains helplessly devoted to her) and marries Jacques in an effort to save herself from her own desire. Monsieur D’Aiguines delivers what I argue is one of the single most important speeches about homosexuality appearing in Broadway drama from 1920 to 1945. Dramaturgically, it serves to highlight Madame D’Aiguines’ opposition to social norms and her passion for her love interest, Irene, while simultaneously (and paradoxically) providing promising commentary on the nature of lesbianism. Though lengthy, his speech warrants close inspection. D’Aiguines tells Jacques:

If she [Irene] had a lover I’d say to you: Patience, my boy, patience and courage. Your cause isn’t lost. No man lasts forever in a woman’s life. You love her and she’ll come back to you if you know how to wait...But in this case I say: Don’t wait! There’s no use. She’ll never return—and if ever your

paths should cross again fly from her, fly from her...do you hear? Otherwise you are lost! Otherwise you'll spend your existence pursuing a phantom which you can never overtake. One can never overtake them! They are shadows. They must be left to dwell alone among themselves in the kingdom of shadows! Don't go near them...they're a menace! Above all, never try to be anything to them, no matter how little—that's where the danger lies. For, after all, they have some need of us in their lives...it isn't always easy for a woman to get along. So if a man offers to help her, to share with her what he has, and to give her his name, naturally she accepts. What difference can it make to her? So long as he doesn't exact love, she's not concerned about the rest. Only, can you imagine the existence of a man if he has the misfortune to love—to adore a *shadow* near whom he lives? (148-149)

Here, for Monsieur D'Aiguines, lesbians are phantoms, shadows, and menaces. In *The Captive*, Madame D'Aiguines qualifies as an antagonist for three reasons: she opposes the will of her husband, competes with Jacques for the love of/mastery of Irene, and uses social norms and mores to gain proximity to her love interest. Furthermore, Bourdet's depiction of her phantom nature suggests she is a uniquely dangerous antagonist because like the supernatural antagonists of the Gothic, Madame D'Aiguines can seemingly appear and disappear at will to menace those around her. D'Aiguines views lesbians as menaces because they will take from a male whatever they can so long as he does not demand love. A lesbian is "not concerned" with the arrangement and/or the males she uses from D'Aiguines' perspective. In her essay "Tracking the Vampire" (1991), Sue-Ellen Case writes: "The queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny. Like the Phantom of the Opera, the queer dwells underground, below the operatic overtones of the dominant, frightening to look at, desiring, as it plays its own organ, producing its own music" (383). Like the queer described by Case, Madame D'Aiguines enchants Irene from offstage, but her

shadowy presence is ubiquitous and ultimately pulls Irene from Jacques—an act that is both monstrous and uncanny because Irene’s decision to leave Jacques for Madame D’Aiguines is seemingly unnatural and inexplicable within a heteronormative matrix of desire. But despite the dangers of which D’Aiguines warns, his speech suggests that homosexuality is, if not natural, then at least inborn—not a disease to be cured or a trait easily passed from one to another like an infection. This sentiment is a departure from some of the views of sexologists like Havelock Ellis. Ellis lamented that modern movements such as the emancipation of females may indirectly cause sexual inversion, “promote hereditary neurosis,” and “develop the germ of it [sexual inversion]” which is spread to other females because lesbianism occurs “with special frequency in women of high intelligence who, voluntarily or involuntarily, influence others” (*Studies in the Psychology...* 148). D’Aiguines tells Jacques not to wait for Irene because “[t]here’s no use”; she won’t return because her lesbianism is not a passing fancy. Jacques “can never overtake” Irene because her sexuality is not a question of finding the right male, but of being true to what comes naturally to her: lesbianism. D’Aiguines continues his impassioned (note the abundance of exclamation points) plea for Jacques to give up Irene. He stresses the unscrupulous behavior of lesbians, explicating their schemes to infiltrate and undermine heterosexual marriages, making clear the supposedly inherent bond between sexuality and morality.

Despite the play’s French origins, Monsieur D’Aiguines’ warning to Jacques⁶⁸ also epitomizes American fear of lesbianism and the threat it poses to unsuspecting husbands. D’Aiguines argues that females use socially-condoned behaviors, like same-sex friendship, to penetrate the homes of unsuspecting husbands and covertly

⁶⁸ Monsieur D’Aiguines’ warning to Jacques is quoted at length in Chapter Two.

steal their wives. In this way, lesbian antagonists upset the social order and confirm societal fears about the spread of lesbianism and the manner in which it represents a rejection of traditional domestic roles. In her essay, “Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat” (1979), Christina Simmons argues that

[i]f women’s sexual desires exhibited the urgency long attributed to men’s, and if an intense love relationship seemed vital for personal happiness, then lesbian relationships were the logical result of the absence or failure of heterosexuality. [...] Whether female resistance to heterosexual relationships actually occurred or not, the recognition of sexual inequality engendered in the culture a male *fear* of resistance, often expressed as a fear of lesbianism. (55)

For Simmons, a fear of heterosexual resistance is expressed as a fear of lesbianism. In the case of Monsieur D’Aiguines, his fear of his wife’s and Irene’s lesbianism is well-founded.⁶⁹ Here, Castle’s revision of Sedgwick’s male-female-male triangulation is most useful. D’Aiguines himself implies the difference between homosociality and homosexuality, marking the reality and dangers of the female-male-female triangle. Though the females about which D’Aiguines speaks are married, Bourdet provides no evidence to suggest that they are happily heterosexual; on the contrary, as D’Aiguines indicates, homosexuality is not a choice and females often marry, seemingly unscrupulously, for socio-economic reasons. Of course, the speech Bourdet has crafted for D’Aiguines ignores the history of viewing females as currency in a patriarchal economy in which females could be married and/or sold for property, power, etc. *The Captive* does not discuss the limited options available to females for attaining security on their own terms. For many females, marriage was one of a few options, if not the only option, to provide a measure of economic security. But from D’Aiguines’ perspective, under the guise of heretofore commonplace female

⁶⁹ Please Chapter Two for an analysis of the manner in which intimate female friendships became suspect after the dissemination of sexological material into popular culture.

friendship, lesbians are destroying domestic life. Because the play does not highlight the limited options for security available to females, the play provides no rationale for marrying only for security. Thus, the actions of someone like Madame D'Aiguines or Irene seem intentionally dastardly rather than desperately necessary. Interestingly, Monsieur D'Aiguines, while consistent in his condemnation of scheming lesbians, prevaricates with respect to males' responses to this scheming. Husbands may wish to defend their marriages with brute strength, but this stems from a fear of loneliness for D'Aiguines. D'Aiguines' portrait of these males is one of vulnerability. He asks Jacques to "imagine the existence of a man if he has the misfortune to love—to adore a *shadow* near whom he lives" (148-149) and notes that husbands are left "alone" (149). He victimizes husbands, which might serve to make the lesbian scheming even more despicable to an audience member who would sympathize with the unfortunate and deceived husband. Finally, D'Aiguines makes his argument completely personal, and in an odd dramaturgical twist, admits his own weakness for his lesbian wife. When Jacques asks D'Aiguines why, given all that D'Aiguines has revealed about the nature of lesbians and the havoc they wreak on others, he has not left his wife, D'Aiguines confesses:

Oh, with me it's different. I can't leave her now. We've been married eight years. Where would she go?...Besides it's too late. I couldn't live without her any more. What can I do—I love her?...[*Pause.*] You've never seen her? [JACQUES *shakes his head.*] You'd understand better if you knew her. She has all the feminine allurements, every one. As soon as one is near her, one feels—how shall I say it—a sort of deep charm. Not only I feel it. Every one feels it. But I more than the rest because I live near her. I really believe she is the most harmonious being that has ever breathed...Sometimes when I'm away from her, I have the strength to hate her for all the harm she has done me...but with her, I don't struggle. I look at her...I listen to her...I worship her. You

see? (150)

The very name of the play suggests a sinister villain: Madame D'Aiguines holds Irene captive (even Monsieur D'Aiguines admits that Irene suffers as much as he does, but in a different way) (151-152), but it also holds her husband captive. In terms of dramaturgy, Bourdet doubles the seeming devastation caused by Madame D'Aiguines: her deeds fracture two marriages. Madame D'Aiguines has the best of both worlds and Monsieur D'Aiguines is powerless to leave her. She exerts an other-worldly charm that makes opposition impossible. Furthermore, she undermines the power of three males and preys on one female: Madame D'Aiguines ultimately defeats her husband who cannot leave her, Irene's father who cannot bend Irene to his will because of Madame D'Aiguines' influence, Jacques who cannot compete with her for Irene's love, and Irene who finally returns to her. Although never onstage, Madame D'Aiguines is the lesbian antagonist at cross-purposes with nearly every other character in the play.

Dramaturgically, Madame D'Aiguines' absence serves multiple purposes. First, it creates suspense: Will she appear on stage before the play's conclusion? It also fosters curiosity: Who (or what) is this mysterious woman who has captured Irene's heart? Additionally, her absence contributes to her dark reputation. Monsieur D'Aiguines characterizes lesbians as "phantom[s]" and "shadows" (148). Lesbians are elusive creatures who conjure dread (like the Phantom of Opera, to use Sue-Ellen Case's example). Terry Castle argues that "[t]he spectral figure [of the lesbian] is a perfect vehicle for conveying what must be called—though without a doubt paradoxically—that 'recognition through negation' which has taken place with regard to female homosexuality in Western culture since the Enlightenment" (60). The spectral figures of which Castle writes are both ghosts and ghostly flesh-and-blood humans. Castle even mentions in passing Monsieur D'Aiguines' warning to Jacques

as an example of the spectral status of lesbians in early twentieth-century literature (45). Furthermore, Castle notes that “[o]ne might think of lesbianism as the ‘repressed idea’ at the heart of patriarchal culture. By its very nature (and in this respect it differs significantly from male homosexuality) lesbianism poses an ineluctable challenge to the political, economic, and sexual authority of men over women” (62). Although Madame D’Aiguines is not represented onstage, her shadow still poses a threat to patriarchal norms—perhaps more so, precisely because one cannot control a shadow. While audience members do not see Madame D’Aiguines, they *might* see her at any time; like a ghost, she can appear and disappear at will. Her effect on Irene is persistent and consequently, her sexual power is present onstage despite her physical absence.

Ultimately, Madame D’Aiguines, in the shadows, cuckolds both her husband and Jacques. Madame D’Aiguines’ goal is not the mastery of Jacques or her own husband, but the mastery of Irene. The manner in which she thwarts Jacques’ attempts to impose heterosexuality on Irene makes her an antagonist insofar as she opposes the efforts of the hero—when *The Captive* is read within a traditional heteronormative context. But what if Madame D’Aiguines is the hero who rescues Irene from compulsory heterosexuality? What if Irene desires Madame D’Aiguines (as the ending of the play suggests)? How might this shift inform an early twentieth-century eugenic reading of the play in terms of the manner in which eugenics tracts posited moral imperatives for the longevity and improvement of the human race?

Historian Lillian Faderman concisely speaks to the dynamic between eugenics, sexuality, and immorality when writing about sexology; she notes that:

while they were convinced of the objectivity of their classifications, the scientists—and particularly the medical men who turned their attention to

sexology [during the late nineteenth century]—were often motivated by the moral vision of their day. Influenced by the theories of evolution, they formulated the notion that those who did not contribute to what was considered the human race’s move forward—criminals and deviants, by virtue of their socio-economic position, the “lower classes”—owed their backwardness to bad heredity. They were “degenerate” because, as the term itself suggests, their genes were defective. Their deviant or backward behavior was thought to have a physiological basis. Through this explanation of the misfit, science came to replace religion as the definer and upholder of mores. (40)

When read through Faderman, Madame D’Aiguines is quite simply a “degenerate.” Not only is she the result of “bad heredity,” but the manifestation of this aberration, her lesbianism, means that she offers nothing to the evolution of the human race. Paradoxically, Monsieur D’Aiguines’ anti-lesbian tirade illuminates the strength of females as well as the inborn nature of homosexuality. Read through a lens of heteronormativity, *The Captive* paints a picture of menacing lesbians, but the play warns that trying to cure or change them is pointless—a perversely positive message that echoes the work of some sexologists like Edward Carpenter. Carpenter posited that homosexuals were born as such and that homosexuality need not be presumed to be “a result of disease and degeneration” (23) because “the sexes form in a certain sense a continuous group [...] Love and Friendship—which have been so often set apart from each other as things distinct—are in reality closely related and shade imperceptibly into each other” (18). In fact, Monsieur D’Aiguines’ warnings also echo a fear of precisely what Carpenter contends: that friendship and love are not far enough removed from each other to make female friendships “safe.” According to Monsieur D’Aiguines, friendship is but a “mask” behind which lesbianism looms large. In the case of the Madame D’Aiguines-Jacques-Irene triangle, the two females choose each other, a eugenic problem which prohibits procreation and disrupts social

order.

In her essay, “Normality, Whiteness, Authorship: Evolutionary Sexology and the Primitive Pervert” (1997), Julian Carter explains eugenic fears regarding reproduction circulating in early the twentieth century. Carter writes:

In the first forty years of the twentieth century, scores of people wrote about modern marriage as a triumph of evolution. In such accounts, “primitive” reproductive arrangements developed, across ages of natural selection, into romantic and sexual love between spouses. These socioevolutionary narratives focused on sex as the means by which races evolved, devolved, or committed suicide. Thus early twentieth-century studies of “normal” sex among “civilized” people often contained a eugenic element—that is, they sought to aid evolutionary progress by encouraging reproduction among white, middle-class Americans. As such studies forged connections between Anglo-Saxon civilization, evolutionary progress, and normal marital sex, they linked sexual perversion to primitivism and savagery. (155)

Within this framework, in choosing to be with one another, both Madame D’Aiguines and Irene reject their evolutionary duties. And in an ironic twist of Darwin’s notion of the survival of the fittest, Monsieur D’Aiguines tells Jacques that Irene “is suffering probably, as the weak always do, struggling with a stronger nature until they give in” (151). In this instance, Madame D’Aiguines is the stronger nature to which Irene capitulates, but unlike Darwin’s theory of evolution, an extrapolation of Madame D’Aiguines’ conquering of Irene would result in the race suicide feared by proponents of eugenics. Madame D’Aiguines’ power over Irene has affected Irene’s marriage and is made manifest in Irene’s disgust for her sexual (evolutionary) duties as Jacques’ wife. At the play’s conclusion, Irene asks Jacques, “Is there no spirit in love? Must it be only—*the body!*” to which he replies, “Yes, you loathed that, didn’t you? Go on,

say it, be frank at least! [*Irene lowers her head, and does not answer.*] But don't bother, don't say it! What for? I've known it for a long time" (251). Jacques subsequently promises: "You can breathe freely at last! I'll never impose my desire again. No more of that drudgery. It's over! Aren't you going to thank me?" (252). One might infer from this exchange that Irene does find "spirit" in her love for Madame D'Aiguines and a welcome escape from the mandates of marriage.

Critical Captivity

Reviews of the play, while frequently positive in their assessment of the production and even the daring theme, vary in their assessments of Madame D'Aiguines as an antagonist. Most startling is Bourdet's own assessment of his play in *The New York Herald Tribune*:

"I have never made a study of the sort of women discussed," he said. "They are something entirely out of man's knowledge and always will be. I have not attempted to do a portrait."

"Instead, I imagined I was writing the story of a man's great sorrow. It was a Calvary I was showing, with a man and not a woman on the cross. Of course, the title of the play may be misleading. Yet the fact is that the story is of the man more than of the woman. Of her sufferings I cannot tell." (Stone)

If Bourdet intended to write a play about a metaphorically crucified man and those responsible for death, his play falls short of his intention. Dramaturgically, there is no evidence to suggest that Jacques was crucified by the people. If one extrapolates Bourdet's metaphor more fully, his analysis falls apart: Pontius Pilate doesn't crucify Jesus directly, he asks the people to make a choice. The only characters in the play who could be even remotely responsible for Jacques' metaphoric crucifixion would be Madame D'Aiguines and Irene, neither of whom serves as a representative of the

people; on the contrary, both oppose the social norms of the majority. While Madame D'Aigüines is clearly an antagonist insofar as she lures Irene away from Jacques and represents a sexual morality at odds with heteronormativity, there is no place for her in Bourdet's metaphor. Critics, however, found myriad other ways of characterizing Madame D'Aigüines' Sapphic scheming outside of the religious context proposed by Bourdet. In his review of *The Captive*, Percy Hammond characterizes Madame D'Aigüines as a "sorceress," a "witch," and an "enchantress" who "cause[s] all the trouble" and "exercise[s] her unnatural influences" over the other characters in the play ("The Captive,' an Expert Play"). John Anderson's *New York Post* rave review implies rather than states that Madame D'Aigüines is the play's antagonist. He describes the other characters in the play as "victims" and refers to Monsieur D'Aigüines as "the defrauded husband" ("The Captive' Arrives at Last"). Anderson focuses on the effects of Madame D'Aigüines' schemes in terms of those victimized and defrauded without actually portraying her as an active agent of evil.⁷⁰ For Anderson, Irene is "a woman who loved neither him [Jacques] nor any man, but whose heart songs were in Sapphic stanzas, and whose desire was flamed by winds from Lesbos Isle"; Anderson characterized this desire as an "unholy torment" ("The Play: 'The Captive' Arrives at Last"). Charles Brackett's bold review of the play in *The New Yorker*, however, contrasts with those of his colleagues. This piece draws upon the language of sexology to make a powerful pro-lesbian statement, using the play's characters as its vehicle. Brackett characterizes Irene as "congenitally Lesbian" and writes that Irene is "in the unhappy throes of her first passion"; he does not attribute her unhappiness to her lesbianism, but to the nature of first love (33). Representing a voice of dissent unique among reviews of *The Captive*, Brackett offers a surprisingly enlightened view of the play's plot when he remarks that he "resented

⁷⁰ For more reviews of *The Captive*, please see Chapter Two.

two things in ‘The Captive’ as theatricalisms; the implication that *Irene* is merely the captive of *Madame D’Aiguines* instead of being imprisoned in her own abnormality, and the hypothesis that the intimate circle of a worldly French diplomat would regard her idiosyncrasy as so unique and dumbfounding” (33). Brackett objects to the virtual villainization of Madame D’Aiguines and views lesbianism as little more than an idiosyncrasy. Furthermore, he ventures to suggest that lesbianism is commonplace—at least in “worldly” French society, and he contends, in middle-class American society as well. He closes his review with the following speculation: “For all its virtues ‘The Captive’ uses the abracadabra of an hitherto forbidden theme to create an atmosphere more stifling than that of life. Now that the field has been opened I should like to wager that in five years ‘The Captive’ will sound as old-fashioned as ‘Mrs. Dane’s Defence [sic].’” *Mrs. Dane’s Defense* (1900), by Henry Arthur Jones, tells the story of Felicia Hindermarsh who works as a lady’s companion, becomes pregnant by the lady’s husband (after which the lady commits suicide), inherits a fortune from her own aunt (whose identity she subsequently takes), leaves her baby with a nurse, falls in love with a man who leaves his fiancé for her, and suffers the consequences of the revelation of her past and returns, alone, to her child. Racy, but Brackett assumes that its themes of single motherhood and adultery are already somewhat “old-fashioned.”

Beyond Wicked

Another scheming lesbian on Broadway from 1920 to 1945 appears in Stephen Powys’ *Wise Tomorrow* (1937).⁷¹ There can be no doubt that Diana Ebury is a villainous antagonist and a successful one at that. She desires to have Joan for herself and woos her away from Joan’s fiancé, Peter. In this female-male-female

⁷¹ For a summary of *Wise Tomorrow*, please see Chapter One.

triangulation, like that of *The Captive*, the lesbian antagonist again defeats her competition. Peter is no match for Diana, and Joan ultimately chooses Diana—even after Diana’s death. Diana becomes a shadow who hovers over Joan’s life and the rest of the play. She, like Madame D’Aiguines, is “the monstrous, the uncanny,” to use the terms Sue-Ellen Case employs to describe the lesbian Other (383). Like many villainous antagonists, Diana has a side-kick of sorts, Colley, who suffers Diana’s neglect, but does her bidding anyway. Toward the close of the play, Powys briefly recounts Colley’s relationship with Diana and her abandonment of Colley in favor of a new female who more closely mirrors Diana’s own persona: Joan. Diana orders Colley to fetch Joan (ironic because Colley’s devotion to Diana leads her to work toward securing Joan’s loyalty and commitment to Diana):

COLLEY. She’s promised her young man that she won’t see you.

DIANA. She can’t refuse...she knows I’m ill...ill and *alone*.

COLLEY. (*mockingly*) You have *me*, dear.

DIANA. You!

COLLEY. Yes, *me*...there was a time when you were glad to have me with you. You were always offering to help *me* then... *I* was to have a great career...be a famous pianist... Yes! But you found that you needed me to entertain your friends...so you changed your mind, and incidentally you changed my life...Oh well, what does it matter?

DIANA. That’s why you hate me, Colley?

COLLEY. No...there’s only one thing I hate you for...that *blasted* piano!... You didn’t even care enough for whatever gifts I had to give me something decent to play on.

DIANA. If it comes to hating, I ought to hate her. But I can’t... She’s so full of life! (99)

All Colley wants of her relationship with Diana is acknowledgment of her role in

Diana's life and a piano, but Diana cannot even acknowledge Colley's comments and feelings; she jumps to her own thoughts about hate with respect to Joan. Diana is hungry for "life" and, befitting her melodramatic dialogue, Diana is first portrayed as a werewolf.

Bob warns Peter to "be careful, old son. Try not to let this friendship [between Joan and Diana] go any farther [...] It *mustn't*...There's a good strain of werewolf in Diana, remember, and I know..." (28). Without a husband (they are separated—she refuses to divorce him, maintaining her status as a respectable married woman while shunning a married lifestyle) and without children, Diana preys on young females. Even the stage directions indicate how calculatingly Powys wants the actor playing Diana to portray the role. When Tony makes a comment about Diana's husband, the stage directions indicate that Diana "*pauses over it as if making a mental note: 'Here is an enemy'*" (31). Whenever Diana recognizes that she risks not getting her way, the stage directions specify that the actor playing Diana should act as though "*she were undergoing an attack of angina pectoris*" to elicit sympathy and manipulate those around her (36). Diana embodies the lesbian threat described by Castle in *The Apparitional Lesbian*. Castle writes that

[i]t would be putting it mildly to say that the lesbian represents a threat to patriarchal protocol: Western civilization has for centuries been haunted by a fear of 'women without men'—of women indifferent or resistant to male desire. Precisely because she challenges the moral, sexual, and psychic authority of men so thoroughly, the 'Amazon' has always provoked anxiety and hatred. (4-5)

Diana provokes this anxiety and hatred as her power over Joan mounts. For instance, when Peter appears backstage to greet his fiancé and takes her in his arms, Joan scolds him for nearly spoiling her make-up and pushes him away once she spots Diana in the

doorway. After Joan hurries away to get onstage as the curtain goes up, Peter warns Diana that she has “great influence with Joan” and pleads with her not to upset her before reminding Diana that Joan is set to marry him later that month (46). Diana congratulates Peter and after his departure, she explodes in a fit of violence and “with a blind, involuntary gesture she sweeps the make-up box [she has given to Joan] from the table” (47). Diana then tells Colley that she must stop Joan’s marriage to Peter. Diana and Colley exit to discuss Colley’s plan for preventing Joan’s marriage to Peter, and Norman (Tony’s neighbor, an artist), overhearing that the two women are leaving to discuss a plan, remarks that “Shakespeare said when two women get together, look out for bloodsome weather” (49).

Norman’s comment about “bloodsome weather” speaks not to Diana’s lupine qualities, but to her vampiric ones. Diana wants to make Joan into a copy of herself. She wants to make Joan into the star that Diana was and into the lesbian that she is, much like a vampire can bite her prey and turn her into a vampire, one with whom the vampire can spend eternal life. Even Colley notes that Diana is “living [her] life over again through [her] protégé—this ‘second Ebury’” (47). Tony puts it rather concisely when she says that “there’s a craving for *possession* in the way Diana looks at Joan” (51, emphasis in original). Peter eventually tells Joan to choose between him and Diana: “You’d think it was reasonable enough if it were a man who had come between us... Well, I realize that this woman is more dangerous than any man!” (78).⁷² Diana fakes an attack, Joan leaves to fetch her some brandy, and Peter exits; “DIANA, *who has closed her eyes, opens them as PETER goes up the hall, and as she hears the front door close behind him she draws a deep breath, at the same time throwing back her head, a faint smile of triumph on her lips*” (78). Joan makes a final break not with

⁷² These sentiments echo those of Monsieur D’Aiguines to Jacques Virieu in Edouard Bourdet’s lesbian drama *The Captive*.

Diana's world, but with Peter. Diana has achieved her possession and as an antagonist, she has bested her competition.

In "Tracking the Vampire," Sue-Ellen Case argues that "heterosexist feminist discourse flirts" with the figure of the lesbian vampire, but ultimately "double-crosses her with the hegemonic notion of 'woman,' reinscribing 'her' in the generational model and making horrible what must not be seductive" (389). Case's assessment is savvy and partially applicable to a reading of Diana as a lesbian vampire, but Diana bridges the horrible and seductive insofar as she successfully makes Joan her own. And although Diana represents this paradoxical duality, her death might indicate that the monstrous and seductive cannot coexist; the double-cross here is the demise of that which is not socially sanctioned. Like a vampire, Diana desires Joan precisely because Joan is "so full of life" (99). But this attraction to life is seemingly non-reproductive. Case contends that the "the melding of mother and desire into the hegemonic category of 'woman's' plenitude also masks the transgression at the very site of fruition by both the 'racially inferior' and the 'sexually sterile'" (390). Eugenically, the lesbian is racially inferior precisely because her sexuality precludes reproduction. But the lesbian vampire can reproduce herself in possessing the object of her desire and making her lesbian. Diana has remade Joan in her own image. Joan is the "second Ebury" (47). Case rejects theorizing the lesbian vampire in terms of a female's identification with a lesbian monster figure because such identification excludes the reciprocity of same-sex desire. Furthermore, she argues that too often "the vampire is subjected to the familiar mode of 'seduced and abandoned,' or 'the recreational use of the lesbian'" (391). *Wise Tomorrow* serves as an example of a text in which the vampire figure, the non-recreational lesbian, is successfully seductive and is not abandoned by her love interest. This departure from the trope discussed by Case subverts expectations. While Diana literally dies, she metaphorically lives on in Joan

suggesting that her lesbian seduction was successful in a way that indicates lesbian longevity. If one were to posit that Joan's desire for Diana, for a female, was directly precipitated by Diana's seduction (as opposed to congenital homosexuality), then the lesbian vampire figure becomes fertile and even more dangerous to the prevailing social order than the "horrible," undesirable (and thus sterile) lesbian vampires examined by Case.

In fact, Powys highlights Diana's disdain for the marital and reproductive duties of females. Diana is career-minded and uninterested in pursuing matrimony and child-rearing. She "mockingly" says to Peter, who believes that Joan's happiness rests in her plans to marry Peter: "Love, marriage, children! The sacred reproductive instinct before which everything must bow..." (75). Although her contempt is clear, Powys' stage directions ensure that the actor understands that her delivery must be mocking. Diana represents all that society feared in lesbianism and feminism. She is a predatory, greedy, sly woman (as evidenced by her manipulation of Joan, her refusal to divorce the husband she does not love so he can marry his true love, her faked attacks of angina, etc.) who knows no bounds and who certainly does not respect the gender and sexuality norms of her day. While words used to describe homosexuality in the 1930s do not appear in the play, the terms with which other characters describe Diana reflect metaphoric, coded appraisals of Diana's lesbian appetites. In his review of *Wise Tomorrow*, Brooks Atkinson decimates the play: "For some reason that was not apparent in the results, several people went through the motions of giving a play at the Biltmore Theatre last evening" ("The Play: Opening of Stephen Powys's 'Wise Tomorrow'..."). Atkinson dives right into the lesbian theme, finding the subject matter "malodorous." He summarizes the play as follows: "It is the story of an evil-minded and treacherous old actress who falls in love with an attractive young actress and wrecks her life [...] and posthumously makes Joan hers by naming her as the heir

to the Ebury property.” A reader can assume that Atkinson views Joan as corrupted since he refers to her sister Tony, as “the uncorrupted sister.” He sees Colley as “the ignoble secretary to the villainess” and Diana as “the evil one” who “makes friends with her [Joan] and breaks up her prospective marriage.” He writes that although Powys’ play “gives off an aroma of scandal, which is one of the theatre’s most precious vices, it appears to exist within a vacuum.” Months later, Atkinson would review *Love of Women*⁷³ and remark that “[a]lthough the authors may not be impervious to the value of scandal in the theatre, they do not exploit it in their play... ‘Love of Women’ is little more than an exercise in entrances and exits” (“The Play: ‘Love of Women’ ...”). How is it that Atkinson sees scandal in a play (*Wise Tomorrow*) that carefully avoids explicit explorations of lesbian content and fails to see scandal in a play (*Love of Women*) that addresses its lesbian content head-on? I have previously argued that critics made light of *Love of Women*’s lesbian theme because critics did not view the play as an exploitation of its homosexual content. *Love of Women* did not strike critics as being as scandalous as its forerunners because it does not vilify lesbianism nor does it provide a clear moral judgment of its lesbian characters. In the case of *Love of Women*, the play does not address lesbianism as a “dangerous” sex matter (John saves Brigit from Vere, and Vere is left alone). If one cannot attack the lesbian content of a play, then the alternative seems to be to neutralize or displace it and dismiss it. *Wise Tomorrow* does vilify at least one of its lesbian characters, Diana, and provides a clear moral judgment of her, consequently critics attack the content—especially since Peter does not “save” Joan as John “saves” Brigit in *Love of Women*. In *Love of Women*, the lesbian antagonist is vanquished personally because she loses her battle for the love of Brigit to John. She is also defeated socially because heterosexuality prevails and she is abandoned (although

⁷³ For a summary of *Love of Women*, please see Chapter One.

there exists a glimmer of hope for a relationship with a young female admirer). In *Wise Tomorrow*, Diana wins her personal competition for the affection and devotion of Joan and she accomplishes a social coup as well: Joan assumes Diana's lifestyle and represents the possibility of an infinite line of lesbian antagonists if Joan were to seduce another female just as Diana seduced her.

Richard Watts Jr., who took a stab at *Wise Tomorrow* under a review entitled "More Bad News," declares that the play "is a weak and fumbling work that has no possible virtue to recommend it" (10). Watts writes that *Wise Tomorrow* "tell[s] the story of an aging actress, whose career has come to an end and who hopes to get a vicarious one by ruling the life of a youthful actress. In the end the older woman dies, but her hold is still so strong that she is able to prevent the marriage of the younger woman and keeps the girl her slave even after death" (10). He does acknowledge that Diana wants more than a vicarious career from Joan and his identification of distinctly lesbian content is clear: "There is a wide-eyed attempt to express the Lesbian theme in the new play, but it doesn't even give the drama the box-office quality of being shocking" (10). Most tellingly, Watts, who identified *Love of Women* as a "fable" uses this word to describe *Wise Tomorrow*. It would seem that here, too, Watts wishes to make his readers sure of the fact that there is something to be learned from the tale, despite its dramatic shortcomings. Additionally, a close reading of the review reveals Watts' perceptions about girlhood and womanhood. In his descriptions of the actors' performances, Watts surmises that Joan is meant to be played as "a sensitive and emotional girl," while Diana is "the dominating woman." Tony is "the sweet girl" because despite her views on "grubby little children you're not allowed to smack," she wins Peter and audiences are led to believe that they will marry, allowing Tony to fulfill the prescribed gender role shunned by her sister. In his comparison of *Wise Tomorrow* and *The Green Bay Tree*, Watts writes about both Diana and Joan as

“women,” but changes his diction when he talks about Joan as Diana’s slave; in that role, he determines that Joan is a “girl”; Diana possesses her. The antagonists/aggressors are women; their objects of desire/victims are girls, young enough to grow into heterosexuality and shun the lesbianism offered by the scheming antagonists.

Diana’s possession of Joan and their seeming lesbianism clearly did not sit well with critics, but while the language of homosexuality became cultural currency during the first half of the twentieth century, homosexual themes, according to critics, did not reflect mainstream American popular culture. John Mason Brown, in his review of *Love of Women*, writes “Please, Mr. Shubert and Mr. Shubert, what about a good Western for a change?” (“Two on the Aisle: ‘Love of Women’”). A western *is* American culture. Of *Wise Tomorrow*, Wilella Waldorf takes similar note of the dissonance between lesbianism on Broadway (a commercial, popular culture venue) and traditional ideas of American popular culture. She writes that “[r]ehearsals are going on at the Martin Beck Theatre just now, and it is whispered the theme has a touch of Lesbianism about it, which sounds a little odd when you consider that the Warners [of Warner Brother Pictures], presumably, have in mind a picture version eventually. However, as Samuel Goldwyn or somebody once said, ‘We can always call them Bulgarians’” (“Forecasts and Postscripts...”). The Warner Brothers presented the play through Bernard Klawans and cast Gloria Dickson (a Hollywood film actor) in the role of Joan. Most telling is Waldorf’s comment that it is “odd” to find lesbian content in a play backed by purveyors of American popular culture. Just as Brown preferred a good Western to lesbianism on Broadway, Waldorf cannot even conceive of how Broadway and Hollywood could collaborate on a project with lesbian themes. But the play did run on Broadway (if only for three performances), demonstrating that lesbianism was appearing on Broadway stages and would appear

again, next in *Love of Women* and then not again for five years until *Proof Through the Night* by Allan R. Kenward which featured one lesbian character and is by no means a “lesbian play.”

The Third Villain

Trio premiered on Broadway on December 29, 1944 and ran for sixty-seven performances.⁷⁴ The play, by husband and wife team Dorothy and Howard Baker, is based on Dorothy Baker’s novel (1943) of the same name. *Trio* explores the effects of a domineering professor and plagiarist, Pauline Maury, on her live-in, favored pupil, Janet Logan, and the conflict that ensues once Janet’s affections stray from Pauline toward Ray Mackenzie, a “direct, restless, thoughtful, masculine” man who is “instinctively hostile toward Pauline” (vi). The Bakers describe Pauline as “brittle, inhuman, egotistic, and demanding...as well as charming” (vi). Pauline alternately treats her student Janet “violently,” “roughly,” and “brutally” (1.1.24) and then tenderly and protectively (she calls her “darling” and later gives her an orchid to wear to a party they both attend) (1.1.6). Immediately, the playwrights have marked Pauline as an aggressor (engaged in what one would contemporarily identify as a pattern of partner abuse) and as the play’s clear antagonist.

Lynda Hart’s *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression* (1994) offers a smart lens through which one can read Pauline as an aggressive lesbian antagonist. Hart persuasively argues that “the lesbian functions as a structural dialectic of appearance/disappearance in the process of making women’s aggression visible. These representations carry with them the weight of a culture that has made the

⁷⁴ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1944-45*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1945. 407. Print.

lesbian and the female criminal synonymous by *displacing* women's aggression onto the sexually 'deviant' woman" (76). For Hart, what marks lesbians as criminal is not necessarily their criminal acts. She argues that the titular characters of *Thelma and Louise* (1991) are "not criminals because they shoot a rapist, rob a store, or blow up a truck. They are criminals because they are together, seeking escape from the masculine circuit of desire" (79). Similarly, Pauline is not a criminal solely because she is a plagiarist, an academic fraud undeserving of her new title, "the first Girard Professor of French Civilization"; she is presented by the playwrights as a criminal because she seeks escape from the masculine circuit of desire and, in doing so, aggressively attempts to take Janet with her (1.1.12).

In *Trio*, the multiple layers of Pauline's character as an antagonist are evident in her competition with Ray for Janet's love, her ethical (as a plagiarist) and sexual (as a lesbian) opposition to social standards and mores, and her battle with Janet over Janet's future. Significantly, a reader of the play learns even more of Pauline as an antagonist by perusing the playwrights' description of Janet, Pauline's supposed victim. The Bakers write that Janet,

in comparison with Pauline, is young and fair. Janet should have been the healthy, gifted, easy-going sort of graduate student who leaves nothing to be desired and yet accomplishes nothing too remarkable while in the University. She should have been direct and uncomplicated. Instead, under Pauline's dominance, she has become highly specialized—and very unsure of her self [sic]. She shows this in her tendency to wilt under scrutiny, to become frightened and to want to hide, though never suggesting that weakness and moral confusion are native qualities in her. (vi)

The reiteration of "should have been" connotes the effect that Pauline has had on Janet. Pauline is a singularly demanding character. Within the first few lines of the

play, she chastises Janet for wearing glasses: “Darling, please take off those glasses. You know you can see perfectly well without them” (1.1.2). She then questions the length of time it takes Janet to mark Pauline’s students’ papers and “runs her finger along the moulding on top of the fireplace, looks at finger, and repeats same business with table at right of fireplace” until she is satisfied with Janet’s housekeeping (1.1.2). And like all of the lesbian antagonists discussed, Pauline is possessive of Janet. When she realizes that Janet has forgotten to adjust the blinds while changing her clothes, Pauline “moves with cold decision” and confronts “with harshness” her pupil and “[b]itterly” tells her that she’s “not public property” (1.1.6). When Janet stands up for herself and states that she’d “rather not be thought of as property at all,” Pauline tells to her to control herself despite the fact that Janet is not the least bit out of control (1.1.7). Just as Madame D’Aiguines haunts Irene’s every waking moment in *The Captive*, Pauline’s presence affects every facet of Janet’s life; Janet confesses to Pauline, “I can’t even walk down the street without wondering whether you’d like it” (1.1.7). Furthermore, Pauline literally decides when Janet sleeps and wakes—she gives her two sleeping pills after a tea party and insists that she take them (1.2.38). Pauline is molding her “protégé” (she introduces her as such to her colleagues during the tea party) in much the same fashion as Diana grooms Joan to be her successor in *Wise Tomorrow* (1.1.18). But despite her public pronouncement of Janet as her protégé, Pauline treats Janet as little more than a child or servant, “imperiously” criticizing Janet in front of the guests (1.1.20). And at this function, one of Pauline’s guests, critiquing her (plagiarized) book, remarks: “Your poets were all depraved in their various ways...they were alcoholics, they were addicted to drugs, they had sadistic and homosexual and murderous tendencies. You got them all into a group” (1.2.28). He continues and contends that Pauline’s work infers that these artists “were great poets because of these weaknesses or vices or whatever you want to call them. And that’s not true. They were great poets in spite of them” (1.2.29). Here, the

inclusion of homosexuality among alcoholism, drug addiction, sadism, and murder suggests that homosexuality is deviant and insidious. In the foreward to the unpublished manuscript of the play, the authors complicate this view of homosexuality; they write that Pauline's "Lesbianism is the form not the content of her character; it's part and parcel of her fraudulence; it's a way of throwing still another light on the speciousness of her success" (iii). The Bakers clearly intend to tie Pauline's lesbianism to her criminality and immorality. The implication is that Pauline's lesbianism predisposes Pauline to morally suspect behavior.

Indeed, Pauline will stop at nothing to keep Janet and once she is confronted by Janet's preference for Ray Mackenzie, the stage directions indicate that "from this point on, PAULINE MAURY will be desperate and veering, trying by any means at all to keep possession of the only person in the world who has thoroughly believed in her" (2.22). Pauline tells Ray, "I think I should make this clear: personal morality, as such, has no interest for me, I'm happy to leave it to the Dean of Women and the Y.W.C.A. to ponder over" (2.23). Pauline, in an effort to coerce Janet into submission once Janet announces she wants to marry Ray, states:

You meet a man, and that's the end of you. In three weeks you forget everything we've ever said, everything we've ever tried for and planned for[.] In three weeks you can forget that I have spent years teaching you everything you know—how to dress, how to talk, how to eat, even how to sit and how to stand and how to walk. What were you when you came to me? Can you remember back that far? What were you? (2.30)

Ad when this tactic is not immediately effective, she informs Ray that he is not the first fling Janet has had and that Janet has these flings "with as little conscience and as little remorse as my cat" and then returns to Pauline for Pauline to "smooth things up and relieve her of the consequences" (2.30). Janet flatly denies this, but Pauline's

attacks and lies have done the damage she intended and upon her departure, Janet and Ray argue and Ray turns on Janet. But just before Pauline leaves, she makes one last effort to make Janet her own in front of Ray. She advances toward Janet and tries to pin an orchid on her, “Let me put it on for you” (2.31). Janet “[s]teps back—directly to Ray—and seems to be going to run” (2.31). When Pauline takes another step toward her, Janet cries out” and says, “Don’t. I don’t want it. I can’t” (2.31). Pauline then “looks at the orchid, and suddenly tears it apart. She starts for the door, dropping the petals as she goes” (2.31). Paradoxically, Pauline tries to pin/penetrate Janet with an orchid, the shape of which suggests a vagina. Janet’s reaction (her readiness to run and her cries) implies an attempted assault rather than a flower-pinning. The “it” to which Janet refers could be the orchid, Pauline, or lesbianism and what she “can’t do” could be leaving with Pauline or continuing their lesbian relationship. Just as Madame D’Aiguines and Diana hold captive their love interests, Pauline has all but taken possession of Janet—to the extent that upon Janet’s initial decision to leave Pauline, Janet explains to Ray, “I—if I don’t get away tonight, clear away, I never will. She’ll find a way to stop me. I don’t know how but she will” (2.33). Subsequently, Janet describes her dynamic with Pauline in phallic terminology, using a murder metaphor that suggests rape more than murder. Pleading with Ray to avoid commencing a fight, Janet and Ray share the following exchange:

JANET. (Xing to him) We’ve got to watch it. We must never let this start.

(She drops the flowers on the desk) It’s the worst thing that can happen. It’s poison. It’s a disease. It gets people. They start to hurt each other and there’s never any end to it. Once it starts they’ve got to have a knife and feel it go in.

RAY. Do you and she spend your time getting knives into each other?

JANET. No, it’s lopsided. She does it.

RAY. (Turning to Her [sic]) Why don’t you fight back?

JANET. I’m not a fighter. I get weak. I want to crawl away.

RAY. And she likes it, doesn't she? It's what she wants/ [sic]

JANET. (Xing up to C) I don't know. I can't be very clear about it. She knows an awful lot about me. (Turning to him) She's taken care of me for three years. (2.33A-2.34A)

Here, Janet explains that she is the passive half of her relationship with Pauline. Pauline must "have a knife and feel it go in" as she stabs Janet just as she attempted to pin her with the orchid. Like a wounded animal, Janet wants nothing more than to "crawl away." When Ray suggests a sadistic quality to this dynamic, Janet does not deny it; she simply states that she does not know whether or not Pauline enjoys this torture. The exchange between Janet and Ray is a direct throwback to, and reiteration of, the party scene in which one of Pauline's guests conflates homosexuality, sadism, and murder. Tellingly, this conversation between Janet and Ray directly precedes Janet's admission that she's "lived with" Pauline, possibly connoting a sexual arrangement rather than one of room and board. Ray immediately picks up on this and asks Janet if she is in love with Pauline or if Pauline is in love with her; Janet responds in the negative. Janet continues, "I didn't know what it was. I never stopped to think whether there was anything wrong with it, because the whole thing was so mixed up with everything I liked and everything I was just beginning to find out about, like poetry and music and pictures" (2.36). And Ray replies, "That's the trouble. Poetry and music and pictures attract degenerates" (2.36). Whether the playwrights intend it or not, Ray invokes the spirit of Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1895), his infamous treatise on the relationship between the arts and degeneration. In *Degeneration's* dedication to "Caesar Lombroso, Professor of Psychiatry and Forensic Medicine at the Royal University of Turin" and author of multiple books on the relationship between criminality and heredity, Nordau argues that:

[b]ooks and works of art exercise a powerful suggestion on the masses. It is from these productions that an age derives its ideals of morality and beauty. If

they are absurd and anti-social, they exert a disturbing and corrupting influence on the views of a whole generation. [...] Now I have undertaken the work of investigating [...] the tendencies of the fashions in art and literature; of proving that they have their source in the degeneracy of their authors, and that the enthusiasm of their admirers is for manifestations of more or less pronounced moral insanity, imbecility, and dementia. (viii)

Ray's comment to Janet epitomizes Nordau's conviction that society owes much of its degeneration to those who create and consume the arts. When Janet asks if Ray is calling *her* a degenerate, Ray confirms this and queries, "Why not?" (2.36). Ray also employs the language of sexologists by naming Janet a "degenerate," and in doing so, suggests the word's eugenic meaning insofar as degeneracy entails an evolutionary baseness. Ray accuses Janet of not being a woman and when Janet replies "The hell I'm not," Ray tells her: "You couldn't be" (2.37). For Ray, Janet's degeneracy means she is not a real woman, the implication of which is that a real woman desires men so Janet's relationship with Pauline precludes her from this category. Ray ultimately scorns her physical advance to comfort him and he throws her out of his apartment.

Ray's use of the term "degenerate" is actually a spot-on assessment of the eugenic ramifications of Janet's relationship with Pauline. Simmons notes that "[t]he many single graduates of the women's colleges as well as independent young reformers and professional women, made notorious when Theodore Roosevelt accused them of causing race suicide, were widely known to live with other women when they did not live with their families" (56). In his 1905 address to the National Congress of Mothers, Roosevelt asserted that "the primary duty of the woman is to be the helpmeet, the housewife, and mother. The woman should have ample educational advantages; but save in exceptional cases the man must be, and she need not be, and generally ought not to be, trained for a lifelong career as the family bread winner; and,

therefore, after a certain point the training of the two must normally be different because the duties of the two are normally different” (Roosevelt 143). Roosevelt continues and contends that the

woman who deliberately forgoes these blessings, whether from viciousness, coldness, shallow-heartedness, self-indulgence, or mere failure to appreciate aright the difference between the all-important and the un-important why, such a creature merits contempt as hearty as any visited upon the soldier who runs away in battle, or upon the man who refuses to work for the support of those dependent upon him, and who though able-bodied is yet content to eat in idleness the bread which others provide.

The existence of women of this type forms one of the most unpleasant and unwholesome features of modern life. (Roosevelt 145)

Thus choosing not to have children, whether the result of lesbianism or birth control, constitutes a crime against society. And those females who not only chose not to bear children but to make their lives with other females, suffered the stigma of their choices. Simmons writes that “[s]uspicion accumulated that these relationships were ‘unhealthy’ at least” and “others began to see a ‘psychologically sick’ lesbianism as the cause rather than the effect of women’s resistance to heterosexuality” (56, 57).

Within this pro-eugenic, anti-feminist framework, Pauline’s lesbian influence is quite literally destructive. Hart argues:

Desire between women has persistently been represented as destructive of the social order. This is an assumption that is undoubtedly linked to the fear of any and all nonprocreative sexualities. George Chauncey describes the Victorian sexual order in which ‘sexual relations outside the heterosexual institution of marriage...represented not only a degeneration to an earlier, lower state of evolution, but threatened civilization itself [...]’ These apocalyptic predictions in the dominant culture’s response to homosexuality

tend to surpass the rationale of nonprocreative sex. (15)

Pauline's desire for Janet is not trivial; the future of the human race depended upon the eradication of nonprocreative sex—all homosexual sex. Ray's disgust, when read through a eugenic lens, appears morally justified. When Ray tells Janet that she is not a woman, that she "couldn't be" a woman, he affirms sexological and eugenic notions of lesbians as something between females and males. Hart's reading of Caesar Lombroso (to whom Nordau dedicated *Degeneration*) and William Ferrero's *The Female Offender* (1893) suggests that the female aggressor "retains the sex of a female but acquires the gender attributes of masculinity. She is tyrannical, selfish; she wants only to satisfy her own passions" (13). Hart notes that for Lombroso, like Ellis, a female was always a woman, "unless she transgressed a certain sexual boundary or performed extraordinary acts of violence. These transgressions were not discrete but rather coupled in the cultural formation of categories that fell outside the bounds of 'womanhood' altogether" (13). Janet's transgression of the boundary between heterosexuality and homosexuality makes her something other than a woman. Both females are eugenic aberrations and their independent, self-supporting lifestyles only confound their status as Others. "Homophobia," writes Hart, "is a much more complicated psychic mechanism [...]. As Marilyn Frye says, 'This sounds extreme, of course, perhaps even hysterical...that feminists, whom [phallocrats] fairly reasonably judge to be lesbians, have the power to bring down civilization, to dissolve the social order as we know it, to cause the demise of the species, by [their] mere existence'" (15-16, brackets in original). In short, when one reads Pauline's character through Hart, Pauline emerges as a feminist, lesbian, criminal antagonist who contributes to the destruction of social order and the health of the human race.

The final act of the play depicts the demise of this feminist, lesbian, criminal antagonist. Pauline apologizes for essentially outing Janet to Ray and attempts to guilt

her into staying, laying bare the vulnerability of both females and martyring herself. During the last act, the audience learns that Pauline has, in fact, plagiarized the work of her deceased former female lover. Pauline is caught when her lover's husband writes to Pauline's university to expose her as a fraud. Ray returns for Janet and after their departure, the final stage directions indicate that "PAULINE is left alone, standing beside the ruins of the supper table. She looks down, sees the tablecloth, and takes it into her hands. For a moment you think she is going to fold it. But she cannot do it. Her strength and her fury are gone. She walks slowly into the bedroom, twisting the tablecloth into a rope" (3.23). If, in fact, the actor playing Pauline can convincingly twist the tablecloth into a visible rope, the playwrights certainly intend for the audience to believe that Pauline's abusive reign has come to an end as she exits the stage to take her own life. In Dorothy Baker's novel of the same name, Janet chooses Pauline over Ray (perhaps out of guilt, perhaps out of love) and Pauline exits to a bedroom and shoots herself while Janet and Ray remain in the other room. In the dramatic version, the female-male-female triangulation perseveres as Ray wins Janet and Pauline is potentially eliminated. But even this restoration of social order does not completely eliminate lesbianism because Janet's sexuality is ambiguous. Consequently, even after Pauline's likely death, the possibility of lesbian desire persists. Janet tells Pauline that all "the things" Pauline has done for her have "left a mark on me. They've left a mark on me that I'll never be able to lose" (3.18). And Ray admits that he doesn't know if Pauline has "wrecked Janet" (3.23).

Like the reviews of the plays previously examined, reviews of *Trio* clearly identify Pauline as the play's antagonist. She is afforded little or no sympathy. Bert McCord, in his *New York Herald Tribune* review contends that the play "tells of the emotional entanglement of a scintillating and depraved woman and a fascinated and almost hypnotized girl who is ultimately set free by the love of a young man" (9). McCord's

word choice of “depraved” carries with it connotations of perversion, corruption, and evil. McCord is making a moral judgment. This rhetoric echoes many reviews of Broadway plays with lesbian content during this era (most notably Aimee and Philip Stuart’s *Love of Women* and Stephen Powys’ *Wise Tomorrow*): the lesbian antagonist and aggressor is a “woman” while the object of her desire is a “girl,” a female young enough to learn of the dangers of lesbian villainy and abandon it in favor of heterosexuality. *The New York Times* continues in this vein and critic Lewis Nichols writes that the play “concerns a woman college teacher, the young girl who has been living with her and the boy the latter hopes to marry” (“The Play: ‘Trio,’ From the Novel by Dorothy Baker). Again, Pauline is a “woman” while Janet is only a “young girl.” Howard Barnes’s review of the play goes so far as to refer to Janet as a “youngster” (“The Theaters: The Captive Released”). Barnes praises the Bakers’ “honest and sensitive account of elliptical human relationships” and while he notes that the play does not compare with *The Captive*, he posits that *Trio* is “still well worth seeing.” Here, Pauline’s villainous qualities as the antagonist are apparent in Barnes’s encapsulation of the plot: “‘Trio’ is simply the tale of a bemused young girl under the domination of a vicious older woman who becomes emancipated from a web of inversion” (“The Theaters: The Captive Released”). Like a spider, Pauline has spun a web to trap her prey, according to Barnes. But instead of consuming her prey, Barnes suggests that Pauline might make Janet a lesbian. In another article about *Trio*, Barnes describes Pauline as “ogreish” (“The Theater: Censorship...”). Here, her homosexuality and criminality have reduced her to a monster—she has not even made it onto a human scale of evolution. Unlike Irene of *The Captive*, Janet frees herself from Pauline’s “web of inversion,” although in the novel, Janet’s choice mirrors that of Irene’s: she chooses to stay with her lover. While Barnes criticizes “extraneous melodramatic interludes,” he states that it is during these interludes that Pauline “is exposed as an arrant plagiarist as well as a Lesbian” (“The Theaters: The Captive

Released”). Barnes’s contention reveals Pauline as doubly deceptive and criminal: she is both a plagiarist and a Lesbian and must be *exposed* as both. Critics do not question Pauline’s position as the play’s antagonist, but suggest that censorship of the play is both unjust and absurd. This view is best represented by Howard Barnes’ March 4th response to censorship of the play:

Personally, I found the work more than normally interesting as a theatrical recreation of human experience and utterly devoid of any sensational salacity. The fact that the Lee Sabinson production opened here on Dec. 30 and remained unchallenged until a week ago raises a grave problem in the allocation of any censorial power. It certainly suggests that the power should not reside in the hands of one man, sitting as judge and jury. (“The Theater: Censorship Gets a Blast From Critics”)

Despite such critical claims that the play was “utterly devoid of any sensational salacity,” *Trio* revived the censorship debate that had reached frenzy during the run of Bourdet’s *The Captive*.

Just as *The Captive* provoked New York City censors, the Broadway production of *Trio* became a battle over censorship focused on the play’s lesbian theme. After *Trio* had been running for almost two months, License Commissioner Paul Moss refused to renew a license to the Belasco Theater unless *Trio* was closed (“The Theater: Censorship...”). According to the February 24th issue of *The New York Times*, the producer of *Trio*, Lee Sabinson, suggested that Moss acted as a result of religious pressures. *The Times* reports that “[a]ccording to Mr. Sabinson, the Commissioner is said to have taken the action following complaints from the Rev. Dr. John Sutherland Bonnell, the pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church. Last night Dr. Bonnell admitted having sent the complaint to Mayor La Guardia last Monday. He added that he knew of ‘widespread objection to that play particularly and to others as well as

among laymen as well as religious leaders” (“‘Trio’ To Close...”). Furthermore, Dr. Bonnell “declared he regarded ‘Trio’ as ‘most offensive because it deals primarily with an abnormal perversion and therefore is especially dangerous to the public morals and specifically in the case of the young’” (“‘Trio’ To Close...”). Over a week later, on March 3rd, *The Times* carried another story about the religious backlash to the production. *The Times* notes, “The Tablet, official Catholic organ of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn, applauded the group of Protestant ministers for their condemnation of several New York shows and commended Mr. Moss ‘for his vigorous and effective action in putting the vilest of these performances [*Trio*] out of business” (“Sues for \$1,000,000...”). Interestingly, on March 2nd, *The Times* carried the four-part headline: “Mayor Backs Moss In Closing of ‘Trio’[:] Tells Equity That Only Court Can Censor Play and Producer Has Not Sought Law’s Aid[:] Refuses To Oust His Aide[:] Says in Reply to Crouse That Show Was ‘Rejected by a Theatre,’ Not Commissioner.” The article goes on to qualify its headline and states that Lee Sabinson’s attorney had, in fact, filed a \$1,000,000 civil suit (although the Commissioner, Mayor, and city had apparently not yet been served with their papers). Six days later, *The Times* ran a front page story with the headline: “Mayor Approves Plan To Curb Moss[:] Agrees to Support a Law to Limit Commissioner in Power to Ban Plays.” After Sabinson’s civil suit was filed, Moss continued to insist that he denied the Belasco Theater a renewal license because

he had determined that “ ‘Trio’ was an obscene, indecent, immoral play which would tend to the corruption of the morals of youth and others.” He added that its sponsors had committed an additional offense in advertising it “as a play dealing with Lesbianism and the unnatural relationship between two women.” (“Moss Insists He Has...”)

Mayor LaGuardia would not admit that “the commissioner exceeded his authority in closing the play without a court decision, but said that he would press for legislation

that would specifically forbid the commissioner acting henceforth without a court hearing” (“Moss Insists He Has...”). While the Padlock Law remained in effect, the press coverage of the closing of *Trio* did shed light on arbitrary censorship and made the lesbian content of *Trio* known to the broad readership of mainstream New York newspapers—many more people than had ever even seen the production on Broadway.

In the foreword to *Trio*, the Bakers respond in detail to the censorship of their play:

TRIO opened in the Belasco Theater in New York in December 1944. It was closed the following February—after sixteen influential Protestant clergymen had demanded its suppression.

The sixteen—fifteen of whom had neither read the book nor seen the play—were persuaded that TRIO is an immoral drama.

Now it is true that the two women in this story have lived together in an intense and questionable relationship. In life this relationship—if it is noticed at all, and most often it is not noticed—is called Lesbianism. The play takes notice of Lesbianism. That’s the crux of the fiction which the play makes use of. (Baker i)

The playwrights then mount a curious defense of Pauline. They state that

[i]n the jungle in which she lives—in which she must outbrave better endowed competitors in order to exist—she has learned how to shine and dominate and how to contrive a flattering region for herself within a hostile universe. she [sic] might be anybody who willingly makes great sacrifices to the previous gods of success and acclaim; only she is more intensely [sic] that anybody, since that’s the way fiction likes to have it. Being extremely what she is, she’s an out-and-out fraud. [...] All intense ties are—more or less remotely—sexual. All fondness, admiration, dreams of power, yearnings for security. In

real life nobody takes too much notice of that. Normality isn't what it appears to be either; it isn't ironclad; it may not exist at all but may be instead a lot of abnormal potentials hanging in a state of balance. [...] The story in this particular play isn't about Lesbianism. If it were, it would have been unfair to make Pauline a plagiarist, which would imply that persons with abnormal dispositions are also thieves. No, it's about a brilliant, glamorous, successful person, who lifts herself with the aid of her bootstraps. [...] The story is also about the collapse of façade after façade... (ii-iii, underlining in original)

I quote the Bakers at length because their defense of Pauline stands in stark contrast to critics' reception of this character. While the critics also condemn the censorship of *Trio*, they do not view Pauline as the Bakers do. I don't believe this incongruity is the result of the choices of actors or directors, but what appears to be a disingenuous backpeddling on the part of the authors in a foreword written after the play was censored. Indeed, the play *does* "imply that persons with abnormal dispositions are also thieves" and even the Bakers admit in their foreword that "Ray MacKenzie expresses some unpardonably extreme ideas in the course of these three acts" (iii). One presumes the Bakers refer to Ray's assertion that "[p]oetry and music and pictures attract degenerates" (2.36). The Bakers "admit that a character like Pauline is a black number. The first impulse of the run of people is to ignore her, disparage her, or ban her. The next impulse is to make a kindly fuss over her because she's the tragic outcome of her inborn nature. Each of these impulses is a prejudice in its way" (iv). The Bakers go on to assert that Pauline's "clinical history is unimportant," but their statements unambiguously identify homosexuality as "inborn," demonstrating a knowledge of sexology and making a liberal political statement about the nature of homosexuality and the prejudicial backlash against it (iv). Their defense of Pauline makes her no less of a personal and social antagonist, but it intimates that she has little control over her "tragic" circumstances.

In their portraits of lesbian antagonists and their desire, *The Captive*, *Wise Tomorrow*, and *Trio* represent examples of literature that “[decanonizes] the canonical structure of desire itself,” to borrow a phrase from Terry Castle (90). This group of plays neatly exemplifies Castle’s revision of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s theory of homosocial triangulation “[i]nsofar as it documents a world in which men are ‘between women’ rather than vice versa, it is an insult to the conventional geometries of fictional eros. It dismantles the real, as it were, in a search for the not-yet-real, something unpredicted and unpredictable. It is an assault on the banal: a retriangulating of triangles” (90-91). Sexological and eugenic readings of these plays reveal how one might view the lesbian antagonist as a reiteration of stereotypes of moral and hereditary degeneration. But they also depict lesbianism as inborn and unchangeable, rather than acquired and treatable. A literary reading reveals the manner in which all three plays threaten social order in their explicit portraits of lesbian desire and exploration of female-female-male love triangles, two of which—in *The Captive and Wise Tomorrow*—conclude with intact lesbian relationships and a shunned heterosexual male suitor. In the next chapter, the male suitor falls out of the equation entirely in an examination of lesbianism in the most sexologically suspect of settings: the all girls’ school. Christa Winsloe’s *Girls in Uniform* offers a new perspective on lesbian desire, using an authoritarian German setting as a backdrop for exploring sexual taboos that typically would have provoked censorship.

WORKS CITED

- “3 Theaters Raided; ‘Sex’ and ‘Captive’ Players Arrested.” *New York Herald Tribune* 10 Feb. 1927. Print.
- Anderson, John. “‘The Captive’ Arrives at Last at the Empire Theatre.” *New York Post* 30 Sept. 1926. Print.
- “Antagonist.” *The Compact Oxford English Dictionary, Second Edition*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991. Print.
- Atkinson, Brooks. “The Play: ‘Love of Women’ With English Authors and Actors.” *New York Times* 14 Dec. 1937. Print.
- . “The Play: Opening of Stephen Powys’s ‘Wise Tomorrow,’ Which Was Done in London Last Year.” *New York Times* 16 Oct. 1937. Print.
- Baker, Dorothy and Howard. *Trio*. MS. Author’s Private Collection. Print.
- Barnes, Howard. “The Theater: Censorship Gets a Blast From Critics.” *New York Herald Tribune* 4 March 1945: 1, 3. Print.
- . “The Theaters: The Captive Released.” *New York Herald Tribune* 30 Dec. 1944. Print.
- Bourdet, Edouard. *The Captive*. Ed. & Trans. Arthur Hornblow. New York: Brentano’s, 1926. Print.
- Brackett, Charles. “Preferences and Eccentricities.” *The New Yorker* 9 Oct. 1926: 33. Print.
- Brown, John Mason. “Two on the Aisle: ‘Love of Women’ Staged By the Messrs. Shubert.” *New York Post* 14 Dec. 1937. Print.
- Carpenter, Edward. *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1908. Print.
- Carter, Julian. “Normality, Whiteness, Authorship: Evolutionary Sexology and the Primitive Pervert.” *Science and Homosexualities*. Ed. Vernon A. Rosario. New York: Routledge, 1997. 155-176. Print.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. “Tracking the Vampire.” *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. Eds. Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. 380-400. Print.

- Castle, Terry. *The Apparitional Lesbian: Female Homosexuality and Modern Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1993. Print.
- Davenport, Charles B. "Research in Eugenics." *Science*. 54.1400 (Oct. 1921): 391-397. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Essays in War-Time: Further Studies in the Task of Social Hygiene*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1917. Print.
- . *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. Print.
- . *Views and Reviews/2 Volumes in 1*. Manchester: Ayer Co. Pub., Facsimile of 1932 Edition. Print.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1991. Print.
- Ferguson, Ann. "Patriarchy, Sexual Identity, and the Sexual Revolution." *Signs* 7.1 (Autumn 1981): 158-172. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. "The Psychogenesis of a Case of Female Homosexuality." *The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*. 1.2 (1920): 125-149. Print.
- Hammond, Percy. "'The Captive,' an Expert Play, Dealing With a Subject Too Odd for a Polite Reviewer." *New York Herald Tribune* 30 Sept. 1926. Print.
- Hart, Lynda. *Fatal Women: Lesbian Sexuality and the Mark of Aggression*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994. Print.
- Katz, Jonathan Ned. *Gay/Lesbian Almanac: A New Documentary*. New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, Inc., 1994. Print.
- "Legislature Gets Play 'Padlock Bill.'" *New York Times* 19 March 1927. Print.
- Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1944-45*. New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1945. Print.
- "Mayor Approves Plan To Curb Moss." *New York Times* 8 March 1945. Print.
- "Mayor Backs Moss In Closing Of Trio." *New York Times* 2 March 1945. Print.
- McCord, Bert. "News of the Theater: 'Trio' Bows in Discord." *New York Herald Tribune* 29 Dec. 1944: 9. Print.

- “Moss Insists He Has Right to Censor Plays.” *New York Herald Tribune* 23 March 1945. Print.
- Nichols, Lewis. “The Play: ‘Trio,’ From the Novel by Dorothy Baker, Finally Opens on Broadway, at the Belasco.” *New York Times* 30 Dec. 1944. Print.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. [No City Listed]: D. Appleton and Company, 1895. Print.
- Powys, Stephen. *Wise Tomorrow*. London: Samuel French, 1937. Print.
- Rich, Adrienne. “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence.” *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*. Eds. Henry Abelove, Michele Ana Barale, David M. Halperin. New York: Routledge, 1993. 227-254. Print.
- Roosevelt, Theodore. “Theodore Roosevelt on Motherhood and the Welfare State.” *Population and Development Control*. 13.1 (March 1987): 141-147. Reprinted from *Presidential Addresses and State Papers of Theodore Roosevelt, Part Three*, P. F. Collier & Son, New York, 1905. Print.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*. New York: Columbia, 1985. Print.
- Senelick, Laurence. “The Homosexual as Villain and Victim in Fin-de-Siecle Drama.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 4.2 (Oct. 1993): 201-229. Print.
- Simmons, Christina. “Companionate Marriage and the Lesbian Threat.” *Frontiers: a Journal of Women Studies* 4.3 (Autumn 1979): 54-59. Print.
- Smith-Rosenberg, Carroll. *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America*. New York: Knopf: 1985. Print.
- Somerville, Siobhan. “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body.” *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5.2 (Oct. 1994): 243-266. Print.
- Stone, Percy N. “Bourdet Didn’t Try to Shock When He Wrote ‘The Captive.’” *New York Herald Tribune* 12 Dec. 1926. Print.
- “Sues For \$1,000,000 In Closing Of ‘Trio.’” *New York Times* 3 March 1945.
- “The Captive.” *Variety* 6 Oct. 1926. Print.
- “‘Trio’ To Close Tonight: Producer of Show Attacked by Bonnell Blames Moses.” *New York Times* 24 Feb. 1945: 16. Print.

Wahn, W.A. "Smith Approves Theatre Padlock." *New York Times* 8 April 1927: 12. Print.

Waldorf, Wilella. "Forecasts and Postscripts: Edith Barrett to Play a Role in 'Wise Tomorrow.'" *New York Post* 17 September 1937. Print.

Watts, Richard Jr. "The Theaters: More Bad News." *New York Herald Tribune* 16 Oct. 1937: 10. Print.

---. "'Winter Bound' Is Provincetown Players' Offering: Study in Feminine Psychology at Garrick Is Confusing to Opening Audience." *New York Herald Tribune* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.

Weeks, Jeffrey. *Making Sexual History*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000. Print.

"'Winter Bound' Moves Along Devious Paths." *New York Times* 13 Nov. 1929. Print.

CHAPTER FOUR

Girls in Uniform: A Reclamation & Reinvestigation of the First Lesbian Boarding School Drama

*“Nothing can happen to me now—nothing can touch me—nothing in the whole world...She loves me! I know it—I feel it—it gives me strength...it makes me feel holy... [...] From now on I will be quite different, I will have only good thoughts pure thoughts...and I will serve her...life has no other meaning.”*⁷⁵

Manuela, in Christa Winsloe’s *Girls in Uniform*

*“The subject of the play is an invitation to bitterness and hysteria—an invitation steadfastly refused. The writing has a superb, controlled indignation and pity—pity not for this girl only but a starved and suffering humanity represented in her.”*⁷⁶

Charles Morgan, *The New York Times*

Explorations of lesbian boarding school dramas usually begin and end with perhaps one of the best known lesbian dramas—if not *the* best known lesbian drama—on Broadway during the first half of the twentieth century: Lillian Hellman’s *The Children’s Hour*.⁷⁷ *The Children’s Hour* is popularly anthologized, frequently produced, and extensively studied. The play premiered on Broadway on November 20, 1934⁷⁸ and ran for 691 performances (closing on July 4, 1936).⁷⁹ Despite its

⁷⁵ Winsloe, Christa. *Children in Uniform*. English Adapter: Barbara Burnham. *Famous Plays of 1932-33*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933. 9-104. 77. Print.

⁷⁶ Morgan, Charles. “The ‘Maedchen in Uniform’ Play Scores in London.” *The New York Times*. 6 Nov. 1932. X1. Print.

⁷⁷ *The Children’s Hour*, Hellman’s first play, tells the story of Karen Wright and Martha Dobie who have begun the Wright-Dobie School for Girls. Karen and Martha are falsely accused of lesbian behavior by a scheming student, Mary Tilford. Consequently, Karen’s engagement to her fiancé, Doctor Joseph Cardin is broken off and, realizing that she does love Karen as accused, Martha commits suicide. Since Karen and Martha are accused of having been lovers and Martha eventually admits “*I have loved you the way they said*” (104, emphasis in original), there is little speculation about Martha’s sexuality. In fact, in *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*, Alan Sinfield unequivocally states that “it is plain all the way through [the play] that Martha is in love with Karen, and almost equally plain that the women have not been enjoying sexual relations in the manner alleged.” (95). Sinfield is careful to identify Martha as a lesbian and simultaneously deny Mary’s lie that they have been physically intimate.

⁷⁸ Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1934-1935*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935. Print.

⁷⁹ “News of the Stage: Exit ‘The Children’s Hour’ on July 4th—This Evening’s Gift From the WPA—The Summer Circuit Reports.” *New York Times* 26 Jun. 1936. 17. Print.

lesbian content and unlike many of its lesbian predecessors, it was favorably reviewed by critics. *The Children's Hour*, however, was not the first lesbian boarding school drama on Broadway. Anthologized only once,⁸⁰ seldom produced, and infrequently studied, Christa Winsloe's *Girls in Uniform* (in a translation by Barbara Burnham)⁸¹ premiered on Broadway on December 30, 1932, two years before *The Children's Hour*, and ran for only twelve performances.⁸² The play was immediately compared with its 1931 German film counterpart, *Maedchen in Uniform*,⁸³ directed by Leontine Sagan and written by Christa Winsloe and F.D. Andam (Friedrich Dammann).⁸⁴ The film premiered in New York in 1932. The play, Winsloe's first, originally premiered in Leipzig in 1930 under the title *Ritter Nérestan (Knight Nérestan)* and was renamed when it debuted in Berlin later that year as *Gestern und Heute (Yesterday and Today)*. Most notably, the play, again retitled and this time translated as *Children in Uniform*, ran in London's West End for over 250 performances after opening on October 7, 1932.⁸⁵ Just a year after the Broadway production, Farrar & Rinehart released *The Child Manuela: The Novel of Maedchen in Uniform*, also written by Winsloe, in English. *The Child Manuela* focuses on Manuela, the protagonist of *Girls in Uniform*, and details her life before the action of the play commences and carries the story through to the play's end. The fiction version of the narrative contributes a history for

⁸⁰ It was anthologized in the following compilation:

Winsloe, Christa. *Children in Uniform*. English Adapter: Barbara Burnham. *Famous Plays of 1932-33*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933. 9-104. Print.

⁸¹ Although the play premiered on Broadway as *Girls in Uniform*, Burnham's translation (called an "English adaptation") was published under the title *Children in Uniform*.

⁸² Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1932-1933*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1934. Print.

⁸³ Spellings of the film title include *Madchen* and *Maedchen*. I am using the latter spelling throughout this chapter with the exception of quoted material.

⁸⁴ The Janus VHS release of the film, a "John Krimsky and Gifford Cochran" presentation, credits Christa Winsloe with the adaptation and screenplay. Krimsky and Cochran secured the American rights for the film when it first premiered in the United States (Hall 26). The original German states only "Nach dem Buhnenstuck 'Gestern und Heute' von Christa Winsloe," or "After the Stageplay 'Yesterday and Today' by Christa Winsloe." Lotte Eisner, among others (including the British Film Institute) attribute the screenplay to Christa Winsloe and F.D. Andam.

⁸⁵ Deeney, John F. "Censoring the Uncensored: the Case of 'Children in Uniform.'" *New Theatre Quarterly* 16.3 (August 2000): 219-226. Print.

Manuela that uniquely informs a dramaturgical analysis of the play. For both the play and film, there existed two distinctly different critical receptions: one group identified both versions as primarily anti-authoritarian texts, the other group identified both as primarily lesbian texts. While one might choose to privilege the antiauthoritarian themes of the play (and film) as many did, a close reading of *Girls in Uniform* reveals that its antiauthoritarian rhetoric complicates and enhances its depiction of what would have been viewed as deviant sexual desire. Such a reading reveals that Winsloe draws parallels between authoritarianism and heteronormativity and criticizes both. Winsloe's play is not just a plea for understanding, but a multivalent critique of repressive social structures that were, in 1931, on the rise in Germany.

Girls in Uniform

Girls in Uniform explores the love a student, Manuela, has for her teacher, Fraulein von Bernburg, in a strict, rigid, repressive boarding school for girls in a "Town in North Germany" in the 1932 (Winsloe 15). Manuela, whose father is an army officer and whose mother has died, is sent to the boarding school by her aunt. Following a confusing and overwhelming orientation, Manuela settles into her new surroundings and thrives, motivated by her affection for her teacher, Fraulein von Bernburg. After a successful dramatic turn as Nerestan in Voltaire's *Zaire*,⁸⁶ Manuela becomes drunk, openly confesses her love of Fraulein von Bernburg and her belief that Fraulein Bernburg returns her love, and then passes out. Unfortunately, the headmistress has overheard her statements and is incensed by her scandalous behavior and claims. The

⁸⁶ Voltaire's *Zaire* (also *Zara*) tells the story of two Christian slaves, Zaire and Nerestan. Zaire falls in love with and becomes engaged to the Sultan of Turkey while Nerestan is away trying to secure ransoms for Christians. Upon Nerestan's return, Zaire learns that she is Nerestan's sister and Nerestan and his father make Zaire delay her marriage to the sultan and promise to be baptized. The sultan suspects Zaire is unfaithful, kills her, captures Nerestan, and subsequently learns that Zaire was not unfaithful. Devastated, the sultan kills himself with the same knife he used to slay Zaire. In the film version, *Maedchen in Uniform*, the students perform *Don Carlos*, not *Zaire*.

headmistress punishes Manuela by ordering that no one talk to her and forcing Manuela to take her lessons alone. Fraulein von Bernburg disobeys the headmistress and arranges to see Manuela to tell her of her punishment in person. Fraulein von Bernburg also tells Manuela that Manuela will no longer be sleeping in the dormitory under Fraulein von Bernburg's supervision and that Manuela can no longer see or speak with Fraulein von Bernburg. Manuela departs, heartbroken. Fraulein von Bernburg musters the courage to confront the headmistress and speak her mind about the deadening effect of the headmistress's policies on all who inhabit the school. Her speech is interrupted by news of Manuela's suicide. After learning that she can no longer see Fraulein von Bernburg, Manuela has committed suicide by throwing herself from a window and the play ends. It is important to note, however, that *Maedchen in Uniform*, the film version, does not end in Manuela's suicide. Instead, Manuela's classmates save her and the headmistress retreats, suggesting that the more humane and less authoritarian ways of Fraulein von Bernburg might prevail in the boarding school. Because of the scant theatre criticism on *Girl in Uniform*, I will draw upon film criticism as it relates to the content shared between the film and play versions. As someone outside of the field of Film Studies, I want to acknowledge the limited manner in which I am appropriating film criticism that investigates the thematic and narrative content shared by the film and play.⁸⁷ But before I turn to criticism of the play and film, I need to establish the context in which the play and film were produced and received.⁸⁸ While a full analysis of Weimar Germany and the socio-political

⁸⁷ To maintain methodological consistency, I am separating the theatre and film scholarship and I am not performing close readings of reviews of the film's German premiere because such investigations are ancillary to my investigation of the play's Broadway run.

⁸⁸ I have found no significant criticism or reviews of Winsloe's novel *The Child Manuela*. An advertisement for the novel in *The New York Times* sells the book as "an exquisitely tender and sensitive story of adolescent love which should be read by every woman in America" ("Display Ad 79-No Title"). The ad quotes two reviews I have been unable to locate. One quoted review by Blair Niles refers to the novel as a "beautiful and infinitely moving story...every parent should read it." The second review from the *Saturday Review of Literature* simply states: "skillfully and delicately handled." It is unclear whether this review refers to the handling of the novel, the theme of lesbianism, or Manuela's adolescence.

circumstances in which Winsloe wrote her play and screenplay falls outside of the scope of this project, it is important to have a broad sense of the cultural moment in Germany that informs Winsloe's depiction of Prussianism in the early 1930s.

An Historical Aside

Girls in Uniform's German origins, German setting, and 1932 American premiere must be mined for their political ramifications before a rigorous examination of the play's themes can be discussed. A product of Weimar Germany (1919-1933), *Girls in Uniform* was completed just before Hitler was made Chancellor in January 1933. In 1919, German voters elected a National Assembly to create a constitution for a democratic republic. The National Assembly met in Weimar, a European cultural mecca since the eighteenth century and a symbol of a more liberal Germany.

According to Sabine Hake in her book *German National Cinema* (2002),

[t]he signing of the constitution ushered in a period of dramatic change that, in the popular imagination, has become identified with the liberal, urban, and cosmopolitan atmosphere of the 'golden twenties' [a period of relative stability in Germany prior to the Great Depression]. The new government established parliamentary structures and improved civil rights, including women's right to vote; other reforms concerned workers' housing, labour conditions, reproductive rights, and freedom of speech. The literary and artistic avant-gardes gave rise to progressive mass culture committed to experimentation, innovation, and social change. However, the difficult conditions under which the various short-lived governments introduced democratic traditions also revealed the persistence of pre-war authoritarian power structures. (26)

The "difficult conditions" to which Hake refers were largely defined by Germany's struggle to combat inflation and pay war reparations after World War I. Despite

multiple plans reducing reparations and extending the period over which they were paid (e.g. the Dawes Plan, the Young Plan, etc.), many Germans, following the end of World War I, opposed the mandated reparation payments, the loss of territory, and the disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. Hake notes that the “new political and cultural elites tried to move beyond the postwar atmosphere of disillusionment, cynicism, and resentment” (26).⁸⁹

In fact, *Girls in Uniform* can be productively viewed as an artifact of not only the new (albeit short-lived) democratic Weimar society, but also of the shift in sexual politics that characterized Weimar Germany. In her essay, “Modernity and Mass Culture in Weimar: Contours of a Discourse on Sexuality in Early Theories of Perception and Representation” (1987), Patrice Petro argues:

The Weimar years were not only marked by multiple political, economic and social crises, but also that these crises were often experienced as contributing to the loss of (male) cultural authority. That responses to the loss of this authority inevitably involved woman should hardly come as a surprise, especially when we reflect on the fact that it was only in the early twentieth century that the woman's movement gained a contending voice in German political and cultural life. (118)

The moment was right for a play challenging male cultural authority (in the form of Prussianism in *Girls in Uniform*) in an all-female setting. Petro goes on to assert that the almost obsessive attempt of artists and intellectuals in Weimar to delay the loss of male authority reveals a simultaneous attempt to distance a mass cultural audience perceived as threatening, as Other, and as female. While this

⁸⁹ When the Great Depression hit Germany in 1930, the financial gains made in the 1920s were lost. In September 1930, Hitler's Nazi Party, which had won only twelve seats in the Reichstag in 1928, won 107 seats in the Reichstag and became Germany's second largest party (the Social Democrats still held 143 seats).

response certainly attests to the tenacity of a male desire, it also points to a threat that was neither purely imaginary nor metaphorical. In other words, mass culture and the cinema in Weimar cannot be aligned with the complete exclusion of women, since both were in many ways responsive to women's demands for a greater share in German cultural and economic life. (140)

Both *Girls in Uniform* and its cinematic counterpart can be viewed as a response to “women’s demands for a greater share in German cultural and economic life” and a threat to the status quo epitomized by the strict authoritarianism of the boarding school. The depiction of females as rebellious, sexual beings might have been particularly dangerous in Germany given a new female audience for theatre and cinema. Prior to 1908, females were banned from attending public meetings.

Detailing this history in pre-World War I Germany, Petro writes:

[E]ven after women were granted the right to assemble, the very act of a woman attending a public gathering was considered scandalous, even immoral. Nevertheless, the cultural sanction against women's right to assemble was not heeded by the promoters of mass cultural entertainment, who sought to capitalize on changes in women's legal status and thus to profit from the economic potential of female audiences. The cinema, in particular, became one of the few places in German cultural life that afforded women a prominent position and a privileged access, and the growing visibility of women at the movies did not go unnoticed by those who held mass culture responsible for exacerbating the decay of standards brought about by industrialization and modernity more generally. (141)

It stands to reason that Winsloe took advantage of the opportunities afforded to her in a more female-friendly Weimar society. In so doing, she created a female-centric and anti-authoritarian work in a cultural environment largely defined in terms of male authority. And because of the socio-political climate of Weimar Germany, Winsloe’s

work enjoyed many incarnations accessible to female audiences prior to the rise of Nazism.

During the Weimar period, the United States and much of Europe carefully monitored Germany's growth and recovery without directly intervening in German politics. The relationship between Germany and much of the western world was fragile and precarious: European nations cast a suspicious eye on Germany and Germany reacted to its diminished power with resentment. Into this tense atmosphere emerged the many versions of *Girls in Uniform*. As this chapter discusses, *Girls in Uniform's* and *Maedchen in Uniform's* distinctly Prussian (read: authoritarian, militaristic, World War I German) setting and its critique of authoritarian rule made it palatable to American and British audiences for two reasons: the Prussian setting permitted viewers to accept the story as a product of cultural Otherness (that which is not American, not British) and the critique of authoritarian rule may have, for some, eclipsed the lesbian content. The setting of the play, socio-historical context in which it premiered, and its lesbian themes are key to deciphering its reception. To unpack its complex dramaturgy, one must further examine this complicated relationship between political context and taboo sexual theme.

Lesbianism & Prussianism: Perspectives on a Metaphor

Some critics and scholars view the play's antiauthoritarianism, specifically anti-Prussianism, as its primary theme to which the play's lesbianism is subjugated. Others view lesbianism as the play's focus and view the Prussianism as a metaphor for lesbian repression. In the early 1930s, one could critique antiauthoritarianism, but one could not as easily advocate for a pro-lesbian politics in a work intended for commercial audiences. By tying these two strands of repression together, Winsloe

presents a savvy critique of sexual repression cloaked in ostensibly antiauthoritarian rhetoric. In "From 'Caligari' to Dietrich: Sexual, Social, and Cinematic Discourses in Weimar Film" (1993), Richard McCormick contends:

In the turbulent economic, political, and social chaos of the Weimar Republic, newly emancipated women were blamed for social instability, especially by antidemocratic forces on the Right, who also blamed Socialists, Jews, and other groups that played new and more prominent roles in the republic. All of these groups were scapegoated as "other" in keeping with ominous ideological and psychological tendencies that would become all too clear by 1933. The right-wing myth that helped to coalesce these tendencies was born with the Weimar Republic itself: the *Dolchstoßlegende*, the legend of the "stab in the back," according to which Imperial Germany had been humbled in World War I not on the battlefield but on the home front by the enemy within—that is, by women, socialists, Jews, homosexuals, and others. (644)

Extrapolating on McCormick, it would seem that a script written by a female, directed by a female, and focused on both antiauthoritarianism and lesbianism would never have made it to the stage or screen in 1933 and was, perhaps, fortunate to have done so in 1931. The decline of Prussianism and the rise in depictions of homosexuality in popular culture provided Winsloe with a unique opportunity to create a political play in 1930 and screenplay in 1931 that could not have been made earlier, and would not have again been possible until at least fifteen years later. An examination of the receptions of both the play and film reveal the degree to which critics and scholars saw in the play and film what they wanted to see. These varying perspectives demonstrate that the play and film told one story that elicited two substantially different interpretations during at least the first fifty years following the first productions. But what are the stakes in this debate over content? Why cannot the play and film engage both themes? What is accomplished in privileging the political themes at the expense

of the sexual content?

Writing about the film *Maedchen in Uniform* between the World Wars or within a decade after the end of World War II, critics and historians, one might reasonably expect, would be particularly attentive to depictions of authoritarianism in Germany, but not necessarily to the exclusion of the film's lesbianism. The action of the film is largely the same as its theatrical predecessor.⁹⁰ If anything, the film actually plays up the students' burgeoning sexuality: the students talk about the "sex appeal" (this exact term, spoken in English, appears in the film) of actors (specifically, German film star Hans Albers); they collectively gather to look at a sexual illustration in a book; and Fraulein von Attemis, the instructor overseeing the school's theatre production, demonstrates the art of feminine seduction to a female student actor unable to perform seduction persuasively. Hertha Thiele, the young actor playing Manuela, is strikingly beautiful and Fraulein von Bernburg, played by Dorothea Wicke, stands transfixed when she first sees Manuela coming down the stairs toward her. The camera lingers on Manuela's face as she lovingly gazes at von Bernburg throughout the film, but the camera also captures what appear to be von Bernburg's own longing glances at Manuela. The bond they share is made most evident in the last moments of the film. The viewer sees von Bernburg, in her office, rubbing her temples as if haunted by frightening thoughts or images. The film then jumps to a close-up of Manuela, poised to commit suicide and the close-up quickly dissolves into a close-up of von Bernburg's face against the same back-drop. The camera jumps back to von Bernburg who, the viewer realizes, knows, psychically, that Manuela is about to kill herself. Von Bernburg shouts Manuela's name and rushes out of her office to go to her. The camera dramatically reinforces the connection and love chronicled in Winsloe's script.

⁹⁰ I have not found an extant screenplay for *Maedchen in Uniform*.

It would seem impossible to discuss the film without acknowledging the driving force of the action: Manuela's love for Fraulein von Bernburg (and Fraulein von Bernburg's apparent, albeit conflicted, reciprocation of this love).

A number of critics and historians, however, do not identify any lesbianism in the film *Maedchen in Uniform*. When the film premiered in the U.S. in 1932, *The Wall Street Journal*, under the headline "The Theatre: With a Bow to the Germans," reported that *Maedchen in Uniform* centers upon an "interesting war between two women [the headmistress and Fraulein von Bernburg]" (3). This "war" might be most easily understood as a war between the authoritarian ideals of World War I Germany and the democratic mission of the interwar Weimar Republic, but it is, of course, also a war between sexual norms and sexual Otherness, although critics do not articulate it as such. The *Wall Street Journal* critic writes that Manuela's drunken outburst of love for von Bernburg is nothing but an inebriated "shriek of anger" (which ignores Manuela's confession that she is wearing the chemise von Bernburg gave her) and that the headmistress's "merciless attitude frightens" Manuela and prompts her to attempt suicide (3). Although *The Wall Street Journal* offers a favorable review of the film, it completely ignores the relationship between Manuela and von Bernburg. *New York Times* film critic Mordaunt Hall explains to his readers that *Maedchen in Uniform* "is actually more of a rap on the knuckles for the militaristic notions [of the headmistress] than an exposition of unnatural affection" (11). (A "rap on the knuckles" for militarism in any form by a German film would have been viewed as a progressive move in 1932.) Hall describes Manuela's feelings for von Bernburg as "devotion" and "great affection," but paradoxically acknowledges that these feelings might be interpreted as "unnatural affection" (11). He attributes Manuela's feelings for von Bernburg to the fact that Manuela is motherless and that von Bernburg shows Manuela more attention than the other students precisely because Manuela is motherless.

In *Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*, originally published in 1947, film historian Siegfried Kracauer echoes Hall's assessment of the film's theme, writing that it "exposes the devastating effects of Prussianism upon a sensitive young girl" and offers a "plea for its [Prussianism's] humanization" (228). According to Kracauer, "Hertha Thiele's Manuela is a unique compound of sweet innocence, illusory fears and confused emotion" (227). Manuela "idolizes" Fraulein von Bernburg, but only because the discipline of the Prussian boarding school has made her "suppress" her "desire for love" (227, 226). For Kracauer, writing just after the end of World War II, the film is first and foremost an attempted criticism of authoritarian behavior, not a lesbian love story (tragic in its dramatic incarnation). Furthermore, according to Kracauer, *Maedchen in Uniform* fails as a truly antiauthoritarian tract:

What on the surface appears to be a wholesale attack against rigid Prussian discipline is in the final analysis nothing but a plea for its humanization. [...] In the whole film, there is no hint of the possibility that authoritarian behavior might be superseded by democratic behavior. [...] As the shadows envelop her, the garrison bugles blare again. They have the last word in the film. The resumption of this motif at such an important moment unmistakably reveals that the principle of authority has not been shaken. The headmistress will continue to wield the scepter. And any possible softening of authoritarian discipline would only be in the interest of its preservation. (228-229)

Why does Kracauer privilege the aural over the visual? Would it not be fruitful to mine these seemingly contradictory signs for a meaning as complex and gray as the film itself rather than insist on a black-or-white interpretation? Might not the sound of the garrison bugle, as the headmistress is slowly enveloped in darkness, signal the possibility of a new regime? Routines will continue, but may be changed in the aftermath of the headmistress's failure. Kracauer himself admits that the "final scene,

it is true, elaborates upon the symbolic defeat of the headmistress: Prussianism seems definitely done for when she [the headmistress] moves back through the dark corridor, leaving the bright foreground to Fraulein von Bernburg and the girls” (228). Might not the bugle indicate, at the very least, future battles for Manuela and von Bernburg? In short, for Kracauer, while the film is about antiauthoritarianism, it is about the failure of antiauthoritarianism, not its revolutionary potential. Fellow film scholar Lotte Eisner follows in Kracauer’s footsteps in her own assessment of the film’s primary theme.

In *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt* (1952), Eisner contends that *Maedchen in Uniform* “is the last word on the slavery and starvation to which the aristocracy subjected its daughters whose headmistress says, [...] ‘We Prussians became great by starving’” (325). The closest Eisner comes to acknowledging the lesbian content of the play is to note that “[t]he rather troubled atmosphere of close friendships between young adolescents, whose senses have still to come to rest on an object different from their own sex, is evoked throughout” (326). Eisner’s statement implies that the film’s central conflict is between the students rather than between Manuela and Fraulein von Bernburg. Eisner never mentions the name of Fraulein von Bernburg and only once refers to the actor who assumed this role in the film, Dorothea Wieck. She states that the director, Leontine Sagan, who also directed the London stage production, brings out “the flush of love trembling in the cracked voice of the adolescent—Hertha Thiele—in counterpoint with the contralto of Dorothea Wieck,” but fails to identify that that love is directed toward von Bernburg (326).⁹¹ While one could argue that in the wake of

⁹¹ Eisner does not specify the scene in which Hertha Thiele’s voice cracks. While one might typically associate a cracking voice with an adolescent male instead of an adolescent female, I suspect that Eisner refers to the moments in which Thiele’s voice “cracks” with emotion when she is overcome by her feelings.

World War II, Eisner and Kracauer might understandably view *Maedchen in Uniform* through a political rather than a sexual lens, their omissions of the film's lesbianism suggest that lesbianism is not even a vehicle by which the antiauthoritarianism is explored; antiauthoritarianism, in their views, is the film's central theme and Manuela's desires are merely incidental.

The views of critics and scholars regarding *Maedchen in Uniform* were shared by critics writing about the stage play, *Girls in Uniform*. And just as the aforementioned film critics did not identify the lesbianism of the film, most theatre critics rationalize away the play's lesbianism. Brooks Atkinson follows in Hall's steps in his review of the Broadway production. Atkinson states:

As filmgoers know, it is the austere portrait of life in a Prussian girls' school which is conducted on military principles. The discipline is severe; the authority is rigid and Spartan. What upsets it is the sensitive imagination of Manuela, the motherless child of a Prussian officer, who finds in her teacher the first womanly tenderness she has ever known and who loses her head out of pleading, girlish ecstasy. (10)

Atkinson's language: "Prussian," "military principles," "discipline," "severe," "authority," "rigid," and "Spartan" drives home the play's authoritarian Prussian setting (10). Atkinson first stresses the setting and then tells his readers that Manuela has a "sensitive imagination" and is motherless *before* writing that Manuela finds in von Bernburg "the first womanly tenderness she has ever known" (10). Instead of acknowledging the play's lesbianism, Atkinson instead implies that because Manuela is a sensitive girl in a repressive setting, she turns her attention to von Bernburg, but her passion for von Bernburg is the result of an overactive imagination and the absence of her mother in her life. Her sensitive imagination in combination with the manner in which she "loses her head out of pleading, girlish ecstasy" denote

adolescent female hysteria rather than lesbianism. The position of these critics and scholars would seem to suggest that they did not want to acknowledge the play's lesbianism and therefore provided rationalizations for the desire Manuela feels for von Bernburg. Rather than accept the apparent lesbian content of the play, these critics and scholars stretch their personal readings of the film and play to accommodate their need to view the texts almost solely in terms of their political content.

A second group of theatre and film critics and scholars, some writing during the same period as Hall and Atkinson do, stress the play's and film's lesbian content and explicitly rebuke those who fail to cite lesbianism as the primary theme of both the play and film. A little over a month before *Girls in Uniform's* American premiere, Charles Morgan reported on the show's London success. While he, like Hall and Atkinson, stresses the importance of the Prussian boarding school and its effect on all who reside there, he adds that "[t]he developing love between girl and mistress is, as the play presents it, almost a love between mother and child, though it is open to us to assume, if we will, that subconsciously it is inflamed in some degree by passion different in origin" (XI). Morgan's appraisal of the relationship is important because he writes of developing love "between" Manuela and von Bernburg rather than of Manuela's love for Bernburg. Yet his reference to a "passion different in origin" is as close as Morgan comes to discussing the play's lesbianism. Theatre critic Percy Hammond, writing in 1932, compares the play with its cinematic counterpart and finds "suggestions of innocent abnormality [...] more straightforward in its tangible and English form [presumably, the live theatre production in English as opposed to the German language film] at the Booth [Theater]" ("The Theaters: 'Girls in Uniform'"). But he mentions that "skeptics" of the film attribute its popularity to its "unhealthy implications." The abnormality and unhealthy implications of which he writes can refer only to the lesbianism of the play and film.

Over half a century later, film critic B. Ruby Rich acknowledges the film's significance as "anti-authoritarian and prophetically antifascist," but argues that "[i]n emphasizing the film's progressive stance in relation to the Nazi assumption of power, however, film historians have tended to overlook, minimize, or trivialize the film's central concern with love between women" (64). Rich positions her work in opposition to previous, largely male criticism of *Maedchen in Uniform*, and offers a lesbian-centered feminist reading of the film. Rich's essay, first published in 1984, argues that the film is

about sexual repression in the name of social harmony; absent patriarchy and its forms of presence; bonds between women which represent attraction instead of repulsion; and the release of powers that can accompany the identification of lesbian sexuality. The film is a dual coming-out story: that of Manuela, the adolescent who voices "the love that dares not speak its name" and who, in distinguishing between fantasy and desire, dares to act upon the latter; and that of Fraulein von Bernburg, the teacher who repudiates her own role as an agent of suppression and wins her own freedom by accepting her attraction to another woman. (64)

Her identification of the film's central theme is corroborated by Richard Dyer in his *New German Critique* article (1990) "Less and More than Women and Men: Lesbian and Gay Cinema in Weimar Germany." Dyer argues that while the film was a critical and commercial success and is frequently included in studies of German cinema, "as a lesbian film, *Madchen* did need to be rediscovered" because "[w]hile praising its artistry," historians "managed to play down the film's lesbianism" (32). For Dyer, the film's lesbianism "is not incidental to the film's anti-authoritarianism and femininity—in many ways, it is what makes those qualities possible" (32). A decade later, John F. Deeney expresses similar views in his analysis of the Lord Chamberlain's licensing of the dramatic version, *Children in Uniform*, in England, and

its subsequent 1932 West End production. (I will investigate the reasons for the Lord Chamberlain's licensing of the play later in this chapter.) Deeney posits that while *Children in Uniform* "certainly critiques an authoritarian educational system, [...] it might be argued that lesbianism is merely muted within this" and that the play "succeeded in creating a lesbian space within the heterosexual paradigm of realism" (223, 224). For Morgan, Rich, Dyer, and Deeney, the lesbianism of the film and play is a foregone conclusion. But given the absence or denial of this theme in other reviews and scholarly critiques, how might one understand how the play might have been perceived by Broadway audiences in 1932?

Among those writing about the play between the World Wars, immediately after World War I, and decades after World War II, there exists a clear divide between those who view the play and film as lesbian texts and those who don't even acknowledge the works' lesbian content, much less view it as central to Winsloe's story. Were all critics of the 1930s and 1940s to ignore the lesbian theme and most critics writing decades later to embrace the theme as central to the texts, then one might argue that the socio-historical contexts in which the historians and critics were writing informed their perceptions of the film. But this is not the case. In 1932, Atkinson and Hall, who rationalize away the lesbian themes in the play and film, respectively, were writing at the same time as Morgan and Hammond, who did acknowledge the lesbian content when writing about the play and play-as-compared-with-its-film-counterpart, respectively. Kracauer and Eisner, writing in the 1940s and 50s, ignore the lesbian themes (despite the fact that some writing a decade earlier identified these themes) while Rich, Dyer, and Deeney, writing in the last quarter of the twentieth century, emphasize the centrality of the lesbianism. One cannot dismiss Kracauer and Eisner simply because they were writing not long after World War II no more than one should accept the claims of Rich, Dyer, and Deeney because of their

critical distance from World War II Germany and the emergence of the critical apparatuses they employ (e.g. feminist and queer studies). As late as 1981, film critic and historian Claudia Lenssen, in an interview with Helen Fehervary, a German literature scholar; and Judith Mayne, a film scholar; argues:

We [German women filmmakers and film critics] are not at all as fascinated by *Madchen in Uniform* as American women are. For us it is typical of a whole series of films made in the late 1920s and early 1930s, before the Nazi regime; and we discuss it within this particular tradition of German cinema. We know that there is an underlying theme of lesbianism in the film, but the theme is suppressed and we analyze the film in terms of the censorship that already existed in the early 1930s. (173)

Judith Mayne challenges Lenssen and responds, “I would hardly describe [the lesbian theme] as ‘underlying’” (173). The debate about the film’s subject matter continued fifty years after its release. Perhaps most importantly, not one of these critics provides a close dramaturgical reading of the film or play. A dramaturgical reading of the play highlights the manner in which Winsloe uses antiauthoritarianism as a means of deepening her depiction of lesbianism and criticizing repressive state structures that were slowly becoming a way of life in Germany in 1931.

Manuela in Context

Those who dismiss the idea that the play focuses on lesbianism stress Manuela’s youth and imply that her feelings for Fraulein von Bernburg represent adolescent idolatry rather than conscious lesbian desire. Atkinson, Kracauer, and Eisner all emphasize Manuela’s age. Manuela is fourteen and a half. This is stated in both the film and play. Does her age preclude lesbianism? British readers who worked for the Lord Chamberlain’s office believed it did. These readers were working with the same

Burnham translation which would later appear in the U.S. The Lord Chamberlain himself initially wanted to prohibit a British production of the play because, according to Deeney, “parallels [...] might be drawn between a ‘Prussian girls’ school and the usual run of girls’ schools in this country” (221). In fact, by the 1930s, fear and suspicion of homosexuality in single-sex environments, the result of the work of sexologists, was widespread in the U.S. and in Europe. G.S. Street’s reader’s report declared: “Such an ordinary thing as the ‘passion’ of a schoolgirl for a mistress is not to be confused with adult lesbianism, which has so far been ruled out as a subject for plays. It is unfortunate that the stupid Headmistress treats it as a grave perversion and Fraulein von Bernburg calls it a ‘sin’. Personally, I do not think the play should be banned” (qtd. in Deeney 221). Lady Violet Bonham Carter, of the Lord Chamberlain’s Advisory Committee, argued that “[n]ot the faintest apprehension (of sin) exists in the mind of the child. A condemnation of the system which produced these results is really the theme of the play, and the setting is so uncompromisingly German in every particular, that I should not have thought it could be taken as anything applying to, or reflecting on, educational methods in this country” (qtd. in Deeney 221). Again, critics identify the play’s German setting as an indication of Otherness that could be displaced, marginalized, and therefore accepted precisely because, in this instance, it was so clearly *not* British. Because Manuela is a “schoolgirl,” a “child,” her desires, according to these British readers, cannot constitute authentic lesbianism. And yet do critics disavow Juliet’s heterosexual passion for Romeo because of her youth? She is the same age as Manuela and the passion she and Romeo share for one another provides the entire foundation upon which the tragedy is built. Furthermore, it is essential to note that Manuela is old enough to receive a proposal of marriage in the play. Just before her triumphant performance as Nerestan in *Zaire*, Manuela receives a written proposal from her fencing master. She completely dismisses this proposal, tears up the letter, and remarks that she it would make her feel “quite sick” to have to

see the fencing master again (59). Manuela is not too young for either heterosexual or homosexual love. Sexologists of the era, too, posit that youth does not preclude homosexuality. Their work provides an in-depth examination of homosexuality in single-sex schools which speaks to the anxiety experienced by so many members of the Lord Chamberlain's Advisory Committee. In short, Manuela's youth seems an all too convenient and disingenuous means of erasing Manuela's desire. Deeney notes that only one committee member, Allardyce Nicoll, a British theatre scholar and critic (who, at the age of thirty-eight, would soon leave England to become the chair of Yale's Drama Department in 1933),⁹² departed from this view and argued that despite her age, Manuela's passions were "unnatural" (read: lesbian):

The heroine [is] an 'individualized type', highly strung and gifted with a strong histrionic sense which makes it easy for her to enter into an imaginative world of singular intensity of feeling...

While there is certainly a distinction to be made between Manuela's feelings for F. von Bernburg and adult lesbianism, it still remains true that the former are clearly leading towards the latter and that Manuela, innocent though she may be, is in the grip of potentially unnatural passion. (qtd. in Deeney 221, brackets in Deeney)

Ultimately, the play was licensed, but "with the proviso that the 'setting...remain German'" (Deeney 221). The taboo sexual material was acceptable as long as it was clearly German, perhaps because homosexuality in single-sex education was just as prevalent in Great Britain as in other countries. The play confirms Nicoll's conviction that Manuela's feelings for Fraulein von Bernburg are not the result of youthful idolatry, but of her lesbianism.

⁹² "Milestones, Feb. 6, 1933." *Time Magazine* 6 Feb. 1933. Print.

The works of the two English sexologists informing this study are particularly attuned to the ostensible relationship between homosexuality and single-sex schools. In *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion* (1906), Havelock Ellis includes an appendix on “The School Friendships of Girls.” And in *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women* (1908), Edward Carpenter includes a chapter entitled “Affection in Education” which discusses sexual curiosity in British boys’ schools. By examining the relationship between portraits of lesbianism in *Girls in Uniform* and sexological conceptions of homosexuality in same-sex environments, one can understand how Manuela’s sexual desire might have been perceived by audiences and examine how the play embodies and comments upon detailed sexological constructions of homosexuality in educational settings. Sexologists wrote extensively about homosexuality in young people, especially those whose access to members of the opposite sex was limited, and *Girls in Uniform* serves as an artifact of debate about homosexuality in educational settings exemplified by the exchanges of the Lord Chamberlain’s Advisory Committee and detailed in the writing of Carpenter and Ellis. For example, Carpenter writes that “[t]he panic terror [sic] which prevails in England with regard to the expression of affection of this kind has its comic aspect. The affection exists, and is known to exist, on all sides; but we must bury our heads in the sand and pretend not to see it. And if by any chance we are compelled to recognize it, we must show our vast discernment by *suspecting* it” (104, emphasis in original). Carpenter’s appraisal of the situation was spot on as evidenced by the Lord Chamberlain’s initial trepidation about licensing *Children in Uniform*; he feared that the lesbianism in the Prussian girls’ school might provoke anxiety about girls’ schools in England or, even worse, promote homosexuality in girls’ schools. And while Carpenter specifically focuses on male homosexuality in school environments, his colleague Havelock Ellis surveys female homosexuality in single-sex education settings. Ellis’s work provides a lens through which one can understand perspectives

on female homosexuality in single-sex schools, and, by extension, the lesbianism of *Girls in Uniform*.

Ellis examines examples taken from the work of Giulio Obici, a psychiatrist, and Giovanni Marchesini, an educator, who together studied lesbianism among girls, twelve to twenty years of age, in Italian school settings (*Le "Amicizie" di Collegio: Ricerche sulle Prime Manifestazioni dell'Amore Sessuale/Boarding School "Friendships": Research on the First Manifestations of Sexual Love, 1898*).⁹³ Obici and Marchesini "received much assistance in their studies from former pupils who are now themselves teachers" (Ellis 243). Ellis quotes at length one of these former pupils "who had never herself been either the object or the agent in one of these [school girl] passions, but had had ample opportunity of making personal observations" (243). The former female day-pupil offers her reflections on "flames," passionate school friendships. She remarks:

The 'flame' proceeds exactly like a love-relationship; it often happens that one of the girls shows man-like characteristics, either in physical type or in energy and decision of character; the other lets herself be loved, acting with all the obstinacy—and one might almost say the shyness—of a girl with her lover. The beginning of these relationships is quite different from the usual beginnings of friendship. It is not by being always together, talking and studying together, that two become 'flames'; no, generally they do not even know each other; one sees the other on the stairs, in the garden, in the corridors, and the emotion that arises is nearly always called forth by beauty and physical grace. Then the one who is first struck begins a regular courtship: frequent walks in the garden when the other is likely to be at the window of her

⁹³ It is unclear how widely disseminated the work of Obici and Marchesini was. It may well have received its broadest audience through Ellis's survey of their case studies and findings.

class-room, pauses on the stairs to see her pass; in short, a mute adoration made up of glances and sighs. Later come presents of beautiful flowers, and little messages conveyed by complacent companions. Finally, if the 'flame' shows signs of appreciating all these proofs of affection, comes the letter of declaration. (243-244)

Ellis's account of this former pupil's observations is particularly relevant and useful because the plot of *Girls in Uniform* follows this outline with only a few exceptions (namely that Manuela falls for her teacher, not another pupil). Ellis notes that "[w]hile there is an unquestionable sexual element in the 'flame' relationship, this cannot be regarded as an absolute expression of real congenital perversion of the sex-instinct" (249). Indeed, many of the students in *Girls in Uniform* express affection for each other and Fraulein von Bernburg. For instance, Mia, a student, tells her friends that another student has started a "pash," or crush, on her (38). Ellis quotes "a lady who is familiar with an English girls' college" who contends that "[r]aves on teachers are far commoner than between two girls. In this case the girl makes no secret of her attachment, constantly talking of it and describing her feelings to any who cares to listen" (250, 253). Nearly all of the students in Fraulein von Bernburg's dormitory have great affection for Fraulein von Bernburg and look forward to her nightly kisses for each of her students, but Manuela's feelings for Fraulein von Bernburg depart from those of her peers and resemble an extreme sort of "rave." Ilse, for example, admits to harboring a great fondness for the teacher, but tells Manuela that she does not have "a *real* crush on her" (50, emphasis in translation). Thus, even in the language of the students, "great fondness" does not constitute a "crush"; a "crush" is something more, something, perhaps, more romantic and/or sexual.

In his work on adult female inversion, Ellis offers another way of understanding lesbianism that sheds some light on Manuela's preference for pursuing her crush as a

masculine female. Ellis identifies a “very pronounced tendency among sexually inverted women to adopt male attire when practicable” (140-141). Ellis elaborates and states that “[i]n such cases male garments are not usually regarded as desirable chiefly on account of practical convenience, nor even in order to make an impression on other women, but because the wearer feels more at home in them” (140-141). The stage directions in *Girls in Uniform* indicate that Manuela laughs “*boyishly*” (27) and when dancing with the dance mistress, Manuela “*kisses her hand,*” and “*dances as gentleman to the old lady*” (32). Most tellingly, while preparing to play the role of the knight Nerestan in Voltaire’s *Zaire*, Manuela confides in her friend Edelgard:

I’m so terribly happy, for now I shall be able to show her myself—as I really am! When I’m dressed in my silver armour, with my hair quite free, then, then she [Fraulein von Bernburg] will see me properly for the very first time! [...]
Let me dream I am a knight, a knight who has come to free her—to take her out of this prison, to flee far, far away. Alone, we two, quite alone! (*Stops short, and lowers her voice.*) Alone? But what good would that be!

Whenever I *am* alone with her I can’t say one word! Twenty times I have made up my mind to kiss her hands before doing it once in reality! (55-56)

Manuela views herself as Fraulein von Bernburg’s suitor and savior—someone to free Fraulein von Bernburg from the oppressive school setting. After this confession, another student, Ilse, tells Manuela that she overheard the headmistress exclaiming that Manuela looks like a boy; the following dialogue ensues:

MANUELA (*turning sharply*): That! She said that?

ILSE: Well, why not?...quite nice...What’s up? Don’t you want to look like a boy?

MANUELA (*turning away*): No, no, it isn’t that! I’d like to look like a boy. But I don’t want the Head to say it. I hate her! (57)

Manuela articulates that she feels more comfortable, more herself, when assuming

masculine attire and behavior and Manuela wants to woo her beloved as a masculine suitor would. And when, dressed as a male, Manuela drunkenly declares her love for von Bernburg to the entire school, she visually and verbally signals what the headmistress terms Manuela's "depravity" (82). The headmistress tells her:

In the whole history of this house there has never been such a scandal. You are the wickedest girl who has ever been received in to the school ...If you were not too big, you should be whipped. [...] I would not have believed that any pupil of mine could have behaved like the lowest wretch out of the streets. You boasted, you screamed, so that everyone might hear, glorying in your depravity. (82)

Her "depravity" is not her drunkenness, but her lesbianism, the love of which she "boasted" and that which the headmistress finds "revolting" (82, 78).

I have discussed the parallels between the play and sexologists' notions of adolescent female inversion to highlight the degree to which the play engages medical conceptions of same-sex desire in girls' schools and exists within a popular culture dialogue about same-sex desire among young people. These conceptions were becoming increasingly more widespread in Germany. Social historian Lillian Faderman writes that "[i]n Germany the first organized homosexual movements emerged appropriately enough on the tail of the sexologists' pronouncements. Efforts (which some women supported) soon began to educate the public to accept those congenitalists' theories that appeared to place those who identified themselves as homosexuals in a positive light" (*Surpassing the Love* 316). While Germany was at the forefront of what might be contemporarily termed a gay rights movements, one must consider that Winsloe's play moved across cultures when it premiered in England and then in the United States. This raises the question: How might one gauge the socio-sexual climate in the United States at the moment that *Girls in Uniform*

premiered on Broadway? Would a Broadway audience have perceived the manner in which *Girls in Uniform* represented prevailing notions of adolescent female inversion? Did Broadway audiences see a lesbian play or just an antiauthoritarian play with a hint of youthful idolatry? I believe that a review of a lesbian drama previously produced on Broadway serves to tie together the threads of Broadway drama, single-sex schools, and sexology. In 1927, *The New York Herald Tribune* reported that “girls came in school detachments” to see the lesbian play *The Captive* on Broadway (the play premiered on Broadway in 1926) (“Girls’ Schools Upheld ‘Captive’”).⁹⁴ *The Tribune* makes clear the play’s lesbian themes and the reception of the play by the girls’ school “detachments”: “Helen Menken, who played the title role in “The Captive,” received several notes from women educators in the audiences, deans of women’s colleges and heads of finishing schools, who said they were already concerned with the necessity of impressing the girls in their charge with the dangers of a reprehensible attachment between two women” (“Girls’ Schools Upheld ‘Captive’”). It is important to note, however, that Helen Menken was “out of town” and “could not be asked for names of the educators who had written to her”; indeed, the information about the “notes from women educators” came from Percy Shostac, the production’s stage manager. It is impossible to know if Shostac was telling the truth (he provided no evidence or names to support his claims) or if he was expressing his own views on the “reprehensible” nature of lesbian love. The article continues and quotes Shostac as saying that the greatest merit of *The Captive* was that it “gave audiences the satisfaction of seeing a good play well done” and “[a]s a secondary merit [...] it added to the understanding of the audience by showing the devastating effect of such an attachment between two women” without gratifying “any curiosity as to the origin or conduct of such an attachment” (“Girls’ Schools Upheld ‘Captive’”). Furthermore, the article states that:

⁹⁴ Please see Chapter Two for summary and analysis of *The Captive*.

“A study of attachments between girls at Radcliffe, Vassar, Wellesley and other women’s colleges has been made by Warner Fabian [a pseudonym for journalist and novelist Samuel Hopkin Adams], who wrote ‘Flaming Youth’ four years ago,” Mr. [Horace] Liveright [a publisher who bought the rights to *The Captive* after the show was raided]⁹⁵ said yesterday, “and he had written a book which I intend to bring out this fall under the title “Unforbidden Fruit.”⁹⁶ It deals with the same them[e] in a novel as “The Captive” does on the stage.” (“Girls’ Schools Upheld ‘Captive’”)

Both the stage manager and would-be producer of *The Captive* focus on attachments between girls in all-female schools despite the fact that *The Captive* never touches upon the issue of same-sex desire in girls’ schools. While Liveright is likely trying to promote Warner’s racy novel *Unforbidden Fruit: A Story of Love in Women’s Colleges*, which Boni & Liveright did, indeed, bring out in 1928, Shostac’s comments suggest that educators should be concerned about the “girls in their charge,” indicating that these *girls* are not too young to develop lesbian relationships in their single-sex schools. Shostac’s concerns were widespread. Faderman makes the following concise conclusion about lesbianism and same-sex educational settings in the United States:

More than any other phenomenon, education may be said to have been responsible for the spread among middle-class women of what eventually came to be called lesbianism. Not only did it bring them together in large numbers within the women’s colleges, but it also permitted them literally to invent new careers such as settlement house work and various kinds of betterment professions in which they could be gainfully and productively employed and to create all-female societies around those professions. (*Odd*

⁹⁵ Horace Liveright bought the rights to *The Captive* after Gilbert H. Miller and the Charles Frohman Company withdrew the play in exchange for the dismissal of charges of participating in an indecent show, corrupting public morals, and maintaining a public nuisance against the producers, actors, and manager of the show.

⁹⁶ *Unforbidden Fruit: A Story of Live in Women’s Colleges* was published in 1928 by Boni & Liveright.

Girls 13)

Ironically, *The Captive* may not have been the best vehicle for teaching young females about the dangers of lesbianism because the female protagonist in *The Captive*, as discussed in previous chapters, leaves her husband for her lesbian lover. This small *Tribune* article speaks volumes about American social anxiety (and, perhaps, male voyeurism) with respect to female sexuality in single-sex schools during this era. And while Shostac worried about the “attachments” between female college students, it is interesting to note that, in fact, a number of clubs and organizations at colleges and universities went on to mount their own productions of *Girls in Uniform* in the years following its Broadway debut, including: Mt. Holyoke (1935), Cornell University (1935), Middlebury College (1937), and Hunter College (1939). I suspect that students at these institutions were not interested in *Girls in Uniform* as a warning, but either for its dramatic merit or because it dealt with lesbianism in such a straightforward manner.⁹⁷

Of course the only way to know if Winsloe purposefully wrote a lesbian play and created Manuela as a lesbian character would be to consult her own statements about *Girls in Uniform* or any of its other incarnations, but I have not discovered any. Alternately, one might turn to her biography. Although it could be argued that such a bio-critical reading of the play is both essentialist and reductive, there is a case to be made for the importance of what a bio-critical analysis of early lesbian drama might yield. When biographical information about playwrights of lesbian drama of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s is available (and it seldom is), this information can clarify the

⁹⁷ “Drama for Mt. Holyoke.: ‘Girls in Uniform’ Chosen as Club’s November Play.” *The New York Times* 13 Oct. 1935: N4. Print.

“Girls in Uniform.” *Cornell Alumni News* 14 Nov. 1935: 117. Print.

“Middlebury Dramatics: Season Opens Wednesday With ‘Girls in Uniform.’” *The New York Times* 1 Nov. 1936: D9. Print.

“Hunter Varsity Girls Plan to Give Drama: ‘Girls in Uniform,’ a School Play, to Be Staged in January.” *The New York Times* 3 Dec. 1939: 70. Print.

manner in which a playwright may have understood same-sex desire during a period of cultural hostility toward and fear of homosexuality. Bio-critical analysis affords an opportunity for putting a playwright's relationship to homosexuality in context to facilitate an understanding of how her/his text participates in a broader cultural conversation/debate about homosexuality. In other words, I am interested in the playwright's personal life only insofar as it informs her/his construction of lesbian characters. I want to stress that I don't believe Christa Winsloe's sexuality had any bearing on the manner in which the play was received or interpreted when it first premiered in the U.S.; not one critic mentions her sexuality. I suspect her full biography was as much a mystery, specifically to American audiences in 1932, as it is now. What one can know of her sexuality affects more contemporary feminist and lesbian readings of her work, however, and lends credibility to the idea that she intentionally wrote *Manuela* as a lesbian character.

Christa Winsloe, also known as Baroness Hatvany, was the wife of the Hungarian Baron Ludwig Hatvany. Winsloe had a number of lesbian affairs throughout her life, most notably with American journalist Dorothy Thompson. Thompson was married to author Sinclair Lewis when she met Winsloe. Marion K. Saunders, Thompson's biographer, quotes Thompson's friend John Farrar (the publishing magnate whose company Farrar and Rinehart published *The Child Manuela*) as saying that Winsloe and Thompson were "a couple" (190). Farrar notes that "[i]f you asked Dorothy for dinner, you asked Christa too" (qtd. in Saunders 190). Winsloe's friend, Erika Mann, the lesbian daughter of author Thomas Mann, played one of the teachers in *Maedchen in Uniform* and wrote, with her brother Klaus Mann, about Winsloe's relationship to her play in their memoir *Escape to Life* (a chronicle of the German artists and intellectuals, including the Manns, who went into exile as Nazism gained a stronghold in Germany). The Manns remembered Winsloe announcing her plan to write a play

about her own childhood boarding-school experiences. Of *Girls in Uniform's* popularity, Erica and Klaus write:

Christa Hatvany had guarded in her heart, and now rediscovered, a simple, strong and genuine feeling, and because she could so express it that hundreds of thousands of people recognized the pain and ecstasy of their own childhood, their own first love, which had, in their own hearts, been overlaid, but never stifled. The poignant feeling of recognition was received with gratitude by those hundreds of thousands of people as an expected gift. (50-51)

Winsloe's discovery of her young heart's feelings prompted not just the writing of *Girls in Uniform*, but also the novel that tells the complete story of *Girls in Uniform's* protagonist, Manuela.

For most plays, it is impossible to know much of the characters' lives before the play commences, except for that information offered about characters' histories during the play itself. *Girls in Uniform* is a rare exception. Winsloe did not merely adapt the stage play into a novel; the first half of the novel, *The Child Manuela: The Novel of Maedchen in Uniform*, provides readers with Manuela's life from birth until she enters the boarding school (the point at which the play commences). The novel was released after the play's American run and I have not found any evidence to suggest that the novel was written prior to the play. The Manns write that the play came first, followed by the film, and then the novel (50). The content of the novel seems to confirm Manuela's lesbianism. In the novel, prior to her admittance to the boarding school, Manuela demonstrates a deep and abiding love of her mother, then has a crush on a schoolmate (Eva), and finally falls for the mother (Frau Inge) of her male suitor (Fritz). While one might argue, like film critic Mordaunt Hall and theatre critic Brooks Atkinson do, that Manuela is searching for a mother figure after her mother's death, her crush on her schoolmate occurs while her mother is still living and her

feelings for her suitor's mother are of a seemingly sexual nature. Of encounters with Manuela's schoolgirl crush, Winsloe writes:

If she could only wear trousers [...] she would feel more assured. Sometimes Mother allowed her to do gymnastics in dark-blue knickers, and then she felt free and merry. If she could only wear them to school! Then she would simply go up to Eva and make a bow and offer to carry her schoolbooks, and jump over a fence while Eva was looking or climb up a tree and call down to her; then she would ask her for a dance and send flowers. (58-59)

And of Manuela's feelings for her suitor's mother, Winsloe states: "She could see the opening of Frau Inge's frock and would have liked to drop a kiss into it, but she did not dare. Quite involuntarily she began to tremble" (148). When read in conjunction with *Girls in Uniform*, *The Child Manuela* illuminates the author's perception of Manuela and provides additional evidence of Manuela's lesbianism.

Manipulating the Metaphor

B. Ruby Rich argues that "we must take issue with the largely unexamined critical assumption that the relations between women in the film [*Maedchen in Uniform*] are essentially a metaphor for the real power relations [...] it treats, i.e., the struggle against fascism" (64). Recall that critics and scholars alike identify the play and film as inherently antimilitaristic, antiauthoritarian, and/or antifascist.⁹⁸ In "The Filmic Adaptation of the Novel *The Child Manuela*: Christa Winsloe's Child Heroine

⁹⁸ As previously noted, critic Mordaunt Hall writes that the film is a "rap on the knuckles for [...] militaristic notions." Brooks Atkinson remarks that the play is an "austere portrait of life in a Prussian girls' school which is conducted on military principles. The discipline is severe; the authority is rigid and Spartan." Siegfried Kracauer contends that the film "exposes the devastating effects of Prussianism upon a sensitive young girl" and is a "plea for its [Prussianism's] humanization" (228). Lotte Eisner views the film as a critique of Prussianism and views it as "the last word on the slavery and starvation to which the aristocracy subjected its daughters" (325). Critic B. Ruby Rich acknowledges the film's significance as "an anti-authoritarian and prophetically antifascist" (64).

Becomes a *Girl in Uniform*,” Lisa Ohm argues that “[p]ast critics were aware of the film’s suggestive homoeroticism, but culled more significance from the political content, interpreting the averted suicide of the adolescent heroine at the end as a victory for humanism over the authoritarian Prussian educational system or its political extension, fascism” (98).⁹⁹ But does the play’s depiction of Manuela’s successful suicide suggest the failure of humanism over authoritarianism/fascism?

Dyer characterizes homosexuality in the Weimar Republic and posits:

The sense of a widespread and relatively public lesbian and gay presence is endemic to the image of the Weimar republic. However excessively glamorized or pathologized this may be, the richness and diversity of that presence—in bars, organizations, publications, friendship networks and much else—continues to astonish, certainly disabusing anyone of the attachment to a model of sexual history as an ineluctable linear movement towards the enlightened present. (5)

Indeed, the gay and lesbian cultures that flourished in Germany during this period were squashed by Hitler’s cultural programs and anti-gay bias. Given this cultural context, the difference between the endings of the play and film are important. I believe that the play’s suicide is more dramatic and, in some ways, political than the film’s averted suicide. *Girls in Uniform* is perhaps a more accurate representation of the power of authoritarian rule and sexual repression. *Maedchen in Uniform* offers a positive view of the efficacy of compassion in the face of repression and militarism (Manuela survives), but *Girls in Uniform*, historically, is a more poignant warning of the effects of fascism (Manuela perishes). But as a film, *Maedchen in Uniform* would have required a larger budget and reached a broader audience, perhaps influencing the decision to have Manuela saved by her peers. The stakes were higher for the film

⁹⁹ Ohm contends that “[p]rior to writing the film script, Winsloe had adapted her novel material for a play” (102) but Ohm does not cite any sources for this novel-play-film chronology.

version and, indeed the film was viewed to have reached so many people that, according to Dyer,

there is an indication of the damage that, at the time, it [*Maedchen in Uniform*] might be felt to have done in a follow-up film, *Anna und Elisabeth* (1933). Although not using the same characters, it uses the same stars, Thiele and Wieck, and makes their [lesbian] relationship the clear selling point of the film. The aim, however, is to show unequivocally how sick and twisted such relationships are. [...] *Madchen's* lesbianism was something that needed to be negated, yet to give it expression at all was to set its powerful emotions into play. *Anna und Elisabeth* suggests just how intoxicating a film *Madchen* was, and is. (58-60)

Dyer provides no production information for *Anna und Elisabeth*, and reviews of the film shed no light on the circumstances under which it was produced. Dyer, does, however, provide a short synopsis of the film. He writes that *Anna und Elisabeth* explores the relationship between “a crippled lady of the manner, Elisabeth von Salis” (Wieck) and a miracle-working village girl, Anna (Thiele) (58). Elisabeth falls in love with Anna and keeps Anna from her fiancé. When Anna leaves Elisabeth, Elisabeth throws herself from a cliff. Dyer writes that “[d]eath is a deliverance from her [Elisabeth’s] own lesbianism and her power over Anna” (59). According to Dyer, *Maedchen in Uniform* reached such a broad audience, and presented ideas so antithetical to Nazi doctrine, that a follow-up film used the symbolism of *Maedchen in Uniform* and demonstrated how it could be “annexed to Nazi ideology” and appropriately concluded: Elisabeth dies in *Anna und Elisabeth* whereas Manuela is “saved from self-destruction, a triumph of personal and collective lesbianism” (Dyer 59). The tragic ending of the stage version posed fewer risks in this medium than it would have in the film since the play would have required less money to produce and reached a smaller audience. The film’s happy ending was likely a commercial choice

to make the film a financial success. In short, *Maedchen in Uniform* provides a happy ending to the masses (excluding, perhaps, the Nazi members of those masses) while *Girls in Uniform* provides a sad ending to the theatre-going elite (which might partially explain its short Broadway run).

From the moment the play commences, *Girls in Uniform* consistently stresses the repressive atmosphere of the boarding school: “As the curtain rises FRAULEIN VON GAERSCHNER is heard giving orders. “Form two’s...Left, right, left, right!” And she heads the procession of girls across the stage, marching two by two” (17). What Manuela’s aunt identifies as the “beautifully kept [...] well scrubbed and polished” setting, Manuela, “as though awakening,” views as “bare” and “cold” (17). Rules abound. The girls cannot post letters that have not been censored and/or approved by the headmistress. If a girl attempts to post an unapproved letter, “[h]er holiday leave will be cancelled, and she will no longer have the honour to wear the school uniform” (43). For the headmistress, discipline is everything. She speaks with one of the school’s mistresses and orders her to economize by reducing food, laundry, heating, and sick-room expenses. She tells her: “Our girls need more discipline, more self-control. We Prussians are a Spartan race. Never forget that. They must remember they are daughters of soldiers, and, God willing, they will be mothers of soldiers” (43). She continues: “If we pamper our children, [...] how can Prussia rise again? In our children lies the glory of the past—the hope of the future. Never forget that. Only through self-denial, discipline, and hunger can we again come into our own” (44). The headmistress’s speeches describe the repressive environment in which the students and instructors live, but they also speak to sexual repression. The headmistress views her students in terms of their relationships with males: they are daughters of soldiers and future wives of soldiers. There is no room in this patriarchal framework for single females or lesbians (or even mothers of daughters). While the

headmistress's recipe for Prussia's rebirth—"self-denial, discipline, and hunger"—speaks to the material reductions she wants to make, her words are also an uncannily astute program for sexual repression. Students and instructors must deny their need and/or desire for same-sex love; they must discipline themselves to avoid temptation, and they must starve themselves of their desires in order to survive. Fraulein von Bernburg, for example, has learned to deny herself and only at the close of the play does she tell the headmistress, "You kill the soul, the spirit! This galvanized suppression is spiritual death" (103). And because Manuela is denied the presence of von Bernburg and cannot discipline herself to accept this, she chooses to end her life.

Furthermore, the headmistress believes that every female's life must revolve around "[c]hurch, kitchen, children" (103). She tells von Bernburg that "[p]arents send us their girls to be taught discipline, order, self-control, and obedience. Those who have not learned to obey can never command. If one should assert herself at the community's expense she must be crushed—rooted out—" (102). Manuela transgresses the patriarchal (and thus heterosexual) order by asserting her love for von Bernburg and her conviction that von Bernburg shares this love. She does this while wearing von Bernburg's chemise and tells her classmates this, compounding and reifying her offense. Fraulein Von Bernburg goes so far as to prohibit Johanna, presumably the school's laundress (her official position is unclear), from darning Manuela's "threadbare" underwear and insists on taking care of the issue herself (60). Privately, she gives one of her own chemises to Manuela, "*takes her head and kisses it*" (63). Manuela's declaration of love prompts the headmistress to isolate her as though what the headmistress sees as "her sin and perversity" were contagious—and for sexologists, as previously discussed, single-sex schools *did* foster passions between females (103). The headmistress punishes Manuela for her social and sexual rebellion. But Fraulein von Bernburg's confrontation with the headmistress suggests

that Manuela's death might not be in vain if von Bernburg continues to subvert the order imposed by the headmistress by treating the girls as "individuals" and, in the words of the headmistress, "modify[ing] our rules for each child" (101). Taken to its extreme, this subversion of order could result in a safe space for lesbianism, a socially-sanctioned environment devoid of males, devoted to the education and nurturing of females, and accepting of same-sex desire. Indeed, the play itself intimates that the socio-political climate is tempestuous and the existing power structure somewhat precarious. The dance mistress, Frau Alden, formerly the Emperor's Ballet Mistress (when there was an emperor, prior to World War I), tells Manuela that she has talent for dancing and should consider becoming a lady-in-waiting. Martha, the school's seamstress, replies, "A lady-in-waiting! In a republic! What an idea to-day!" (32). Frau Alden "sharply" retorts: "To-day? What is to-day? Who can tell what tomorrow will bring?" (32). When the play premiered in Berlin, it was titled *Gestern und Heute (Yesterday and Today)*, stressing the difference between the past and the present and intimating change. According to Frau Alden, the republic might easily give way to a monarchy or, as it happens, a fascist dictatorship. Similarly, the balance of order in the boarding school is precarious and relies completely on the girls and mistresses' acceptance of the headmistress's authority and rules. Manuela envisions a life outside of this authority and these rules, the "prison" of the boarding school (56). She imagines a place "far, far away" where she can be alone with Fraulein von Bernburg (56). Manuela's thoughts take her out of her environment and in so doing, fracture the framework reinforced by the daily militaristic routine of the school. Manuela's death symbolizes the defeat of individuality and perceived deviant behavior. But if Manuela's death is a warning of the power of authoritarianism and sexual repression, Fraulein von Bernburg's revolt is the hope for continued rebellion.

Lesbian Dramaturgy?

Manuela's death makes *Girls in Uniform* a tragedy. As is the case in many lesbian dramas, the lesbian does not survive the play. While *Girls in Uniform* does end in misery, it is a dramaturgically appropriate conclusion to the play. Winsloe may have employed an Aristotelian structure, but it is this conventional structure that allows her to advance a politics of resistance. *Theatre Arts Monthly's* "Broadway in Review" reports that *Girls in Uniform* "seemed infinitely superior to the more popular film version with its deliberate evasions and forced happy ending and a reasonable number of its spectators, at least, felt it should have run all season" (186). *Maedchen in Uniform's* happy ending is forced because it does not follow from the circumstances in which Manuela finds herself. The entire play persistently reinforces the austerity and repression of the Prussians girls' school. Film scholar Patricia White contends that "although the film doesn't depict contemporary German lesbian subcultures, it references Weimar cultural and sexual politics in its [...] allegory of sexual freedom and, in the solidarity of the schoolgirls with the persecuted Manuela, gives a glimpse of a collective identity resonant with the politicized gender and sexual identity movements that emerged in pre-World War II Germany" (18). Although the play doesn't conclude with Manuela's peers saving her, White's assessment of the film's allegory of sexual freedom applies to the play. Manuela's inability to pursue sexual freedom in the boarding school doesn't reinforce the rigid morality of the headmistress; on the contrary, it highlights it as the repression it is. Consequently, Manuela's death is a tragedy, the sad culmination of her desires and the actions of those who seek to crush them. Winsloe makes this explicit in her careful depiction of Manuela's love for von Bernburg.

Reviewing the London production of *Children in Uniform* for the *New York Times*,

Charles Morgan lights upon a key component of *Girls in Uniform's* tragedy. He writes: "The subject of the play is an invitation to bitterness and hysteria—an invitation steadfastly refused. The writing has a superb, controlled indignation and pity—pity not for this girl only but a starved and suffering humanity represented in her" (XI). Manuela kills herself because she is heartbroken to be separated from Fraulein von Bernburg, not because of what her love for Fraulein von Bernburg makes her: a lesbian. While the headmistress condemns Manuela's love as a sin, Manuela is devastated only because, for her own good, Fraulein von Bernburg refuses to see her again. Manuela states that she "will do everything they tell me, I will be good, patient, obedient" if only Fraulein von Bernburg will not forsake her (98). The stage directions indicate that after Manuela leaves von Bernburg's room, von Bernburg "*struggles with herself for a moment, then feels she must call the child back; she jumps to her feet to do this... "MANUELA" is on her lips as she opens the door, but, at this moment, the knocking of the Head's stick can be heard approaching, and the HEAD appears in the corridor*" (99). The sound of the headmistress's stick—an instrument of enforcing order—stops von Bernburg from going to Manuela and, ultimately, preventing her death. The embodiment of the school's repression, the headmistress, makes von Bernburg's desire to return to Manuela impossible. Thus, Manuela takes the only course of action available to her to escape the environment that prohibits her love for von Bernburg. Winsloe never implies that Manuela's love is wrong and Manuela never expresses any shame for her love. Manuela's death marks the end of a tragic love story, not a morality tale.

Some have argued that Winsloe's dramaturgy represents more than just exceptional playwriting. Deeney contends that "Winsloe's text is permeated with references external to the plot, references establishing specific given circumstances which helped to ensure the play's licensing [by the Lord Chamberlain in England]" (224). Deeney

rightfully asserts that Winsloe makes clear the play's focus on "Germanic 'galvanized oppression' and German women" (224). If Deeney is correct in speculating that Winsloe wrote the play with an eye toward international theatrical licensing, the play's lengthy London run is a clear indication of the success of Winsloe's dramaturgical strategies. The play's complete Broadway failure—evaluated in terms of its twelve day run, not its critical accolades—suggests that Winsloe's play did not strike a cord with American audiences (much to the chagrin of *Theatre Arts Monthly*, which reported that the play's numbers were not enough to sustain it and "it went the way of all the neglected, leaving to a sad minority only a grateful memory") (186). A small *New York Times* blurb, under the title "'Maedchen' Author Here," also suggests that Winsloe may well have written *Girls in Uniform* for international audiences. After her film's success and her play's failure in the United States, Winsloe travelled to the U.S. The *Times* reports:

The Baroness said she had come here in appreciation of the interest America has shown in her literary work. She is eager to attend American plays and study the manner of their presentation.

"I want to see what you Americans do with your plays to make them seem universal," she declared. (15)

The idea of "universality" here is ripe for investigation. Was Winsloe's play too German for American audiences in 1932? Too lesbian? Too tragic? *The Children's Hour* wasn't too lesbian or tragic for American Broadway audiences just two years after Winsloe's play closed on Broadway. I think the critics' dismissal of Manuela's behavior as a function of confused adolescence may have misled readers and potential audience members. *The Captive* was successful during the 1926/1927 season because it was controversial and well-received. *Girls in Uniform* was well-received, but reviewers reduced the play's content to a "tale of a girls' school in Prussia" (Atkinson 10). The very authoritarian metaphor used to explore lesbianism eclipsed the

lesbianism for many critics and scholars. This metaphor may have made the play more accessible and veiled its taboo content, but it may have also made the play more safe and thus less marketable. Reviews, to an extent, make the play seem as “Spartan” and “severe” as its setting (Atkinson 10). *The Wall Street Journal* reviewer expresses a desire for a “more thrilling” title. The reviewer offers “Punch Drunk” or “The Girl Who Dared” as more appropriate (although “equally inadequate”) titles for American audiences (“The Theatre: With a Bow to the Germans” 3). While this may have helped to advertize the piece and entice audience members, I do not know if it would have extended the play’s Broadway run in a significant way. Ironically, *Girls in Uniform* was the more racy title; the play on which the film was based was titled *Gestern und Heute (Yesterday and Today)*. Dyer reports that Carl Froelich, who supervised the production, rejected the play’s original title, saying

“We want to get back the money we’re investing, we’ll call it *Girls in Uniform*—then they’ll think there’ll be girls in uniform playing about and showing their legs.” Hertha Thiele (Manuela), who became a star through the film, receiving fan mail from men and women alike, recalled that when the film was shown in Romania, “the distributor sent a letter demanding ‘another twenty meters of kissing please!’ ...they also sold Manuela-stockings.” (35)

Froelich tried to sell a truly lesbian film as something more akin to a lesbian fetish film. While his heterosexual-male-voyeur public relations scheme may have been successful for the film, his new title (and rationale behind it) did little to help sell the tragically-concluding play to American audiences.

Maedchen in Uniform debuted in the U.S. in September of 1932 (“RKO Activities” X4). Nelson B. Bell of *The Washington Post* reported that *Maedchen in Uniform* was one of the top fifteen films (in terms of “key city box-office records”) of the first six months of 1933—ten months after the film premiered (16). *Maedchen in Uniform* had

been running for nearly four months when *Girls in Uniform* hit Broadway. Perhaps audiences were already well-acquainted with the film version, complete with its happy ending, and saw no need to see the tragic theatrical version. Had the play preceded its cinematic counterpart, perhaps it would have done better on Broadway. Perhaps not. I think the play's commercial failure was likely a combination of the play's content, unknown playwright, critical reception, and successful cinematic predecessor. Regardless of the length of its Broadway run, *Girls in Uniform* offers a smart, complex portrait of lesbianism during an era in which many people pathologized and policed depictions of homosexuality in the U.S.

WORKS CITED

- Atkinson, Brooks. "The Play: 'Maedchen in Uniform' Becomes 'Girls in Uniform' on the Stage." *The New York Times* 31 Dec. 1932: 10. Print.
- Bell, Nelson B. "Six-Month Box-Office Champions of 1933—Sylvia Sidney III." *The Washington Post* 2 Aug. 1933: 16. Print.
- "Broadway in Review." *Theatre Arts Monthly* 17.3 (January 1933): 186. Print.
- Carpenter, Edward. *The Intermediate Sex: A Study of Some Transitional Types of Men and Women*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1908. Print.
- Deeney, John F. "Censoring the Uncensored: the Case of 'Children in Uniform.'" *New Theatre Quarterly* 16.3 (August 2000): 219-226. Print.
- "Display Ad 79-No Title." *The New York Times* 19 Nov. 1933: BR26. Print.
- "Drama for Mt. Holyoke: 'Girls in Uniform' Chosen as Club's November Play." *The New York Times* 13 Oct. 1935: N4. Print.
- Dyer, Richard. "Less and More than Women and Men: Lesbian and Gay Cinema in Weimar Germany." *New German Critique* 51 (Autumn 1990): 5-60. Print.
- Eisner, Lotte H. *The Haunted Screen: Expressionism in the German Cinema and the Influence of Max Reinhardt*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973. Print.
- Ellis, Havelock. *Studies in the Psychology of Sex: Sexual Inversion*. Honolulu: University Press of the Pacific, 2001. Exact Facsimile of the Original 1906 (2nd) Ed. Print.
- Faderman, Lillian. *Odd Girls and Twilight Lovers: A History of Lesbian Life in Twentieth-Century America*. New York: Penguin, 1992. Print.
- . *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present*. New York: Quill, 1981. Print.
- Fehervary, Helen, Claudia Lenssen, & Judith Mayne. "From Hitler to Hepburn: A Discussion of Women's Film Production and Reception." *New German Critique*. 24/25 [Autumn 1981/Winter 1982 (Special Double Issue)]: 172-185. Print.
- "Girls in Uniform." *Cornell Alumni News*. 14 Nov. 1935: 117. Print.

- “Girls’ Schools Upheld ‘Captive,’ Says Shostac: Stage Manager of Forbidden Play Tells of Letters of Praise Sent by Women Deans to Helen Menken.” *New York Herald Tribune* 21 Feb. 1927. Print.
- Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. London: Routledge, 2002. Print.
- Hall, Mordaunt. “The Screen: ‘Girls in Uniform,’ a German-Language Picture Concerned With Life in a Potsdam Girls’ School.” *The New York Times* 21 Sept. 1932: 26. Print.
- Hammond, Percy. “The Theaters: ‘Girls in Uniform.’” *New York Herald Tribune* 31 Dec. 1932. Print.
- Hellman, Lillian. *The Children’s Hour*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1934. Print.
- “Hunter Varsity Girls Plan to Give Drama: ‘Girls in Uniform,’ a School Play, to Be Staged in January.” *The New York Times* 3 Dec. 1939: 70. Print.
- Kracauer, Siegfried. *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film*. Ed. Leonardo Quaresima. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004.
- “‘Maedchen’ Author Here.” *New York Times* 12 May 1933. 15. Print.
- Maedchen in Uniform*. Dir. Leontine Sagan. Perf. Hertha Thiele, Dorothea Wieck. English Translation: Angela Krimsky. Embassy Home Entertainment (Janus Collection/Estate of John Krimsky), 1987 (original: 1931). Videocassette.
- Mann, Erica and Klaus Mann. *Escape to Life*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1939. Print.
- Mantle, Burns. *The Best Plays of 1934-1935*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1935. Print.
- McCormick, Richard W. “From ‘Caligari’ to Dietrich: Sexual, Social, and Cinematic Discourses in Weimar Film.” *Signs* 18.3 (Spring 1993): 640-668. Print.
- “Middlebury Dramatics: Season Opens Wednesday With ‘Girls in Uniform.’” *The New York Times* 1 Nov. 1936: D9. Print.
- “Milestones, Feb. 6, 1933.” *Time Magazine* 6 Feb. 1933. Print.
- Morgan, Charles. “The ‘Maedchen in Uniform’ Play Scores in London.” *The New York Times* 6 Nov. 1932: X1. Print.

- “News of the Stage: Exit ‘The Children’s Hour’ on July 4th—This Evening’s Gift From the WPA—The Summer Circuit Reports.” *New York Times* 26 Jun. 1936: 17. Print.
- Ohm, Lisa. “The Filmic Adaptation of the Novel *The Child Manuela*: Christa Winsloe’s Child Heroine Becomes a *Girl in Uniform*.” *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions, Volume II: German Film History/German History on Film*. Eds. Sandra Frieden, et. al. Oxford: Berg, 1993. 97-104. Print.
- Petro, Patrice. “Modernity and Mass Culture in Weimar: Contours of a Discourse on Sexuality in Early Theories of Perception and Representation.” *New German Critique* 40 (Winter 1987): 115-146. Print.
- Rich, B. Ruby. “From Repressive Tolerance to Erotic Liberation: Girls in Uniform (Madchen in Uniform)” in *Gender and German Cinema: Feminist Interventions, Volume II: German Film History/German History on Film*. Eds. Sandra Frieden, et. al. Oxford: Berg, 1993. 61-96. Print.
- “RKO Activities.” *New York Times* 11 Sept. 1932: X4. Print.
- Saunders, Marion K. *Dorothy Thompson: A Legend in Her Time*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973. Print.
- “Screen Notes.” *The New York Times* 10 Nov. 1932: 25. Print.
- Sinfield, Alan. *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Print.
- “The Theatre: With a Bow to the Germans.” *The Wall Street Journal* 23 Sept. 1932: 3. Print.
- White, Patricia. *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999. Print.
- Winsloe, Christa. *Children in Uniform*. English Adapter: Barbara Burnham. *Famous Plays of 1932-33*. London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1933. 9-104. Print.
- . *The Child Manuela: The Novel of Maedchen in Uniform*. Trans. Agnes Neill Scott. New York: Farrar & Rinehart Inc., 1933. Print.

CONCLUSION

*“Fitting a woman’s play into any canon—male or female—implies that it is acquiescent to the ideology perpetuated by that canon. Canons, by implication, exclude not only worthy plays but worthy spectators on the basis of their ideological perspectives.”*¹⁰⁰

Jill Dolan, “Bending Gender to Fit the Canon”

In her essay, “Canonizing Lesbians?” (1990) which appeared in *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon* (1990), Lynda Hart discusses the challenges inherent in trying to theorize a place for lesbian drama in a female canon. Hart writes:

I am [...] striving here to articulate a lesbian position within the concept of a female canon, indicating my own bind as a writer who has accepted to speak as a feminist and as a lesbian. Politically, I want to include lesbians as social subjects in a context that intends to document women’s history in the theater. But theoretically, I cannot find a place from which to speak that does not reinscribe lesbians in patriarchal ideas. (283)

Hart identifies two basic challenges in her essay. She strives to define what constitutes a lesbian play and she questions how any group of plays can be gathered together without reinscribing the patriarchal privilege typically associated with canon formation.

Hart goes on to debate the advantages and disadvantages of both seeking admittance to established canons and creating new/opposing canons. Of the former, Hart posits:

Most feminists, I believe, agree that canonization is a concept that has effectively permitted erasure. Universality is evoked to justify excluding divergent and diverse viewpoints, and most of us know that heterosexuality is

¹⁰⁰ Dolan, Jill. “Bending Gender to Fit the Canon.” *Making A Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women’s Theatre*. Ed. Lynda Hart. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 318-344. 341. Print.

one of the primary terms of universality. The canon has been a white, male, heterosexual (or passing heterosexual) club that has mystified its terms for inclusion by establishing aesthetic criteria that suppress the sociohistorical context from which these aesthetic criteria emerge. Gaining admittance for marginalized others into that canon is slow, painstaking, and often results in token admissions. (279)

And of the latter, she contends: “But the alternative, constructing opposing canons, also is problematic, especially for lesbians, because it is unclear whether they would meet the criteria for inclusion in a female, a woman’s, or even a feminist canon.

Canons, by definition, must set certain limits; they must be formulated as this, but not this. They are thus inherently exclusionary” (279). Twenty years after Hart expressed her concern regarding the efficacy of canons in general and, specifically, the ideological repercussions of female and/or lesbian canons, the problems with which Hart struggles in her article remain timely and unresolved. What constitutes lesbian drama? If the canon is “a white, male, heterosexual (or passing heterosexual) club,” is advocating for the inclusion of lesbian dramas an effort to diversify the canon or it is merely capitulation to the heteronormative construction of the canon itself? And is it the established canon that poses problems or the formation of any canons? These questions in addition to those raised by Hart are of particular interest to me as I examine the work of this project not in discrete chapters, but as a whole. While each reading of a lesbian drama provides new insight into the play and its cultural significance, what is accomplished by grouping these works together as representations of lesbianism on Broadway? How can these plays function as a single entity? Should they?

In Search of a “Lesbian” Drama

Hart examines a number of lesbian plays and anthologies and finds that most are “‘about’ lesbianism, by which I mean that they are representations that present lesbian characters operating in a heterosexual framework that is interior as well as exterior. Too often the characters’ questions concern how to adjust and integrate in a heterosexual world that appears nearly monolithic—except for themselves of course” (285). Moreover, Hart expresses concern that “these characters are not shown as active, perceiving, creative subjects but rather as images of the way that the heterosexual world perceives them. If so, they unwittingly reify the structures that they ostensibly challenge” (285). Hart finds promise in one play: Holly Hughes’ *The Well of Horniness* (1983). She identifies it as a play that “effectively challenges the hegemony of heterosexuality and the tenacity of sexual difference” (289). Hart states that “[a]t this historical moment [1990], it [*The Well of Horniness*] is located on the borderline, a place both there and not there. It is a delicate balance to maintain, but as long as it holds itself tautly in that tension, deferring totalization, elusively in motion, poised in a position of aggressive resistance, I would name that play lesbian” (289). I contend that the plays I have included in this project both serve “as images of the way that the heterosexual world perceives them” and are “poised in a position of aggressive resistance.” These ideas are not mutually exclusive, especially for historical drama.

Hart does mention three plays from the first half of the twentieth century: *The Children’s Hour* (1934) by Lillian Hellman, *The Mothers* (1915) by Edith Ellis,¹⁰¹ and *Criss Cross* by Rachel Crothers.¹⁰² Of the first, Hart writes that it is a play “that

¹⁰¹ *The Mothers* is a short one-act play that tells the story of a Selina Crocker whose husband wants to leave her for Hannah Brimmicombe because Selina is not affectionate/sexual enough with him. After Selina and Hannah share tea together, Hannah adjusts her view of Selina’s husband and agrees to give him up for Selina and her children. The two kiss briefly before Hannah leaves. Selina’s husband returns, rejected by Hannah.

¹⁰² *Criss Cross*, an incredibly short one-act play, portrays a scene in which Cecil Chadwick confides in her cousin, Ann Chadwick, a writer, that she (Cecil) believes her beau’s affections may be waning. In

represents lesbian love as unspeakable, unseeable, and unthinkable” (278). And of the latter two, she remarks that both are “prurient stage images that accept the terms of a heterosexual contract” (284). In many of the plays explored in my study, the characters ostensibly “accept the terms of a heterosexual contract” when one half of lesbian relationship leaves the relationship to marry a male. While there exist exceptions to this trend (e.g. *The Captive, Wise Tomorrow*), I don’t believe that this capitulation means the plays are not lesbian. The plays, when considered historically, are definitely poised in positions of “aggressive resistance” and challenge the socio-sexual status quo even if these challenges are not always successful.

This, of course, begs the question: What constitutes a successful challenge to the socio-sexual status quo? Does the lesbian character need to be happily coupled with her female love interest at the play’s conclusion? Does the lesbian need to vanquish heterosexuality? No. The depiction of resistance is enough even if this resistance is, on the part of the playwright, unintentional. Broadway plays about lesbianism during the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, regardless of their depiction of lesbianism, contributed to an ongoing cultural dialogue about the existence of lesbians not just as scientific specimens, but as loving human beings. And while the love is, at times unrequited, it is still romantic love. Some of the lesbians are successful in their pursuits of romantic love and others are not, but in every play a female either remains steadfast to her lesbian sexuality or discovers and sometimes embraces her newfound lesbianism. Although this may not seem revolutionary in the twenty-first century, such public portraits of lesbianism were ground-breaking and controversial during the period in which the plays were produced on Broadway. The plays’ depiction of lesbianism

fact, her beau desires Ann, who demonstrates no interest in him. Ann, who appears to harbor feelings for Cecil, tells him to marry Cecil and tells Cecil (in front of her beau) that he will marry her. They both depart to go on a date and Ann is left alone. The date of this play is uncertain. Hart believes it was written in the 1930s, but does not cite evidence for this.

qualifies as a type of resistance (the censorship that ensued demonstrates reactions to this resistance).¹⁰³ To affect social change, it is reasonable to assume that a piece of drama would provide an image of the way the heterosexual world perceives lesbians, especially since so many of the lesbians in these dramas are depicted as struggling within their heteronormative societies. Like *The Well of Horniness*, lesbian dramas from the first half of the twentieth century are located on “the borderline, a place both there and not there” (289). The plays were created and set within largely homophobic and sexually oppressive societies, but they also gesture toward the “not there”: a space beyond the boundaries of heteronormativity, a place of sexual freedom. In this way, they are truly transgressive works. But even if one reads these plays as lesbian dramas of resistance, does one betray this resistance in attempting to bring the plays together under a single label?

Traditionally, inclusion in a literary canon implies a certain degree of quality based on, as Hart points out, mystifying aesthetic criteria. I do not wish, however, to make an argument for a subjective qualitative analysis of lesbian drama. The plays included here were not chosen on the basis of the skillfulness of their authors. I am interested in the plays as cultural artifacts—an exceptional group of cultural artifacts given the scarcity of lesbianism on Broadway after 1945 (the most notable post WWII lesbian plays on Broadway are Jean-Paul Sartre’s *No Exit* in 1946 and Frank Marcus’s *The Killing of Sister George* in 1966).¹⁰⁴ What, then, can be achieved by exploring them as a group? Hart notes that

[a]lthough projects posing a noncanonical theory of literary evaluation are underway, we still are faced with making practical decisions about course

¹⁰³ The 1927 Padlock Law forbade depictions of homosexuality on stage.

¹⁰⁴ It is difficult to account for this scarcity as the decline of lesbianism on Broadway is inversely proportionate to the rise of lesbian visibility in American culture. Did lesbianism become passé? Was it deemed less commercial? One can only speculate about this absence.

syllabi, in-class methodological strategies, and anthology formations.

Avoiding formulations based on biological determinants that link all women writers together and flatten their multiplicities into a homogeneous mass is absolutely necessary. At the same time, however, we are reluctant to give up the idea of women as a community; and we do so, I think, at our political peril. (279)

I concur with both of Hart's assertions: it is imperative not to erase the multiplicities inherent in any one group while it is also necessary to create groups and communities to establish visibility and effect socio-political change. But how can one do both? The aim of this work is to view this group of lesbian plays, by both male and female playwrights, collectively to establish a resistant lesbian theatre history. In so doing, however, one risks eliding the differences inherent in multiple expressions of lesbianism. The term lesbian, as an umbrella term, includes females of a broad range of gender expressions and erotic roles,¹⁰⁵ not to mention classes, races, ethnicities, ages, etc. And while this study focuses on plays appearing on Broadway because of the function of Broadway in popular culture, this concentration excludes less commercial plays, exemplifying the limits of canon formation expressed by Hart. How then can one make a group of plays practically accessible without compromising the criteria by which they are collected (and by which other plays are necessarily excluded)? I believe the most practical way of addressing Hart's concerns is to consider lesbian drama as one component of a resistant lesbian theatre history. The resistant nature of these lesbian plays necessarily situates them in opposition to canonized dramas and established theatre histories that frequently omit lesbian drama. If one privileges the plays' resistance as a unifying factor, then one can account for the

¹⁰⁵ In *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas*, Esther Newton defines one's erotic role as in terms of top/bottom preferences (which can be fluid): "In any given sexual exchange, the top is the person who conducts and orchestrates the episode [...and] [t]he bottom is the one who responds, acts out, makes visible, or interprets the sexual initiatives and language of the top" (171).

multiple expressions of lesbianism as different combinations of sex, gender, and sexuality that change and resist classification. In this way, “the lesbian” is constantly made and remade and her resistance is the trope by which we begin to construct and expand lesbian theatre history.

WORKS CITED

- Crothers, Rachel. *Criss Cross. A Century of Plays by American Women*. Ed. Rachel France. New York: Richard Rosen Press, Inc., 1979. 25-29. Print.
- Dolan, Jill. "Bending Gender to Fit the Canon." *Making A Spectacle: Feminist Essays on Contemporary Women's Theatre*. Ed. Lynda Hart. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1989. 318-344. 341. Print.
- Ellis, Edith. *The Mothers. A Century of Plays by American Women*. Ed. Rachel France. New York: Richard Rosen Press, Inc., 1979. 41-47. Print.
- Hart, Lynda. "Canonizing Lesbians?" *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon*. Ed. June Schlueter. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990. 275-292. Print.
- Newton, Esther. *Margaret Mead Made Me Gay: Personal Essays, Public Ideas*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2000. Print.
- Schlueter, June. "Introduction." *Modern American Drama: The Female Canon*. Ed. June Schlueter. Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1990. 11-23. Print.

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- Abel, Elizabeth, ed. *Writing and Sexual Difference*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982. Print.
- Aston, Elaine. *An Introduction to Feminism and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 1995. Print.
- Austin, Gayle. *Feminist Theories for Dramatic Criticism*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1990. Print.
- Belsey, Catherine. *Critical Practice*. London: Routledge, 1980. Print.
- Bennett, Susan. *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception, 2nd Ed.* London: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Bernstein, Robin, ed. *Cast Out: Queer Lives in Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006. Print.
- Bland, Lucy and Laura Doan, eds. *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998. Print.
- . *Sexology Uncensored: The Documents of Sexual Science*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1998. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. Routledge: New York, 1999. Print.
- . *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*. New York: New York University Press, 2005. Print.
- Case, Sue-Ellen. *Feminist and Queer Performance: Critical Strategies*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009. Print.
- , ed. *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theatre*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990. Print.
- Childs, Donald J. *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.
- Cobrin, Pamela. *From Winning the Vote to Directing on Broadway: The Emergence of Women on the New York Stage, 1880-1927*. Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2009. Print.

- Conboy, Katie, Nadia Medina, and Sarah Stanbury, eds. *Writing on the Body: Female Embodiment and Feminist Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1997. Print.
- Davenport, Charles B. "Influence of Heredity on Human Society." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 34.1 (July 1909): 16-21. Print.
- . "Research in Eugenics." *Science*. 54.1400. (Oct. 1921): 391-397. Print.
- Davidson, Arnold I. "How to Do the History of Psychoanalysis: A Reading of Freud's 'Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality.'" *Critical Inquiry* 13.2 (1987): 252-277. Print.
- de Laurentis, Teresa, ed. *Feminist Studies: Critical Studies*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986. Print.
- Demastes, William W., ed. *Realism and the American Dramatic Tradition*. Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 1996. Print.
- Doan, Laura. *Fashioning Sapphism: The Origins of a Modern English Lesbian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001. Print.
- Duberman, Martin. *About Time: Exploring the Gay Past*. Revised and expanded edition. New York: Meridian, 1991. Print.
- Duberman, Martin Bauml, Martha Vicinus, and George Chauncey, Jr., eds. *Hidden from History: Reclaiming the Gay and Lesbian Past*. New York: NAL (New American Library) Books, 1989. Print.
- Fausto-Sterling, Anne. *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and Construction of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books, 2000. Print.
- Fisher, James, ed. *"We Will Be Citizens": New Essays on Gay and Lesbian Theatre*. Jefferson: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2008. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume One: An Introduction*. Trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage Books, 1990. Print.
- Freud, Sigmund. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Trans. & Ed. James Strachey. New York: Basic Books, 1962. Print.
- Galton, Francis. "Eugenics: Its Definition, Scope, and Aims." *The American Journal of Sociology* 10.1 (July 1904): 1-25. Print.

- . "Studies in Eugenics." *The American Journal of Sociology* 11.1 (July 1905): 11-25. Print.
- Garton, Stephen. *Histories of Sexuality: Antiquity to Sexual Revolution*. New York: Routledge, 2004. Print.
- Hale, Nathan G., Jr. *The Rise and Crisis of Psychoanalysis in the United States: Freud and the Americans, 1917-1985*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. Print.
- Harbin, Billy J., Kim Marra, and Robert Shanke, eds. *The Gay and Lesbian Theatrical Legacy: A Biographical Dictionary of Major Figures in American Stage History in the Pre-Stonewall Era*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2005. Print.
- Hart, Lynda and Peggy Phelan, eds. *Acting Out: Feminist Performances*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993. Print.
- Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. *Alma Mater: Design and Experience in the Women's Colleges from Their Nineteenth-Century Beginnings to the 1930s*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984. Print.
- Keyssar, Helene. *Feminist Theatre*. New York: Grove Press, 1985. Print.
- , ed. *Feminist Theatre and Theory*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1996. Print.
- Martin, Carol, ed. *A Sourcebook of Feminist Theatre and Performance: On and Beyond the Stage*. London: Routledge, 1996. Print.
- Moll, Albert. *Perversions of the Sex Instinct: A Study of Sexual Inversion*. Trans. Maurice Popkin. Newark: Julian Press, Inc., 1931. Print.
- Munt, Sally, ed. *New Lesbian Criticism: Literary and Cultural Readings*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Print.
- Murphy, Brenda. *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999. Print.
- Newton, Judith and Deborah Rosenfelt, eds. *Feminist Criticism and Social Change: Sex, Class and Race in Literature and Culture*. New York: Methuen, 1985. Print.
- Oosterhuis, Harry. *Stepchildren of Nature: Krafft-Ebing, Psychiatry, and the Making of Sexual Identity*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000. Print.

- Ordoover, Nancy. *American Eugenics: Race, Queer Anatomy, and the Science of Nationalism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003. Print.
- Peiss, Kathy and Christina Simmons, eds. *Passion and Power: Sexuality in History*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989. Print.
- Reinelt, Janelle G. and Joseph R. Roach, eds. *Critical Theory and Performance*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992. Print.
- Rosario, Vernon A. *Science and Homosexualities*. New York: Routledge, 1997. Print.
- Rupp, Leila J. *Sapphistries: A Global History of Love Between Women*. New York: New York University Press, 2009. Print.
- Savran, David. *A Queer Sort of Materialism: Recontextualizing American Theater*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003. Print.
- Schwarz, Judith. *Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy: Greenwich Village, 1912-1940*. Revised Edition. Norwich: New Victoria Publishers, 1986. Print.
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. *Tendencies*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1993. Print.
- Senelick, Laurence. *The Changing Room: Sex, Drag and Theatre*. London: Routledge, 2000. Print.
- Sinfield, Alan. "Lesbian and Gay Taxonomies." *Critical Inquiry* 29.1 (Autumn 2002): 120-138. Print.
- . *Out on Stage: Lesbian and Gay Theatre in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999. Print.
- Smith, Wendy. *Real Life: The Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf: 1990. Print.
- Soloman, Alisa and Framji Minwalla, eds. *The Queerest Art: Essays on Lesbian and Gay Theater*. New York: New York University Press, 2002. Print.
- Solomon, Barbara Miller. *In the Company of Educated Women*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. Print.
- Stambolian, George and Elaine Marks, eds. *Homosexualities and French Literature: Cultural Contexts/Critical Texts*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990. Print.
- Stansell, Christine. *American Moderns: Bohemian New York and the Creation of a New Century*. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2000. Print.

- Terry, Jennifer. *An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999. Print.
- Titus, Mary. "Murdering the Lesbian: Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*." *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature* 10.2 (Autumn 1991): 215-232. Print.
- Vicinus, Martha. "Distance and Desire: English Boarding School Friendships." *Signs* 9.4 (Summer 1984): 600-622. Print.
- Waincott, Ronald H. *The Emergence of the Modern American Theater, 1914-1929*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997. Print.
- Watson, Steven. *Strange Bedfellows: The First American Avant-Garde*. New York: Abbeville Press Publishers: 1991. Print.
- Weed, Elizabeth and Naomi Schor, eds. *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997. Print.
- Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. Print.
- Zimmerman, B. *Encyclopedia of Lesbian Histories and Cultures: Volume 1*. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 2000. Print.