HOME GIRLS AND UNDERSTUDIES: SHY WOMEN IN COLD WAR THEATRE AND FILM

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In contrast to studies of U.S. Cold War theatre and film which typically focus on the era's "crisis of masculinity," portrayals of mother-son relationships, and portrayals of dynamic and 'dangerous' women, this project examines constructions of shy young women. Primary play and musical texts, their film adaptations, and original films are read through a lens of feminist materialism and emotional labor, in tandem with mid-twentieth century texts on popular psychology, psychosociology, self-improvement, and sexuality. Such texts show how shyness in young women is negatively constructed as a threat to personal and professional efficiency, as selfishness which breaks familial and social bonds, as a precursor to mental and physical collapse, as a symptom of modern urban alienation, as a sign of emotional vulnerability, and as a tool for infiltration. The shy girl's weakness thus rhetorically links her with other 'threats' to national security in the early Cold War era: communists, racial/ethnic Others, homosexuals, and other subalterns. Consequently, these suspicions about shyness lead to the physical, mental, and emotional disciplining of young women who would otherwise pursue solitary and independently meaningful interests.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Teresa Jean Knight holds a B.A. in English from Westminster College, an M.A. in Comparative Literature from King's College London, and an M.A./Ph.D. in Theatre Arts from Cornell University.

For Moose and Squirrel

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INTRODUCTION

Upon seeing his daughter Catherine's socially awkward behavior at a party, Dr. Sloper gives his usual lament about the young woman's shyness and failed marriage prospects in *The Heiress* (1947):

> She has gone to the best schools in the city. She has had the finest training I could get her in music and dancing. She has sat here with me evenings on end, and I have tried to make conversation with her, and give her some social adeptness. […] I have given her freedom wherever I could. The result is what you see—an entirely mediocre and defenseless creature with not a shred of poise. What did I do wrong, my dear sister?[1]

Catherine's lack of social graces, compounded by her plain appearance, lead her father to conclude that she is "dull"; she must be "stupid" because she is a conversational bore and has no overall charm. Upon seeing the play on Broadway in 1947, *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson declared, "It is difficult to make a stupid woman the heroine of an interesting drama. Probably that is the basic infirmity of this elusive play. […] The heroine cannot be acted; she can only be acted against."[2] Atkinson's criticism of the lead character Catherine thus matches that of her father, who vehemently desires her to be more social, less withdrawn, and a more "clever" and "entertaining companion."[3] Because Catherine ultimately tricks and rejects a returning suitor who once deceived and spurned her, some have more recently cited her as a feminist heroine.[4] But Atkinson concludes that Catherine's "revenge is tiny compensation for the desolation of an old maid's life."[5] This suggests that the central conflict of the play is Catherine's wavering

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[1] Ruth and Augustus Goetz, *The Heiress* (1948; repr., New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1975), 18-19.

[2] Brooks Atkinson, "The New Play," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 30, 1947.

[3] Goetz, *The Heiress*, 9; 57.

[4] See, for example, Neil Sinyard, *A Wonderful Heart: The Films of William Wyler* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2013), 130.

[5] Atkinson, "The New Play," 22.

between unsociability and attachment, wherein her solitary equilibrium is regained but at the expense of the heteronormative happy ending of coupledom. In this sense, *The Heiress* puts a twist on socialization narratives which bring socially awkward characters peace in the form of social integration. And in the postwar U.S., the drama also acts as a cautionary tale about both the need for charismatic social performance and the danger of deception.

The present study examines how U.S. theatre and film of the early Cold War (1945-62) depict shy young women. Analyzing socialization narratives about "home girls" who enter society through heterosexual courtship rituals, and shy female understudies who enter society through the successful performance of captivating entertainment, I argue that shyness is treated as an undesirable, masculine trait that threatens the shy characters' economic and social success. Moreover, because shyness may be read as secrecy, socially withdrawn behaviors can be used as ciphers for treachery. Thus, in the paranoia of a spy and surveillance culture, shy behaviors seem to threaten personal and national security.

We might wonder why *The Heiress*, an adaptation of Henry James's 1880 novel *Washington Square*, was adapted for and successful with audiences during the Cold War. Why would a stifling Victorian worldview resonate in the mid-twentieth century? To begin, there was the matter of re-domesticating women after their expanded involvement in the WWII workforce; in a postwar natalist frenzy, women were encouraged to marry and have children. As in Victorian Anglo-American culture, the housewife—a domestic goddess of fecundity and tranquility—was the glue that held the family unit together.[6] James's character, whom he dubbed "Poor Catherine," was a tragic figure who was too headstrong and awkward to take a chance on

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[6] Bruce McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2003), 130.

matrimonial bliss. In one especially tearful scene, Catherine gives away the fancy Parisian baby clothes she had thought she would one day use. Overall, she fails to achieve the ideal postwar American femininity—the supposedly happy convergence of repopulation, consumption, and nurturance within a nuclear family unit—envisioned by Broadway's largely white, upper-middle-class audience.[7]

Though Catherine's inheritance guarantees that she can afford to live alone if she chooses, her choice is unwise in the context of Cold War U.S. culture. Nuclear families were upheld as the basic unit of national character and security. Not only did a family offer safety and the possibility of regeneration in the event of a nuclear disaster, but single family units, with their houses, participation in the workforce (father) and in child-rearing (mother), and consumption of commercial goods, signaled all that was unique and desirable about life in a developed capitalist nation. Soviet communism, on the other hand, had supposedly dissolved traditional family units through an expanded workforce, and limited the consumption of goods.[8] Moreover, in the context of anti-communist rhetoric and Cold War paranoia, having a family and friends to vouch for one's character, and not being seen as a secretive (read: suspicious) person, were important safeguards against ostracism. It is partly the need for openness and sociability, and partly the need for heterosexual nuclear arrangements, that makes "Poor Catherine" a cautionary figure to postwar critics. Her shyness is a threat to the U.S. social order and to national security.

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[7] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 3. Luxury ads in playbills suggest that the average Broadway patron between 1947 and 1962 was upper-middle-class, a supposition further supported by the high cost of tickets. It is estimated that only 10 percent of 1950s Broadway patrons were from the working classes, 1. As McConachie reports, a survey revealed that "over 70 percent of theatergoers in New York in 1960 were white people from the upper-middle class," 3.

[8] David Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1992), 3.

In the past two decades, critics working on Cold War era theatre and film have focused on the biographical ties between playwrights and screenwriters and their characters, between the biographical similarities of actors and the characters they play, or on certain types of characters —most commonly existential male heroes, juvenile delinquents, aggressive female villains, and over-permissive or coddling parents. Critics have also devoted much attention to the crisis of masculinity that appears in Cold War culture rhetoric and media. Because of this, most work on socially awkward characters tends to focus on boys and young men. Understandably, the feminist archive is full of sexually aggressive women, loud and fast-talking dames, or otherwise masculine-coded women (e.g., tomboys). But what about shy girls? Are they intrinsically boring? Necessarily dull or plain? Does political resistance always mean being 'in-yer-face'? Can we read social awkwardness otherwise, namely, as a refusal to conform? I think shy girls are interesting because they provoke strong feelings of pity, anger, disgust, and therefore dismissiveness. They are out of sync with social cues and thus out of circulation. They quietly threaten to muck up the economy of heterosexual desire and its production of what Michel Foucault calls *biopower* (that is, the production and maintenance of children—the future workforce and consumer base).[9] Though a-sociality (socially withdrawn behavior) is typically understood as distinct from the anti-social (explicitly working against normative social values and systems), it is an unwelcome state of being. Thus, the a-social became read as antisocial. Shy girls and women are marginal figures of Cold War criticism who reveal how the "social" is delimited in postwar culture, and to what ends. Hence, my project contributes to our

[9] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 140.

understanding of U.S. Cold War theatre and film by investigating the meaning of female shyness in performance—both dramatic and social.

I identify two recurring and related types of shy young women in U.S. Cold War cultural production: home girls and understudies. "Home girls," a term Tennessee Williams employs in *The Glass Menagerie* (1945) to describe undesirable unmarried women who live at home with their birth family,[10] appear in narratives that stress the importance of 'healthy' socialization—that is, marriage to an upwardly mobile partner of the opposite sex. Understudies appear in backstage stories involving shy female characters whose efforts to perform well make explicit links between sociability and performance. Theatrical and filmic performance are social acts; becoming well-socialized in these contexts requires good performances—where 'good' requires charisma, dynamism, precision, and, overall, engaging the audience in satisfactory ways. For these reasons, it is not a coincidence that the shy women in backstage narratives are young like the home girls. Their entrances into the limelight are entrances into the social economies of adulthood.

Drawing on Bruce McConachie's use of "containment culture" and Milly S. Barranger's use of "unfriendly witnesses," I suggest that we think of the imperative to be open and well-socialized as a form of *friendly containment*—a strategy of keeping U.S. citizens in-line with capitalist values of circulation. Here I think of circulation in terms of moving both commodities and bodies in acts of economic transfer (i.e., the economics of theatre and film performance; the economics of coupling that results in the production of children; and the economics of affective labor—emotional transfer that accompanies all forms of labor, including that of home

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[10] Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, in *Tennessee Williams: Plays 1937-1955*, ed. Mel Gussow and Kenneth Holditch (New York: The Library of America, 2002), 422.

management).[11] McConachie uses the phrase "containment culture" as a powerful metaphor for both limiting the geopolitical influence of Soviet communism and keeping U.S. citizens safe from nuclear war and the 'Red Menace' that threatened to overturn capitalist ideology.[12] As both an international and domestic policy, containment meant keeping out threats by 'protecting'—that is, conserving—certain traditional Western values. Rhetorically, containment was promoted as a form of preserving American freedom. Because this complex metaphor requires a simultaneous keeping out and keeping in, McConachie detects a tension between individuality (the self as a container of thought and desire) and social conformity (the self as contained by societal institutions that control deviant behavior) in postwar U.S. culture.[13] Likewise, Barranger notes ironic tension in the idea of being a "friendly" witness in the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) hearings, as 'friendliness' meant cooperating with an anti-communist state that impinged on individual liberties during Senator Joseph McCarthy's witch-hunts to root out communist sympathizers and other liberal subversives.[14] Here, being "unfriendly" means being uncooperative with a paternalistic state that presents itself as the protector of a national family. To me, this is a Cold War example of the affective labor required

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[11] In the style of other cultural studies, my project assumes that theatre, film, and circulating concepts of psychology and lifestyle are loosely bound together in chains of signification—in something like overlapping feedback loops that both reflect and reinforce mainstream cultural practices and attitudes—but not in an orderly, precise way that merits careful delineation à la reader or viewer response theory. Thus, I do not theorize how postwar U.S. audiences understood theatre and film, as our understandings of these audiences are always mediated by the ways in which we understand the postwar era from our own perspectives.

[12] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 9.

[13] Ibid., 12.

[14] Milly S. Barranger, *Unfriendly Witnesses: Gender, Theater, and Film in the McCarthy Era* (Carbondale: Souther Illinois University Press, 2008), xiii.

by citizenship; cooperation is figured as familiarity and niceness—even when that 'niceness' could lead to another person's career blacklisting, deportment, imprisonment, or death.

My project, then, seeks to examine how *friendly containment*—the ways in which the affect of U.S. citizens were policed, self-policed, and other-policing to ensure prosocial, patriotic behaviors—not only through theatrical and filmic production, but through other forms of cultural production that inform the plays and films: popular psychology, anti-communist rhetoric, and celebrity culture. Moreover, the production of friendliness, both within the U.S. and in its foreign relations, is gendered. David Savran points out, for example, that tensions of the 1959 Kitchen Debate between then U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khruschev were allayed when a waitress passed by and the two men decided to drink a toast "to the ladies."[15] Savran remarks, "In this friendly toast, the antagonism between capitalism and communism is displaced and reconfigured as an opposition between man and woman, producer of discourse and silent accessory, ogling subject and object of the gaze."[16] The passing waitress brought not only food but pleasure; the kitchen—the literal and conceptual site of the debate—is a feminine-coded space from which she provided nurturance. Thus, *friendly containment* demands different behaviors and attitudes from different people. In this case, the men ease tensions through expressing sexual attraction to an American woman, and she in turn happily accepts this attention and further exhibits positive affect in providing service labor for the men. Standing in for the ideal American housewife, the waitress's polished and friendly self-presentation specifically positions her in contradistinction to Soviet women, who were

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[15] Savran, *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers*, 4.

[16] Ibid.

stereotyped as unglamorous (unsexy) and affectively cold, working out in the world alongside men, not nurturing them in a cozy, well-stocked domestic space. As we see with shy young women in early Cold War theatre and film, much depends on the positive affect and physical competence of the Kitchen Debate waitress, who must happily receive Khruschev and Nixon's attentions in the name of U.S. exceptionalism. Her apparent joy being in the kitchen, in serving men, and in receiving their sexual attention stages the supposed emotional and material superiority of democracy and capitalism for an international audience.

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Although shyness in Cold War theatre and film can be approached from many angles, with different emphases and in different theoretical lights, my research draws upon several threads of sociocultural and theoretical discourse to begin an interdisciplinary conversation. As shyness is not a popular topic in the humanities, I engage related threads from historical discourse analysis, gender and queer studies, affect theory and affective labor, and recent sociocultural studies in shyness and introversion. This will allow us to understand how the concept of shyness operated during the postwar era in the multiple ways I identify. Thus, my study employs its objects of analysis—plays and films—not as ends in themselves, but as means to an end: to comprehend the causes, nature, and consequences of marginalizing shy girls in U.S. culture.

Historical Discourse Analysis

My project is aligned with other major studies of U.S. Cold War theatre and film published in the past two decades, all of which present discourse analyses linking postwar cultural production to sociopolitical and economic imperatives. The most far-reaching of these

studies is Bruce McConachie's *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War: Producing and Contesting Containment, 1947-1962* (2003). Building on earlier studies such as David Savran's *Communists, Cowboys, and Queers: The Politics of Masculinity in the Work of Arthur Miller and Tennessee Williams* (1992) and Robert J. Corber's *Homosexuality in Cold War America: Resistance and the Crisis of Masculinity* (1997), McConachie draws at turns from postwar political rhetoric, popular psychology, discourse about nuclear families and gender roles, theatrical reviews, plays, films, radio programs, and television shows, to make sense of Cold War theatre. Using the metaphor of "containment" as something more than a governmental approach to international affairs, McConachie argues that different kinds of containment appear at all levels of U.S. culture during the early years of the Cold War.[17] Like much of the critical analysis of Cold War culture which treats crises of masculinity, McConachie focuses on the following types of characters: 1) Empty Boys (narcissistic and childish men who struggle to find inner peace, which is narratively 'fulfilled' through the adult activities of steady employment, marriage to a woman, and procreation); 2) Mothers (whose strength and empathy make the family unit cohere and push each family member toward success); 3) Fragmented Heroes (men conflicted about their masculinity in the face of nuclear disaster—they are both strong and impotent); and 4) Female Others (women who are sexually aggressive and/or dangerously unpredictable).[18] Though McConachie briefly mentions one shy girl in his analysis—Reenie in William Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957)—his overall treatment focuses, as do most Cold War media critics, on crises of masculinity, fathers, the relationships between sons and their mothers, and

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[17] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 12.

[18] Ibid., 50-52.

those between men and sexually aggressive women. Even the mention of Reenie is overshadowed by McConachie's reading of the relationship between Reenie's brother and their mother. In positing that the identity politics of containment culture relies on "abject Others" who act as shadows of normative behavior, however, I think McConachie opens a field where shy girls belong. He explains that "abject Others" are a

> secondary effect of containment thinking, resulting from the contrast between 'inside' and 'outside' that structures all figures of containment. Because the cognitive logic of containment required an outside Other to delimit an inside Same, abject Others proliferated during the Cold War. The image of the homosexual shadowed the character of the Empty Boy, the black Family Circle stood behind its white counterpart, and the threat of the fecund female shaped the Fragmented Hero. These abject Others were not peripheral to containment liberalism, but constitutive of its constellation of concepts and metaphors.[19]

Understood thus, the shy girl can be construed as an "abject Other" who shadows sociable, marriageable, heterosexual young women. She is the polar opposite of the sexually aggressive woman—too passive to be thought 'dangerous,' or to attract men's sexual interest; and as a wife and mother, the shy woman fails to provide the correct level of nurturance to her family (she may be emotionally attached to others, but her shyness is depicted as neurotic self-centeredness).

My project deviates from two pervasive elements of McConachie's approach, however. First, while I appreciate his emphasis on cognitive psychology to establish that audiences understood the containment metaphor at work in multiple levels of culture—albeit often unconsciously—knowing exactly what Cold War audiences understood seems out of reach to any method. Second, McConachie's use of the word "narcissism" or "narcissistic" as a seeming catchall for the introspection of Empty Boys, method actors, and therapeutic culture in general,

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[19] Ibid., 53-54.

(perhaps unintentionally) pathologizes introspective states. My project necessarily sees introspection as a contested site.

More recent work by Cold War theatre and film critics continues to forge connections between political rhetoric of containment, performance, gender and sexuality. Milly S. Barranger's *Unfriendly Witnesses: Gender, Theatre, and Film in the McCarthy Era* (2008) examines the HUAC testimonies and strategies of women from theatre and film who refused to name names of suspected communist sympathizers. Barranger asserts that these female "unfriendly witnesses" did not suffer such punitive measures as did uncooperative male witnesses because of the conflicting views of women as threatening and dissimulative but ultimately mentally and socially impotent.[20] Tony Perucci's *Paul Robeson and the Cold War Performance Complex: Race, Madness, Activism* (2012) finds parallels between anti-communist rhetoric and anti-theatrical, homophobic, and racist discourse, wherein both communists and male 'others' are seen as weak, effeminate, mentally unstable, sneaky, and false.[21] Unlike the relatively unscathed female "unfriendly witnesses" of Barranger's study, Paul Robeson was heavily surveilled by the FBI and his passport was seized due to his uncooperative HUAC testimony and his civil rights activism; despite being labeled as weak or mad, he was considered a real threat to national security.[22] Combined with Savran's and McConachie's studies, Barranger's and Perucci's work strengthens the links between anti-communist discourse and rhetoric about psychology, performance, and gender. But again, where these works concern

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[20] Barranger, *Unfriendly Witnesses*, 7.

[21] Tony Perucci, *Paul Robeson and the Cold War Performance Complex: Race, Madness, Activism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 2.

[22] Ibid., 1-2.

women, they are almost exclusively outspoken or otherwise strong figures—women who are comfortable in the spotlight and adept at performing. Thus, there is a need for talking about how shy girls and women fit (or do not) into the postwar anti-communist cultural milieu.

Gender and Queer Studies

My project also draws on particular threads in gender and queer studies. It follows Judith Butler's assertion that gender is performative; that is, a set of bodily practices that are socially understood as masculine, feminine, or 'other.'[23] Building on this performative concept of gender, Judith Halberstam's *Female Masculinity* (1998) upends the idea of masculinity's neutrality. Her analysis of drag king shows and masculine characters in film supports the idea that introversion or introspection is culturally understood as a masculine trait. In drag king shows, for example, the engaging and exaggerated aspects of drag queen performance are often absent. The masculine performer's stage presence is more internalized; his gestures are small; he is silent, withdrawn, deadpan, and/or awkward.[24] (In the World War II and postwar eras, for example, a similar performance of masculinity can be seen in John Wayne westerns.) To perform femininity, in other words, means externalizing emotion by increasing sound and movement—communicative gestures that reach out to the audience. D.A. Miller's *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (2000) further suggests that the emotional, gestural, and vocal largesse of performers (particularly the stage mother) in musicals excludes maleness from the stage altogether.[25] The view that performance is naturally linked with femininity—a view that has

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[23] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble:Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (1990; repr. London and New York: Routledge, 2002), 179.

[24] Judith Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 245-46.

[25] D. A. Miller, *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 76-79.

survived, as Elin Diamond claims, from Western antiquity[26]—implies that women who are not gifted performers, who are not well-attuned to the communicative needs of their audience, are masculine. In a postwar containment culture that upholds heterosexual relations and Victorian notions of domesticity, masculine women are a threat to the social order.

Likewise, the antisocial thread of queer theory in the last decade concerns queer subjects who upset white middle-class heterosexual economies of desire and repression. Theorists like Lee Edelman and Leo Bersani reject these normative economies in aggressive terms of "anti-futurity"—the championing of queer 'unproductive' sexual practices, and the rejection of the pervasive assumption that heterosexual reproduction relates to or brings about any meaningful sociopolitical change.[27] And Judith Halberstam further investigates more passive varieties of the antisocial in *The Queer Art of Failure* (2011). She imagines normally negative states such as "inefficiency" and "unproductiveness" as queer "mode[s] of critique," saying, "Heteronormative common sense leads to the equation of success with advancement, capital accumulation, family, ethical conduct, and hope. Other subordinate, queer, or counter-hegemonic modes of common sense lead to the association of failure with nonconformity, anticapitalist practices, nonreproductive life styles, negativity, and critique."[28] Social, productive, and reproductive ineptitude undergirds the reading of shy women in my project. I do not identify these marginal female characters as lesbian (as does Robert J. Corber in his analysis of *All About Eve*, for

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[26] Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis:Essays on Feminism and Theater* (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), vi.

[27] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 27; 31. See also Leo Bersani, *Homos* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996).

[28] Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 89.

example),[29] but I do read them as gender queer in the instances where they fail to exude 'feminine charm' or otherwise perform well. This position echoes one of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's few mentions of shyness:

> Some of the infants, children, and adults in whom shame remains the most available mediator of identity are the ones called (a related word) shy. ("Remember the fifties?" Lily Tomlin used to ask. "No one was gay in the fifties; they were just shy.") Queer, I'd suggest, might usefully be thought of as referring in the first place to this group or an overlapping group of infants and children, those whose sense of identity is for some reason most durably tuned to the note of shame.[30]

Or, as I argue, to shyness. It is clear that much of the affective force behind postwar dramatic plots about shyness is invested in fixing seemingly broken girls and women who have tenuous senses of identity. Though shy female characters are almost always 'fixed' by successfully entering a heterosexual economy of desire at the play's or film's end, much of their narrative presence occupies a grey area between feminine- and masculine-coded behavioral traits.

Affect Theory and Affective Labor

My use of shyness as an identifier touches on affect theory in the humanities but shifts away from notions of shame—the affect with which shyness is often associated. Inspired by the work of psychologist Silvan Tomkins, who describes shyness as a variety of the primary negative affect of shame,[31] theorists Eve Sedgwick, Sara Ahmed, Elspeth Probyn, and several others

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[29] Robert J. Corber, *Cold War Femme: Lesbianism, National Identity, and Hollywood Cinema. (*Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 20.

[30] Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 63.

[31] Silvan S. Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness, The Complete Edition* (1963; repr. New York: Springer, 2008), ed. Bertram P. Karon, 351.

explore the various contours of shame as both a tumultuous and productive affect.[32] According to Tomkins, shame, shyness, and humiliation cannot be distinguished behaviorally—all three lead patients to lower their eyes and head, and to blush. These affects fall on a single spectrum of bodily intensity, where shame takes clinical precedence as the more intense, more common, more physiologically recognizable affect.[33] But as Tomkins admits, shyness and shame are not experientially equivalent, and all affects are unique to individuals.[34] One thing that seems to specify shyness for Tomkins is disturbance caused by strangers, a learned response:

> there is no shyness until the infant can learn to distinguish the mother's face from the face of a stranger, at which point he first begins not to smile, to look away and sometimes to cry and even to fall asleep.
>
> These reactions to the stranger by the infant are first of all reactions of not smiling. Infants appear to vary in what else they do when confronted with the stranger for the first time. Some infants cry, some turn their eyes away, some stare with intense interest at the unfamiliar face, some appear to freeze in fear.[35]

In this example shyness becomes a social problem in two senses: it is both the manifestation of disturbance caused by a strange social encounter for the infant, and it causes the infant to stop smiling, to cease its socially desirable display of positive affect. Interestingly, infants' various shy responses reappear with and negatively mark the shy girl of early Cold War theatre and film —at times she seems listless, distressed, frozen, awkwardly staring at new faces, when she *should* be displaying friendliness. However, as pertinent as his short discussion of shyness is,

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[32] See Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*; Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004); and Elspeth Probyn, *Blush: Faces of Shame* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

[33] Tomkins, *Affect Imagery Consciousness*, 351-2.

[34] Ibid.

[35] Ibid., 353.

Tompkins quickly asserts that these shy responses to strangers are insufficient grounds to consider shyness as separate from shame.

Other psychologists have distinguished further between temperamental and situational shyness, which allows for shy dispositions.[36] As shame implies judgment, it is difficult to imagine someone possessing a shameful disposition from birth. The idea of situational shyness might also help explain why people who are thought to be extroverted (that is, energized through social interactions) can experience shyness in certain moments (e.g., the onset of stage fright when faced with public speaking). Moreover, we might distinguish shame—a feeling that occurs after the fact (e.g., after the experience of 'inappropriate' pleasure)—from shyness—an affective withdrawing that seeks to prevent the experience of negative judgment (and therefore shame). Thus, an introverted person (one who is energized by thinking and/or being alone rather than socializing) might not be shy, though behaviorally s/he withdraws from other people.[37] For these reasons, I break from Tomkins, Sedgwick, and other affect theorists who focus on shame. Clearly, shame is an important affect to consider in minority studies, and it is certainly linked to shyness—particularly when people are shamed for being shy. But shyness is not the same as shame, and if we are to understand the affective shadows of our culture, shyness must be considered a distinctive mode of feeling.

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[36] Susie Scott, *Shyness and Society: Illusions of Competence* (New York: Palgrave McMillan, 2007), 4-6.

[37] "Extraversion" and "Introversion" are types of temperament delineated by Carl Jung in *Psychological Types* (1921). Though he originally conceived of extroverts as those who are object-oriented (people drawn to things and people outside of themselves), and introverts as those who are subject-oriented (people drawn inside of themselves, to ideas and feelings), the terms have changed somewhat in common parlance. Now they are often differentiated in terms of the energizing (extrovert) or enervating (introvert) effects of socializing. NB: the spelling of "extravert" also varies; I'm using "extrovert" here, keeping with recent publishing trends. See Carl Jung, *Psychological Types*, trans. H. G. Baynes (1921; repr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 452-53; 427.

As I am not interested in clinically diagnosing dramatic characters, my project does not aim to provide a definitive theory of what causes shyness; rather, I find it a complex state that elicits strong negative emotions in both the shy person and her society (including the audience). Not only do shy characters fail to impress their fellow characters, but the performance of shyness often fails to impress the audience, thus losing force in the memory of critics. Shyness is an archival wallflower. In *Ugly Feelings* (2005), Sianne Ngai notes that criticism is drawn to forceful and expressive affects. She remarks that the widespread attention shame has received in recent scholarship, for instance, results from an ethical turn in literary and cultural studies.[38] Her meditations on "weak," "amoral," and "noncathartic" (expressively flattened) negative affects include the affective states of anxiety and paranoia, but not shyness. Following Ngai's study of how amoral and seemingly unproductive affects are gendered, I move to include shyness in such discussions.

My study of shyness also intersects with another thread of affect theory: affective labor. In a popular text from the early Cold War era, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951), C. Wright Mills argues that, with the rise of business and customer service sectors, affect has become a key component of labor.[39] Consumers desire positive emotional feedback from service providers who work in a "personality market" wherein "personal or even intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange and become of commercial relevance, become commodities in the labor market."[40] Responding to and building upon Mills's work,

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[38] Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 6-7.

[39] C. Wright Mills, *White Collar: The American Middle Classes* (1951; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 65.

[40] Ibid., 182.

Arlie Russell Hochschild explores the gender divisions of affective labor, including those within the caring professions and unwaged home care. Women in particular are expected to provide not only physical but emotional support for those receiving care.[41] This gendered view of affective labor helps us understand a crucial aspect of the U.S. postwar suburban housewife's burden: her affective labor only stops, presumably, when she sleeps at night. Women are often seen as natural nurturers, which obscures both the physical and affective labor involved in caring for others.[42] This poses a special problem for women who are introverted or otherwise not dispositionally drawn to others. Shyness necessarily interferes with both the ease and effectiveness of providing affective labor, or any labor that requires human interaction. Most importantly in postwar culture, perhaps, shyness interferes with a woman's attainment of a husband, house, and children. Taking her out of circulation, shyness cuts her off from the possibility of providing her supposedly natural talent for nurturance.

In the context of show business, of course, shyness is economically and aesthetically disastrous. Nicholas Ridout's *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (2006) posits theatre as an asymmetrical social interaction between performer and audience, where audience members expect to enjoy a form of paid leisure, and the actor labors to please them without calling attention to the labor involved.[43] Part of entertaining thus lies in obscuring the labor—the physical and psychological difficulty—of providing entertainment. If the actor

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[41] Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart* (1983; repr., Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 20. Of course, Hochschild also builds upon and responds to the work of her mentor, Erving Goffman, whose work on social performance I discuss in Part II.

[42] Ibid., 164-66.

[43] Nicholas Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 27.

missteps or "breaks character" and, say, makes unfettered eye contact with an audience member, the affective economy of entertainment is disrupted. As Ridout explains,

> when the promise of a direct face-to-face encounter between two human beings is made within the theatrical set-up, either the act of delivery or the act of collection is always compromised. While we look for something meaningful to take place in our presence, and thus to facilitate some kind of meaningful communication, we actually find that the circumstances—the material conditions, if you like—in which this encounter takes place compromise the moment and inhibits [*sic*] the communication. Something fails to take place amid what does take place. […] There is an ineptitude or clumsiness in the relationship, a miscommunication or a dropped connection.[44]

Because theatrical practice is a socially awkward and tenuous experience, great care must be taken to maintain the illusion of willing participation on the part of the performer, who eases the audience's affective burden. Because caregiving is seen as a feminine trait, female performers have been particularly responsible for pleasing, not challenging, their audiences. In *Theatre & Feeling* (2010), for example, Erin Hurley reads the musical *Gypsy*'s iconic song "Let Me Entertain You" (sung several times by a sister act and, later, by a female stripper) as a locus of emotional labor. She remarks, "*Gypsy* exposes a theatrical service economy in which female performers are the primary feeling-technology; it is they who raise spirits."[45] Shyness threatens to obstruct the good feelings that accompany good entertainment. It also disrupts the aspects of "feeling-technology" that depend on perceptions of eagerness in female desirability.

Sociocultural Studies in Shyness and Introversion

This study of shyness is timely. Recent publications in both academic and trade presses question both the dogmatic emphasis on "group work" in business and educational settings, and the medicalization of shyness in the form of drugs for "social anxiety" disorders. Susan Cain's

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[44] Ibid., 32.

[45] Erin Hurley, *Theatre & Feeling* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 68.

bestselling *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (2012) traces the rise and impact of what she calls the "Extrovert Ideal"—"the omnipresent belief that the ideal self is gregarious, alpha, and comfortable in the spotlight."[46] Drawing on the work of cultural historian Warren Susman's distinction between the pre-industrial, pre-urban "Culture of Character" and the "Culture of Personality" that emerged with urbanization and the rise of a corporate business class (wherein effectively interacting with strangers takes economic and social precedent over fostering a private character), Cain explains:

> In the Culture of Character, the ideal self was serious, disciplined, and honorable. What counted was not so much the impression one made in public as how one behaved in private. The word *personality* didn't exist in English until the eighteenth century, and the idea of "having a good personality" was not widespread until the twentieth.
>
> But when they embraced the Culture of Personality, Americans started to focus on how others perceived them. They became captivated by people who were bold and entertaining. "The social role demanded of all in the new Culture of Personality was that of a performer," Susman famously wrote. "Every American was to become a performing self."[47]

Cain points to self-improvement gurus like Dale Carnegie (of *How To Win Friends and Influence People* (1936) and, earlier, *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* (1913)) as catalysts in the rise of elocution and public speaking lessons in the first half of the twentieth century.[48]

Indeed, U.S. popular and institutional psychology in the twentieth century has labeled social adeptness as normal and pathologized social awkwardness. Like Cain, Christopher Lane sees pervasive views of shyness and social anxiety disorders as culturally contingent.[49] In

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[46] Susan Cain, *Quiet: The Power of Introverts in a World That Can't Stop Talking* (New York: Broadway, 2012), 4.

[47] Ibid., 21. Also see Warren Susman, *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (1973; repr. Washington DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2003), 271-85.

[48] Cain, *Quiet*, 20.

[49] Christopher Lane, *Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 11-12.

Shyness: How Normal Behavior Became a Sickness (2007), he traces the development of the first four editions of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) used by psychologists to diagnose mental illness. While Lane focuses much of his work on the compilation process of the third edition of the DSM in the late-1970s and 1980s—which widely expanded the range of possible diagnoses (concurrent with the pharmaceutical industry's available drugs)—his coverage of how Introverted Personality Disorder (IPD) changed between DSM editions is particularly relevant to my project. In the DSM I (1952), IPD symptoms include being "quiet, shy, obedient, sensitive and retiring," avoiding close attachments with others, having an "inability to express directly hostility or even ordinary aggressive feelings," and thinking in an "autistic" manner.[50] The DSM II (1968) described IPD as a "*behavior pattern* [that] manifests shyness, over-sensitivity, seclusiveness, avoidance of close or competitive relationships, and often eccentricity."[51] During talks about how to present IPD in the DSM III (1980), the correspondence between notable psychologists on the DSM Committee laid bare a contempt for introverts. Donald Klein, for example, asserted that those with "introverted personality are[n't] preoccupied with internal processes . . . they just don't have much going on."[52] Theodore Millon agreed, saying, "I would like to see us make more reference to their [introverts'] characteristic behavioral apathy, their lack of vitality, their deficits in . . . spontaniety [*sic*], their inability to display enthusiasm or experience pleasure, their minimal introspectiveness and awareness of self, as well as their imperviousness to the subtleties of everyday social life."[53] (Lane thinks it especially strange that

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[50] Ibid., 80.

[51] Ibid.

[52] Ibid., 88 (Lane's editing).

[53] Ibid., 94.

Millon should criticize a "minimal introspectiveness" in those usually considered as *too* introspective.) Notice how these epithets from professional psychologists sound much like Dr. Sloper's gripes about his daughter Catherine's general dullness and social clumsiness in *The Heiress*. Here clinicians also equate social awkwardness with stupidity, and the DSM committee members align introversion with extreme states of dissociation and detachment. Though IPD was nominally removed from the DSM III, its symptoms were merged with Schizoid Disorders (a form of mild psychosis related to but distinct from schizophrenia).[54] While introversion as such is not currently a pathological diagnosis (despite the campaign to include it in the DSM V (2013)),[55] introverted or shy behavioral traits (basically, any kind of social withdrawal) appear as symptoms of myriad mental disorders. As Lane points out, there are few disorders with extroverted (prosocial) symptoms in any editions of the DSM, and there has never been a corresponding Extroverted Personality Disorder.[56] As both Lane and Cain note, introverts make up an estimated one-third to one-half of the U.S. population—that is, well over 100 million people.[57] Lane also points to the marketing campaigns of "mood-brightening" "antishyness pills" like Paxil and Zoloft which cite studies that one-in-five people have social phobia or "social anxiety disorder." "[I]n other words, shyness is an illness if you make the criteria sufficiently inclusive; it's a run-of-the-mill trait if you don't."[58] While I don't mean to conflate introversion (being enervated by socializing) and shyness (being fearful of socializing), *Quiet* and *Shyness*

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[54] Ibid., 79-80.

[55] Nancy Ancowitz, "Are Introverts Nuts?" *Psychology Today*, April 21, 2010. http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/self-promotion-introverts/201004/are-introverts-nuts.

[56] Lane, *Shyness*, 82.

[57] Ibid., 83. See also Cain, *Quiet*, 3.

[58] Lane, *Shyness*, 102.

make compelling arguments for how twentieth century institutional and popular psychology, the business sector, and other forms of cultural production contribute to an "Extrovert Ideal" that promotes high sociability and shows an urge to pathologize shyness.

Sociologist Patricia A. McDaniel's *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts: Shyness, Power, and Intimacy in the United States, 1950-1995* (2003) provides an invaluable reading of the gendered relations of shyness as they have appeared in advice manuals. As McDaniels notes, the definition and perception of shyness has shifted over time, and what people commonly associate with shyness is socio-historically contingent.[59] Though shyness is usually defined in 'commonsense' terms or in terms of what it is *not*, McDaniel "'loosely' define[s] 'shyness' as feelings of fear or discomfort in social situations,"[60] a definition upon which I rely, in an effort to move away from clinical terms assigned to shy behaviors. The earliest English usage of "shy" associates it with fearful animals and women, and prior to the twentieth century the silence accompanying shyness was held as a natural and positive feminine trait.[61] But dating manuals in the 1950s belie the 'naturalness' of female shyness, often advocating that women don what McDaniel calls a "mask of shyness" in certain situations, particularly as a method of making men feel comfortable and confident.[62] In such situations, shyness is a strategic performance for securing a romantic partner. McDaniel identifies this performance as gendered "emotion work":

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[59] Patricia A. McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts: Shyness, Power, and Intimacy in the United States, 1950-1995* (New York: New York University Press, 2003), 8-9.

[60] Ibid., 9.

[61] Ibid., 22.

[62] Ibid., 50.

young women become responsible for young men's self-esteem in a way that is unreciprocated because it is seen as an extension of women's knack for nurturance.[63]

Susie Scott's *Shyness and Society: The Illusion of Competence* (2007) reveals that the "mask of shyness" is still encouraged in twenty-first century dating advice columns in teen magazines marketed to young women.[64] Likewise, Scott views shyness as performative, analyzing the anecdotal experiences and strategies of shy test subjects, who actively use shy behaviors as a defense mechanism against the perceived negative judgments of others.[65] The shy test subjects differentiate themselves from introverts and "quiet" people, assuming that introverts and quiet types simply do not want to socialize and feel comfortable not doing so.[66] While I do not wish to invalidate the opinion of these shy test subjects, Scott's eagerness to assert that shy people are socially responsible and really *want* to socialize but cannot seems like an effort to build sympathy for shy people at the expense of introverts.[67] This stance further overlooks that introverts may also be shy, and minimizes the fact that all quiet people—shy or otherwise—are under various pressures to socialize, which may interfere with their desire or enjoyment of being alone. Just as Scott points out that there are shy people who have become adept at social performance ("shy extroverts" or social "imposters"),[68] so Cain identifies "pseudo-extroverts," introverts who have learned to perform well in social situations.[69] Still, Scott's dramaturgical

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[63] Ibid., 51.

[64] Scott, *Shyness and Society*, 23-4.

[65] Ibid., 9.

[66] Ibid., 127.

[67] Ibid., 10-11.

[68] Ibid., 127.

[69] Cain, *Quiet*, 4; 6.

analysis of shyness is helpful in that the everyday social performance of shy people is seen as a mental and physical negotiation of social values and norms. Since shy characters in theatre and film are played by actors who may or may not be shy, actors communicate the gestures, sounds, facial expressions, and energy by which shy and quiet people are identifiable in life offstage and offscreen. My project's objects of analysis, then, are performances of shyness, and shyness as active social negotiation.

Unlike McDaniel and Scott, neither the more widely-read Cain nor Lane discuss substantial ways in which shyness or introverted behaviors affect men and women differently. But consider the implications of extremely flawed and extremely popular works like John Gray's *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* (1992; 2012), which states in no uncertain terms that men biologically *need* alone time to think about things, and women biologically *need* to talk about things with their friends.[70] By these dictums, garrulous men and quiet women are abnormal. But while garrulous men are unlikely to suffer social or work-related setbacks in a culture that values extroverted behavior, quiet women remain likely to be encouraged to seek mental help. A recent *New York Times* article discusses a study in which female employees are statistically more likely to be evaluated negatively based on their personality traits than are men.[71] While Tara Mohr mentions that women in the study were negatively described as "aggressive," it follows that shy or socially withdrawn women would likewise receive negative job performance evaluations, if personality 'deviations' are noticed more in women. While my intent is not to pinpoint shy characters' specific personality traits à la Myers-Brigg, I am

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[70] John Gray, *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus: The Classic Guide to Understanding the Opposite Sex* (1992; repr. New York: Harper Collins, 2012), 26-27.

[71] Tara Mohr, "Learning to Love Criticism," *New York Times*, September 27, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2014/09/28/opinion/sunday/learning-to-love-criticism.html.

interested in the ways that their behavior is read and often pathologized by others. If we think in terms of Cain's "Extrovert Ideal" in tandem with affective labor (with its insistence on "mood-brightening"), it is not only aggressive women who are regarded with suspicion and contempt—but also those who are so 'passive' that they neglect the affective desires of those around them.

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Setting the Stage: 1945-62

The dates of my project correspond with the end of World War II, which saw an increase of anti-Soviet rhetoric as the U.S.S.R was no longer an ally, and the last overtly anti-Soviet film of the era, *The Manchurian Candidate* (1962). As Michael Rogin points out, this film marks a shift in Hollywood representations of Cold War politics, which then move in more liberal directions following Kennedy's assassination.[72] This is further supported by the relaxation of the Production Code, as films were allowed to become less 'family-friendly.' In theatre, Off-Broadway productions had greatly increased by 1962, allowing for more experimentation and openly liberal subject matter, and expanded audiences.[73]

In 1946 and '47, U.S. diplomat George F. Kennan articulated a policy of "containment" as a strategy for handling what he and many others saw as the ruthless, calculating expansionism of the U.S.S.R—a policy adopted by the U.S. government and soon the private business sector. Understanding the Cold War as primarily a psychological battle over competing ideologies of capitalistic democracy and communist totalitarianism, Kennan encouraged Americans to lead by example at home and in dealings abroad:

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[72] Michael Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie: and Other Episodes in Political Demonology* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1987), 254.

[73] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 2.

> The United States […] must demonstrate by its own self-confidence and patience, but particularly by the integrity and dignity of its example, that the true glory of Russian national effort can find its expression only in peaceful and friendly association with other peoples and not in attempts to subjugate and dominate those peoples. […I]f we wish our relations with Russia to be normal and serene, the best we can do is to see that on our side, at least, they are given the outward aspect of normalcy and serenity. Form means a great deal in international life. […] What is important, in other words, is not so much what is done but how it is done. And in this sense, good form in outward demeanor becomes more than a means to an end, more than a subsidiary attribute: it becomes a value in itself, with its own validity and its own effectiveness, and perhaps—human nature being what it is—the greatest value of all.[74]

In psychological warfare, mental fortitude, proven through certain behavioral and affective postures, would supposedly protect U.S. citizens from the infiltration of communist principles that were seen to limit economic prosperity and personal freedom. In official and popular U.S. rhetoric, Americans were posited as affectively open, warm, honest, and strongly family-oriented, while Soviets were posited as secretive, cold, deceptive, socially and sexually detached and promiscuous.[75] These rhetorical positions would have heavy ramifications for how U.S. citizens were expected to behave as proof of their Americanness, particularly with the continuous suggestion that Soviet sympathizers were hiding among U.S. citizens, surreptitiously 'infecting' them with pro-Soviet ideas. As a result of intense efforts to contain communism at home and abroad, several mass "scares" surfaced in what has become known as the postwar U.S. "Age of Anxiety."[76]

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[74] George F. Kennan, quoted in John Lewis Gaddis, *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War* (1982; repr., Cary, NC: Oxford University Press, 2005), 49.

[75] For example, see John McPartland, "Portrait of an American Communist," *LIFE*, January 5, 1948, 75-82.

[76] The oft-repeated phrase comes from poet W.H. Auden. See Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural Reader* (Emeryville, CA: Shoemaker & Hoard, 2006), 1.

Of course, the psychological Cold War was undergirded by the physical threat of Soviet nuclear weapon capabilities in 1949.[77] As Elaine Tyler May's *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* suggests, this outside threat encouraged a domestic bomb shelter mentality, wherein the single detached suburban ranch house—which may or may not have had an actual bomb shelter—was conceived as a safe enclosure to protect the American family unit.[78] May explores this phenomenon in tandem with rhetoric encouraging women to return to domestic life after working in men's jobs during the war. While many working-class white women and women of color were financially barred from participating in this domestic ideal,[79] the rhetoric powerfully put forth an image of the family home carefully cultivated by the housewife as a haven of intimacy and trust, a barrier to the corrupting and corruptible outside world, as both protective and worth protecting.[80] The idealized postwar division of labor, in which the workforce was figured as masculine ('breadwinning') and the domestic was figured as feminine ('homemaking'), further ensured that money and consumer goods consistently flowed into the single family unit.[81] The nuclear family also acted as an important site of citizenship; conspicuous consumption and tranquil 'togetherness' were hallmarks of U.S. capitalist culture in the Cold War, one supposedly free from the drudgery and limited material choices of Soviet

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[77] Michael Barson and Steven Heller, *Red Scared! The Commie Menace in Propaganda and Culture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 58.

[78] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (1988; repr., New York: Basic Books, 2008), 1.

[79] Ibid., 27; 75.

[80] Ibid., 63-5.

[81] Ibid., 19-21.

life.[82] But close quarters within the home also enclosed the individual within a site of surveillance, surveillance by family members and the self, that mirrored State and business surveillance in the outside world.[83] Protecting the home meant ensuring that each member of the family was mentally strong enough to resist anti-American ideals, something one could prove through social interaction.

The psychological threat of Soviet infiltration, or the Red Scare, elicited governmental and business sector surveillance and disciplining of U.S. citizens. Although the U.S. had undergone previous red scares after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917, Russia had been its ally in World War II, during which time the Roosevelt Administration undertook a program of pro-Soviet propaganda to ease citizens' concerns over working with the Soviets.[84] When the war ended, however, right-wing thinkers such as Ayn Rand publicly asserted that wartime pro-Soviet propaganda—including several Hollywood films—were proof that communists had infiltrated U.S. culture.[85] Hollywood was a powerful lure in the new hunt for communist subversives, as the McCarthy and HUAC trials gained national attention through their interrogation of famous actors, directors, writers, and other Hollywood professionals.[86] In turn, Hollywood studios used the hunt for the Red Menace to blacklist left-wing artists (particularly writers) and weaken the strength of their unions—effectively equating unionizing with communist practices and ideals.[87]

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[82] Ibid., 19-22. The postwar conception of family "togetherness" was first articulated in Otis Sties, "Live the Life of McCall's," *McCall's Magazine*, May 1954.

[83] Rogin, *Ronald Reagan, the Movie*, 245.

[84] Barson and Heller, *Red Scared!*, 10-11.

[85] Brenda Murphy, *Congressional Theatre: Dramatizing McCarthyism on Stage, Film, and Television* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 22.

[86] Ibid., 18.

[87] Ibid., 16-7.

Jewish and black Hollywood professionals were especially targeted, as they had been associated with left-wing unionizing and civil rights activism.[88] Hence, Hollywood blacklisting provides a microcosm of how government and business interests aligned during the early Cold War era to attack and suppress leftist and progressive class and racial/ethnic politics.

The concurrent Lavender Scare aligned conservative government and business interests in an attack on sexual and gender subversion. At least 91 suspected homosexuals were fired from federal government positions between 1947 and 1949,[89] and David K. Johnson makes the compelling case that McCarthy, HUAC, and like-minded politicians were more determined to expose and depose homosexuals than communists.[90] Robert J. Corber's *Cold War Femme* also illustrates how the Red and Lavender Scares followed a similar logic of infiltration, as femme lesbians were, like communists, posited as subversives hiding 'in plain sight,' ingratiating themselves to U.S. citizens, and subterraneanly converting heterosexual women to homosexuality.[91] In a time when the nuclear family was dominantly seen as central to individual and national security, homosexuality and a failure to express heteronormative gender roles apparently threatened families, communities, and the nation.

The embedded complex of Red, Lavender, race, and class scares reveals anxieties based on the perceptions of communists, homosexuals, gender deviants, racial and ethnic Others, and the working class as mentally ill or more prone to mental illness. In the postwar era, these groups

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[88] Ibid., 17-8. Also see Perucci, *Paul Robeson and the Cold War Performance Complex*, 2.

[89] David K. Johnson, *The Lavender Scare: The Cold War Persecution of Gays and Lesbians in the Federal Government* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 21.

[90] Ibid., 22-5.

[91] Corber, *Cold War Femme*, 31.

were rhetorically positioned as emotionally immature and psychologically vulnerable. Psychological profiles of the time also placed the introvert (associated with shy or withdrawn behaviors) and the invert (associated with homosexuality and gender reversal) in a category similar to these other groups. According to Sigmund Freud, introverts and inverts were both immature, maladjusted, and narcissistic—that is, attached to the wrong love objects (one's own internal self for introverts, and one's self externalized as persons of the same sex for inverts), and overly concerned with themselves.[92] Being immature, or having failed to achieve heterosexual marriage and children, introverts and inverts were seen as emotionally frail, like children themselves, and prone to neurosis.[93] When psychiatric diagnosis was standardized in the DSM-I in 1952, Freud's basic ideas about introverts and inverts persisted, as introversion and shyness were listed under schizoid personality disorder, and homosexuality was listed as a variant of sociopathy; both so-called disorders were seen as the manifestation of antisocial traits and lack of prosocial feeling.[94] Clearly, then, people who might be considered introverts or inverts, through

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[92] Sigmund Freud, *Types of Onset of Neurosis*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XII (1911-1913)*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (1912; repr., London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 232-3.

Sigmund Freud, *On Narcissism*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916)*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (1925; repr., London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 73; 88.

Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume VII (1901-1905)*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (1905; repr., London: Hogarth Press, 1958), 165-6.

My discussion here oversimplifies Freud's views on homosexuality, as he proposed that humans were likely born bisexual, asserting that homosexual attachments were normal phases of development (see *Three Essays*). Nevertheless, he continually links sustained homosexual attachments and gender inversion to other neuroses and arrested development.

[93] Foucault traces this infantilizing of the mentally ill to the first asylum in England, Samuel Tuke's Retreat, modeled after an idealized, morally righteous patriarchy in which doctors were the wise parents to their wayward patient-children. Foucault places Freud directly in this line of familial psychologizing. See *History of Madness*, trans. Jonathan Murphy (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 490; 510.

[94] The Committee on Nomenclature and Statistics of the American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual: Mental Disorders* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Association, 1952), 35; 38-9.

failing to express sociability or gender 'correctness,' would be seen as psychological kin to communists, racial and ethnic Others, and the working-class poor.

In the postwar era, physical solutions to chronic anxiety and other forms of mental illness were in high demand, for returning servicemen and women suffering negative effects of physical battle, and civilians suffering negative effects of psychological warfare. Interventions like psychosurgery (e.g., lobotomy), electric or insulin shock therapy, and psychotropic drugs (first introduced in 1954),[95] were seen as quick and effective fixes, preferable to the months or years of treatment required by psychoanalysis or psychodynamic therapy.[96] Biological treatments for mental illness such as lobotomy were performed disproportionately on white women, however, as the treatments were thought to negatively impact a man's ability to work outside of the home, whereas housework was considered mindless—easily done by those with limited mental capacity.[97] In the immediate postwar years, lobotomy was perfected by American psychosurgeon Walter Freeman, who could quickly disconnect the 'troubling' prefrontal cortex by inserting an icepick through a patient's eye socket, thereby disrupting the obsessive, self-conscious, emotionally-charged thoughts that led to anxiety disorders.[98] Another surgeon reported that lobotomy specifically cured "self-consciousness, shyness, […] and excessive reserve."[99]

In the best cases, psychosurgery allowed patients to return to regular life in a state of calm. In bad cases, far from relieving the dependency caused by anxiety, psychosurgery

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[95] Bourke, *Fear*, 152.

[96] Ibid., 146.

[97] Ibid., 152.

[98] Ibid., 142-3.

[99] Quoted in Bourke, *Fear*, 149.

incapacitated patients mentally and physically, returning them to 'normal' life in a helpless, childlike state.[100] Often, such patients were then institutionalized. Perhaps as troubling as the lobotomy process and its aftereffects was the lack of standardized application of the procedure: often, families of patients could request a lobotomy for a woman, child, or man who was difficult to 'manage.'[101] Women were lobotomized for being combative or irritable, but so too were they lobotomized for being chronically nervous, depressed, or listless—for failing to provide domestic and affective support to their families.[102]

Psychological solutions to anxiety included psychodynamic therapy or psychoanalysis and their popular psychology variants. The "talking cure," in which a patient told her/his history to a therapist, slowly uncovering the unconscious source of an illness, was a long and expensive process.[103] Capitalizing on a more immediate, cheaper form of psychiatrists' advice, lingo, and concepts, forms of popular psychology such as self-improvement manuals, advice columns, and celebrity interviews and magazines (which included lifestyle tips) provided the layperson with a method for matching her/his behavior and feelings against a relative measure of normalcy or desirability, and seemed to provide concrete steps for self-correcting behavior, thoughts, and feelings.[104] Typically, postwar pop psychology imported negative views about shyness and gender deviance, advocating personality adjustments such as cultivating "fascination,"

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[100] Ibid., 149-50.

[101] Ibid., 149.

[102] Ibid., 148. Also see Janet Walker, *Couching Resistance: Women, Film, and Psychoanalytic Psychiatry* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 25-6.

[103] Walker, *Couching Resistance*, xxv; 73-5. Also see May, *Homeward Bound*, 29-31.

[104] Bourke, *Fear*, 7. Also see Lindsay A. Hammond, "Women and Self-Help Books" (PhD diss., University of Kansas, 2004), 21-3.

dynamism, affective openness, and positivity for both men and women.[105] Marriage manuals advocated more emotional and physical intimacy between married men and women, and certain lifestyle magazines (e.g., *Playboy*) encouraged premarital sex between men and women, which emphasized affective and physical receptivity in women.[106] Men were encouraged to exhibit prosocial behaviors, particularly among other men and in professional settings. But dating, marriage, and parenting manuals singled out women as the true nurturers, exhorting them to attend to the desires and needs of others as both a duty and an avenue of self-fulfillment.[107] Thus, psychological interventions and their popular iterations provided ways of surveilling others and oneself, promoting prosocial behavior for promised economic success, personal fulfillment, and national security.

Objects of Analysis and Methodology

This project explores the ways in which shy young women are construed in early Cold War era theatre and film in the U.S. In these works, shyness is negatively constructed as personal inefficiency, selfishness, emotional and financial vulnerability, a precursor to mental collapse, professional inefficiency, a precursor to physical collapse, a negative symptom of modern urban alienation, and a diabolical tool for infiltration. Shy girls undergo a process of socialization in these narratives, wherein their bodies, minds, and emotional display are policed and shaped by others—at the expense of the shy girls' independent interests.

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[105] Cain, *Quiet*, 23-5.

[106] Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English, *For Her Own Good: Two Centuries of the Experts' Advice to Women* (1978; repr., New York: Anchor Books, 2005), 267-9. Elizabeth Fraterrigo, *Playboy and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America* (1978; repr., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 4-5.

[107] Ehrenreich and English, *For Her Own Good*, 208-9; 295-99. Cain, *Quiet*, 20; 24-5.

My study analyzes works that particularly succeeded with business class (upwardly mobile middle- to upper-class, overall white) audiences. As these works reflected business class values and acted as aspirational models, they provide a helpful lens to view postwar attitudes about shy girls. I focus on the dramatic works *The Glass Menagerie* (Tennessee Williams, 1945), *The Dark At the Top of the Stairs* (William Inge, 1957), *The Heiress* (Ruth and Augustus Goetz, 1947), the musical *Gypsy* (Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, and Jule Styne, 1959)—and their film adaptations, which often increase the sociability of shy characters even more than do the plays. Singular analysis is given to the films *The Three Faces of Eve* (dir. Nunnally Johnson, 1957), *Limelight* (dir. Charles Chaplin, 1952), the Technicolor film adaptation of the musical *Show Boat* (dir. George Sidney, 1951), and *All About Eve* (dir. Joseph L. Mankiewicz, 1950). My analysis will center on readings of primary play and film texts, as well as original theatrical and film reviews of these works' debuts in order to reveal how shy girls are construed both by the works themselves, and by those who first framed these works for the popular press. I turn to these particular media because postwar theatre and film establish persistent stage and screen conventions for exhibiting the performance of human behaviors in their corporeal richness.

The project is also a discourse analysis that draws on postwar popular psychology and self-improvement manuals (including handbooks about parenting, socialization, and elocution), containment politics (evaluating how anti-communist rhetoric relates to rhetoric about women and the need for domesticity), and celebrity culture. I view these discourses through a lens of affective labor, using an overall material feminist approach to the texts. These overlapping discourses can help us understand what shy girls *mean* in the context of the Cold War.

A note on partiality: this work also participates in a "critique of ideology" in that I draw attention to ways in which negative cultural constructions of shyness contribute to patriarchal and capitalist oppression of shy people, particularly of women. However, this critique is limited in several crucial respects: 1) my critique and interpretation are culturally and historically invested in Western, capitalist notions of selfhood and identity; 2) I have chosen some objects of analysis over others—this study is representative, not comprehensive; 3) while male socialization narratives certainly exist in theatre and cinema, I focus on women; 4) though I treat race and class in several respects, discussions of shy women of color are limited by problems of detection (e.g., popular postwar films featuring geishas equate extreme demureness with sexual desirability and assume it to be a 'natural' Japanese disposition; therefore, these films do not seek to "socialize" these women—do geishas feel shy, and/or is it a situational performance? White cultural production at the time does not suggest that shyness in women of color is a problem for whites; however, as discussed later in this study, shyness is seen as a problem for black women who want to date black men—for it impedes courtship, marriage, and socioeconomic advancement); 5) my discussion of "shy girl traits" is meant only to establish a recognizable pattern in the dramatic narratives I treat, and is not the only helpful way to approach these characters (e.g., one might consider them in terms of how they fit into a particular genre, such as the ill or disfigured heroine of sentimental drama and, later, women's film); and 6) I draw on a representative but not comprehensive sample of self-improvement manuals, psychological studies, and cultural phenomena. Even this list on partiality is partial! Overall, I see the project as an invitation to further discussion, rather than a final rendering of how to understand shy girls in U.S. theatre and film.

Structure

The study consists of two parts containing eight chapters. Each chapter is devoted to a particular construction of shyness.

Part I: Home Girls examines the common tropes of shy girl socialization narratives in theatre and film that are set in domestic spaces. The home is a private space that acts as an extension of one's interior; as such, it is a psychological space. I consider the privacy of the interior space (both the home and the self) as a site fraught with anxiety in terms of anti-communist rhetoric that prizes citizens' transparency over secrecy. The unknown interiors of shy young women contribute to a sense of paranoia and fear about their true allegiances to nuclear family values.

Chapter 1 interprets shyness in *The Glass Menagerie* as personal inefficiency—an obstruction of both job security and heterosexual coupling and reproduction. I read this work in tandem with self-improvement manuals dedicated to public speaking, dating, and overcoming an "inferiority complex."

Chapter 2 reads female shyness in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* as selfishness that inhibits social bonds and leads others to self-destruction. This view is supported by postwar manuals on motherhood and dating, which encourage women to attend to the emotional needs of others—particularly men and children—making women responsible for others' happiness.

Chapter 3 considers how *The Heiress* constructs shyness as emotional and financial fragility which makes the shy woman susceptible to romantic deceit. I couple this reading with postwar rhetoric surrounding communist and ethnic Others' infiltration of the family, and its complex relationship to emotional labor.

Chapter 4 sees shyness as incipient to mental breakdown in *The Three Faces of Eve*, where it makes a young woman vulnerable to a "split" personality disorder. This is read in conjunction with postwar U.S. debates about racial segregation and the rhetoric concerning the national psyche. Major psycho-sociological texts of explicitly link psychic splits in white individuals to disunity on a national scale, and disunity is seen as individual and national vulnerability to totalitarian regimes.

Part II: Understudies analyzes the elements of shy girl socialization narratives as they appear in backstage musicals and films, exploring how the performance aspects of these stories emphasize how affective labor operates in socialization narratives generally. The understudy's transformation into a star requires physical and affective tempering; her desirability increases as she becomes more confident ("sure-footed"), dynamic, and engaging onstage. The understudy is a fitting figure for the socialization of shyness, because she learns the roles of others and waits patiently for the chance to perform them. Unless the understudy is more calculating, the performance may never materialize; unless she is precise and adept onstage, the performance may not benefit her career.[108] To survive, she must compete with the stage presence, the emphatic gesticulation, and the striking vocal dynamism of more established performers. The stage is no place for hesitation. Here, performing well is seen as the cure for both shyness and a lagging career.

In Chapter 5, I discuss how the musical *Gypsy* conceives of shyness as professional inefficiency. The awkward, tomboyish understudy's transformation into a confident and feminine star presents the heterosexual matrix of desire as a set of on- and offstage practices, where the

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[108] Estelline Bennett, "Understudies," *The Green Book Album*, January 1910, 1017; 1019.

success of the show is intimately linked to cultivating male desire. I view this work as aligned with the rise of *Playboy* culture, where the affective and physical openness of women are associated with sophistication and modernity.

Chapter 6, on *Limelight*, considers shyness as incipient to physical breakdown. Here, shyness impedes both heterosexual coupling and performance success for a ballerina. I read the film alongside meditations on the "talking cure" of psychoanalysis, where self-disclosure becomes a catalyst to achieving mental health and professional triumph.

Chapter 7 explores how the Technicolor adaptation of *Show Boat* constructs shyness as a negative symptom of modern urban alienation for a woman alone in the big city. The only cure for stage fright becomes a return to the safety of family and friends. Because the understudy here is a white woman who often benefits from the unreciprocated emotional labor of a mixed-raced actress, I couple the film with an etiquette manual addressed to African-Americans which reiterates mainstream ideas about women's 'proper' role as self-sacrificing nurturers.

Chapter 8 reads shyness in *All About Eve* as a devious tool for infiltration and career advancement. Because the film uses the shy girl understudy ironically as a sexually aggressive, manipulative infiltrator, rather than the victim of infiltration, we see the convergence of conventional Cold War film narratives and backstage stories, with anxieties about performance, secrets, surveillance, and treacherous shyness. Here, the performance of shyness contributes to a paranoia that even "nice," quiet girls cannot be trusted (just as communist infiltrators may be wolves in sheep's clothing).

The study concludes by reflecting on how we understand the normalizing forces of the Cold War era, and how they play out in depictions of shy young women. I also meditate on what

we have inherited from these depictions, and how they create an ambivalent relationship between shyness and feminist activism. Overall, I advocate a different kind of self-care for shy women. I further consider how this conversation can continue into research on quiet women and their socially awkward and subversive relatives.

PART I: HOME GIRLS

> AMANDA: We have to make some plans and provisions for [Laura]. She's older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along.
> TOM: I guess she's the type that people call home girls.
> AMANDA: There's no such type, and if there is, it's a pity! That is unless the home is hers, with a husband![109]

Just as some might consider the hoarder to be a pathological example of capitalist accumulation, home girls are often seen as negatively extreme examples of Victorian femininity. They willingly confine themselves to domestic spaces, are prone to fits of nervousness, and are seen as weak and passive. But, like hoarders who sour the otherwise positive construction of accumulation, home girls supposedly sully the traditionally positive trait of female domesticity by neglecting certain requirements of the role. As Amanda Wingfield suggests, home girls fail to perform idealized domestic femininity when they do not help form a new family in a new home. In short, the home girl's shyness limits the circulation of her body, thoughts, and emotions. Contrasted to the ideal housewife who freely circulates in postwar America, the home girl disturbs others because she suspends herself in a queer stasis.

Part I of this work examines the common tropes of postwar shy girl socialization narratives in U.S. theatre and film set in domestic spaces. The home is a private space that acts as an extension of one's interior; as such, it is a psychological space. For this reason, I connect home girl narratives to postwar popular psychology and self-improvement manuals. Part I explores the home girls of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, and *The Heiress*, connecting these plays and their film adaptations to popular early- to mid-twentieth

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[109] Tennessee Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, in *Tennessee Williams: Plays 1937-1955*, ed. Mel Gussow and Kenneth Holditch (New York: The Library of America, 2002), 422.

century manuals by Alfred Adler, Dale Carnegie, Helen Valentine, Benjamin Spock, and others, all of which encourage outgoingness as a means to happiness. Specifically, I read *The Glass Menagerie* in relation to the other-directed philosophies and advice of Adler, Carnegie, Valentine and Thompson, and Bailard and Strang, which suggest that shyness is selfish and inefficient. *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* draws on the same ideas, but with the added emphasis on mothering —a la advice from Dr. Spock—and dating—many manuals for which suggest that girls must manage their own emotions to protect boys' inner fragility. Meanwhile, *The Heiress* reveals Cold War anxieties about ethnic others who infiltrate the middle-class white home—particularly maids and sexually charged 'gentleman caller' types. The home girls Laura Wingfield, Reenie Flood, and Catherine Sloper undergo severe stress in their quests to please others with attempts at outgoingness, which highlights the emotional labor involved in friendliness, flirtation, and acts of familial kinship.

As a coda to these home girl narratives, I include a reading of the film *The Three Faces of Eve*. In this work, a quiet young housewife, Eve White, develops a split personality that prevents her from acting as a caring wife and mother. Here, shyness is configured as a precursor to mental collapse and a broken nuclear family. Read in tandem with postwar psychosocial studies linking split personality states to racial prejudice and fascism, Eve White's broken mind and home become ciphers for a racially segregated nation whose weakened democratic ideals risk infiltration by totalitarian ideologies. In this sense, *The Three Faces of Eve* demonstrates how personal problems associated with shyness are continually connected to issues of national identity and security in the early Cold War era.

Shy Girl Traits

Socialization narratives concerning shy girls appear to have some common traits, which I identify in each object of analysis. (1) The shy girl is presented as rather plain, and has some kind of physical defect or bodily awkwardness. Overcoming shyness involves improving the girl's physical qualities. (2) She is often drawn to animals, inanimate objects, or solitary handiwork—all of which are treasures or talents hidden (shielded?) from the outside world. Characters close to the girl often chide her for spending time with said animal, collection, or solo task instead of spending time with other people. (3) The shy character is juxtaposed to a more sociable, more traditionally feminine counterpart. This well-socialized female acts as an example of how the shy character ought to act. (4) We witness a poignant example of the shy woman's extreme nervousness and social withdrawal when faced with an important performance 'opportunity.' (5) Inevitably, a gentleman caller visits the shy girl, and/or she has a failed romantic encounter with a young man. This caller is a sympathetic figure who relates his own social struggles but has overcome them; now he is more socially aware and adept. He tries to coax the shy girl out of her shell. (6) The gentleman caller or young man kisses or embraces the shy woman, somehow 'marking' her with his charm—and his good example of overcoming social awkwardness. This bodily contact often serves as a point of no return, after which the girl seems more emotionally available and more hopeful about her romantic future. And (7) the shy girl transforms into a more acceptable form of femininity; she becomes more of a woman in dress, manner, sociability, and/or the level to which her behavioral or affective deviations are corrected. In line with other familiar "makeover" narratives, shy girls are transformed into women through physical beautification and affective tempering. But the makeovers don't always stick. Besides allowing us to see that certain conventions govern the handling of shy girls in a

variety of plays and films, this taxonomy of shy girl traits allows us to rethink these makeovers as physical, mental, and affective disciplining—primarily designed to allay the postwar anxieties of the shy girls' family and friends, and of the audience.

CHAPTER 1: PERSONAL INEFFICIENCY IN *THE GLASS MENAGERIE*

Laura Wingfield

Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie* (1945),[110] set in a cramped apartment in a lower-middle-class neighborhood of St. Louis in the 1930s, concerns the Wingfield family's economic, psychic, and interpersonal struggles. Abandoned by her husband and worried for her children's futures, Amanda urges her shy daughter Laura to become a secretary or get married; and she urges her son Tom to find a better job and to find Laura a "gentleman caller." One night, Tom brings an unsuspecting coworker from his warehouse job to dinner: Jim O'Connor, who happens to be Laura's secret high school crush. Like one of Laura's business school tests, the dinner with Jim steeply tests Laura's social skills and is presented as a moment crucial for determining her future success. This chapter explores how characters in *The Glass Menagerie* construct shyness as personal inefficiency, which is supported by mid-20th-century self-improvement rhetoric surrounding "inferiority" and "charm." In disciplining Laura to attract gentlemen callers and succeed in business school, Amanda and Jim link her successful development as a young heterosexual woman to a cultural milieu of positive, other-directed[111] affect dominant in both domestic and corporate sectors.

Laura's Shy Girl Traits

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[110] James M. Salem, *A Guide to Critical Reviews, Part I: American Drama, 1909-1982* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 1984), 577. The show opened on Broadway on March 31, 1945, and ran for 561 performances.

[111] I borrow the term "other-directed" from David Riesman, a postwar American sociologist who, like Mills, was concerned that corporate culture had a negative impact on U.S. society and particularly on white middle-class males. In his popular *The Lonely Crowd*, Riesman describes other-directed people as having "a social character whose conformity is insured by their tendency to be sensitized to the expectations and preferences of others," adding that these middle-class (white) Americans tend to be "shallower," "friendlier," "more uncertain," and "more demanding of approval than the European." See *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1950), 9; 20.

JIM: (*Grinning*) What was the matter?
TOM: Oh—with Laura? Laura is—terribly shy.
JIM: Shy, huh? It's unusual to meet a shy girl nowadays.[112]

Williams tells us that Laura Wingfield's shyness derives from her physical difference, namely, her limp and leg-brace, remnants of a childhood illness.[113] Her memories of traumatic events center on moments of extreme self-consciousness when she walks in front of others in public and assumes that they judge her slow hobbling harshly. Laura assumes that she'll never have a gentleman caller or get married because she's "crippled."[114] Even though her mother and Jim O'Connor insist that Laura's "little physical defect" is hardly noticeable, she is convinced otherwise.[115] To compensate for her limp, Jim suggests that Laura develop her self-esteem,[116] and Amanda suggests that she develop charm.[117] Amanda also attempts to smooth over Laura's physicality by dressing her up for Jim's visit.[118] Indeed, Amanda thinks that Laura's good looks are wasted because of her shy disposition.

Instead of seeking out human friendships, Laura spends a large part of her time alone, polishing her collection of glass figurines and listening to old records on her victrola. When she drops out of a typing class at business school, Laura spends her days alone, wandering St. Louis's museums, zoos, libraries, and botanical gardens.[119] Amanda repeatedly criticizes her

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[112] Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 438.

[113] Ibid., 394.

[114] Ibid., 410.

[115] Ibid., 410; 454.

[116] Ibid., 454.

[117] Ibid., 410.

[118] Ibid., 433-34.

[119] Ibid., 408.

preoccupation with these things as interests that hinder her from meeting men.[120] Laura shields her solitary activities from her mother for a time, acting as though she is still enrolled in typing class.

In the stage version of *The Glass Menagerie*, the only other female character is Amanda Wingfield, who acts as a hyper-feminine counterpart to Laura. Amanda leads by example, showing Laura how to charm men verbally, how to dress to attract men's attentions, and how to move in a vivacious and flirtatious manner.[121] Recalling the time that she had 17 gentlemen callers one night in her youth, Amanda even dresses in her old ball gown for Jim's visit. She emphasizes Laura's "domestic" qualities to Jim—a vague word that references domestic skills but also Laura's preference for staying at home with her glass and record collections.[122] When Tom calls Laura a "home girl," Amanda qualifies that being a home girl is okay depending on whose home it is and if there's a husband.[123] Further, Amanda sells women's home magazines to make money.[124] That is, she helps circulate advice for achieving idealized modes of femininity. Though Amanda displays ridiculous (for New York audiences) amounts of so-called feminine charm, she's certain that only through acting more like a desirable woman will Laura achieve happiness in the form of heterosexual coupling.

Even with Amanda's guidance, Laura experiences much social anxiety and falters during 'performance' opportunities. She tells of a typing test that she failed because she grew nauseated

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[120] Ibid., 408-10; 422; 437.

[121] Ibid., 403; 434-35.

[122] Ibid., 442.

[123] Ibid., 422.

[124] Ibid., 411.

from nerves. When Jim O'Connor comes to visit, Laura is taken ill and can barely interact with him. She withdraws from other people at such times, retiring to other rooms or running away. She displays nervous behavior by shaking, bringing her hands to her lips, lowly moaning and sighing.[125] Laura does not like being in the 'spotlight' and consistently shows symptoms of stage fright.

Laura's failed romantic encounter occurs with Jim O'Connor, the gentleman caller around whom the entire play is organized. "PART I. Preparation for a Gentleman Caller. PART II. The Gentleman Calls."[126] Williams also singles out Jim through his succinct and bland character description. In contrast to the paragraph length descriptions of Amanda and Laura, and the psychological reading of Tom, Jim is described simply as "A nice, ordinary, young man."[127] This signals Jim's comparable normalcy. Jim picks up on Laura's shyness and coaxes her to let him sit and talk with her. She relaxes in part by listening to him talk and giving him positive feedback on his popularity in high school. But Laura is truly drawn to and more open with Jim after he admits that he has struggled with an "inferiority complex."[128] He tells her that he has overcome his struggles through self-improvement courses such as public speaking at night school.[129] Jim repeatedly tells Laura that she's special—"very different. […] I mean it in a nice way"[130]—and pretty, which embarrasses her but also allows her to lower her guard.

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[125] Ibid., 436-38; 443-44.

[126] Ibid., 394.

[127] Ibid.

[128] Ibid., 453.

[129] Ibid., 453-54.

[130] Ibid., 457.

In addition to Jim's communication skills, he uses physical contact to reach Laura. Jim convinces her to dance with him, and in doing so she relaxes her tense body and enjoys her free movement.[131] Even after dancing has led to the breakage of her favorite glass animal, Laura does not show anger, but says, "It's no tragedy, Freckles. Glass breaks so easily. No matter how careful you are. […] *(Smiling*) I'll just imagine he had an operation. The horn was removed to make him feel less—freakish!"[132] Jim kisses her, marking her body once more with his practiced charisma.[133] At this point, Laura has succumbed to her gentleman caller. All her anxiety seems to be gone—"*Laura sinks on the sofa with a bright, dazed look.* […*H*]*er look grows brighter even*."[134] By initiating such physical contact, Jim proves that social awkwardness can be overcome. But he is also disciplining Laura, just as Amanda's dressing of Laura is a kind of bodily disciplining.

Laura's transformation into a more acceptable form of femininity accelerates with Jim's kiss. The moment afterward, he confesses that he is not available; he is engaged to another "home girl," Betty.[135] Tom suggests that Jim likes attention from people who remember his "former [high school] glory,"[136] so perhaps he has been seduced by the idea of seducing someone who worshipped him in their youth. The fact that he is engaged to another home girl suggests

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[131] Ibid., 455-56.

[132] Ibid., 457.

[133] Ibid., 458.

[134] Ibid., 458-59.

[135] Ibid., 459.

[136] Ibid., 432.

that he—as someone who likes talking to and 'fixing' others—is drawn to quiet women in particular.

Though Laura is deeply hurt by Jim's revelation, she gives him the broken glass unicorn as "a souvenir."[137] She is also seen being cheered up by her mother, though we don't hear Amanda's speech—it's a pantomime. On one hand, these actions suggest that Laura is more open emotionally, more flexible and less delicate than she was at the beginning of the play. But is she forgiving because she is large-hearted, or because she's come to terms with her home girl status? Is she performing affective labor, in one final attempt to please Jim (and another attempt to please her mother)? At the play's end, Tom's dread that he left his sister shortly after this moment suggests that he is fearful that things turned out badly for Laura. Overall, Laura's transformation into more of a 'woman' is questionable in the stage version of *The Glass Menagerie*.

Critical Reception of Laura

A review of the critical literature on Laura allows us to see that, even in widely disparate approaches to the play and film, her shyness has always been seen as entangled with her strangeness and gender queerness on an affective, social, and physical level.

New York theatre critics' reviews of the first Broadway production of *The Glass Menagerie* overwhelmingly focus on and praise Laurette Taylor's portrayal of Amanda Wingfield, and only mention Julie Haydon's performance of Laura in brief, general terms that paint Laura as strange. Ward Morehouse, for example, clamors at length over Taylor's "sustained

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[137] Ibid., 460.

skill and expressive force,"[138] but the character of Laura is described merely as a "psychopathic" and "neurotic crippled girl."[139] The most descriptive reviews of Haydon's Laura come from Louis Kronenberger, who thinks she "gets the shy, scared side of Laura, but little of the locked-up intensity that the role seems to suggest,"[140] and from Wilella Waldorf, who praises her "low, beautifully modulated voice" and her "persuasive" "pantomime."[141] These reviews reveal the consensus that Laura is strange in her deformity, unsociability, and affective expressiveness.

The New York critics also begin a long-standing trend in scholarship of focusing on the more dynamic female character in *The Glass Menagerie*. In *The Other American Drama*, Marc Robinson focuses his analysis on Amanda because of her obvious complexity:

> The actor shouldn't streamline her, as is possible, perhaps, with Laura—an altogether less fully imagined character. Amanda is too boisterous for any easy interpretation—by actor or spectator—and while she may pander shamelessly to her children and acquaintances, especially the Gentleman Caller, she never makes it easy for us to know her, much less feel superior to her.[142]

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[138] Ward Morehouse,"'The Glass Menagerie,'" in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 234. Similarly, Robert Garland, Lewis Nichols, Burton Rascoe, Louis Kronenberger, and Otis L. Guernsey attest that Amanda is the play's central and most dominant character. See Robert Garland, "Laurette Taylor Stars in 'Glass Menagerie,'" in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 235; Lewis Nichols, "'The Glass Menagerie,'" in *New York Theatre Critics Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 235; Otis L. Guernsey, "The Theatre at Its Best," in *New York Theatre Critics Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 236; Louis Kronenberger, "A Triumph for Miss Taylor," in *New York Theatre Critics Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 235; Burton Rascoe,"'The Glass Menagerie' An Unforgettable Play," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 237.

[139] Ibid., 234-35. Likewise, Garland describes Laura as "an unhappy moonlike cripple," and John Chapman calls her "the crippled elf." See Garland, "Laurette Taylor Stars in 'Glass Menagerie,'" 235; and John Chapman, "'Glass Menagerie' is Enchanting Play, Truly Hypnotic Theatre," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 236.

[140] Kronenberger, "A Triumph for Miss Taylor," 236.

[141] Wilella Waldorf, "'The Glass Menagerie' High Point of Season So Far," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1945*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1945), 237.

[142] Marc Robinson, *The Other American Drama* (Baltimore and London: PAJ, 2005), 34.

Still, Robinson recognizes that "Amanda is such an oversized character that she nearly banishes Laura from the play. Laura's shyness draws her to the shadows; Amanda's ego keeps her there."[143] While *The Glass Menagerie* as a drama gives us multiple story lines of interest, and I do not mean to suggest that Laura is the primary character, it seems that Robinson—as a host of other critics have done—neglects Laura as a simplistic character partly because she lacks dynamism. This points to a critical bias in favor of extroverted characters, as they seemingly give us more with which to work—more energy, more words, more feeling, more movement.

Consequently, Laura Wingfield is not often investigated as a 'legitimate' Tennessee Williams character;[144] however, where Laura *does* appear in case studies, she is read predominantly through a psychobiographical lens, that is, seen as an analog for Tennessee Williams's sister Rose[145]—and sometimes as an analog for Williams himself. Most psychobiographical studies read Laura's nervousness and unsociability as dramatizations of Rose

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[143] Ibid., 37.

[144] Not only were reviewers of *The Glass Menagerie*'s stage productions more fascinated by the characterization of Amanda Wingfield, but scholarship has tended to focus on the two dominant types of Williams's heroines: the "belle," a relic of the Old South (such as Amanda Wingfield), and the sexual goddess or vamp (such as the highly sexualized women of *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof*). Though George W. Crandell notes that two types of Williams figures are the "belle" and the "crippled, maladjusted girl," almost all major scholarship on Williams's female characters have been primarily devoted to belles and vamps. And the only article Crandell cites about "the crippled, maladjusted girl" is not widely available. So I would argue that this "crippled, maladjusted girl" *type* is not well-established in Williams scholarship as a whole. For more on the dominance of belles and vamps in Williams scholarship, see Robert Emmet Jones, "Tennessee Williams's Early Heroines." *Modern Drama* 2, no. 3 (1959): 211; and George W. Crandell, "Tennessee Williams Scholarship at the Turn of the Century," in *Magical Muse: Millennial Essays on Tennessee Williams*, ed. Ralph F. Voss (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2002), 22.

[145] Crandell attributes this psychobiographical approach in general to the publication of several influential biographies: Benjamin Nelson's *Tennessee Williams: His Life and Work* (1961); Donald Spoto's *The Kindness of Strangers: The Life of Tennessee Williams* (1985); Ronald Hayman's *Tennessee Williams: Everyone Else is an Audience* (1993); and Lyle Leverich's *Tom: The Unknown Tennessee Williams* (1995). See "Tennesse Williams Scholarship at the Turn of the Century," 11. Besides biographers, critics who take this approach to Laura include R.B. Parker, C.W.E. Bigsby, Jacqueline O'Connor, Jayshree Singh (Kama), Janet V. Haedicke, Stephanie B. Hammer, and Ruth Foley.

Williams's mental illness, and Tom's guilt as Tennessee's own for abandoning his real sister. Reading the characters of *The Glass Menagerie* as cyphers for Tennessee "Tom" Williams, his sister Rose, and his mother Edwina, for example, means that analyses of Laura as an individual are subsumed under her meaning for Tom Wingfield and then Tom Williams. This occurs even more directly in the few psychobiographical studies that consider Laura as a symbol of Williams's own queer desire and psychologically tortured genius.[146] Thus, considering Laura as separate from the personal psychology of Tennessee Williams and his family is an open avenue of scholarship. However, these psychobiographical readings still grapple with Laura's mental and behavioral divergence, and her status as a queer character.

Some critics have made idiosyncratic genre readings of Laura, placing her in various literary, filmic, and/or artistic genres—such as Romanticism, bourgeois tragedy, women's pictures, or fairytales. Laura has been read as a Romantic, "fragile, almost unearthly ego brutalized by life in the industrial, overpopulated, depersonalized cities of the Western world;"[147] a twist on the 18th- and 19th-century bourgeois tragedy heroine who typically tries to leave her

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[146] Mark Lilly reads Laura's limp as a sign of gay identity and her lame foot as a phallic symbol, claiming that as a monstrous, unfit woman she symbolizes Williams's male queer desire. Stephanie B. Hammer agrees with Lilly's reading, asserting that "Laura represents an autobiographical performance, but not of Williams's sister. Laura is the hidden aspect of Williams himself: the hysterical, withdrawn, secretly desirous, feminine crippled artist. As such she offers a fascinating if displaced portrait of a queer genius that cannot express itself directly." See Lilly, *Lesbian and Gay Writing* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), 154; and Hammer, "'That Quiet Little Play': Bourgeois Tragedy, Female Impersonation, and a Portrait of the Artist in *The Glass Menagerie*," in *Tennessee Williams: A Casebook*, ed. Robert F. Gross (New York: Routledge, 2002), 45.

[147] Bert Cardullo,"The Blue Rose of St. Louis: Laura, Romanticism, and *The Glass Menagerie*." *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review* 1 (1998): 81.

family home in pursuit of romance;[148] a Cinderella figure who fails to transform into a princess;[149] or as a protagonist akin to those in the "woman's picture" who struggle to be independent and fit into society.[150] Above all, notice how these genre interpretations of Laura emphasize her untimely outsider status in the postwar U.S. Her physical and social difficulties are implicitly linked to her gender and sometimes sexual queerness. Indeed, some critics have labeled Laura as being "asexual,"[151] due to her perpetual "neediness" and/or fragile otherworldiness,[152] or as sexually "inconclusive."[153] Clearly, then, Laura does not easily fit into mainstream conceptions of middle-class heterosexual white women in postwar America.

Psychobiographical, genre, and disability scholars debate whether Laura's encounter with Jim ultimately affects her positively or negatively. Though some scholars see Jim as a Christ

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[148] Stephanie B. Hammer interprets Laura as the young heroine of a bourgeois tragedy, a "subspecies of melodrama and bourgeois realism" which emerged in 18th and proliferated in 19th-century Anglo-Europe. See "'That Quiet Little Play': Bourgeois Tragedy, Female Impersonation, and a Portrait of the Artist in *The Glass Menagerie*," in *Tennessee Williams: A Casebook*, ed. Robert F. Gross (New York: Routledge, 2002), 36; 41.

[149] Daniel E. Lees is interested in the ways in which Williams uses and overturns the Cinderella fairytale. Lees claims that Laura is Cinderella, Amanda is the fairy godmother, Jim O'Connor is the prince, and Tom might be considered another prince. See "*The Glass Menagerie*: A Black 'Cinderella.'" *Unisa English Studies* 11 (1973): 31.

[150] Barton R. Palmer and William Robert Bray, *Hollywood's Tennessee: The Williams Films and Postwar America (*Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009), 38-41. Janet V. Haedicke, "Menageries, Melting Pots, Movies: Tennessee on America," in *Interrogating America Through Theatre and Performance*, eds. William W. Demastes and Iris S. Fischer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 174.

[151] Ruth Foley, "Women as Victims in Tennessee Williams' First Three Major Plays" (Master's thesis, Liberty University, 2013), 17.

[152] Jeanne M. McGlinn, one of the few scholars to include Laura in her typology of Williams's Southern belles, contends that the Southern gentlewoman is a symbol of spirit rather than flesh. Likewise, Cardullo reads Laura and Jim's encounter as spiritual, "as opposed to animalistic or carnal lust." These interpretations, however, ignore Laura's status as an individual body and mind, subsuming her desire under Williams's, or disavowing it in the name of Victorian and Romantic idealism. See McGlinn, "Tennessee Williams' Women: Illusion and Reality, Sexuality and Love," in *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*, ed. Jac Tharpe (Jackson: University of Mississippi Press, 1977), 510; and Cardullo, 90.

[153] Kenneth Krauss, *Male Beauty: Postwar Masculinity in Theater, Film, and Physique Magazines* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2014), 36.

figure who sets Laura on a "return to normalcy,"[154] ubiquitous psychobiographical readings linking Laura to Rose Williams assume that the young Ms. Wingfield is fundamentally disturbed, delusional, and otherwise mentally ill—and therefore doomed.[155] Finding potential critical benefit to this unhappy ending, disability scholar Sara Hosey attends to Laura's "refusal/inability to perform according to accepted social scripts," which "allows us to discuss the ways in which the play defers audiences' desire for a resolution or a 'happy ending' that will resolve the 'problem' of disability in the play."[156] While Hosey and most other disability scholars treating

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[154] Irshad Ahmad Tabasum and Asim Karim, "The Redeemers in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie,*" *Kashmir Journal of Language Research* 16, no. 2 (2013): 5-6. See also Judith J. Thompson, *Tennessee Williams' Play: Memory Myth and Symbol* (New York: Peter Lang, 2002), 22.

[155] For example, Thomas L. King calls Laura a "severely disturbed woman," while her brother Tom has escaped mental illness because he has a creative outlet. Joseph K. Davis says that Laura "withdraws into the world of her glass animals, and so flees into a no-time of approaching mental collapse." Jacqueline O'Connor reminds us that it is unclear exactly what will happen to Laura after Tom leaves, "but the play provides enough clues to indicate that Laura's mental stability is as fragile as her glass figures, and that her inability to provide for herself makes her a likely candidate for an institution." McGlinn posits that all Williams's heroines between 1940 and 1950 refuse to accept reality and instead live under illusions. She writes that Laura is "prone to deadening withdrawal and introversion," and sees no hope for improvement. Contantine Stavrou argues that all of Williams's heroines are "obviously portraits of the same woman observed at different stages of her regressive neurosis," adding that Williams uses neurotic women in his plays to act as "a reflection of our disordered society and cosmos." He reads Laura as a "virtual Proustian hypochondriac." And, using one of the most common psychological buzzwords from the postwar era, Barbara Jo Taylor calls Laura "maladjusted." See King, "Irony and Distance in *The Glass Menagerie*," *Educational Theatre Journal,* xxv, no. 2 (1973): 87; Davis, "Landscapes of the Dislocated Mind in Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*," in *Tennessee Williams: A Tribute*, ed. Jac Tharpe (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1977), 194; O'Connor, *Dramatizing Dementia: Madness in the Plays of Tennessee Williams* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green University Press, 1997), 82-3; McGlinn, 511-13; Stavrou, "The Neurotic Heroine in Tennessee Williams," *Literature and Psychology* 5 (1955): 26; 28; 33; and Taylor,"Fragile and Flawed Female Characters in the Drama of Tennessee Williams," *Mount Olive Review* 6 (1992): 110.

[156] Sara Hosey, "Resisting the S(crip)t: Disability Studies Perspectives in the Undergraduate Classroom," *Teaching American Literature: A Journal of Theory and Practice* 6 (2013): 26.

the play refer to Laura's physical disability,[157] the subfield of *neurodiversity*—"a neologism meant to suggest the wide range of cognitive styles making meaningful contributions to civilization"—helpfully allows us to further think of Laura's mental, emotional, and behavioral divergences as sites of contention over what makes for supposedly normal bodies and minds.[158]

Just as some disability scholars see Laura's unwieldy body and mind as resistant to the demands of characters in the play and to the audience, several other studies explore Laura's self-consciousness and self-imaging as possible forms of resistance to public judgment and patriarchal norms. Eric P. Levy argues that the characters are all primarily concerned with maintaining certain self-images. Amanda and Jim use others as mirrors that reflect positive images of themselves, while Laura and Tom evade others to avoid being mere reflections and standing in negative judgment.[159] In this schema, Laura is invested with being "fragile" (a more positive trait) instead of weak (a more negative trait).[160] (Levy does not say this overtly, but

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[157] Reacting against scholars like John Strother Clayton who claim that Laura's "physical flaw" "[represents and accounts] for the flawed nature of her character," Hosey argues that the use of Laura's disability as symbolic of her "internal failings" is a common move that reifies "understandings of disabled individuals' experiences as only literary or significant when they are deployed in order to explore non-physical conditions and non-disabled characters' experiences"; 23; 26. See Clayton, "The Sister Figure in the Plays of Tennessee Williams," in *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Glass Menagerie,"* ed. R. B. Parker (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1983), 113; also see Lipkin and Fox,"The DisAbility Project: Toward an Aesthetic of Access," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 11 (2001): 119; Fox, "But Mother,--I'm Crippled!" in *Gendering Disability*, eds. Bonnie G. Smith and Beth Hutchinson (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 234; and Herman,"The Disabled Family Dynamic in Drama: *The Glass Menagerie*, *A Day in the Death of Joe Egg* and *Time for Ben*" (Masters Thesis, University of Kentucky, 2008), 16; 18.

[158] Clay Morton, "Not Like All the Other Horses: Neurodiversity and the Case of Rose Williams," *Tennessee Williams Annual Review* 13 (2012): 1. Morton argues that, like the misdiagnosed Rose Williams, Laura Wingfield is "clearly autistic;" 5. Morton's paper seeks to depathologize people with autism and, by extension, Laura. My project also seeks to depathologize her by (re)claiming her shyness, a common trait or set of behaviors that is neither a psychological nor a neurodevelopmental condition.

[159] Eric P. Levy,"Through the Soundproof Glass": The Prison of Self-Consciousness in *The Glass Menagerie,*" *Modern Drama* 36, no. 4 (1993): 529.

[160] Ibid., 531.

fragility is a positive trait for Victorian white women and a general sign of femininity.) He argues that Amanda simultaneously builds up and cuts down Laura in the mirror scene, in order to build herself up as both a mother and a formerly desirable woman.[161] Here, Laura's social withdrawal is interpreted as a protective act to avoid ridicule and shame.[162] Levy points to Laura's giving away of the broken, no longer "freakish" unicorn, and to her movement to the victrola, as signs that she ultimately retreats to her original self-image (and does not change) by the play's end.[163] In "The Cinematic Eye in *The Glass Menagerie*," Crandell applies feminist film theory to Williams's play to interpret Laura as both passive and active: "Laura passively lets Amanda dress and primp her, and she follows Amanda's instructions to look in the mirror—complying with

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[161] Ibid., 530.

[162] Ibid., 530.

[163] Ibid., 535. Meditations on Laura's self-imaging relate well to historical/materialist interpretations of her failures. Hammer comments on the disjunction between the idealized white femininity of the 19th century (which informed Amanda's upbringing) and the necessity for women to find work or other sources of money (men) in the Great Depression era of the play: "Laura's determination to remain in the domestic sphere is shown from the outset as problematic, at least within the context of the family in the play. […] Here mother wants her daughter to work and earn money—either as a wife or as a secretary—but this daughter actually wants to stay home. Thus, Laura is shoring up traditional middle class views of womanhood as the lady of the house that we saw as operative in [19th-century bourgeois drama]. But her mother won't have it. No one in this play can afford to be a 'lady;'" 41. This recalls, of course, Amanda Wingfield's reliance on black servant labor in her youth on a Southern plantation, which allowed young Amanda to remain in a state of feminine 'softness' and devote all her time to entertaining gentleman callers. As bell hooks reminds us, being a home girl has not historically been an option for women of color who have had to work outside their homes due to economic constraints. Lisa Siefker Long argues that, though the play is set in the 1930s, Williams uses the hardship of the era to comment on social problems in the post-World War II era. The characters in The Glass Menagerie symbolize wartime difficulty and the longing for peace and stability, with Laura read as "an individual ravaged by the destruction of war." Like Amanda, Laura lives in the past, symbolized by her obsession with the victrola and old records. Long remarks that Laura "does not know how to cope with the present economy or how to prepare for success as a postwar woman." See Williams, *The Glass Menagerie*, 442; hooks, *Feminist Theory: From Margin to Center* (1984; repr., New York: Routledge, 2015), 133-4; and Long, "Tennessee Williams in Cultural Context: *The Glass Menagerie* to *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (PhD dissertation, Vanderbuilt University, 1996) 34; 75.

Berger's assertion that "Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at."[164] On the other hand, says Crandell,

> Laura actively resists both the role that society prescribes for women as well as Amanda's insistence that she conform to it […] More often than not, Laura's resistance takes the form of a refusal. She refuses to believe that any gentleman will call for her. She refuses to attend Rubicam's Business College, spending her time instead at the art museum or at the zoo. She refuses to open the door for her brother and the gentleman caller when they arrive. When forced to do so, she quickly absents herself. As much as Amanda seeks to be the focus of attention, Laura actively avoids it. As much as possible, she refuses to be seen.[165]

Crandell goes on to identify moments in the living room scene with Laura and Jim where Laura eludes Jim's gaze.[166] He concludes, "As the only woman to resist the male gaze in *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura represents an alternative to accepting, as Amanda does, the conventional role of woman in a patriarchal society. […] Laura offers the possibility that the glass menagerie, her visible yet invisible retreat, provides a satisfaction equal to, if not greater than, the hope represented by the gentleman caller."**[167]** Laura can thus be seen as a subversive and self-determining character who refuses to be in heterosexual circulation.

Laura can also be seen as resistant to capitalist circulation, which is bound up with heterosexual circulation; she acts as a counterpoint to the dehumanizing effects of postwar consumer culture. In "The Escape That Failed," Michael Paller warns us not to sentimentalize *The Glass Menagerie*, arguing that emphasizing its supposed 'sweetness' ignores the characters' goal-driven desperation.

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[164] George W. Crandell, "The Cinematic Eye in Tennessee Williams's *The Glass Menagerie,*" *The Tennessee Williams Annual Review* 1 (1998): 8.

[165] Ibid., 9.

[166] Ibid.

[167] Ibid., 9-10.

> Laura seeks refuge in her own private world. To do this requires more will and resolve than Laura is usually given credit for. After all, she successfully thwarts each of her mother's plans for her—an education, a job, a husband. For all her occasional foolishness, Amanda is a resilient woman who knows exactly how the world treats those who are not strong enough to stand up to it. She is not easily thwarted. To form an accurate picture of Laura, we must understand how much of her mother's strength she has inherited.
>
> In her quiet way, Laura is quite as indomitable as Amanda. Laura may be fragile, but she is no weakling. She defies her mother as effectively as her brother does. Tom's battle of wills with Amanda is, except for the question of where he spends his nights, straightforward and open. Laura's is quieter and sly.[168]

In response to critics like David Krasner, who notes that Laura's "pathological shyness" is part of the "helplessness [that] makes her vulnerable to a capitalist society,"[169] Hosey remarks that

> we might challenge the assumption that, within the context of Williams' play, being physically or emotionally 'crippled' is necessarily a bad thing. In other words, Laura may be emotionally and physically ill-suited for successful participation in what Williams portrays as brutal and dehumanizing labor and marriage markets; looked at in this way, Laura's limp and her preoccupations become not only markers of individuality, but potentially radical rejections of a capitalist-patriarchy.[170]

Likewise, Granger Babcock notes that Amanda and Jim represent conventional society, and that they express normative values through consumption, and the surveillance and policing of Tom

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[168] Michael Paller, "The Escape That Failed: Tennessee and Rose Williams," in *Magical Muse: Millennial Essays on Tennessee Williams*, ed. Ralph F. Voss (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama, 2002) 74. Though Marc Robinson's analysis centers on Amanda, he also makes a comment that alludes to Laura's determination to self-protect: "It never sounds completely convincing when commentators speak of how Williams's characters keep reaching out for connections with others; for just as desperately do they turn in on themselves, pull back from others, determined to possess themselves in case they can't have anyone else;" *The Other American Drama*, 37. Hammer likewise detects willfulness in Laura's "painful shyness," which marks her "as both unattractive to potential husbands and unhireable by potential employers. There is even a sense that this old-fashioned shyness is deviant in a way that Amanda regards, perhaps not wrongly, as defiance—as a neurasthenic refusal of the work-ethic, which […] can be a significant means of individual resistance to capitalism;" "'That Quiet Little Play,'"40.

[169] David Krasner, *A History of Modern Drama, Volume 1* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), 276. He continues, "For all her airs, Amanda is thoroughly aware of the reality facing women like Laura: shy, vulnerable, too sensitive to work, and crushed by a disability that stigmatizes. In the dog-eat-dog world of American capitalism, Laura is an appendage, a fifth wheel, her lame gait unable to fit into the 'go-go' whirl of American entrepreneurialism;" 277.

[170] Hosey, "Resisting the S(crip)t," 8.

and Laura.[171] Babcock further contrasts Jim's active desire for upward mobility with Laura's inefficiencies:

> As a 'type,' [Jim] is necessary for the maintenance of the economy, but he does not necessarily have to be successful; he can simply desire success so long as he works and consumes, as long as he is not a 'crank' or a 'cripple,' as long as he avoids the sin of inefficiency.
>
> Laura Wingfield, on the other hand, *is* crippled, and because of this, she is 'terribly shy.' So shy, in fact that Amanda is unable to assimilate her into the dominant modes of the apparatus.[172]

Here, Babcock identifies Laura's main problem as "her inability to standardize herself"[173] in the context of the postwar "managerial revolution" wherein standardized production around a corporate center "reduced social relations to 'vital statistics' so that men (and women) became interchangeable; and the symbolic apparatus deployed to construct consumers constituted them as generic so that they became indistinguishable from one another."[174] Materialist critics who see Laura as resistant thus position her not as sadly abnormal, but as a thoughtful and quietly principled individual.

Put together, the above critics help us see Laura as an untimely character whose shyness and physical difference are kinks in an economy that values efficiency. This recalls Michel Foucault's *History of Madness* (1961), wherein madness in eighteenth-century Europe was first determined by a person's perceived inability to work.[175] As a woman, Laura's inefficiencies are not limited only to her inability/refusal to work outside the home, but also in her refusal to

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[171] Granger Babcock. "*The Glass Menagerie* and the Transformation of the Subject," *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 3 (1999): 21.

[172] Ibid., 24.

[173] Ibid., 25.

[174] Ibid., 20.

[175] Foucault, *History of Madness*, 71.

eagerly participate in the production of *biopower*—that is, to marry a man and have children. Hence, her status as a willingly single woman who avoids business pursuits makes her queer in the normative postwar U.S. worldview.

Inferiority Complexes and Self-Improvement

Drawing on Babcock's assertion that Jim O'Connor and Amanda Wingfield "police the identifications and desires" of Laura, I would like to expand discussions of *The Glass Menagerie* to include a more thorough look at the role of self-improvement and Adlerian psychology at work in the play. Jim appears as a popular psychologist who blends the concepts of Alfred Adler, Dale Carnegie, and, as we shall see, a slew of other self-improvement gurus of the early twentieth century. His diagnosis of Laura and his advice for her improvement are linked to the emotional labor involved in attaining likability, popularity, and becoming an 'outgoing' person.

Though most talk of American psychoanalysis centers on the influence of Sigmund Freud, prior to WWII, Alfred Adler was more popular in the U.S. than was Freud.[176] In 1960, Benjamin Wolman noted that so-called "neo-Freudians" of the postwar era were much indebted to Adler, as they incorporated his concepts of "sociability, self-assertion, security, self, and creativeness" into their work.[177] Consequently, American psychoanalysis has a particularly pro-social bent.

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[176] For instance, his 1928 *Understanding Human Nature* sold over 100,000 copies in its first six months, compared to Freud's best-selling *Interpretation of Dreams* (English translation, 1913), which sold roughly 17,000 copies over the span of a decade. See Jon D. Carlson and Matt Englar-Carlson, "Adlerian Therapy," in *Contemporary Psychotherapies for a Diverse World*, eds. Jon Frew and Michael D. Spiegler (New York: Routledge, 2012), 89.

[177] Benjamin B. Wolman, *Contemporary Theories and Systems in Psychology* (New York: Harper, 1960), 298.

The most recognizably Adlerian concept to circulate in popular psychology is that of the "inferiority complex," "an exaggerated, intensified, unresolved feeling of inferiority."[178] Adler claims that all children, being less powerful than adults, experience feelings of inferiority: "Sooner or later every child becomes conscious of his inability to cope single-handed with the challenges of existence. This feeling of inferiority is the driving force, the starting point from which every childish striving originates."[179] Psychologically unhealthy children may either submit to the perception of themselves as weak and ineffectual, or compensate by developing feelings of "superiority" and "dominance" that mask inner weakness.[180] Those with compensatory "superiority complexes" are more visible because their power-hungry actions are directed at others,[181] but those suffering from a deeply ingrained sense of inferiority often rebel by withdrawing into themselves, not speaking to others, becoming completely isolated.[182] For Adler, both those who are withdrawn and those who are openly aggressive are anti-social. The key to healthy human development is an empathetic "social feeling":

> When we have gained a true knowledge of human nature, built upon a recognition of the value of the difficulties which may occur in the proper development of the soul, it can never be an instrument of harm so long as we have ourselves thoroughly developed our social feeling. We can but help our fellow-men with it. We must not blame the bearer of a physical defect, nor a disagreeable character trait, for his indignation. He is not responsible for it. […] The blame belongs to us because we too have taken part in the inadequate precautions against the social misery which has produced it.[183]

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[178] Alfred Adler, *Understanding Human Nature* (1928; repr., New York: Routledge, 2013), 70.

[179] Ibid., 70.

[180] Ibid., 70.

[181] Ibid., 76.

[182] Ibid., 114.

[183] Ibid., 77.

Adler's 'middle way' approach to behavior which encourages people to be neither too timid nor too aggressive is echoed in many other influential self-improvement manuals of the early twentieth century. Dale Carnegie's best-selling *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1937) urges, "Say to yourself over and over: 'My popularity, my happiness and sense of worth depend to no small extent upon my skill in dealing with people."[184] Because of this, Carnegie recommends that one should never "criticize, condemn and complain," but should instead be "understanding and forgiving."[185] Listing "Ways to Make People Like You," Carnegie encourages us to smile, be a good listener, be genuinely interested in other people, talk in terms of the other person's interests, and make the other person feel important.[186] Social engagement is paramount for success; Carnegie supports this idea by quoting Adler: "It is the individual who is not interested in his fellow men who has the greatest difficulties in life and provides the greatest injury to others. It is from among such individuals that all human failures spring." Carnegie likes this idea so much, he repeats it in italics.[187] In Helen Valentine and Alice Thompson's best-selling *Better than Beauty: A Guide to Charm* (1938), the authors advise a similar affective tempering, writing, "You must recognize that what you want, others want, too. Give others esteem, prestige, warmth, friendliness, and you will be living with charming people. […] The vital essence of childish unself-consciousness […] generates so lively an interest in other people

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[184] Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936; repr., London: Cornerstone, 2005), 21.

[185] Ibid., 33.

[186] Ibid., 110-11.

[187] Ibid., 66.

that it overcomes narrow preoccupations with self."[188] Valentine and Thompson thus encourage the reader to be other-oriented and self-abnegating.

The ideas of Adler, Carnegie, and Valentine and Thompson survive well past the 1920s and '30s, reappearing in such popular self-improvement manuals as Bailard and Strang's *Ways to Improve Your Personality* (1951). They urge their reader to "make an attractive appearance," and "[b]e so interested in other people that you forget yourself."[189] Bailard and Strang note that people often don't like shy people because they are perceived as being "selfish" and "snob[s]."[190] Under a section titled "Concentrate on the Other Person," they tell us,

> It is your self-consciousness that is hard on you. The only way to get over that is to focus your attention on something or someone other than yourself. Don't worry a bit about what others may think if you are not sparkling at times. Do you feel critical of them when they aren't? A great number of people like a quiet and retiring person. They do not think of such a person as lacking in personality.[191]

The difference here between the aloof 'snobbery' of a shy person, and a quiet person who concentrates on others, is emotional labor and perceived openness. It is the willingness to be another's engaged audience.[192] But the endgame makes this affective labor worthwhile, as

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[188] Helen Valentine and Alice Thompson, *Better Than Beauty: A Guide to Charm* (1938; repr., New York: Chronicle Books, 2002), 114.

[189] Virginia Bailard and Ruth Strang, *Ways to Improve Your Personality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1951), 147.

[190] Ibid., 21-22.

[191] Ibid., 149.

[192] That we should need manuals instructing us on how to engage with other human beings is perhaps a sign of modern alienation as discussed by Nicholas Ridout, who cites urbanites' "blasé attitude" (Georg Simmel's term) as a necessary defense: "Each individual in the modern metropolis must, in order to sustain a sense of self against the seething mass of other individuals with whom fleeting contact is made, develop a pose of indifference, or even 'latent antipathy' to all the others." Theatre audiences and actors are expected to drop this defensive affect, but the fear of being vulnerable prevents the ease of positive affective transfer. (We will return to this idea in the chapter on *Show Boat*.) See *Stage Fright, Animals and Other Theatrical Problems*, 43; 69.

Bailard and Strang suggest: "If we develop desirable personality traits, learn to get along with people, make and keep friends, adjust well to life's situations—then we should be able to attain real happiness."[193] Oh, joy!

The other-oriented, empathetic aspects of Adler's work has often been overlooked, and his emphasis on striving and overcoming physical adversity and feelings of inferiority have led critics like Viktor Frankl to call his approach a "will to power."[194] I do not suggest this about his work, but self-improvement manuals that rely on popular understandings of Adlerian principles often use them in the name of capitalist enterprise and efficiency.[195] Carnegie and Bailard and Strang stress the monetary value of relating to others well.[196] In his early best-selling manual *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* (1913), Carnegie writes of successful public speaking, claiming that "few things will compare to standing before an audience and making men think your thoughts after you. It will give you a sense of strength, a feeling of power. It will appeal to your pride of personal accomplishment. It will set you off from and raise you above your fellow-men. There is magic in it and a never-to-be-forgotten thrill."[197] Seen in tandem with acquiring a "feeling of power," this interest in others seems to be less empathetic and more the necessary emotional labor of manipulation, with the goal of accumulating wealth.

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[193] Bailard and Strang, *Ways to Improve Your Personality*, 214.

[194] Viktor E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Boston: Beacon, 1963), 154.

[195] For a discussion of the rise and politics of affective labor in business and service sectors, see Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*.

[196] Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, 18; Bailard and Strang, *Ways to Improve Your Personality*, 44.

[197] Dale Carnegie, *Public Speaking and Influencing Men in Business* (1913; repr., New York: Association, 1931), 13.

Creating likability involves doing helpful activities which one does not necessarily enjoy, which "helps to show yourself and others that you can take it. You will also have shown that you can depend on yourself to fit into a situation and not be just an 'extra wheel.'"[198] In this sense, being other-oriented is less about empathy and more about contributing to the efficiency of a social organization. Efficiency is further conjured in Baillard and Strang's description of a young woman who overcame a difficult social situation. Carol didn't have enough money to buy a new dress to wear to the formal dance which Dick had asked her to, but she earned money after selling hand-made stationery to her peers. She kept her date and became a modern heroine, if the moxie suggested by Bailard and Strang's prose is any indication:

> Carol was ready for her date with Dick the following week. And what a date it was! She had earned her good time and she had it.
>
> Carol was a dynamo. She didn't believe in sitting around moaning about her difficulties. She believed in going into action. She used her head. She called on her resources—originality, ability to sew, and talent in art—and put them to work for her. Result? She solved her problem and had a wonderful time.[199]

As a 'dynamo,' Carol is mechanized and wastes no time or energy on nervousness or fretting.[200] This highlights that part of the 'selfishness' of shy people is their inefficient use of energy and emotion. The inclusion of this example also demonstrates the tension in Carnegie, Baillard and Strang, and others between fostering empathy and actively getting ahead in a capitalist, mechanized society.

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[198] Ibid., 46.

[199] Bailard and Strang, *Ways to Improve Your Personality*, 8-9.

[200] The emphasis on efficiency and positive affect in personality development is connected to the efficiency model of Fordist economics and its corporate structures, wherein each worker is both cooperative and specialized to eliminate wasted time and energy, and to increase output. This model is retained in the shift from industrial to white collar service sectors. See Mills, *White Collar*, 65-7.

Thus, if we think about Amanda's and Jim's disciplining of Laura—as they urge her to be "charming" and to overcome her "inferiority complex"—we can see that they are encouraging an outgoingness that supports hegemonic equations of efficiency and material striving with happiness. In this sense, Laura can be read as what Sara Ahmed calls the "killjoy," a "bad" subject who fails or refuses to make others happy, partly by failing to attain or display normative signs of happiness.[201] These signs include: positive affect which obscures sadness and doubt as a way of 'shielding' others from these negative affects; unproblematic social interactions and relations (e.g., with family and in courtship); and eagerness in school and/or workplace settings, which are supposed to lead to the inherent bliss of increased wealth. Part of Laura's 'problem' is that she interrupts the easy transfer of happiness between herself and others, spreading the "contagion" of her uneasiness and infecting others with the joyless aspects of shyness.[202]

Laura on the Screen

The film adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie* (1950, dir. Irving Rapper) makes more explicit Laura's transformation into a more sociable, feminine character. It also makes her shyness, nervousness, and deception more glaring. For example, we see Laura's humiliation in the typing class, as her teacher yells at her for being late in front of other students. During a typing test, the ticking of the time clock grows louder and the camera closes in on Laura. When she asks to start over, the teacher berates her once more, and Laura flees. Later, she tells her family that she left because she was sick. Later, when Jim asks her to dance, the film makes a fitting spatial metaphor: after dancing in the living room, Jim and Laura physically leave the

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[201] Sara Ahmed, *The Promise of Happiness* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 20-1.

[202] Ibid., 213; 237, n. 26.

apartment and go across the street to the Paradise Dance Hall (Tom thinks it's a temporary lie of happiness in both the film and play), then Jim kisses Laura on the stairs inside the venue. As he slowly reveals that he is not single, they are back on the stairs leading up to the apartment. She is a home girl once more. However, in the film, Laura is last seen eagerly waiting for Richard, whom she says is her (next) gentleman caller. We are meant to believe that Laura's encounter with Jim has been life-altering for the better, that she has come out of her shell, and will enter a heterosexual coupling. We are meant to believe that both Tom and Laura escape the confines of their mother's dingy apartment. But if this is so, why is Tom still worried about Laura? Is the scene of her waiting for Richard merely Tom's guilt-relieving fantasy?

How did contemporary critics understand Laura and the film? A damning review of the film comes from Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times*, who pins the "farcically exaggerated" acting of Gertrude Lawrence (Amanda) as the film's downfall. "On the other hand," he writes, "modest Jane Wyman is beautifully sensitive in the role of the crippled and timid daughter who finds escape in her menagerie of glass."[203] The staff at *Variety* praised the acting of the main characters, but gave special recognition to Wyman in a cheeky summation of the film: "Most remarkable is the subtle restraint employed to register Laura's awakening to the fact that life isn't a bust just because you've got a bum gam."[204] And Richard Griffith of *The Saturday Review* praises the lead actors, and gives special attention to Jane Wyman.

> Outward versatility is no part of Jane Wyman's stock in trade. She just relies on her natural physical endowment. It is expressive to a degree more often encountered in the silent era than in that of sound, and not since Garbo has there been anything like the

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[203] Bosley Crowther, "Movie Review - The Glass Menagerie," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 29, 1950.

[204] Staff, "Review: 'The Glass Menagerie," *Variety*. December 31, 1949.

> naked eloquence of her face, with its amazing play of thought and emotions. Young and ambitious, Miss Wyman responds to variations in her roles and tries to relate them to the background, environment, the individual circumstance. But she has so far understood that she can only do so by projecting from the inside, outward. That is about the most any actor can hope to do before the camera, which instantly distinguishes between calculation and spontaneity.[205]

Griffith's ebullient account of Wyman's acting, when contrasted with theatre critics' lack of interest in the portrayal of Laura, highlights the risk and difficulty of performing shyness on stage, where no cameras catch subtle emoting. Interestingly, Griffith's praise for Wyman's performance rests on her ability to project from the inside out, something which Laura is encouraged to do for Jim, and is willing to do for her next gentleman caller.

While these film critics appreciated the happy ending and the nuanced portrayal of Laura, Tennessee Williams was appalled with the film, which he cited as the worst film adaptation of any of his works.[206] It seems that the ending was changed due to producer and studio pressures to uphold the Hollywood dogma that happy "boy gets girl" endings are profitable.[207] Thus, the film adaptation's emotional "uplift" supports Jim's and Amanda's exhortations to Laura in the stage play.[208] Classical Hollywood, like the self-improvement industry, reinforces the link between positive affect and economic success. And further, the studio's reliance on the financial success of generic formulations like happy romantic endings reinforces the link between efficiency and economic success. In 'improving' the box-office appeal of the screen version *The Glass Menagerie*, Laura's queerly inefficient resistance to positive affective display and other-directed

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[205] Richard Griffith, "A Look at Promise," *The Saturday Review*, Oct. 14, 1950, 32.

[206] Gene D. Phillips, *The Films of Tennessee Williams* (London: Associated University Presses, 1980), 36.

[207] Phillips, 59-60. Palmer and Bray, 26.

[208] Palmer and Bray, 41; 52; 57.

behaviors is corrected, and she becomes a hopeful young women poised on the verge of heterosexual success. Thus, friendly containment appears both in the self-improvement advice from Amanda and Jim, and in the box-office improvement efforts of the film studio, as Laura Wingfield becomes a cooperative female citizen.

The guilty conscience underlying warnings against the power of shyness's inefficiencies to disrupt one's happy future at work and at home intensifies with William Inge's play and film adaptation of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. In the next chapter, we turn to this work which specifically positions shyness as selfishness—a selfishness that not only ruins relationships but turns deadly.

CHAPTER 2: SELFISHNESS IN *THE DARK AT THE TOP OF THE STAIRS*

Reenie Flood

Set in rural Oklahoma during an oil boom in the 1920s, William Inge's *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (1957)[209] explores the effects of marital strife between Rubin Flood, a traveling salesman who has lost his job, and Cora Flood, who wants Rubin to get a job in town so he can be home with the family more often. Amidst Rubin and Cora's arguments, their teenage daughter Reenie struggles with shyness, and their young son Sonny is bullied by neighborhood boys. Reenie is set up on a blind date to a dance, which makes her nervous. Her date Sammy's eagerness to talk puts her at ease, but later she admits that her own self-doubt caused her to leave his side at the dance. With the surprising news of Sammy's suicide after the dance, Cora suggests that Reenie's shyness was selfish; that is, if Reenie had been more thoughtful of Sammy's needs, he would not have killed himself. Reenie disavows her selfishness and suddenly desires to spend more time with her little brother Sonny. This chapter reads Inge's play in terms of its construction of shyness as a kind of selfishness that threatens interpersonal relationships and, ultimately, social cohesion as its effects can be deadly. Seen in tandem with popular postwar tracts on motherhood and dating, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* positions girls and women as the special guardians of others' (especially boys' and men's) health and wellbeing, which specifically aligns emotional labor with femininity.

Reenie's Shy Girl Traits

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[209] Salem, *A Guide to Critical Reviews*, 255. The play opened on Broadway on December 5, 1957, and ran for 468 performances.

Establishing Reenie Flood's physical difference from other women in the play, Inge describes her as "*a plain girl with no conscious desire of being anything else.*"[210] But she is deeply self-conscious about her lack of partners at dances, and afraid of being considered a "wallflower."[211] To counteract Reenie's physical and self-esteem deficiencies, Cora buys her an extravagant party dress to wear on a blind date. This is a dubious solution, as Reenie's anxiety persists: "[T]he dress cost so much, and what good is it going to do me? I never have a good time at those dances, anyway. Nobody ever dances with me."[212]

Reenie is preoccupied with the solitary pastimes of playing the piano and studying at the library. Cora scolds her daughter for not playing music in public to share her talents with others,[213] then expresses her worries about Reenie to Rubin: "[O]f course Reenie doesn't want to go to the party. She never wants to go any place. All she wants to do is lock herself up in the parlor and practice at the piano, or go to the library and hide her nose in a book. After all, she's going to want to get married one of these days, isn't she? And where's she going to look for a husband? In the public library?"[214] For Cora, Reenie's solitary activities are selfish and an obstacle to heterosexual coupling.

As a plain, shy, and studious character, Reenie is juxtaposed with the more feminine characters Flirt (described as "a flapper"),[215] Cora, and her aunt Lottie. Although the play is set

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[210] William Inge, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1988), 16.

[211] Ibid., 68.

[212] Ibid., 21.

[213] Ibid., 22.

[214] Ibid., 24.

[215] Ibid., 16.

in the 1920s, Cora also represents normative post-World War II femininity: she is highly involved in her children's lives, and forgiving of her husband, who compliments her as "clean, and dainty. Give a man a feeling of decency . . . and order . . . and respect."[216] Lottie, though childless, is married and garrulous. She also confirms Cora's anxieties about Reenie's unsociability, saying (so that Reenie can hear), "It's awful funny when a young girl doesn't want to go to a party."[217] And Flirt, well, her name tells us that she is quite popular with boys.

Reenie's social anxiety surfaces as extreme nervousness as the party approaches—she is ill and scared at the thought of going on a blind date. She vomits upstairs just as her date arrives.[218] Later, Reenie reports that she stopped dancing with Sammy and left the dance floor because she didn't want him to think that no one else wanted to dance with her.[219] As a result, he thought she didn't like him. Here, Reenie's self-consciousness prohibits her from feeling well or enjoying herself with a date. Anxiety interrupts the performance of courtship rituals.

As with other shy girls in Cold War theatre and film, the young Ms. Flood has a failed romantic encounter with Sammy Goldenbaum, a student at a nearby military school. When Sammy and Reenie meet, he admits that he gets nervous about going to parties, which puts Reenie at ease. It is not clear if Sammy feels this way because he is secretly shy, or if it's due to the anti-Semitism he has experienced throughout his young life—or both—but he says that he has to "reason with [himself] to keep from feeling that the whole world is against [him]."[220] His

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[216] Ibid., 74.

[217] Ibid., 35.

[218] Ibid., 40.

[219] Ibid., 68.

[220] Ibid., 48.

open and empathetic display wins over Cora, Lottie, and Sonny. Still, he and Reenie fail to have a successful date after she runs away and leaves Sammy alone on the dance floor.

Clearly, Sammy's confessed vulnerability also disarms Reenie, as does his physical contact; she later admits that she let him kiss her.[221] "Well, Sammy and I felt kind of embarrassed, with no one else to talk to, and so he took my hand. Oh, he was very nice about it, Mom. And then he put his arm around me and said . . . "May I kiss you, Reenie?" And I was so surprised, I said "yes" before I even knew *what* I was saying."[222] And Reenie, who claims that she doesn't want to *need* anyone, admits that she likes Sammy "very much."[223] Sammy's kiss was a kind of overcoming of social awkwardness that made Reenie momentarily hopeful.

Reenie is more femininely dressed up for the party, and her transformation into a woman is seemingly completed by her later assertion that she will think more about other people's feelings and not act shy or withdrawn anymore.[224] She 'proves' this by spending time with her little brother and overcoming their sibling rivalry.[225] This comes after Flirt reveals that, once Reenie left Sammy with another girl at the country club dance, the girl's mother kicked him out for being Jewish. Later that night, Sammy committed suicide.[226] Cora tellingly blames Sammy's demise on Reenie's selfish shyness:

> A nice young man like that, bright and pleasant, handsome as a prince, caught out there in this sandy soil without a friend to his name and no one to turn to when some thoughtless

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[221] Ibid., 62.

[222] Ibid.

[223] Ibid., 62-3.

[224] Ibid., 69-70.

[225] Ibid., 76-7.

[226] Ibid., 66-7.

> fool attacks him and he takes it to heart. (*Reenie sobs uncontrollably.*) Tears aren't going to do any good now, Reenie. Now you listen to me. I've heard all I intend to listen to about being shy and sensitive and afraid of people. I can't respect those feelings anymore. They're nothing but selfishness. […] It's a fine thing when we have so little confidence in ourselves, we can't stop to think of the other person.[227]

Cora chides Reenie's shyness as destructive self-concern—a lapse in social feeling which has failed to protect Sammy, and failed to ease ethnic tensions on a larger scale. Thus, a woman's duty is configured not just as caring for her family and immediate community, but as upholding national democratic principles.

Strangely, Reenie seems to rebound from Sammy's death quite easily. She almost immediately has plans to study at the library before deciding to go to the movies with Sonny. She also says that her father's return has made her feel better.[228] It's as if Inge doesn't quite know what to do with Reenie.

Critical Reception of Reenie

As usual, Reenie's shy character seems to immediately marginalize her in reviews of the time. Many New York theatre critics saw Rubin Flood and his tensions with Cora as the predominant issue of the play;[229] consequently, some critics blamed this marital strife for the children's maladjustment.[230] Several critics gave special mention to the performances of both

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[227] Ibid., 69.

[228] Ibid., 75.

[229] Frank Aston, "Drama Probes Family Fear," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 158. Robert Coleman, "'The Dark' Is Inge's Best Play," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 159. Richard Watts, Jr. "Another Striking Drama by Inge," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 158.

[230] Watts, Jr., "Another Striking Drama by Inge," 158. John Chapman, "'Dark at the Top of the Stairs' Moving and Beautifully Acted," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 160.

Reenie and Flirt in tandem, suggesting that the characters read as a necessary pair of opposites.[231] John Chapman clearly prefers Flirt, however, saying that Reenie is "rather drippy."[232] Other critics like John McClain and Walter Kerr indicate their preference for the performances of dynamic characters such as Lottie and Rubin.[233] Overall, the main characters of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* are characterized as "afraid,"[234] "tortured introverts,"[235] who suffer "the lonely agony of people who live together without really knowing one another."[236] This formulation of the play's central issue seems to both account for Reenie's shyness and exclude any deeper meditation on her character or the performance thereof.

Most studies on the drama follow this trend by focusing on Cora, Rubin, Sonny, Sammy, and/or Lottie, all of whom are clearly struggling with issues of gender, sexuality, and family dynamics. Reenie is often glossed over or treated to a much lesser extent, possibly because she is easily labelled as merely "shy." It is also easy to see the connections between Reenie and Laura at the top of the stairs; Michael Greenwald makes explicit psychobiographical comparisons between Inge and Williams, and between the Flood women and the Wingfield women. Just as

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[231] Brooks Atkinson, "The Theatre: Illuminations by Inge," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 159. Coleman, "'The Dark' Is Inge's Best Play," 159. Chapman, "'Dark at the Top of the Stairs' Moving and Beautifully Acted," 160.

[232] Chapman, "'Dark at the Top of the Stairs' Moving and Beautifully Acted," 160.

[233] John McClain, "Inge's Best Play—With Kazan's Aid," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 160. Walter Kerr, "'The Dark at the Top of the Stairs,'" in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1957*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1957), 161.

[234] Aston, "Drama Probes Family Fear," 158.

[235] Watts, Jr., "Another Striking Drama by Inge," 158.

[236] Atkinson, "The Theatre: Illuminations by Inge," 159.

Laura is a cipher for Rose Williams, Reenie stands in for Inge's shy sister Helene.[237] Bruce McConachie also makes a psychobiographical explanation of *Dark*, noting that Inge himself was shy and ambivalent about "social performance."[238] Again, such interpretations, while interesting, fail to consider Reenie as an individual apart from Inge or his sister.

For many critics who psychoanalyze the Floods as a family of their own, Cora and, to a lesser extent, Rubin are blamed for Reenie's shyness and nervous behaviors. McConachie draws on the work of Dr. Spock to interpret *Dark*; Spock's parenting manual stressed that parents were responsible for their children's mental, physical, and—above all—social development.[239] Jeff Johnson adds, while Cora "coddles" Sonny, she "antagonizes" Reenie about her shyness. Moreover, Reenie has anxiety over her parents' constant fighting, and takes her frustrations out on her brother.[240] Following Betty Friedan's descriptions of postwar mothering, Kendra Unruh notes that motherhood became almost all-encompassing because women were housebound, and appliances saved time for them to devote to their children. As a result, women developed unhealthy attachments to their children.[241] Unruh sees Cora's boredom as a housewife as contributing to the zealousness of her parenting, which has contributed to Reenie's neurotic

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[237] Michael Greenwald, "'[Our] Little Company of the Odd and Lonely': Tennessee Williams's 'Personality' in the Plays of William Inge," in *The Influence of Tennessee Williams: Essays on Fifteen American Playwrights*, ed. Philip C. Kolin (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2008), 17; 20.

[238] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 161.

[239] Ibid., 130-31.

[240] Jeff Johnson, *William Inge and the Subversion of Gender: Rewriting Stereotypes in the Plays, Novels, and Screenplays* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2005), 84. Similarly, Robert Combs contends that the adult Floods are inadequate parents because they cannot constructively express their own marital problems: "They are as lost as their children, perhaps more so." See Robert Combs, "Oh, Those Kids!: Vanishing Childhood Innocence in the Adults of William Inge," *American Drama* 13, no. 2 (2004): 68.

[241] Kendra Unruh, "Bored to Death: William Inge's Women and *The Feminine Mystique*" (Master's thesis, Wichita State University, 2006), 25.

behaviors. By contrast, Johnson sees Reenie's "pathological shyness" as stemming from an Electra complex. R. Baird Shuman notes Reenie's singular affection toward her father,[242] and Johnson expounds on this point:

> Reenie, who achingly wants to please her father, defers to his authority at her own expense, and already exhibits traces of spinsterhood though she is still in her midteens. She cannot form relationships with other men, and as a result retreats from engagements, moping around the house and complaining that she is happy only when she is 'alone, practicing at the piano or studying in the library.'[243]

Because Reenie has not found a healthy resolution to her Electra complex, she remains "maladjusted and withdrawn."[244] Johnson argues that, because Inge relies on a Freudian "family romance" revolving around Oedipal and Electra complexes, the characters must act according to the neat rules of Freud's formulation rather than the vagaries of life. Thus, Reenie's behavior *must* improve when Rubin returns, whether or not that resolution makes sense.[245] Such psychoanalytic readings of Reenie's social withdrawal as maladjustment perpetuate popular postwar constructions of shyness as pathology.

In a more contemporary psychological study of Reenie, Dorothy Chansky reads her as being stuck in a cycle of self-abuse in the form of disordered eating. She writes, "Reenie reacts to family (or at least maternal) pressures by 'vomiting all over the bathroom' after being excused from helping with the supper dishes so she can get ready for the big party."[246] Chansky says that

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[242] R. Baird Shuman, *William Inge* (Boston: Twayne, 1989), 89.

[243] Johnson, *William Inge and the Subversion of Gender*, 79.

[244] Ibid., 78.

[245] Ibid., 77.

[246] Dorothy Chansky, "The Violence at the Top of the Stairs: Domestic Dystopia in Inge's Heartland," in *Violence in American Drama: Essays on Its Staging, Meanings and Effects*, eds. Alfonso Ceballos Munoz, Ramon Espejo Romero, and Bernardo Munoz Martinez (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2011), 120.

Reenie might be bulimic, but adds, "Reenie, of whom her mother says in the final act 'You don't eat enough to keep a bird alive,' may also be an anorexic in the making."[247] Susan Bordo writes that anorexic women often think of their resistance to food as a way of protecting and controlling themselves, even as their eating disorder ravages their bodies and renders them powerless in socially meaningful ways.[248] If we follow the implications of Chansky's suggestion that Reenie is bulimic and/or anorexic, Reenie could be read as pursuing methods of self-protection that are also self-destructive and inefficient: her shyness is seen as a roadblock to successful heterosexual attachments, and her thin body is seen as weak and immature—another roadblock to physical sexual development, reproduction, and the prospect of work. However, I hesitate to make further comparisons between eating disorders and shyness, as it is clear that Reenie's shyness is not seriously debilitating, despite her mother's disapproval of it as a mode of being. Whereas Bordo discusses eating disorders as real medical conditions which allow for interesting feminist and social critique, I do not wish to pathologize shyness.

Some critics see Reenie as implicated, along with Cora, in the gendered dynamics of the play's 'strange' ending. Reacting to Robert Brustein's inflammatory essay which asserts that Inge's "she-dramas" feature "men-taming-women" who emasculate the male characters,[249] Janet

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[247] Ibid.

[248] Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 147-9.

[249] Robert Brustein, "The Men-taming Women of William Inge," *Harpers Magazine*, November 1958, 56. Brustein mocks Inge's "domesticated" men, including Sammy's need for Reenie and, in turn, Reenie's need for Sammy, writing "[A]lmost everyone in his plays is characterized by their willingness or unwillingness to sacrifice their individual selves to love. The plain self-pitying daughter in Dark astonishingly turns out to be the indirect cause of the Jewish cadet's suicide because, feeling sorry for herself, she wasn't around to help him when he needed comfort ('The only time anyone wanted me, or needed me in my entire life. And I wasn't there')."

Juhnke asserts that the women in Inge's dramas are "more tamed than taming,"[250] and Linda Wagner-Martin adds that the women in *Dark* are primarily driven by the actions of the men.[251] Hence, Reenie gains self-realization through her interactions with and loss of Sammy, and is almost magically consoled by her father and brother. She reacts rather than acts. Other critics portray Reenie as (partly) culpable for Sammy's death. Brustein[252] and Ralph F. Voss[253] assert that Reenie fails to give Sammy the emotional support he craves. Although Combs blames Cora for Reenie's problems, he too sees Reenie as a cause of Sammy's death.[254] And even as Wagner-Martin claims that Inge's women are driven by the men, she writes that Sammy's suicide "occurs at least partly because of the selfishness of the social code Cora and her daughter Reenie try to represent."[255] In other words, these critics support Cora's attack on Reenie's selfishness, a vice which she significantly conflates with shyness.

Dr. Spock and Dating

Our understanding of Reenie is augmented, I believe, by exploring the role of emotional labor in parenting and courtship manuals from the postwar era. No parenting manual is more influential than the mega-seller, still in print, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care*

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[250] Janet Juhnke, "Inge's Women: Robert Brustein and the Feminine Mystique," *Kansas Quarterly* 18, no. 4 (1986): 104.

[251] Linda Wagner-Martin, "Structures of Violence: Gender Roles in Inge's Plays," in *William Inge: Essays and Reminiscences on the Plays and the Man*, eds. Jackson R. Bryer and Mary C. Hartig (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Company, 2014), 123.

[252] Brustein, "The Men-taming Women of William Inge," 56.

[253] Ralph F. Voss, "Robert Brustein's 'Men-Taming Women of William Inge': A Re-Examination," in *William Inge: Essays and Reminiscences on the Plays and the Man*, eds. Jackson R. Bryer and Mary C. Hartig (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Compay, 2014), 113.

[254] Combs, "Oh, Those Kids!," 77.

[255] Wagner-Martin, "Structures of Violence," 120-1.

by Dr. Benjamin Spock (1945). This book carefully guides parents—particularly mothers—through the baby and child's lifespan, offering tips for raising a physically and mentally healthy child. Dr. Spock emphasizes the importance of parenting for how a person turns out as an adult, saying,

> How happily a person gets along as an adult in his job, in his family and social life, depends a great deal on how he got along with other children when he was young. If parents give a child high standards and high ideals at home, these will form part of his character and show up in the long run […]. But if parents are unhappy about the neighborhood they live in and the companions their child has, give him a feeling that he is different from the others, discourage him from making friends, the child may grow up unable to mix with any group or to make a happy life. Then his high standards won't be of any use to the world or to himself.[256]

Spock not only stresses the importance of "helping a child to be sociable and popular,"[257] but instructs the mother to neither be too involved nor too uninvolved in her child's life, while drawing her attention to every little change that a baby and child go through. Such pressure to turn out a happy, well-adjusted person, with so many physical and emotional cues to attend to, almost guarantees that the mother (if not both parents) will err on being 'too involved' with the child. Though Rubin chides Cora for being too attached to and permissive toward their children,[258] Cora must devote much emotional and physical labor to Sonny and Reenie in order to be a good mother by postwar parenting standards. This is important to remember when considering Reenie because not only do we see much scholarly criticism of her mother's behaviors, but Reenie is also expected to one day produce and (obsessively) care for a family of her own. This explains why Reenie's "selfish" shyness is so worrying for Cora. The young

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[256] Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1946), 319.

[257] Ibid., 318.

[258] Inge, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, 10.

woman's self-conscious worries and social withdrawal do not allow her to be attentive to the needs of others. And the pressure to be other-oriented is intrinsically linked with the pressures of becoming a successful woman in a heterosexual matrix.[259]

As in self-improvement manuals on charm, friends, business, and personality, emotional labor shows up in texts on dating—but with an important difference for women. Dr. Evelyn Millis Duvall makes a grand announcement in *The Art of Dating* (1958) that "Dating is one of the most exciting periods of your life. Suddenly, there are new horizons before you, friendships flower, your personality blooms, and your sense of being a desirable person worthy of affection becomes real."[260] But teenagers who did not find dating exciting or easy turned to a plethora of dating manuals in the postwar era, many of which spelled out a tricky path for young women. As Patricia McDaniel points out, middle-class white teenage girls were encouraged to take initiative around boys—who were said to be secretly shy—but to also don a "mask of shyness" when required, in order not to intimidate said boys (48).[261] As Robert Loeb's *She-Manners* (1959) explains, "You know—men suffer from an odd sense of inferiority. They're often terrified by smart women. This doesn't mean you have to act the idiot role or some cute little "Oh, aren't you smart!" role. But it does mean that you can let him feel that he is superior."[262] Suggesting that Adler's theory of inferiority—which applies to *all* people—is limited to men, Loeb urges women to *affect* their own inferiority even if they feel it isn't so, *to spare men humiliation*.

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[259] See, for example, Susan Koprince's discussion of Inge's childless female characters, who are all "consistently portrayed as lonely, sexually frustrated, and even emotionally unbalanced." In "Childless Women in the Plays of William Inge," *The Midwest Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2000): 254.

[260] Evelyn Millis Duvall, *The Art of Dating* (New York: Association Press, 1958), 9.

[261] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 48.

[262] Robert Loeb, *She-Manners* (New York: Association Press, 1959), 123.

Emotional labor peculiar to women is also put forth as a dating strategy in *The New Etiquette* (1947): "Once during an evening is enough for a woman to state a definite and unqualified opinion—and even then it should be something constructive or a defense of someone or something."[263] Here ideal femininity is equated with positive affect, as a display of the interpersonal skills which have historically been attributed to women and not to men.[264] Dating, therefore, is a training ground for young women to hone the hidden emotional labor they will exhibit as wives and mothers. Through the lens of postwar dating manuals, then, we better understand why Cora construes Reenie's abandonment of Sammy at the dance as "selfish." As a boy, he must show a tough exterior, but girls should know how fragile boys truly are inside—and soothe boys' insecurities before their own.

In this fashion, *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* constructs shyness as a problem in women and a comic peculiarity in men. Just as characters fret and fuss over Reenie's shyness, encouraging her to become more other-directed and less selfish, no one harasses Uncle Morris or Flirt's date Punky for their comedically-presented social awkwardness. In both cases, the quiet man's more loquacious female partner 'makes up for' his relative silence by doing the brunt of social interaction. This results in women who act as spokespeople, and men who often hang back, in group situations. In this configuration, Reenie's shyness is problematic because she is unable to hold her own, let alone carry the social burden for a man. So, shyness prevents young women from meeting and holding the interest of men, and from being good wives and mothers, whose eager connection with other people in domestic and communal spheres form the

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[263] Margery Wilson, *The New Etiquette* (New York: F. A. Stokes & Co., 1947), 206.

[264] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 170.

emotional bonds of micro and macro societies. Thus, the home girl's shyness may not only be blamed for her date's destruction, but also for the deterioration of social cohesion.

Reenie on the Screen

Unlike the Williams's work on the adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie*, Inge was not involved in adapting *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* to film. Director Delbert Mann chose screenwriting team Irving Ravetch and Harriet Frank, Jr., to make the stage play more cinematic, and consequently the film differs from the play in many respects.[265] For example, Reenie and Sammy have a 'cute-meet' before their blind date, when she runs into the road and causes him to crash his car into a tree. She's full of apologies and offers to get him her handkerchief for his bloody lip. They meander into the center of town and sit in the soda shop, as Sammy benignly tells Reenie about how 'disturbed' he is, how often he gets kicked out of different prep schools, and how alienated he is from his movie-star mother. He walks her back home and tells her that he likes her for her empathetic qualities: "You're a very nice girl. You know how I can tell? You get tears in your eyes when somebody tells you a sad story." Reenie is enchanted but forgets to ask his name and later, when her blind date shows up for the party, she's surprised to see that it's Sammy. The film follows them to the birthday party at the country club where they dance, and, in true shy girl fashion, Reenie is a self-professed "awkward" dancer who steps on Sammy and continually mutters expressions of embarrassment. Sammy encourages Reenie's dancing and urges her not to be so self-conscious. But we don't see Reenie getting as nervous before the date as she becomes in the play, so her shyness is not as obvious.

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[265] Alan Gevinson, ed., *Within Our Gates: Ethnicity in American Feature Films, 1911-1960* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997), 256-7.

Contemporary critics reveal an interest in *Dark*'s communication style. Arthur Knight of *The Saturday Review* regards the film as truly original,[266] and praises the performances of all the actors.[267] He writes that Inge "has contrived a series of situations that probe a faltering marriage, the emotional awakening of an adolescent girl, and the roots of anti-Catholicism and anti-Semitism in provincial minds. It is fear and insecurity that lie in wait at the top of the stairs."[268] But Knight adds, "Paradoxically, in a film filled with rare insights into rarely discussed problems, the very eloquence of Inge's characters—their ability to put their emotions into trenchant language—makes them seem surer and more articulate than they could possibly ever be. It makes them, in a word, seem like stage people."[269] This stands in contrast to Brooks Atkinson's review of the stage play, which emphasizes the play's silences and the characters' communication difficulties.[270] So, although Reenie tells Sammy that she is "no good at all at conversation," and indeed lets him and her parents do most of the talking in their scenes together, she is lumped together with other characters who express themselves quite easily. Of course, Reenie has more scenes and speaks a great deal more in the film. In terms of sheer volume of expression, then, the film presents her as more eloquent than she is on the stage.

Reenie's shyness is also minimized in the film through her display of empathetic listening to Sammy and, to a lesser extent, to Rubin, both of whom talk at length about their own desires and worries. After Reenie frets about being a bad dancer and bad conversationalist, Sammy

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[266] Arthur Knight, "The Origins of Originality," *The Saturday Review*, September 17, 1960, 44.

[267] Ibid., 45.

[268] Ibid., 44.

[269] Ibid., 44-5.

[270] Brooks Atkinson, "The Theatre: Illuminations by Inge," 159.

comforts her with, “If you don’t wanna talk, don’t talk, ‘cause I can do enough of that for both of us.” He tells her that the key to overcoming self-consciousness is to tell herself that other “[p]eople just plain don’t care,” which is not only self-improvement advice but also indicative of Sammy’s sense of isolation and his tense relationship with a distant mother who always puts her career before him. Desiring to belong to a family and community, Sammy’s sexual desire for Reenie expands to include the other Floods, as he fantasizes:

> People who like each other kiss each other. You know, it’s not against the law, and it could even happen to you. Suppose I’d known you for a whole year. Friday nights, I’d be by to take you to see Rin Tin Tin at the movies. And on Saturday I’d be over bright and early to help Sonny cut the lawn. And on Sundays, I’d be over to help wash the car. And by then your mother would be having me to dinner every Sunday night. And your Aunt Lottie would say, “Is that boy always hanging around the house?” And your mother would tell her, “Of course. He’s just like one of the family.” By then, I’d know you well enough to do this.

Sammy kisses her, physically attaching himself to Reenie and her family, and moulding her into a receptive vessel of his nuclear family fantasy. After this moment, she does not want to leave his side, even after Sammy has been banned from the “restricted” country club for his Jewishness and declares that they cannot be friends because she is a “nice gentile girl,” and his plan was just a “fairytale.” Reenie protests but Sammy insists on taking her home. Before he leaves she tells him, “I wish I could help you.” In these moments, Reenie is presented as being other-oriented and concerned about the grown men in her life. Her supportive listening abilities in the film suggest that she can overcome the self-consciousness and self-concern which override most of her scenes in the play. Sammy offers her emotional support, too, but he is also presented as needing it from her much more than she needs it from him, which exemplifies the interactions put forth in postwar dating manuals.

In keeping with psychology at the time, the film emphasizes Reenie's arrested development. In her first scene, her mother pins her pigtails up and tells her she's too old for them. On her way out the door, Reenie runs half-way up the stairs (a symbol of sexuality in the play, as only the adults are seen climbing the stairs to their unseen bedroom), takes out the pin to restore her pigtails, and runs back down the stairs—thereby preserving her youthful innocence. Later, Reenie tells her father that it makes her feel good and "grown up" to hear about his worries. He tells her that a man wants a woman with an "open," "generous heart," and urges her to tell Sammy how she feels about him. She follows her father's advice, overcoming the problem of self-disclosure emphasized by the film. After Sammy's death, Reenie cries in her mother's arms and resolves never to be open to anyone ever again. Cora says that Reenie will get over it with time. And that is the last we see of Reenie.

Cora later says that her daughter has gone to Aunt Lottie's house for a few days. So the film ends, not with the family togetherness of the play, but with Sonny and a new friend going to the movies while Cora and Rubin steal away for sex. In this version, Reenie seems to develop a 'mature' sense of interconnectedness with Sammy and Rubin, but does her final disavowal of "reach[ing] out to someone" and subsequent disappearance from the narrative mean that she has reverted to some form of psychosexual immaturity?

Overall, the film adaptation makes Reenie temporarily more open to the project of heterosexual coupledom than she is in the play, as the shy girl quickly comes to accept both Sammy's idea of a serious long-term courtship and her father's advice to be more open-hearted toward men. But like the stage version which has her rebound from Sammy's death quite easily, Reenie is dealt with in a pat way: simply removed from the film altogether. Her sudden

turnarounds in both versions suggest that shyness is a kind of childish self-obsession that can be handily overcome with decisive prosocial actions (e.g., going to the movies with Sonny, or confessing her love to Sammy). Even Reenie's would-be reversion to shyness in the film—her final pronouncement that she will never be open to others again—is brushed off by Cora, a trustworthy adult voice in the film, who dismisses this negative, unsocial thought as the mere nonsense of inexperience. The shy girl's banishment from the film's ending precludes her misery and self-pity, of course, from ruining our viewing pleasure which can now focus on the cheeky bliss of Cora and Rubin's sexual reunion and the happy sight of Sonny playing with a friend outside. As with dating and marriage, when a shy girl cannot provide positive emotional support for a Hollywood narrative, she must be nixed (with the hopeful assumption that she is somewhere being fixed). Hence, in both the stage and film versions of *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*, Reenie is subject to friendly containment in the form of either embracing family togetherness or the narrative assurance that she will outgrow her selfish shyness and join in heterosexual circulation.

If shyness here is selfishness that can destroy others, Ruth and Augustus Goetz's play and film adaptation of *The Heiress* posit shyness as personal vulnerability, an inadvertent threat to the self, which allows for the possibility of infiltration. In this next case, the shy heroine is vulnerable to being taken advantage of emotionally and financially. But the topic of infiltration, of course, has wider sociopolitical meanings in Cold War theatre and film productions, wherein vulnerability to Communism could mean the end of the white middle- to upper-class American way of life.

CHAPTER 3: VULNERABILITY IN *THE HEIRESS*

Catherine Sloper

Inspired by Henry James's novel *Washington Square* (1880), Ruth and Augustus Goetz's play *The Heiress* (1947)[271] follows the wealthy widower Dr. Sloper and his shy daughter Catherine, as Sloper tries to improve his daughter's talents and social skills. He enlists the help of his widowed sister, Lavinia Penniman, to urge Catherine to participate more fully at social gatherings. At one party, she meets Morris Townsend, a dashing young man who has squandered his inheritance and has no job prospects. When Townsend lavishes attention on Catherine, Dr. Sloper fears that Morris is after her money. Despite the doctor's numerous warnings to his daughter about her suitor's questionable intentions, Catherine refuses to stop seeing Morris. Dr. Sloper threatens to disinherit her if she marries the man, but the lovers agree to secretly elope. Only after Morris misses the appointment to meet Catherine for their elopement, effectively abandoning her, does she realize that her father was right. Still crushed by her father's suggestion that she is too socially unsophisticated and ugly to attract a man with good intentions, solitary Catherine withdraws her affections from Dr. Sloper and vengefully denies Morris when he returns in penance.

This chapter follows *The Heiress*'s construction of shyness as a personal vulnerability which leaves one open to the manipulations of others. Read in tandem with Cold War anxieties about communist infiltration of weak Americans, the play and film posit Catherine Sloper's lack of social intelligence as a dangerous weakness, but also see her later 'hardness' and resolve to remain single as the tragic loss of a woman's potential heterosexual attachments. Hence, healthy

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[271] Salem, *A Guide to Critical Reviews*, 190. *The Heiress* opened on Broadway on September 29, 1947, and ran for 410 performances.

American femininity is portrayed as the willingness and ability to attract, marry, and care for a financially solvent man, while successfully repelling any man who would take advantage of emotionally insecure women and/or rely on women for money. Here, the Sloper fortune stands in for capitalism under threat by outside forces.

Catherine's Shy Girl Traits

Catherine's physical difference is her plainness, alluded to several times by her father[272] and by her aunt Lavinia.[273] For instance, when Catherine dons a red dress similar to the one her mother used to wear, Dr. Sloper remarks, "But, Catherine, your mother was dark—*she* dominated the color."[274] The last scene of the play, which takes place two years after the main action, includes the directions: "*In her large, placid way [Catherine] is growing into a dignified and almost attractive woman.*"[275] Even with her improved character, she never quite makes it to pretty. Though she is independent, she remains reclusive, so she cannot be thought of as attractive in any normative sense.

As a solitary woman, Catherine spends most of her time embroidering at home. Her father cites her needlework as her one talent,[276] but he also points to it as a distraction from social success, cautioning, "Don't let it turn into a life work."[277]

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[272] Ruth and Augustus Goetz, *The Heiress* (New York: Dramatists Play Service, 1975), 19; 25; 57.

[273] Ibid., 65.

[274] Ibid., 11.

[275] Ibid., 80.

[276] Ibid., 57.

[277] Ibid., 11.

Catherine is juxtaposed with the more feminine characters of her widowed aunt Lavinia, who dresses coquettishly for her age and situation;[278] her cousin Marian, who is engaged to an upstanding business man; and her father's memory of Catherine's mother, to whom Catherine is negatively compared throughout the play. Because Catherine is Marian's age, it makes sense that Marian is the model for ideal (young) femininity of the 1850s. The Goetzes describe her as "*a pretty, vivacious girl*,"[279] and when Catherine frets about not knowing what to say at a party, Lavinia reassures her with Marian's model behavior: "if you will observe your cousin Marian this evening, you will see that what she says is never of any great consequence. But that doesn't keep her from talking, dear. […S]houldn't you like to be an engaged girl, too?"[280] In everything she does, Catherine fails to live up to the memory of her mother's overall cleverness, social grace, and beauty.[281] It seems that her mother was another Marian—pretty and vivacious. Catherine's eagerness to please her widower father seems in part to cause her social anxiety and awkwardness. For even as she speaks at ease when she is alone with her aunt, Catherine cannot tell the simplest anecdotes to her father.[282]

We see Catherine's social anxiety in her growing nervousness as a small party approaches. At the bidding of Dr. Sloper, aunt Lavinia asks her not to hide in the pantry as she has done at previous parties.[283] Catherine admits that, despite having practiced conversation

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[278] Ibid., 7.

[279] Ibid., 13.

[280] Ibid., 10.

[281] Ibid., 19.

[282] Ibid., 10; 12.

[283] Ibid., 10.

skills in her room, she gets tongue-tied during gatherings.[284] During the party, Catherine nervously twists a handkerchief, is stiffly polite, and misses social cues until her father prods her to do or say certain things.[285] At moments when she feels "trapped," Catherine retreats to her embroidery.[286]

Like other postwar shy girls in U.S. theatre and film, Catherine has a failed romantic encounter with Morris Townsend, her gentleman caller. Morris starts to win Catherine over when he admits that, like her, he sometimes struggles to find the right words:

> CATHERINE. I am not very good at this kind of conversation.
> MORRIS. Neither am I. I am afraid that is our trouble—I am not a glib man, Miss Sloper.
> CATHERINE. I think you talk very well.
> MORRIS. Never when I need it most, never when I am with you. Oh, when I'm with Mrs. Penniman, or in my room at home, I can think of the most delightful things to say—-Can you understand that?
> CATHERINE. Yes, I can.[287]

Morris's confession mirrors what Lavinia has just told him about Catherine: "She is not shy with me, Mr. Townsend. She confides in me freely. In the privacy of her room she is very expressive."[288] So it seems that this is a tactic Morris employs to gain Catherine's trust. This makes Catherine vulnerable to the heartbreak of Morris's later romantic desertion.

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[284] Ibid., 10.

[285] Ibid., 14; 16.

[286] Ibid., 15.

[287] Ibid., 24.

[288] Ibid., 21.

When Catherine incredulously protests Morris's newly proclaimed love for her, he interrupts her with a kiss.[289] Marking her body thus, he then asks her to marry him. Catherine has stopped struggling: "(*Looks at him fully, for the first time*.) Yes."[290]

Catherine's transformation from a shy girl into a woman begins with her dressing up for the party like her mother, traveling to Europe with Dr. Sloper as her mother had, and defying his wishes for her to leave Morris. Her change is complete when she rejects Morris's wish to reconcile. Two years after Morris has left, Catherine has grown more "dignified" and "attractive"—physical traits that have presumably sprung along with her independence.[291]

Critical Reception of Catherine

New York theatre critics were interestingly split about the merits of the Goetzes' stage adaptation of *Washington Square*, as well as about the performance of Wendy Hiller as Catherine Sloper, which was seen as either competently restrained or too subtle. Robert Garland praised the adaptation's "Victorian intensity," proclaiming that "Henry James himself—that pre-Freudian!—would, I'm sure, give it his blessing."[292] Louis Kronenberger, however, disliked the disjunction between the novel's vision of Catherine and the play's. James's Catherine is "too small and passive a figure for tragedy; but not for pity, not for irony. […] But the play cannot risk being so soft-spoken; it must raise its voice; and when it does, it seems to come from an alien throat."[293]

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[289] Ibid., 28.

[290] Ibid., 29.

[291] Ibid., 80.

[292] Robert Garland,"Flawless Cast Offers Superb Period Play," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 339.

[293] Louis Kronenberger, "No Longer a Work of Art, But an Interesting Drama," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 338.

Along with Ward Morehouse, Robert Coleman, William Hawkins, and Robert Garland, Richard Watts, Jr., is enamored of Wendy Hiller's "stunning" performance: "she manages a difficult part without sentimentality or any of the other conventions of such a characterization, and makes it honestly moving and completely real."[294] But Brooks Atkinson, Howard Barnes, and Kronenberger panned Hiller's work as "reduced to windy talking and tatting."[295] Atkinson's stinging condemnation asserted that Hiller "made [Catherine] a rather painfully abnormal person in the early half of the drama, and her composure toward the end of it is not exhilarating."[296] Critics arrayed against the stage adaptation typically show a clear preference for more dynamic characters such as Lavinia.

While most scholarly analysis of *The Heiress* refers to the Goetzes' and William Wyler's film adaptation of the play, there are readings of the play which correspond to the Freudian psychological and gender typing common to much analysis of postwar plays. In his study on *Illusion and Disillusionment: Core Issues in Psychotherapy*, for example, Teitelbaum diagnoses Catherine as being depressed from disillusionment—and of having a revenge fantasy, to boot.[297]

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[294] Richard Watts, Jr., "The Season's First Hit Finally Arrives," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 336.

[295] Howard Barnes, "Old Lace, but Tattered," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 336.

[296] Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 338. Similarly, William Hawkins writes, "The pivotal figure of 'The Heiress' is a girl who frequently had her day during war. Graceless, shy and plain, she might have been a Wac or Wave, and away from competition on an island or a desert become the flamingly popular heroine of many men." Hawkins both repels and creates desire here, at once gesturing to Catherine's lack of sex or emotional appeal, and appealing to the nostalgia of wartime romances. However, like Laura Wingfield, Catherine is an untimely figure who does not properly belong in a competitive postwar milieu. See Hawkins, "'The Heiress' a Bitter Play of Frustrated Love," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1947*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1947), 337.

[297] Stanley H. Teitelbaum, *Illusion and Disillusionment: Core Issues in Psychotherapy* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007), 183-4.

He also notes that much of Catherine's difficulties arise from her sense of parental abandonment and alienation; that is, her motherlessness and over-critical father.[298] While enacting revenge on Morris has "softened the blow of her disillusionment," Catherine is "settle[d]" into a "cynical old maid."[299] This aligns with scholarship trends of reading *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs* in terms of the complexes parents cause in their children.

Tapping into another postwar anxiety for women, Gerald Bordman argues that Catherine is a probable spinster.[300] Recalling Brooks Atkinson's evisceration of the play, and Teitelbaum's "cynical old maid," this reading commonly tames any enthusiasm over Catherine's growing strength of character. To the popular postwar mind, shyness cannot be aligned with any positive traits, and trumps any woman's independence.

Infiltration: Men, Maids, and Emotional Labor

The Heiress exposes a simultaneous postwar demand for and suspicion of social performance—all of which hinges on social relations with outsiders. McConachie explains that, within containment culture, "the business class pictured the nuclear family as a fortress protecting family members from the evils of urban blight, teenage crime, and racial Others."[301] Like the national rhetoric that sought to keep Communist infiltrators off U.S. and its allies' soil, domestic rhetoric sought to protect the family as a self-contained unit by fostering "togetherness"—a home policy of cooperation and quality time spent enjoying family

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[298] Ibid., 183.

[299] Ibid., 183-4.

[300] Gerald Bordman, *American Theatre: A Chronicle of Comedy and Drama, 1930-1969* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 268.

[301] McConachie, *American Theater in the Culture of the Cold War*, 126.

activities.[302] In this light, McConachie notes that one common trope of domestic dramas and musicals of the 1940s and '50s is the appearance of "an exotic outsider threatening family integrity."[303]

In *The Heiress*, an infiltration metaphor creates anxiety about the future of the Sloper home. The Goetzes describe Morris Townsend as "*a handsome, lively man in his late twenties.*"[304] So, he seems innocent enough. But Dr. Sloper's suspicions start to grow as he watches Morris fawn over Catherine, and when he learns that the young man has squandered his inheritance and has no career prospects.[305] Suspecting that Morris has calculated a seduction as a means to Catherine's large inheritance, Dr. Sloper passive-aggressively observes: "I know nothing of you but what I see; but I see that you are extremely intelligent."[306] Despite facing resistance from Catherine's father, Morris's continued positive affect keeps his intentions ambiguous. Even after he has abandoned Catherine when she asks him to elope after forfeiting her inheritance, Morris may possibly be read in an altruistic light. Aunt Penniman attempts to placate the despairing young woman by suggesting that "Morris would not want to be the cause of your losing your natural inheritance. He could not see you impoverished."[307] And Catherine wants to believe her, crying/demanding, "He must love me!"[308] When Catherine still believes that Morris loves her three days after her abandonment, she fancies that he fell ill and could not

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[302] Ibid., 130.

[303] Ibid., 139.

[304] Goetz, *The Heiress*, 13.

[305] Ibid., 27.

[306] Ibid.

[307] Ibid., 65.

[308] Ibid., 66.

send word. At this point, even romantic Aunt Penniman is exasperated: "I can't bear to see you torturing yourself."[309] Until Catherine allows the full weight of her disillusionment with Morris, with her father, and even with her aunt, to set in, she is a pitiable victim of a seductive infiltrator's brainwashing and deception. That Morris's infiltration is identified by Dr. Sloper so soon, hints at the gendered aspects of emotional management. While a white middle-class woman of 1850 or 1950 is expected to exchange positive emotional work for the material resources of a man,[310] the suggestion of a man exchanging emotional labor for a woman's material wealth is taboo. In his constant celebration of his dead wife's wonderful qualities—beauty, gaiety, conversational cleverness, and grace—Dr. Sloper extols the exchange of a woman's body and affective behaviors for a home secured with a man's money. That Morris should be handsome, joyful, bright, and articulate does not mean that he is worthy of the same material gains under the pretense of love and marriage. We must remember, too, that Catherine's affective withdrawal from her father, Morris, Lavinia, and Maria at the play's end is possible, in part, because she has the financial resources to support a life of her own choosing.

Catherine's final withdrawal in *The Heiress* also highlights that the emotional and physical labor of servant Others in nineteenth century middle- to upper-class households generates suspicion as a kind of infiltration from within the home. The first sign of Catherine's emotional withdrawal in *The Heiress* is her recognition that Maria the Irish maid has "affected" her emotion. When Dr. Sloper announces to Maria and Catherine that he will not recover from his illness, Maria, we are told, says "*(With emotion.*) Perhaps you will get well . . .," and bows

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[309] Ibid., 69.

[310] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 163; 167.

her head.[311] By contrast, Catherine neither speaks nor expresses emotion. As Maria leaves, Dr. Sloper addresses Catherine alone:

> DR. SLOPER. You have great emotional discipline, Catherine.
> CATHERINE. No, Father.
> DR. SLOPER. Oh, I admire it. You seem less disturbed by what I said than Maria. She was on the verge of tears. I don't like that.
> CATHERINE. She was affected.
> DR. SLOPER. Yes . . . but not brave. *You* are brave, Catherine.[312]

While Dr. Sloper interprets Catherine's lack of emotion as positive Victorian restraint rather than contempt, Maria's expressiveness is seen as a professional screen. On the other hand, Maria acts as a counterpoint to Catherine, offering up the daughterly show of shock and sorrow one might have expected of Catherine. Later, when Maria compliments Catherine's gown before asking if she and the cook may be excused to go for a walk, Catherine does not thank her for her kind words, but responds, "Maria—you are as free in this house as I. When you want a small favor, you need not blandish me with compliments."[313] Though Maria protests that she was sincere, Catherine will hear no more of it: "I know how I look."[314] Thus Catherine has been disillusioned of the affective laboring all around her: her father's restraint, Morris's fawning, Aunt Penniman's encouragement, and *any* show of emotion from Maria. Miss Sloper effectively ends the maid's involvement in her romantic life when she orders Maria to "bolt" the door upon which Morris bangs.[315] However, Catherine's quest for affectless interactions overlooks the fact that Maria is not as "free" in the house as is Miss Sloper. As a servant, Maria is expected to demonstrate

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[311] Goetz, *The Heiress*, 75.

[312] Ibid., 76.

[313] Ibid., 80.

[314] Ibid.

[315] Ibid., 90.

deference and loyalty—whether she wants to or not. These unstated conditions of the servant's emotional labor were one of the ways in which monied female Yankees elevated themselves over ethnic others like Irish-born women, who lived in their houses but did not enjoy the privileges of familial emotional intimacy.[316] By not accepting Maria as emotionally sincere, then, Catherine treats her like a necessary domestic infiltrator. This reveals and taps into anxieties about the (un)trustworthiness of paid emotional labor: affective tempering is necessary for the service worker to prove her merit, but because her exhibited feelings are ultimately exchanged for money they may always be suspected as false and motivated by greed.[317]

Catherine on the Screen

The film adaptation of *The Heiress* (1949) shares one distinct set piece with both films of *The Glass Menagerie* and *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*: a dance scene. Rather than an intimate dinner party, Catherine, Dr. Sloper, and Lavinia go to a lavish engagement party for Marian which includes a dance. In this added scene, Lavinia asks a young man to dance with Catherine. He does so hesitantly, soon taking Catherine to a secluded spot and telling her that he will return with drinks. After patiently waiting for the young man's return, Catherine is whisked back into view by Lavinia—where she sees the man dancing with another partner. Soon, Morris Townsend appears and asks Catherine to dance. Upon her acceptance, he waits for her to enter his name on her dance card. She strains to hide the empty card from him, but he affably shows her his empty card to put her at ease. They dance awkwardly, with Morris playfully remarking that he will not kick Catherine if she stops kicking him. Morris guides her, saying, "Don't look at

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[316] John C. Waller, *Health and Wellness in 19th-Century America* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 142.

[317] See Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 189-90, for her discussion of how a cynical awareness of affective labor leads to the desire for sincerity and spontaneous feeling.

your feet." "Where shall I look?" she asks. Says he, "At me." Catherine smiles, and Morris counts out the beats, bounding her around the crowded dance floor. When they take a break, Morris offers to get drinks, which Catherine takes as a sign that he will not return. But he does. And Morris kisses Catherine's hand as she leaves the party, assuring her that he will call on her at home. As in the film adaptations of the other home girl plays, the gentleman caller uses dance to display empathy, gain trust, and maintain bodily contact that marks the home girl with his attention and desire. Here, the failed dance with the first young man, followed by Morris's genial and energetic performance, suggests that, though Catherine has not succeeded in coupling with other men, things will work with Morris.

Unlike reviews of other shy girls, reviews of *The Heiress* have little choice but to contemplate the meaning of this withdrawn central character. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* wrote that Wyler "has given this somewhat austere drama an absorbing intimacy and a warming illusion of nearness that it did not have on the stage. He has brought the full-bodied people very closely and vividly to view, while maintaining the clarity and sharpness of their personalities, their emotions and their styles."[318] Crowther sees the film story as "an impassioned and arresting clash of immediate minds and a locking of adult emotions that we can expressly comprehend."[319] As for Catherine, he writes that

> the soft and pliant nature that Miss de Havilland gives to the shy and colorless daughter is much less shatterable by shock, and her ecstasies and her frustrations are much more open than they appeared on the stage, where Wendy Hiller performed her with significant restraint. Thus her emotional reactions are more fluent and evident, which has forced Mr.

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[318] Bosley Crowther, "Movie Review - The Heiress," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 7, 1949.

[319] Ibid.

> Wyler to abandon her poignant breakdown at the shock of being deceived. On the whole, however, her portrayal of the poor girl has dignity and strength.[320]

Like the glowing reviews for Jane Wyman in the film adaptation of *The Glass Menagerie*, it seems that Crowther responds to the intimacy afforded by the camera, which conjures the subtleties required of shy or introverted performances much better than they read onstage.

In line with the postwar trend for blaming parents for their children's problems, Priscilla Walton sees Catherine's state as a motherless child as the source of all her misery:

> Filmed and viewed in a postwar period that saw women as unwilling to return to their primary domestic duties as mothers and housewives after the return of American soldiers, the feature underscores the dangers that ensue when mothers act in absentia. […] Catherine, because of her lack of motherly guidance, follows her own desires to the detriment of herself and her family.[321]

In this sense the film acts as a cautionary tale about the supposed loneliness of resisting a nuclear family. By this logic, even Dr. Sloper might be blamed for not finding his daughter a maternal replacement.

Some current scholars interpret Catherine's development as empowerment. Against critics who see the heroine's transformation in a negative light, Raw suggests that "Wyler's film takes advantage of de Havilland's dominant on-screen presence to draw a much more positive conclusion, as Catherine matures into a poised, attractive woman who appears to have no need of male company."[322] Analyzing Catherine's final ascent up the grand staircase of the Sloper home, Mary Ann Doane points out that this shot refuses normal Hollywood figurations of women on

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[320] Ibid.

[321] Priscilla Walton, "The Janus Faces of James: Gender, Transnationality, and James's Cinematic Adaptations," in *Questioning the Master: Gender and Sexuality in Henry James's Writings*, ed. Peggy McCormack (London: Associated University Presses, 2000), 43.

[322] Laurence Raw, *Adapting Henry James to the Screen: Gender, Fiction, and Film* (Oxford: Scarecrow, 2006), 40.

stairs: "Catherine climbs the stairs, site of the woman's specularization in the classical cinema, but she is held by no man's gaze."[323] Unlike Phyllis Dietrichson in *Double Indemnity* (1944, dir. Billy Wilder), for example, who is presented as a shiny sexual object atop her stairs, or Ziegfeld girls dolloped by the dozens upon never-ending staircases to nowhere, Catherine proudly walks up the stairs with no one watching (but us). Neil Sinyard also reads Catherine at the end of the film as "a feminist in embryo" for having defied the "men who have bullied and dominated her, imposing on her feelings of inferiority and subservience."[324]

However, the majority of critics maintain that Catherine changes for the worst. Swaab speculates that Catherine changes "for better and worse" (perhaps an ironic twist on the marriage vow), but never enumerates the 'better' changes, instead focusing on her status as a spinster and/or a vindictive and cunning *femme fatale*.[325] Rivkin agrees that Catherine takes on a *femme fatale* status, saying that the film builds sympathy for Dr. Sloper as his daughter's "vindictive 'masculine power'" grows.[326] Chandler asserts that Catherine's "obsession" with her father's and Morris's betrayals has made her overly "suspicious" and guarded, and so she foolishly cuts herself off from all new experiences.[327] David Greven expands on these readings in his analysis

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[323] Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 112.

[324] Neil Sinyard, *A Wonderful Heart: The Films of William Wyler* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 2013), 130.

[325] Peter Swaab, "The End of Embroidery: from *Washington Square* to *The Heiress,*" in *Henry James on Stage and Screen*, ed. John R. Bradley (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 63.

[326] Julie Rivkin,"'Prospects of Entertainment': Film Adaptations of *Washington Square,*" in *Henry James Goes to the Movies*, ed. Susan M. Griffin (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 149.

[327] Karen Michelle Chandler, "'Her Ancient Faculty of Silence': Catherine Sloper's Ways of Being in James's *Washington Square* and Two Film Adaptations," in *Henry James Goes to the Movies*, ed. Susan M. Griffin (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2002), 183.

of the connections between women's films of the 1930s and '40s,[328] film noir, and later horror films, wherein he argues that Catherine is an exemplary "Fury," a figure of female vengeance which blends elements of film noir's *femme fatale* and women's film heroines.[329] Like the *femme fatale*, the Fury "allegorizes the dark potentialities of femininity in genre film."[330] But unlike the *femme fatale*, and more like a women's picture heroine, the Fury is a three-dimensional and sympathetic character whose victimization creates her need for vengeance which, while threatening, we understand and may even welcome.[331] Although Greven concedes that Catherine may enjoy her single life, he writes that the film ultimately links her "self-realization" with her transformation into a postwar female "monstrosity."[332] Thus, even when Catherine becomes more sympathetic to film viewers who can more fully appreciate her subtlety, her revenge plot

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[328] Most scholars of the film agree that its melodramatic revenge plot qualifies it as a "woman's picture." See Philip Horne,"Henry James: Varieties of Cinematic Experience," in *Henry James on Stage and Screen*, ed. John R. Bradley (New York: Palgrave, 2000), 44; Raw, *Adapting Henry James to the Screen*, 43; Chandler, "'Her Ancient Faculty of Silence,'" 177; Rivkin,"'Prospects of Entertainment,'" 149; and Swaab, "The End of Embroidery," 59.

[329] David Greven, *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema: The Woman's Film, Film Noir, and Modern Horror* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3; 64-5.

[330] Ibid., 3.

[331] Ibid., 67-8.

[332] Ibid., 69; 64.

and final status as a single, childless woman negatively mark her as possessing undesirable affect and unfeminine social withdrawal.[333]

Many scholars also view the film in terms of 1940s domestic ideology in the U.S. and the resulting tensions over women in the workforce. Raw sees the film's rich costume and design elements as a celebration of consumption, "characteristic of many women's films that took advantage of the prevailing belief in affluence as a way of sustaining the American way of life to promote an image of female self-liberation entirely bound up with the acquisition of new things, particularly luxury goods."[334] Related to this, Rivkin[335] and Walton[336] see the film's nostalgia for Victorian interiors and femininity as a celebration of the domestic sphere for postwar women. Furthermore, Chandler[337] and Singer[338] argue that, because the conflict is less between Morris and Dr. Sloper than it is between Catherine and the men, the film reflects postwar tensions

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[333] See, for instance, Walton's assertion that, "in the cinematic conclusion, when Catherine mounts the stairs to the sound of Morris pounding on her locked door, she ascends to a void. Denied of motherhood, through her own refusal to heed her father's advice, Catherine can only achieve fulfillment through other people's children" [the children of relatives]; "The Janus Faces of James," 44. And Irving Singer asserts that Wyler's film is a tragedy for Catherine because "the ideal possibilities of marriage, which are interpersonal love and familial happiness that can burgeon from it, have been destroyed by the social ugliness of monetary greed, parental domination, and filial hostility. In the last shots, Catherine holds her candle as she goes upstairs into the darkness beyond as if she were walking into her grave." Singer also maintains that the film is tragic for Morris as he is denied the hope of having a home at last under the "conditions of normal heterosexuality." Therefore, the emotional impact of the film, for many critics, depends on Catherine's withdrawal from the heterosexual economy, which acts as a social and psychological 'death.' Moreover, if Singer is right, Catherine selfishly denies Morris the happiness he seeks! These reactions participate in the presupposition that women (and men) can only find fulfillment in marriage and motherhood, no matter the emotional demands. Singer, *Cinematic Mythmaking: Philosophy in Film* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2008), 127-8.

[334] Raw, *Adapting Henry James to the Screen*, 40.

[335] Rivkin, "'Prospects of Entertainment,'" 149.

[336] Walton, "The Janus Faces of James," 42.

[337] Chandler, "'Her Ancient Faculty of Silence,'" 172.

[338] Singer, *Cinematic Mythmaking*, 125.

between the sexes as more women entered the workforce. Here, Catherine's emotional hardness within a domestic space gives the audience a reason to mourn the loss of Victorian gender roles.

Thus, both the play and film adaptation of *The Heiress* create conflict around the emotional and financial vulnerability resulting from Catherine's lack of social know-how. Dr. Sloper's repeated negative contrasts between Catherine and her mother position Catherine's lack of social grace as unfeminine. But the 'hard,' impenetrable affect she later assumes—which she attributes mostly to her father—is also positioned as unfeminine and (based on many critics' reactions) unfortunate. By becoming attached to the 'wrong' man, whose manipulations and financial dependence are deemed unmanly, Catherine makes a mistake in the usual middle- to upper-class heterosexual proceedings. By breaking off all attachments, Catherine ruins her potential to become a wife and mother, and further lowers her status as a daughter. Her high class status and whiteness are reinforced by her chilly interactions with the Irish maid Maria, but her overall failure at feminine charms and familial attachments makes Catherine seem, by heteronormative postwar standards, strangely un-American—recalling for audiences, perhaps, the common portrayals of affectively cold, independent and therefore undomestic Soviet women. Ideal U.S. women, then, should be neither vulnerable nor impenetrable. Here, friendly containment occurs not *to* Catherine but *through* the largely negative reactions to her status at the end of the play/film, when critics emphasize what she has lost—her 'right' place in society.

Shyness appears as another kind of vulnerability in the next chapter's film, Nunnally Johnson's *The Three Faces of Eve*, but in this case shyness becomes a symptom of mental collapse. As with *The Heiress* and other home girl narratives, however, personal problems resound in the sociopolitical sphere. When *The Three Faces of Eve*'s shy heroine develops a split

personality, her doctor's quest becomes to reintegrate this young woman, during a time when debates over racial integration in the U.S. South divided the country. Here, shyness and inferiority threaten the individual mind, but the split white individual also threatens the health of the nation.

CHAPTER 4: MENTAL COLLAPSE IN *THE THREE FACES OF EVE*

Eve White

> ALISTAIR COOKE [journalist and narrator, opening the film with a direct address to the audience]: This is a true story, about a sweet, rather baffled young housewife who, in 1951, in her hometown of Georgia, suddenly frightened her husband by behaving very unlike herself. Well, there's nothing unique in that. We all have moods; we all have a secret yen to behave like somebody we particularly admire. Well, in a literal and terrifying sense, inside this demure young woman, two very vivid and different personalities were battling for the master of her character.

A coda to the tales of our other home girls appears in Nunnally Johnson's 1957 film *The Three Faces of Eve*. Imagine that one of the home girls somehow got married and had a child, then developed Multiple Personality Disorder. Eve White is a downtrodden and deferential housewife who suffers from "spells" of amnesia. After she goes on an extravagant shopping spree and attacks her daughter Bonny during an amnesiac episode, psychiatrist Dr. Luther diagnoses her with a split personality. Her second personality, a lively and sensual woman called Eve Black, hates Eve White's husband Ralph and claims that she is not Bonny's mother. A vibrant single girl, Eve Black likes to go shopping and dancing. The film, based on the best-selling 1957 case study by Drs. Corbett Thigpen and Hervey Cleckley which follows their treatment of Eve (real name: Chris Sizemore) for Multiple Personality Disorder, purportedly follows Dr. Luther's quest to find both the root of Eve's problem and a more suitable personality for her to permanently assume. Before long, a third personality named Jane emerges. She is confident, self-contained, speaks better English, and cares about the little girl Bonny; Jane has the perfect personality!

With *The Three Faces of Eve*, shyness is figured as a precursor to mental collapse, itself defined by a woman's inability to care for husband and child, while the road to mental health is

figured as a "talking cure"—a drawing out, a revelation of inner turmoil. Moreover, shyness is associated with the supposed 'backwardness' of working-class white Southerners. While shyness's opposite appears as overt female sexuality and a proclivity for dancing and singing in public—coded as aspects of black culture in the film—the desirable, mentally healthy white woman emerges as an upwardly-mobile, behavioral and affective mean between these 'extremes.' In this sense, the shyness that threatens to unravel one woman's psyche stands as a symptom of the postwar cultural decay of white Southerners who resisted racial integration. Thus, unlike films which imagine desegregation as a threat or problem, *The Three Faces of Eve* allegorically concerns the threat of segregation.

In addition to relating the film to a complex negotiation of postwar gender roles for women, and racial tensions during an anxious climate of desegregation, I will relate *The Three Faces of Eve*'s narrativization of multiple personality to postwar psychological and sociological rhetoric used to describe prejudice against minorities as a kind of split personality disorder. By this view, shyness as a precursor to mental collapse has immense sociopolitical ramifications in the U.S. Cold War context of trying to prevent the spread of fascism and other authoritarian regimes like Soviet Communism.

Eve White's Shy Girl Traits

When we first meet Eve White, she wears a dowdy hat covering hair pulled back into a ponytail, and a conservative, simple dress. As she sits in Dr. Luther's office, she has poor posture with her shoulders and head stooped forward, she avoids making much eye contact, and she speaks with a faint voice and a Southern accent. Affectively she is withdrawn, sad, and confused,

and Dr. Luther's colleague refers to her as "that dreary woman from across the river." Overall, she is figured as plain and timid.

Mrs. White is not often seen alone—she is usually accompanied in scenes by her husband Ralph and/or daughter Bonny, and/or Dr. Luther—but Eve Black's desire for solitary activities is problematized. The only time we see Eve White alone is when she wakes up from "spells" of Eve Black's activity—in a nightclub, or in a mental hospital. We do know that, apart from her housewifery and mothering, Eve White enjoys reading, which endlessly bores Eve Black. In the film, even Eve White's reading becomes a social activity, as she reads poetry aloud to a hospital orderly. It is fitting, perhaps, that we rarely see Eve White alone, since a housewife is *supposed* to be focused on her family and close associates. The film portrays Eve White's illness as detectible only insofar as it disrupts the physical and emotional labor she provides for her family at home. The fact that Eve Black desires to go out alone at night, and thinks of herself as single, is part of Eve White's problem.

Eve White's two alternate personalities, Eve Black and Jane, act as her more normatively feminine counterparts. Eve Black is a vivacious flirt, who lets her hair down, removes her pantyhose, and dances in Dr. Luther's office. We see her dancing with men at nightclubs and zestfully performing jazz songs in front of strangers there. These nightclub performances code her as feminine, particularly by Hollywood standards, for she is dressed provocatively and exudes pleasure in being looked at, unlike Eve White who is seen clutching at her robe in an effort to remain modest.

Another feminine counterpart, Jane wears her hair up in a stylish French twist, dates a sympathetic man named Earl, and surprisingly has no Southern accent, but speaks easily with a

neutral midwestern one. Unlike Eve Black, she is not a flirt, and she cares deeply about little Bonny. She is also not opposed to marriage, and would like to marry Earl as soon as she is 'cured' of her mental illness. Jane comports herself with confidence and sophistication. In all these ways, Jane presents normative postwar femininity, which is appealing to Dr. Luther who frets just before Jane's first appearance: "The truth is, neither Eve Black nor Mrs. White is a satisfactory solution. Neither of them is really qualified to fill the role of wife, mother, or even a responsible human being. A victory for either would be disastrous. No solution whatever." Eve Black's deviance seems clear given postwar sexual mores for women, but why is Eve White an unsatisfactory solution? The answer seems to be affective, as narrator Alistair Cook pins adjectives to each personality, calling Eve Black "the rollicking playgirl," Eve White "the defeated wife," and Jane "the pleasant young woman who had no memory." Whereas Jane and Eve Black are given descriptors suggesting liveliness and affective positivity, Eve White is seen in a negative, lifeless state. Whereas Jane and Eve Black can offer energy and intrigue (even if Eve Black gives off *too much*), Eve White, we are told, is blah. Who would want her for a wife, mother, patient, or film character?

Eve White's social anxiety appears with her embarrassment when she awakens from her "spells" in a state of undress, or gets in trouble for Eve Black's spending. She is ashamed of not being able to remember the source of her trauma or what Eve Black has done. Mrs. White is also ashamed that she has not "been able to make [Ralph] happy" or be a good mother to Bonny. Hence, things are not going well for her socially, which seems to have contributed to her depression and quiet disposition around Dr. Luther. On the whole, she is very quiet compared to Eve Black, who babbles endlessly to the therapist. Jane is also eager to talk to him. Perhaps most

tellingly, when Eve White's memory of a childhood trauma starts to surface during a hypnosis session, she cries, "I don't want to. Momma, please, I don't want to meet people. Please, Momma, don't make me!" So although no one in the film overtly states that shyness or social anxiety is a large part of Eve White's problem, our first glimpse into her childhood is one fraught with dread over social interaction with strangers.

The extended failed romantic encounter that marks postwar depictions of shy women appears within Eve White's marriage to Ralph, which is in sharp decline until he leaves her. Because a confused but titillated Ralph is seduced by Eve Black, who at first seems to pass as Eve White, the film suggests that part of why Eve White hasn't "been able to make him happy" is due to a sexual problem (further corroborated by her admission of miscarriage) or lack of sexual relations. When Eve Black removes her pantyhose in front of Ralph, he slowly guffaws:

> Ralph: I never seen Evie do a thing like that in my whole life before.
> Eve Black: You don't like it?
> Ralph: That ain't the question.

Though Ralph has moments of patience concerning his wife's condition, it often runs out, and his incredulity about "this multiplied thing"—combined with Mrs. White's refusal to leave treatment and move to Atlanta with him—leads to his divorcing her. The film thereby connects Eve White's lack of sensual display to her overall withdrawn disposition and failure as a wife, someone puts her own problems ahead of her husband's desires.

Besides occasions when she is strong-armed or slapped by Ralph, Eve White is rarely shown in meaningful physical contact with others. This contributes to the sense of her isolation and withdrawal, even as she is continually surrounded by other people. So while Eve White is disciplined by physical contact, it is not an enticement to heterosexual coupledom. By contrast,

we see Eve Black dancing and canoodling with a variety of men, and Jane has passionate and affectionate physical contact with her fiancé Earl, as they cling to each other in the face of her mental illness. When compared with the tropes of the other home girl plays/films, it seems that Jane's sustained physical contact with Earl presages her ending up with him as the only 'surviving' personality. The film's last scene shows Jane, Earl, and Bonny licking ice cream cones and driving, in Jane's words, "home together."

Eve White undergoes two transformations in the film—both of which are to more extraverted, 'interesting' personalities. As noted, Eve Black and Jane have different accents, dress, hair, manner, and affects from Eve White and each other. Agreeing with Dr. Luther's assessment of Jane as the more 'suitable' woman than either Eve Black or Eve White, Mrs. White says she's *willing to die* because Jane is potentially more "fit" to be a mother than she is: "I don't really mind. Not anymore. I'm not fit for [Bonny] now. I'm not fit for anything, really—I know that. But if it's Jane, if she'll just understand how much a little girl needs love and understanding, then I won't mind dying. Y'know, if she'll just take good care of her for me." Eve Black, who has long wanted to be the dominant personality, finally accedes that the multiple personality game is no longer "fun," because she doesn't know what Jane does, and doesn't like that Jane knows what *she* (Eve Black) does. (It had only been fun, apparently, when Eve Black knew what Eve White did and could "come out" when she wanted.) But although Eve White and Eve Black agree to let Jane take over as the dominant personality, the woman's final transformation into Jane requires knowledge of the trauma which led to her split personality in the first place. Jane finally remembers that, as a child, little Evie was forced to kiss her dead grandmother as a way of 'saying goodbye.' We see a long shot of the child being paraded

through a living room full of sullen strangers and, against her will, lowered by her mother down to the old woman's body lying in the casket. The moment of trauma happens off-camera, as the shot cuts to a closeup of Evie's sympathetic but complicit father closing his eyes as the child screams. Back in Dr. Luther's office now, Jane shrugs off the incident as a well-intentioned old-fashioned tradition. Thus, the therapeutic process is complete and Jane emerges as a complete identity, cured of all Eve White's personality deficiencies and Eve Black's excesses.

Critical Reception of Eve White

In 1957, film critics hailed Joanne Woodward's performance while differently interpreting the film's tone and approach to psychological methods. These reviews of *The Three Faces of Eve* reveal an ambivalence about multiplicity, which allows for Woodward's captivating, "*tour de force*" performance built on the use of physical nuance,[339] but also leads to uncertainty as to how exactly to classify the film (is it a realistic or fantastic account?), and annoyance at Eve's instability (as John McCarten sneers, "She's a kind of psychological quick-change artist, and we never know from one moment to the next just what sort of girl she is going to be").[340] Reviewers also make striking value judgements in their description of the different personalities, where Eve White is undesirable because she is boring and sad, Eve Black is entertaining but untenable due to her recklessness, and Jane is a positive emergence of

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[339] Hollis Alpert, "Good Acting," *The Saturday Review*, September 28, 1957, 26.

[340] John McCarten, "The Current Cinema: A Kiss in the Dark," *The New Yorker*, October 5, 1957, 145.

intelligence, balance, and normalcy.[341] While some critics find aspects of the film hard to believe, only Bosley Crowther seems aware of the power differential between doctor and patient, which he sees as a manipulative relationship wherein Dr. Luther conjures the woman's personalities "like a magician doing a trick;"[342] however, this criticism is largely nullified by his positive description of Jane's qualities. All cause for doubt is erased by the film's so-called happy ending of normative femininity. Ironically, Crowther overall derides the film for its melodrama[343]—code for excessive emotionality and therefore femininity. So, a certain kind of feminine display is required of female characters, but male audiences should not be expected to enjoy the emotionality attendant to creating a mentally healthy woman.

The Three Faces of Eve often appears in scholarship that analyzes the relationship between institutional psychology and film; portrayals of therapy on film;[344] and/or comparisons and contrasts between the Thigpen and Cleckley case study, Chris Sizemore's own accounts of her multiple personalities, and Nunnally Johnson's film adaptation of the case. The most helpful

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[341] Alpert describes Eve White as a "drab, spiritless housewife," Eve Black a "sexy, carefree hoyden," and Jane "the normal one;" 26. McCarten describes Eve White as "a drab Southern housewife," Eve Black as a "low-life girl," and Jane as "a fine, upstanding, intelligent woman;" 145. Bosley Crowther describes Eve White as "pallid" and a "wan and emotionally troubled dame," Eve Black as "a loose, lurid creature with a brash go-to-hell attitude," and Jane as "sweet, serene, intelligent and conspicuously self-possessed." And *Variety* sees Eve White as "a drab, colorless Georgia housewife," Eve Black as "a mischievous, irresponsible sexy dish," and Jane as "a sensible, intelligent, and balanced woman." See Crowther, "'3 Faces of Eve'; Personalities Study Opens at Victoria," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Sep. 27, 1957; and Staff, "Review: 'The Three Faces of Eve," *Variety*, December 31, 1956.

[342] Crowther, "'3 Faces of Eve.'"

[343] Ibid.

[344] For instance, Glen O. Gabbard and Klin Gabbard's *Psychiatry in the Cinema* posits *The Three Faces of Eve* as a transitional film on the cusp of the "idealized portraits of of psychiatry" of what they deem the Golden Age of Psychiatry on Film in the late-1950s and early '60s. See Gabbard and Klin Gabbard, *Psychiatry and the Cinema* (Washington, D.C.: American Psychiatric Press, 1999), 78; 81-2; Irving Schneider, "Images of the Mind: Psychiatry in Commercial Film," *The American Journal of Psychiatry* 134, no. 6 (1977): 617; and Robert W. Rieber and Robert J. Kelly, *Film, Television, and the Psychology of the Social Dream* (New York: Springer Science + Business Media, 2014), 53.

of these provide clinical insights into the gendered aspects of Eve's disease, and reveal how the film reinforces negative stereotypes about mental illness. Scholars such as David J. Robinson and Peter Byrne read the film in terms of its representation of Multiple Personality Disorder (now called Dissociative Identity Disorder). Robinson gives interesting statistics about the gendered dynamics of the MPD/DID: 75-90% of all diagnosed cases involve female patients, and female patients typically report twice as many "alters" (alternate identities) as do men.[345] Robinson also notes that alters "can encompass different ages, sexes, races, and families of origin," and that "[a]ngry and depressed are the two most common dispositions of alter personalities."[346] Although he does not connect these statistics, it seems no coincidence that female patients who feel a great impetus to provide others with positive emotional support would find themselves more often in an extreme dissociation from negative affects. Overall, Robinson reads Eve Black as a protective figure for the "dowdy, sullen" Eve White, concluding that the two personalities are "reintegrated" in Jane.[347] And Byrne notes that films like *The Three Faces of Eve* contribute to two misconceptions: 1) an assumption that mental illness is always linked with violence, and 2) an assumption that all mentally ill people have "one 'great dark secret.'"[348] Eve's catharsis, of course, relies on her memory of one childhood event—one 'great dark secret' lies at the heart of her illness and therefore her cure.[349] Moreover, Eve Black's attempt to strangle Bonny recreates the common myth of what Byrne calls the "nice guy/murderer" split; that is, the

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[345] David J. Robinson, *Reel Psychiatry: Movie Portrayals of Psychiatric Conditions* (Port Huron, MI: Rapid Psychler Press, 2003), 152.

[346] Ibid., 153.

[347] Ibid., 154-5.

[348] Peter Byrne, "The Butler(s) DID It," *Medical Humanities* 27, no. 1 (2001): 26.

[349] Ibid., 28.

misconception that mental illness hides violence behind a mask of niceness.[350] (This is a trope that also appears in the depiction of Eve Harrington in *All About Eve*, for example.) Because Eve White's extremely passive niceness is linked to her shyness and mental weakness, it is treated as a suspect affective disposition that cannot contain Eve Black's violent outbursts. The view of shyness as mental weakness in the face of threats has profound implications for Cold War politics and psychiatric treatments.

In *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Insanity Is Not Subversive*, Marta Caminero-Santangelo reads the Thigpen and Cleckley case study of Chris Sizemore's MPD/DID in terms of its meaning for women who suffer from mental illness. Though Caminero-Santangelo's work does not treat the film adaptation of *The Three Faces of Eve* directly, it provides an important counterpoint: against the popular literary readings of female madness as subversion—or multiple personality/dissociation as embodied postmodern multiplicity—she reminds us that, even where we might see their resistance to patriarchal societal norms, women suffering from mental illness are ultimately rendered powerless by their debilitating conditions.[351] Though it has been argued (as we shall see) that MPD/DID in women coincides with changing social roles in the postwar era and beyond, with the Eve case study, her personalities are reduced to stereotypes of womanhood: the virgin (Eve White), mother (Jane), and whore (Eve Black).[352] Where one could argue that Thigpen and Cleckley's choosing of Jane over the other 'unfit' female personalities

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[350] Ibid., 28. Byrne further notes that MPD/DID is common in films about mental illness because it allows for flashback, dramatic moments, and showcasing acting abilities; 27.

[351] Marta Caminero-Santangelo, *The Madwoman Can't Speak: Or Why Insanity Is Not Subversive* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 3-4; 98; 100-1. Caminero-Santangelo is responding to the wave of feminist literary criticism inspired by Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's seminal *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979).

[352] Caminero-Santangelo, *The Madwoman Can't Speak*, 10; 96; 98-9.

emphasizes the constructedness of gender, Caminero-Santangelo observes that this move also reinforces Eve as an *object* for the male doctors' experiments.[353] As other feminist scholars note in their comparisons of the official Eve case study with Sizemore's accounts of her illness, Thigpen and Cleckley—and, by extension, the film—impose a clean narrative and happy ending upon their patient's complex and unresolved experience.[354] The case study also downplays the domestic violence experienced by Sizemore.[355] The name "Jane" is chosen for the third alter because it stands for "Jane Doe," a tabula rasa.[356] Thigpen and Cleckley also note that Jane is "more mature," "vivid," and "interesting" than Eve White; moreover, Caminero-Santangelo asserts that both doctors use moralistic rhetoric to manage "undesirable aspects of women."[357] In all, not only the patient's illness but also the poetic license taken in both the official case study and film limit the extent to which the patient can resist institutional patriarchy. And once again, that patriarchy condemns the shy woman as unsatisfactory and weak-minded.

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[353] Ibid., 101-2.

[354] Ibid., 116. Rather than three, Sizemore reportedly had more than 22 personalities and was never free of her dissociation. For Sizemore's accounts of her illness, see Chris Costner Sizemore and Elen Sain Pittillo, *I'm Eve* (New York: Doubleday, 1977); and Christ Costner Sizemore, *A Mind of My Own: The Woman Who Was Known as "Eve" Tells the Story of Her Triumph over Multiple Personality Disorder* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1989).

Another useful reading comes from disabilities scholar Elizabeth Donaldson, who argues that Alistair Cooke's introduction to the film "helps to initiate the viewer's complicity in a psychiatric gaze" which "specularizes" Eve White, and "promises the spectator a privileged glimpse into a rare medical case." When the doctors "integrate and normalize" Eve's three personalities, they lead her and the film to a "stereotypically heteronormative" ending. But, as Donaldson later remarks about anti-depressant ads which tell consumers they can "regain a lost self," the norm is a constructed hypothetical, not something regained. In other words, we can read Jane as a newly constructed ideal woman, not the recovery of what Eve White had 'lost.' See Donaldson, "The Psychiatric Gaze: Deviance and Disability in Film," *Atenea* 25, no. 1 (2005): 31-2; 43-4.

[355] Caminero-Santangelo, 109.

[356] Ibid., 108.

[357] Ibid., 106-7. For the original case study, see Corbett H. Thigpen and Hervey M. Cleckley, *The Three Faces of Eve* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1957).

Film scholar Janet Walker also notes many of the same disparities between the case study, film, and Chris Sizemore's accounts of her illness;[358] however, Walker's investigation is a meditation on the "interaction between psychiatry and female deviance" in film.[359] And, while she also reads *The Three Faces of Eve* in terms of institutional patriarchal oppression, Walker *does* think there are moments in which we can see Eve's (filmic, at least) resistance to the authority of psychiatry.[360] She identifies a "collusion" between psychiatry and monogamous heterosexuality in films like *The Three Faces of Eve* "to provide the happy ending."[361] A common trope in such films is a relationship between a male psychiatrist and female patient which runs "parallel" to the husband-wife relationship, with the goal of resolving the female patient's problems and redirecting her (positive) energies back to her husband and family.[362] Walker adds that, because psychoanalysis allows women to speak 'freely,' the therapeutic

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[358] Janet Walker, *Couching Resistance*, 71-2; 75-6.

[359]Ibid., xv;

[360] Ibid., xxii.

[361] Ibid., xxix.

[362] Ibid., 37; 41; 52. See Walker's discussion of the rhetoric about the emotional ties between patient and doctor, referred to in psychoanalysis as "transference" and "countertransference," on pp. 41-7. Doane also treats the doctor-patient 'couple' common to women's medical dramas in *The Desire to Desire*, 62-3. Here, Doane notes that the doctor-patient 'marriage' "subdue[s] excessive passion by institutionalizing it."

process "troubles the operation of patriarchal narratives at the same time that it enables them."[363] That is, therapy creates a space in which women can complain and potentially critique social institutions like marriage, even as it discourages them from airing aggression or exhibiting deviant behavior outside of the therapist's office. Walker contends that there is some discursive resistance in the anti-marriage and anti-motherhood rants of Eve Black, who exhibits open aggression to both Ralph and Bonny.[364] There is also filmic resistance in the subtle change in the visual codes that govern Eves' transformation into Jane. When Jane first emerges, Dr. Luther's back is turned to her, so his gaze and voice do not dictate the change in personality (nor does the editor), which is now controlled by Joanne Woodward/Eves' body.[365]

Though Walker admits that these momentary resistances do not make the film a feminist text, she suggests that *The Three Faces of Eve* does not allow psychiatry to close *every* circle.[366] And while the film displaces social issues about gender and class onto one individual's

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[363] Walker, *Couching Resistance*, xxv. As Walker notes, Freud linked marriage itself to neurosis, because of the sudden stress experienced by female virgins in transitioning to sexual relations with their husbands; 55.

Eve is filmically controlled by Dr. Luther's gaze and verbal commands; for much of the film, Walker observes, a shot-reverse-shot of him looking at Eve White creates the visual transition to the emergence of Eve Black, and vice versa; 76-7. Walker also finds that Eve/Jane's memory of her childhood trauma aligns with "conservative postwar familial patterns," and the scene of Eve's mother lowering the girl to kiss her dead grandmother presents the restricted roles available to females: "girlhood, motherhood, death;" 74. Walker further interprets Eves' transformation into the mentally healthy Jane as "a step up in class," as Eve White—"the defeated wife" of a "struggling rube" (Ralph, who drives an old truck)—becomes the "exemplary" Jane, married to Earl, who drives a slick sedan; 69. Overall, the film presents a heteronormative "postwar dream of prosperity and togetherness;" 69.

[364] Ibid., 77.

[365] Ibid., 78.

[366] Similarly, Greven writes that films like *The Three Faces of Eve* "feature women whose frenzy for power, at least over their own destinies, lead them to reenact the pivotal battles for agency waged valiantly by the oedipal girl of Freudian theory." These battles are usually futile against "the logic of patriarchy," but they also crucially give "vent to [women's] desire for power"; *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema*, 11-13.

psychology,[367] Eve's mental illness may be its own kind of resistance to restrictive gender roles: "At a time when women's roles were being widely discussed and challenged, multiple personality may have been read as an unconscious and expansive rendition of career and behavioral choices open to women. […] In fact, many of the films of this group use the camouflage of illness to allow characters to 'try on' alternative sexual dispositions."[368] Returning to Caminero-Santangelo's caution about the relative powerlessness brought about by the actual experience of mental illness, however, we might take this 'resistance' a bit lightly. Still—considering that women are diagnosed with MPD/DID much more frequently than men—the account of the disorder's relationship to gender roles appears frequently in the literature on *The Three Faces of Eve* and cannot be overlooked.

Like Walker, Kelly Kretschmar, and Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd link Eve's illness and transformations to changing roles for women in the postwar era, but with differing views on what Jane's emergence means for women. Kretschmar reports that MPD cases cropped up in the late-19th century, coinciding with the emergence of the modern "New Woman" who worked outside the home, then largely disappeared until the 1950s, when the number of documented cases mushroomed in correlation with increasing numbers of women in the workforce and intensifying national and popular rhetoric encouraging women to be housewives.[369] Again, this phenomenon coincides with a shift in rhetoric about women's proper role:

> [T]he social attitudes toward women as reflected in popular culture suggested that the same women who may have worked factory jobs during World War II were now expected

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[367] Walker, *Couching Resistance*, 71.

[368] Ibid., 77.

[369] Kelly Kretschmar, "Framing Femininity as Insanity: Representations of Mental Illness in Women in Post-Classical Hollywood" (master's thesis, University of North Texas, 2007), 17.

> to return to the home without complaint and become a soft bundle of femininity that any man would be pleased to come home to after a hard day's work. In the 10 years between the 'New Woman' heroines of 1939 and the emergence of happy housewives in 1949, [Betty] Friedan argues, 'the image of American woman seems to have suffered a schizophrenic split.' This confusion about identity, social roles, and 'appropriate' desires (i.e. motherhood versus a career) would take its toll on women throughout the 1950s. That Friedan invokes psychiatric terminology to describe this situation illustrates how comfortable we are linking a woman's sense of her female identity with her mental stability.[370]

Thus, if we wonder why Eve White, the "powerless," "nonthreatening," and childlike housewife —never the threat to domesticity displayed by Eve Black—is an "unacceptable" subject position for Dr. Luther, Kretschmar suggests its cause lies in Eve White being "*too* passive and neurotic to satisfy her husband's sexual desire and live up to the role of dutiful wife and mother."[371] Not only does the male doctor determine the best personality and social role for his female patient, but the film points to bad parenting as the cause of Eve's trauma: her mother is too forceful for a woman, while her father is too passive for a man; therefore, the trauma is rooted in the expression of the 'wrong' gender roles.[372] By contrast, the trauma is cured through Jane, a "patriarchal ideal" of femininity who embraces a heteronormative and middle-class "domestic ideal."[373] Judging by the late-1950s articles which use Eve White/Eve Black/Jane as a symbol for

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[370] Ibid., 21-2.

[371] Ibid., 25-6.

[372] Ibid., 26-7.

[373] Ibid., 31-2. Kretschmar's analysis plumbs *The Three Faces of Eve* in comparison with a similar film also released in 1957: MGM's *Lizzie* (dir. Hugo Hass). *Lizzie* also concerns multiple personality disorder, featuring a "shy" young woman with an abrasive and aggressive alter, who ultimately finds a balanced, well-adjusted personality with the help of a therapist; 24-5. Unlike *The Three Faces of Eve*, *Lizzie* was an utter critical and box-office failure. Kretschmar surmises that this is due not only to *Lizzie*'s low-budget production values, but also to its resolution, where the main character becomes mentally healthy but remains single and has no romantic prospects. Kretschmar suspects that audiences responded more warmly to *The Three Faces of Eve*'s conventionally romantic ending; 32-3.

all women, Kretschmar concludes that the film and its rhetorical successors send the reactionary message that women's psyches fracture when they explore life *outside* the home.[374]

Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd, while also arguing that the film concerns women's changing social roles in the postwar era, have a different take on the meaning of Jane's emergence. "Eve White is demure, married and modest in her desires; Eve Black is outrageous, single, consumes irrationally and behaves irresponsibly."[375] Eve White's reading habit is "the quintessence of dullness" to Eve Black, who prefers to go out dancing.[376] As we've seen, these two opposites are "integrated" by Dr. Luther into Jane, "an intelligent, sensible, educated woman."[377] But Johnson and Lloyd interpret Jane as "a working woman," who is happy because she can work *and* have a family.[378] Thus, *The Three Faces of Eve* participates in a "shibboleth of feminism's prehistory in which women were trapped in a 'happy housewives' myth and then rescued by the self-actualization of leaving the home in other pursuits.[379] Presenting a mythos of "oppression-then-liberation," the film explores postwar "tensions around the figure of the housewife":

> These tensions revolve around a series of shifting balances between social, family and individual desires and constraints for women. The film plays out these desires in the tensions between the housewife as a figure of lack and boredom against the working

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[374] Ibid., 36. Kretschmar cites, in particular, Dr. Margaret Cormack's comments from "Expert Contends Woman of Today Has Four 'Faces,'" *New York Times* (New York, NY), Apr. 29, 1959. See also Katherine J. Lehman, "Woman, Divided: Gender, Family, and Multiple Personalities in Media," *The Journal of American Culture* 37, no. 1 (2014): 66-8; 72.

[375] Lesley Johnson and Justine Lloyd, *Sentenced to Everyday Life: Feminism and the Housewife* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2004), 106.

[376] Ibid., 108.

[377] Ibid., 106.

[378] Ibid., 110.

[379] Ibid., 11-12.

> woman as feminine fulfilment and self-actualisation; between women's struggle for economic independence and self-determination against their primary roles as carers and home-makers.[380]

Jane, then, is a "modern woman" whose idealization contributes to the devaluation of housewifery.

On one hand, I think this analysis offers an interesting link to shyness. After all, Johnson and Lloyd's description of the three personalities essentially paints Eve White as too socially withdrawn, Eve Black as recklessly outgoing, and Jane as a picture of self-contained confidence; and they place this story within the modern project of "self-actualisation." On the other hand, it is not clear to me (or any other critics of the film) that Jane will continue to hold a job now that she and Earl are getting married and have been reunited with Bonny. Johnson and Lloyd overlook the film's final image of the woman, man, and child in the car, matched with the final narration that they are "going home together." It seems more likely that Jane will be a housewife made more competent than Eve White by her self-confidence; able to be more caring by her newfound mental stability.

While most scholars concur that *The Three Faces of Eve* reinforces oppressive patriarchal, heteronormative, nuclear familial gender codes and relations, Gretchen Bisplinghoff adds perhaps the most detailed reading of the screen conventions used to create Eve White's submissiveness to the men around her. She notes, for example, the way in which Mrs. White addresses Dr. Luther with deferential language, always calling him "Sir," while keeping her head down and eyes averted.[381] Bisplinghoff keenly observes that Eve White is ushered by Ralph's

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[380] Ibid., 110.

[381] Gretchen Bisplinghoff, "Codes of Feminine Madness in Film" (PhD diss., Northwestern University, 1984), 71.

hand from the truck into Dr. Luther's office, where she is essentially 'handed off' to another authoritative man.[382] The screen is often composed with the large image of Dr. Luther in the foreground, his desk acting as a long barrier, and Mrs. White's small body hunched over as she sits in the background—crowded in and diminished.[383] Accompanying these images is Eve White's failed suicide attempt. As Bisplinghoff explains, "madwomen withdraw into themselves," becoming "less responsive" and self-destructive.[384] By contrast, Eve Black takes up space and is quite responsive: she leans back and stretches, walks around and dances, crosses the barrier of Dr. Luther's desk to flirt with him, removes articles of clothing, and (we later learn) interrupts the suicide attempt in an act of self-preservation.[385] If we relate these screen conventions to the debate over women's changing roles in the postwar era, Eve White's constrained use of space filmically domesticates her, even when she is not at home. And her deferential behavior—which carries her even to the point of willingly 'dying' so that Jane can take over as a better mother—links Mrs. White's withdrawal to her self-destruction. In one sense, we see the extreme lengths of her emotional labor; in another, we see a warning about shyness or social withdrawal.

Some scholars argue that *The Three Faces of Eve* displaces complex gender and class issues from the social realm onto the individual.[386] This has the effect of bypassing the need for

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[382] Ibid., 75.

[383] Ibid., 105.

[384] Ibid., 88.

[385] Ibid., 71. This is not to suggest that Bisplinghoff sees Eve Black as a picture of mental health, for she also notes that nudity is used as a sign of madness, citing Eve Black's frequent undressing, 112; 114.

[386] Kretschmar, "Framing Femininity as Insanity," 13. Joan Acocella, *Creating Hysteria: Women and Multiple Personality Disorder* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).

wider social change—or even debates about the need for change—while allowing audiences to be entertained by the 'rare' and 'curious' cases of mentally ill individuals. To this important point, Allison Graham adds a most compelling argument that *The Three Faces of Eve* also displaces complex postwar debates about race and integration onto the psyche of a white Southern woman.[387] In trying to appeal to both northern and southern U.S. markets in a post-World War II milieu of growing civil rights movements, television and radio broadcasters, as well as film studios and distribution companies, downplayed racial stereotypes and racial melodramas that had long proliferated before the war—which often resulted in the whitewashing of media.[388] Media companies concomitantly capitalized on the figure of the "harmless hillbilly" who was a sign of "rural ignorance," allowing production companies to bypass the potential of Southern white violence as well as the conundrum of how to present sensitive racial issues of the Jim Crow South.[389] The hillbilly's low-class, bigoted, and backward status stood for tainted whiteness, and the possibility of educating and morally rehabilitating him/her promised "the spectacle of racial redemption."[390] Thus, Graham explains, in a country negotiating the heated consequences of the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in favor of integrating racially divided schools, popular media depictions of race conflicts shifted from

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[387] Allison Graham, *Framing the South: Hollywood, Television, and Race during the Civil Rights Struggle* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 42-3. Lehman (67) and Johnson and Lloyd (109) mention the racial undertones of the film, but only in passing. However, Lehman makes the excellent point that the preponderance of white women in psychological case studies is indicative of the marginalization of women of color in both media and medical treatment.

[388] Graham, *Framing the South*, 4-5.

[389] Ibid.

[390] Ibid., 13.

*inter*racial tensions to *intra*racial ones.[391] While 'blackness' "all but disappeared" from screens, the "reformed cracker would stand as an emblem of American inclusiveness."[392]

The white, upper-middle to upper-class Southern belle had been a rhetorically "embattled figure" since early debates about miscegenation and segregation in the antebellum South.[393] Southern politicians in favor of segregation decried the move to integration as a Communist plot to weaken the white race through "mongrelization" and the "ravaging of Southern womanhood."[394] Such people criticized the so-called "Paper Curtain" between the North and South U.S.—the supposed politically-mandated and culturally-produced Communist sympathies for blacks. And Hollywood was thought to be part of this 'conspiracy.'[395] As Graham points out, Hollywood had actually "long capitulated to Southern white tastes," through censorship, cutting black actors' scenes out of films for distribution in Southern states, and through toning down representations of the South to make it look "charmingly eccentric" rather than a region full of deep tension.[396] Still, Graham maintains that by 1957 audiences would have clearly understood the regional and racial subtext in *The Three Faces of Eve*.[397] By this understanding, Eve *White* is a "hick," a naive, low-class white who is ultimately "eradicated," as is her hick husband Ralph.[398] With Eve *Black*'s appearances, elements of film noir take over the production: jazzy

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[391] Ibid., 16.

[392] Ibid., 14.

[393] Ibid., 16; 18-20.

[394] Ibid., 41.

[395] Ibid.

[396] Ibid., 41-2.

[397] Ibid., 42-3.

[398] Ibid., 44.

and bluesy music, heavy shadows and low-key lighting, dark alleyways and nightclubs, and dangerous sexuality.[399] Graham reminds us that whites also associated each of these elements with black culture.[400] There is further racial undertone to the fact that Eve Black can "pass" as Eve White.[401] Yet, in Eve Black, who lets down her hair, we most clearly see Woodward's bleach-blonde hair, which suggests that her 'badness' is merely a facade, and this partially "redeems" her whiteness by visually strengthening it.[402] Overall, Graham calls the film one of "disintegration" rather than "integration," because Eve White is so dumb, obedient, and weak that she submits to Eve Black (and later Jane) quite easily.[403] This once more posits shyness as a kind of passive malleability. And just when it seems that Eve Black might take over for good, she is "humanely euthanized" onscreen with the emergence of Jane, a well-mannered, middle-class woman with no Southern accent.[404] As Graham notes, Jane's memory of childhood trauma is itself a marker of class: first, she dismisses the source of trauma as simply "the way people thought in those days" (which distances Jane from the backwardness of Eve's family); second, she remembers the names of her teachers and recites lines from Shakespeare which she learned in school (which distances Jane from Eve White's confused bumbling).[405] Linking the "erasure and reconstruction of personality" in the film to the making of a Hollywood star like Joanne Woodward—who ironically had to overcome her Southern accent and mannerisms before

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[399] Ibid., 44-5.

[400] Ibid., 45.

[401] Ibid., 48.

[402] Ibid., 45-6.

[403] Ibid., 47-8.

[404] Ibid., 49.

[405] Ibid., 52.

making this film—Graham concludes that *The Three Faces of Eve* film fails to integrate black and white, but creates a new improved whiteness (a middle-class one), which suggests that social class is most important for "mental health and racial harmony"—and to white supremacy.[406] As Graham remarks:

> Eve White and Eve Black, the hillbilly and the social mulatto, were local 'color'—humorous, pathetic, and ultimately dispensable. As obstacles to progressive representations of the South, they offered proof through their inevitable demise that the times were indeed changing. Poverty, ignorance, and ill-breeding, *The Three Faces of Eve* advised, were relics of an Erksine Caldwell past. By exoticizing the southern white woman, by marking her, or aspects of her, as distinctly anachronistic and self-destructive, the film could walk a tightrope between national sympathies. Displacing racism onto the conflicted figure of the working-class white woman, the picture appeared to examine and condemn an inherently class-bound social pathology, and yet, by consistently marking southernness as Other, it provided reassurance that whiteness itself was not an issue. Through its insistence on its own realism and documentary truth, *The Three Faces of Eve* stood as midwife to the birth of an icon of the New South—the educated, accentless, supremely genuine Everywoman of the 1950s. Racial boundaries might have been wavering offscreen, but onscreen Americans were reassured that whiteness was not just progressive. It was entirely natural.[407]

Thus even as the film covertly raises vital issues surrounding racial relations in the 1950s, it 'solves' them in a patently absurd but familiar way.

In pointing to the aesthetic differences between how the film portrays Eve White, Eve Black, and Jane, Graham's study further illuminates the affective differences between the women, and how affect is related to race. If Jane stands as a "new, improved" white woman, who is polite like Eve White—only more articulate and self-assured—and Eve Black's comparative gumption, emotionality, and sensuality are entangled with culturally-coded blackness, then the film maintains stereotypes about the presumed affective differences between white and black

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[406] Ibid., 52.

[407] Ibid., 53.

women. As Patricia McDaniel notes, Victorian notions of "reserve" were meant to distinguish a person's class and race as a symbol of middle-class whiteness.[408] It is no accident that self-improvement manuals marketed to African-Americans during the postwar era urged Victorian decorum and even a "mask of shyness" for black women when necessary.[409]

The Split-Psyche of Prejudice

Graham's analysis of the racial connotations of *The Three Faces of Eve* gains even more force in tandem with popular postwar psychological and sociological theories linking racial and ethnic prejudice to a split psyche. Swedish sociologist Gunnar Myrdal published *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* in 1944, a study which asserts that racial prejudice in the U.S. springs from white Americans' "split personality": a paradoxical clinging to the foundational "American Creed" of inclusive democratic principles while simultaneously maintaining long-standing assumptions of white supremacy.[410] Gunnar concludes that white Americans must re-educate themselves to *consciously* come to terms with the fact that racism and true democratic egalitarianism are incompatible in order to reintegrate the split American character and allow for social progress.[411] *An American Dilemma* was influential in the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision ten years later.[412] It also influenced another highly influential study, *The Authoritarian Personality* by Theodor Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson,

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[408] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 37-8.

[409] Ibid., 70. We shall return to this topic in the chapter on *Show Boat*.

[410] Gunnar Myrdal, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1944), 52-3. Myrdal notes that this "split personality" applies to Northerners and Southerners alike; 439; 1011-2.

[411] Ibid., 1003.

[412] Ellen Herman, *The Romance of American Psychology: Political Culture in the Age of Experts* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995), 197.

and Nevitt Sanford, commissioned by the University of California at Berkeley for the post-World War II exploration and prevention of fascism and, particularly, anti-Semitism.[413] Asking what kind of population and economic circumstances allow for the rise of fascist movements like Nazism, Adorno et al conducted a series of personality assessments, marking interviewees on an F-Scale (F for "fascism") to determine their fascist or "antidemocratic" potential.[414] The study found that, according to the F-Scale, both aggressive personality types who overtly express prejudice against minorities *and* passive personality types who overtly express compassion for minorities are prone to fascist modes of thinking.[415] That is, both aggressive and passive types may exhibit stereotypy of minorities, particularly if they harbor aggression against their dominant parent (usually the father).[416] For Adorno et al, the Freudian model of personality formation—in addition to popular academic psychological theories of the time[417]—explains why these personality types are prone to aggression and submission. The basic authoritarian personality is formed by a strong identification with and attachment to a domineering parent (again, usually the father), which simultaneously harbors deep admiration and resentment for a punitive relationship which lacks the consistent transfer of positive emotions from the parent to

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[413] Ibid., 58-9. Ideas from *The Authoritarian Personality* were further popularized by similar case studies in Robert M. Lindner's best-selling *The Fifty-Minute Hour: A Collection of True Psychoanalytic Tales* (New York: Rinehart, 1954).

[414] Theodor W. Adorno, Else Frenkel-Brunswik, Daniel J. Levinson, and Nevitt Sanford, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1950), 3.

[415] Ibid., 752.

[416] Ibid., 774; 759.

[417] Ibid., 5. In addition to the work of Erich Fromm, which ties the sadomasochistic type to a faulty resolution of the Oedipal complex, it seems that Adlerian theory, with its emphasis on aggression as over-compensation for an inner feeling of inferiority, and the work of Wilhelm Reich, with its links between fascistic aggression and sexual repression, influenced Adorno et al. See Reich's *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933; repr., New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1980). And Fromm's *Escape from Freedom* (1941; repr., New York: Holt & Co., 1969).

the child.[418] Because the child respects and fears the parent too much to retaliate or express aggression, s/he displaces aggression onto other people outside the familial unit or immediate community—usually onto someone(s) of ethnic, racial, or sex/gender difference.[419] As *The Authoritarian Personality* details the various manifestations of this basic repressed and displaced aggression, it becomes clear that any "failure in superego integration"—that is, too much investment with either the id or the superego—makes one prone to fascism.[420] That is, harboring and displacing aggression out of a deep fear of punishment or disappointment makes one weak against authority. As the researchers note, even gentle "protesters," "shy, 'retiring'" types who openly oppose authoritarianism, are often full of deep-seated guilt to the point of "paralyzing" indecision and inaction; while they speak against oppression, they are effectively powerless to stop it.[421] So who has the least potential for fascism? The "Genuine Liberal," whose integrated personality is perfectly balanced "between superego, ego, and id which Freud deemed ideal."[422] This person holds fast to their beliefs and is outspoken and active; the liberal is compassionate and morally courageous, repelling ideological interference and not imposing ideology on others; and the liberal resists stereotypy because s/he sees others as individual *subjects* and not abstract groups.[423] Genuine Liberals are mentally and sexually healthy, unlike authoritarian and protester types, both of whom often suffer from immature and feminized states of dependency and

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[418] Adorno et al., *The Authoritarian Personality*, 759.

[419] Ibid., 759; 796.

[420] Ibid., 817; 771; 759.

[421] Ibid., 774.

[422] Ibid., 771.

[423] Ibid., 781.

repressed homosexuality or "softness."[424] Adorno et al encourage therapy as a means of integrating personalities *away* from antidemocratic potential and toward the balance of the "genuine liberal."[425] Overall, the study discourages too much aggression and too much passivity, which are measurable along many different attitudes and everyday (inter)actions. The Genuine Liberal, the future of democracy, is housed in a pleasantly balanced personality.

While I do not intend to rate any characters from *The Three Faces of Eve* according to the F-Scale, the rhetoric used by psychologists and sociologists in these studies of prejudice is strikingly similar to the narrative arc and psychological rhetoric of the film. Submissive Eve White and aggressive Eve Black are balanced into ideal Jane (ideal in that she is outspoken without being aggressive, and other-directed without being controlling or too deferential). This comparison reveals the extent to which individual psychology is popularly and officially connected to national security and identity during the early Cold War years. In effect, the individual personality must be integrated in order to integrate the nation as a safe and inclusive place—a stage for the legal, if not total socioeconomic, desegregation of the U.S. South. But part of the rhetorical fallout of these studies is that they also link passivity and social withdrawal—elements of shyness—to mental and sexual dysfunction, and to political weakness. Ironically, the very publications intended to fight prejudice also enact friendly containment by reinforcing negative postwar stereotypes about shy behaviors and their links to homosexuality, unwelcome gender reversal, and political subversion. Hence, shyness is not merely the precursor to mental collapse, but the precursor to national chaos. Shyness not only prevents a woman from providing

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[424] Ibid., 797-8; 813; 811. The link between fascism and sexual dysfunction in particular was further popularized by the case of "Anton" in Lindner's *The Fifty-Minute Hour*.

[425] Ibid., 815-6.

positive emotional labor to her family, but it potentially prevents her from genuinely acting as an inclusive, emotionally engaged democratic citizen.

THE PROBLEM OF HOME GIRLS

Both stage and film versions of *The Glass Menagerie*, *The Dark at the Top at the Stairs*, *The Heiress*, and *The Three Faces of Eve* present us with an awkward, shy character who shuns and repels attention—from other characters, critics, and scholars alike. And yet, these home girls stubbornly exist as a social problem in these dramas, and in U.S. postwar culture, because they resist the conforming standards of happy extroversion, economic productivity, heteronormative coupling, transparent (safe) and recognizably inclusive citizenship, and the very best efforts of their parents and other disciplinary characters to enforce the performance of 'true' American womanhood. In the moments before these home girls are transformed, we see instead young women content to read, collect trifles, play music, do needlepoint, playfully fantasize—indeed to *think*—alone and for their own enjoyment.

Having seen how portrayals of home girls configure shyness as personal inefficiency (*The Glass Menagerie*), destructive selfishness (*The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*), vulnerability to infiltration (*The Heiress*), and psychological disintegration (*The Three Faces of Eve*), we turn to Part II: Understudies, regarding the shyness narratives of backstage musicals and films which call direct attention to the performative aspects of acting as a woman, both on- and offstage. In these shy girl narratives, the success of the shows within the show depends on the shy understudy's acculturation to life on the stage—as she must overcome her shyness by outwardly projecting her voice and moving her body with the sustained goal of pleasing the audience—and backstage—as she must emotionally satisfy her family and theatre colleagues, and overcome her shyness to secure a male love interest. Constructions of shyness in understudy narratives are motivated by considerations of professional efficiency in *Gypsy*, protection from physical

weakness in *Limelight*, worry over single or undomestic women in *Show Boat*, and anxiety over masked ambition and aggression in *All About Eve*. As with home girl plays and films, these productions convey the personal and professional problems of understudies which correspond to sociopolitical issues—particularly mainstream anxieties over emasculation, deviant sexuality, weak minds, women leaving the home, and the threat of Soviet infiltration—of the postwar era.

PART II: UNDERSTUDIES

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1956), Erving Goffman, postwar sociologist and progenitor of the "performative turn" in critical theory, gives a "dramaturgical" account of how people perform in social situations by attempting to control the image of themselves that others see, and adjusting it to fit different situations.[426] He designates the site of social encounters/performances as "the stage" or "front region," and the private space away from the stage as "the backstage" or "back region." Goffman defines the backstage as

> a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. There are, of course, many characteristic functions of such places. It is here that the capacity of a performance to express something beyond itself may be painstakingly fabricated; it is here that illusions and impression are openly constructed. […] Here the performer can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character.[427]

Yet, maintaining the boundaries between the stage and the backstage can be tricky. Goffman notes that people who work in service industries often deal with clients who enter the backstage area (e.g., people who insist on watching mechanics work on their cars): "If an illusionary service is to be rendered and charged for, it must, therefore, be rendered before the very person who is to be taken in by it."[428] Surely this dynamic applies to theatre and film spectators as well, who have made backstage musicals and dramas among the most popular and enduring genres. In these narratives the backstage is rendered as another stage, where the stakes become successfully putting together a show to be performed on the *other* stage (that is, the original "front space," before the "back space" became another "front space"). In this popular formula, "success" is

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[426] Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh, 1956), 8.

[427] Ibid., 69-70.

[428] Ibid., 71.

measured by the extent to which the theatre personnel—especially actors—overcome backstage problems to perform well on the front stage, to please the audience, and to make the show a financial success.[429] Hence, backstage narratives explore the tension between "front" and "back" spaces inherent in Goffman's account of social performance.

Goffman's protégée Arlie Russell Hochschild explores the gendered and racial dynamics of the emotional labor that accompanies personal and profession social performance. Emotional labor "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others—[e.g.], the sense of being cared for in a convivial and safe place."[430] Typically, when we speak of the "success" of a show in the performing arts, we might think of its believability, its spectacular effects, its provocative theme, or something else related to its style, technology, or box-office receipts. But Hochschild's analysis of the service industries reminds us that inducing "the proper state in the mind of others" is a chief aim of the performing arts, and the degree to which a show has instilled this desired mental/emotional state in the audience is one way of measuring its success. A successful performance requires the performer's attention to the needs, expectations, and desires of the audience. Within conventional theatre and film apparatuses, this means communicating the right things at the right times: emotions, gestures, facial expressions, vocal effects, and—where music and dance are involved—rhythm, pitch, tempo, volume, and the like. Part of what accounts for good "stage presence" and "star quality" is the above "rightness" taken to great lengths, for this is said to communicate above all that the performer *cares* about the audience's experience. So, while women and ethnic

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[429] Reality talent shows like *American Idol* continue to use this formula, following the backstage struggles of contestants to create sympathy and imbue each good onstage performance with a sense of triumph.

[430] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 7.

and racial Others have historically been thought to be good performers because they are supposedly naturally duplicitous,[431] performance entails not only 'duplicity' or pretense but also emotional labor. Given that women and racial and ethnic Others are also associated with service industries and care-taking,[432] the affective labor built into performing further feeds into the popular conception of theatre and many other performing arts as feminine, exotic, and relatively unimportant (i.e., as *mere entertainment*). But the business side of the performing art professions takes seriously performers' physical and affectivef "rightness," because they lead to audience satisfaction and increased profits for studios, agencies, and media conglomerates. In turn, performers must take "rightness" seriously; their livelihood depends on it.

So what do we make of female performers who are not "right," who do not exude an exciting presence because they cannot act or sing or dance as expected, or who do not even want to perform? What if they persist onstage, while also being too shy to give the audience what it wants? Part II explores musicals and films about shy young women who are understudies of one sort or another to more capable performers. In contrast to common conceptions of understudies as talented young performers who are eager to perform but must wait for the older star to miss a show, these shy understudies are called upon by others to perform well but are hesitant or seemingly unable to do so. In not presenting their bodies, voices, and emotions properly, shy female understudies fail to please and entertain their audiences. As postwar American women who are already expected to attend to the needs of others, these shy, bad performers doubly fail

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[431] See, for example, Elin Diamond, *Unmaking Mimesis*, vi; Joan Dayan. *Haiti, History, and the Gods* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 178; and Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), 45.

[432] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 163; 130.

to achieve femininity—in both the social and showbiz realms. As such, films and plays that feature shy understudies become meditations on what it means for nonconforming women to learn from "successful," properly performing ones.

Narratives about shy understudies have much in common with the socialization narratives about home girls, but with the added pressure of achieving stardom. Thus, we see in these works a mix of shy girl traits and traits of the star mythos articulated by Richard Dyer: stars are seen as having a mix of ordinary backgrounds, extraordinary talents or qualities, luck, and hard work.[433] In Part II, I explore the stage and film adaptation of the musical *Gypsy* (1959), Charles Chaplin's film *Limelight* (1952), and the film *All About Eve* (1950). I read *Gypsy* in tandem with the rise of *Playboy* magazine culture, *Limelight* in relation to the increasing popularity of psychoanalysis in the postwar U.S., *Show Boat* in connection to urban alienation and self-improvement manuals marketed to African Americans, and *All About Eve* in terms of Cold War fears about infiltration. *Gypsy*'s non-marriage, non-domestic ending is understood as acceptable in a *Playboy* culture that encourages an increased sexual display by women so long as it is accompanied by their positive, nonthreatening attention to men. Psychoanalysis in *Limelight* appears as a method of drawing out the shy girl's inner demons, which gives the supportive male mentor authority over her weakened body and mind, and ultimately guides her back to performing and into a heterosexual union. Modern urban alienation leads to situational shyness in the form of stage fright in *Show Boat*, and the understudy overcomes this to become a star, but only with the help of her family and the mixed-race star whose devotion to her protégée recasts the black woman's femininity in the domestic ideals encouraged by postwar etiquette books. And *All About Eve*'s use of the

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[433] Richard Dyer, *Stars* (1980; repr., London: British Film Institute, 2008), 42.

understudy's infiltration of the star's inner circle, identity, and profession, emphasizes that even shy, nonthreatening women could be dangerous in the Cold War U.S.

In each chapter, my goal is not so much to interrogate characters' status as understudies, or to consider genre as such, but to show how these plays and films configure shyness in the realm of the performing arts—as professional inefficiency in *Gypsy*, as precursor to career-ending physical collapse in *Limelight*, as a sign of modern urban alienation in *Show Boat*, and as a tool for infiltration in *All About Eve*. These plays and films thus continue a depredation of shyness in women, with sociopolitical consequences still felt today.

CHAPTER 5: PROFESSIONAL INEFFICIENCY IN *GYPSY*

Louise Hovick

With book by Arthur Laurents, music by Jule Styne, and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, the musical *Gypsy* opened on Broadway on May 21, 1959, and ran for 702 performances.[434] Based on the (in)famous burlesque star Gypsy Rose Lee's memoirs, the show follows her mother Rose Hovick's dogged attempts to break her daughters into the big-time vaudeville circuit. Their sister act stars Baby June, the energetic and talented younger daughter, supported by Louise, who struggles to keep up with her sister onstage. When June later abandons the act and her family, Rose thrusts shy Louise into the spotlight. But Louise cannot replicate June's act; instead, she becomes an adept and adored stripper. I read *Gypsy*'s construction of shyness as professional inefficiency, similar to Laura Wingfield's personal inefficiency in *The Glass Menagerie*, but set in a showbiz context. Not only must Louise find a way to reach a satisfactory form of adult womanhood, she must also find a way to carry the show-within-the-show. To inhabit her shyness is, for Louise, to let down her family and theatre colleagues and, most importantly, the audience. Further seen through the lens of the rise of *Playboy Magazine* culture in the 1950s, *Gypsy* allows for the success of a single, itinerant woman on the condition that she appeal to the visual, auditory, and sexual desires of her heterosexual male audience. In this sense, Louise's emotional labor has gone beyond the domestic realm (her tense but deep and patient bond with her mother) to include the dark auditorium (her positive, playful bond with male spectators). As part of providing emotional labor to her audience, Louise's striptease ironically conceals her long process of transforming from a shy tomboy into an adept performer of feminine display.

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[434] John Willis, *Theatre World: Volume 58, 2001-2002* (New York: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2004), 218.

Louise's Shy Girl Traits

Louise's difference is partly marked by her boy-like appearance, off- and onstage. As June and Louise's act evolves, Louise continually performs as the masculine counterpart to June's frilly femininity. In the first scene, the sisters appear as a Dutch girl (June) and boy (Louise);[435] later, Louise is one of the many newsboys who support June's solos;[436] and she appears in the act as Uncle Sam.[437] Further distanced from June's femininity, and the nimbleness of the chorus boys, Louise plays half of a dancing cow.[438] Wearing a giant cow head and awkwardly lumbering around the stage, the cow faithfully adores June, but it can only moo.[439] Here, Louise is only recognizable by the one "trick step" she can do. She is thus given special roles meant to disguise her lack of performance skills, thereby multiplying and obscuring her stage identity, as opposed to June who always performs as either Baby- or Dainty June.

Offstage, Louise seems to have internalized the masculine roles assigned to her onstage. She wears slacks and happily accepts that her nickname is "Plug."[440] But when Louise asks Rose if she can wear a dress, her mother replies, "You'd look old in a dress. Besides, you haven't got one."[441] Louise's masculine appearance thus helps prop up June's exceptional status as "star" of the act and Rose's favorite daughter—that is, a girl worthy of special treatment and flouncy

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[435] Arthur Laurents, Stephen Sondheim, and Jule Styne, *Gypsy* (1959; repr., New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1989), 9.

[436] Ibid., 19.

[437] Ibid., 20.

[438] Ibid., 39-40.

[439] Ibid., 42.

[440] Ibid., 10; 25.

[441] Ibid., 33.

costumes/clothes. In a life where there is no clear dividing line between onstage and offstage, moreover, Louise's boy-like identity has been engineered by the stage mother, who early on proclaims: "Louise can be a boy."[442] And Rose reminds Louise of this after her daughter becomes famous as Gypsy Rose Lee. The mother brings the old cow head into the stripper's dressing room, which particularly irks the now-feminine Louise.[443]

The cow head also gestures to Louise's solitary pastime of playing and talking with animals. Unlike in *The Glass Menagerie*, most of these animals are living contributors to the Hovick family chaos. In a cramped old hotel room, for example, the activity of Rose, June, and the chorus boys is augmented thus: "Little dogs run about yapping; there are June's cat, a monkey chained to the bed and bird cages suspended from the chandelier, etc."[444] Adding to this menagerie, Rose gives Louise a lamb for her birthday. During a flurry of Rose's dramatics, "a forgotten Louise" steals away with the lamb and softly sings a song to a mixed group of live and toy animals.[445] "Little lamb, little lamb, / I wonder how old I am."[446] Just like the animals in an ever-increasing collection, Louise alone cannot sustain the attention of others for very long.

Louise's lack of a commanding stage presence is further embedded into scenes where she is a sight unseen by the others. She often moves unnoticed, as when Rose does not realize that Louise is standing behind her as she talks freely about her own past as a neglected child;[447] or

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[442] Ibid., 9.

[443] Ibid., 98-99.

[444] Ibid., 24.

[445] Ibid., 30.

[446] Ibid., 31.

[447] Ibid., 9.

when a chorus boy, Tulsa, is surprised to learn that Louise has watched him develop a new act in secret.[448] So Louise's second solitary pastime is watching others. She often acts as a spectator rather than a performer, a key understudy skill of watching and learning from more experienced performers.

The clearest feminine counterpart to Louise is her sister June, who wears fancy dresses on- and offstage, sings in a higher register than does Louise, is offset from the chorus boys and Louise as either Baby June or Dainty June, plays the Statue of Liberty to Louise's Uncle Sam, moves "daintily," and "squeals" and "coyly screeches."[449] And unlike Louise and Rose, June is desired by showbiz. The New York producer Mr. T. T. Grantzinger wants to train "Dainty Little June" to be an actress, without any interference from her mother.[450] In this sense, Rose is an eager understudy, watching from the wings and jumping at chances to perform. For all Rose's hollering, she too is a feminine counterpart to Louise at times. Unlike Louise, Rose is described as "always talking,"[451] she "moves suggestively" as she charms Herbie into working with her and her daughters,[452] and she emphasizes the lady-like behavior which Louise must maintain during a striptease.[453] On the other hand, Rose is staunchly anti-domestic, as she tells her father, "Anybody that stays home is dead! If I die, it won't be from sittin'! It'll be from fightin' to get up

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[448] Ibid., 52.

[449] Ibid., 19-20.

[450] Ibid., 45.

[451] Ibid., 8.

[452] Ibid., 17.

[453] Ibid., 90.

and get out!"[454] Rose also resists adulthood, which negates the possibility of her daughters needing to grow up act like "ladies":

> HERBIE: Rose, no matter how you dress 'em, no matter how you smother 'em, they're big girls. They're almost young women—
> ROSE: They're not and they never will be!

Thus, Rose struggles to keep June and Louise in a state of arrested development—because young girls and women are more suggestible and valuable in showbiz, and/or to shield them from the deadening effect of the domestic. But this is poor mothering by 1950s standards, which undermines her perceived femininity. By contrast, Louise and June's more normative femininity is established by their desire for domesticity. In the song "If Momma Was Married," the sisters echo their grandfather's wish that Rose would get married and settle down, so that the family would have togetherness without the need for constant performing on the road.[455] In postwar U.S. society, women were expected to perform femininity *in order to* settle down; by disregarding the formula, Rose has turned a means into an end.

Gypsy's three strippers have also disregarded this formula, using their sexual display as a way of earning money, and they act as feminine counterparts and mentors to the inexperienced Louise. Tessie Tura, Mazeppa, and Electra, teach Louise how to get and maintain the attention of the burlesque audience in "You Gotta Get a Gimmick." Though Mazeppa blows a horn, Electra covers her body in electric lights, and Tessie Tura adds balletic movement, they all bump and grind in skimpy costumes to win applause from a presumably male audience.[456] The song educates Louise in performance technique, inflected with 'feminine' display.

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[454] Ibid., 11.

[455] Ibid., 48.

[456] Ibid., 82-3.

What appears as social anxiety in home girl narratives manifests more directly as performance problems with understudies. Louise lacks stage presence, is often behind or out of sync with dance steps,[457] and has a too-quiet voice for the stage. In fact, Rose's first line is, "Sing out, Louise—sing out!"[458] Louise is the older sister, but as a child exhibits infantile behaviors like thumb-sucking and hanging onto the "star," the ironically more mature-acting Baby June.[459] She also thinks of herself as having no talent,[460] and Rose thinks of her as having no "nerve."[461]

Like home girls, Louise is shy and awkward around the boy she likes. Tulsa, described as the "best-looking and brightest boy in the act,"[462] makes Louise tongue-tied and giddy. After giving her some books for her birthday:

> TULSA: I should have wrapped them.
> LOUISE: *(Very touched.)* You don't have to wrap books.
> TULSA: Well—happy birthday, Plug.
> LOUISE: Happy birthday, Tulsa. I mean, you're welcome.

Not only is her speech as wrong-footed as her feet, but Louise is often interrupted while speaking. Her ideas are usually dismissed or cut short by more forceful characters (particularly Rose and June).[463] Louise also begins the song "If Momma Was Married" by equating normalcy with privacy: "If Momma was married we'd live in a house, / As private as private can be."[464]

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[457] Ibid., 5; 69.

[458] Ibid., 5.

[459] Ibid., 5-6.

[460] Ibid., 47; 77.

[461] Ibid., 68.

[462] Ibid., 22.

[463] Ibid., 23; 24; 66; 76; 77.

[464] Ibid., 48.

Combined with her penchant for sneaking off alone and watching others, this suggests that Louise seeks privacy as a relief from social anxiety—where society is configured as one giant audience.

After dancing with Tulsa in the private rehearsal of his new act, it seems that Louise has made a romantic connection with the young man. However, we soon learn that Tulsa has secretly married June—they have run off to start an act of their own.[465] Louise does not reveal her feelings; instead she watches her mother go into problem-solving mode to save the act. And the solution? Rose turns to Louise and announces: "I'm going to *make* you a star!"[466] At the moment when both Rose and Louise have been abandoned by their old act and makeshift family, Rose's showbiz imperative immediately shapes Louise's reaction. Seemingly without a say in the matter, Louise becomes the sole raw material upon which Rose labors at star-making.

But Louise had only wanted to be the star of Tulsa's show, as it were, and she is inexorably shaped by her physical contact with him during his dance routine. Tulsa needs "the girl" for his act, and as he sings, "*Louise has been watching and yearning and now, as Tulsa begins to dance, the yearning increases.*"[467] After a dynamic dance solo, Tulsa slows down and continues to paint the fantasy of the perfect act for Louise:

> TULSA: […] I start this step—double it—and she appears! All in white!
> *(He reaches out his hand to the invisible partner, and Louise—who has gotten up —holds out her hand, tentatively. He is unaware of her, unaware of her hopes, unaware she is following him about, visualizing herself as the partner for him.)*
> […] Now the tempo changes; all the lights come up; and I build for the finale!
> *(At last, he starts a step that Louise knows, and, clumsily, she starts to do it with him. At last, he notices and shouts)*

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[465] Ibid., 57.

[466] Ibid., 57-8.

[467] Ibid., 54.

> That's it, Louise! But do it over here! Give me your hand! Faster! […]
> *(She is dancing joyously, her happiness making up for her awkwardness. They end together—in triumph.)*[468]

Thus, Louise's desire for Tulsa temporarily turns her into "the girl." Following Tulsa's lead and (willingly) entering into his fantasy of perfection, her body is disciplined to enter the stage analog of a heterosexual union, their dance ending like a comedy. In doing so, Louise temporarily overcomes her awkwardness both in relation to Tulsa offstage and her usual onstage clumsiness. Seeing the otherwise boyish Louise fleetingly become "the girl" is an important step toward Rose later making her the star of the act, which requires feminization.

Rose's first attempt to transform Louise into the new star is a flop, as Louise, donning a blonde wig, is not a believable pseudo-June as she lacks her sister's sure-footedness, strong voice, and peppy affect.[469] So Rose—nominally inserting herself into the act—agrees to a new act: Rose Louise and Her Hollywood Blondes, where Louise's brown hair makes her unique and maintains her 'star' status.[470] (Still, Louise continues to wear slacks.[471]) Her final transformation into the bonafide star, Gypsy Rose Lee, results from the combined urging of Momma Rose and Louise seeing herself as "pretty" for the first time—as her reflection in the mirror shows her in a sophisticated dress and up-do.[472] More than this, Louise enjoys performing because she receives positive responses from the crowds at burlesque theaters. In her first striptease, she falters a bit but responds to her mother's "Sing out, Louise!" and "*Louise sings a little louder, a little truer.*

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[468] Ibid., 54.

[469] Ibid., 64-5.

[470] Ibid., 71.

[471] Ibid., 72.

[472] Ibid., 89-91; 94.

She looks around at the men out front: They like her. Her voice is stronger as she finishes."[473] All told, Gypsy Rose Lee is the combination of feminine aspects of June, the three strippers, and Rose. She uses June's old act (the song "Let Me Entertain You"), the strippers' advice about a gimmick (talking to the audience), and Rose (being "a lady," that is, "make 'em beg for more—and then *don't* give it to them!"[474]). More than this, however, Gypsy Rose Lee asserts her independence from her mother. She stuns Momma Rose by loudly arguing with her about her meddling.[475] In this sense, Louise transfers her emotional labor: the positivity and fantasy indulgence she once gave her mother is now given to the audience of men. But familial love is maintained by the final scene, in which Louise applauds her mother's performance. Rose admits that she was selfish, and Louise invites her to a party. In this way, Louise has become a kind of postwar American woman: like a home girl leaving home, she is independent from, yet still maintains loving ties to, her family (Rose); and she is now financially supported through affectively and sexually fulfilling her male suitors (a whole audience of them). Everything is in order, at least as far as Louise can see…[476]

Critical Reception of Louise

Reviews for the stage version of *Gypsy* overwhelmingly focus on its star, Ethel Merman as Momma Rose. Robert Coleman begins and ends his review praising "Our Ethel," writing that Merman gives "one of her most dynamic performances—and, brother, that's dynamic!"[477]

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[473] Ibid., 95.

[474] Ibid., 91.

[475] Ibid., 101-2.

[476] Ibid., 107-8.

[477] Robert Coleman, "'Gypsy' a Dynamic Musical," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 300.

Coleman remarks that Louise "went along for the ride," later noting that "Sandra Church is excellent as the shy, sensitive Gypsy who blossoms into a fabulous and wealthy take-it-off queen."[478] But most of his review concerns Merman and the more ebullient female performances: Jacqueline Mayro as Baby June, and Miria Karnilova, Faith Dane, and Chotzie Foley as the strippers Tessie Tura, Mazeppa, and Electra, respectively.[479]

While most reviewers similarly credit these dynamic characters with carrying the show, praising Louise almost in passing,[480] Richard Watts, Jr. attributes the show's success to the performances of both Ethel Merman and Sandra Church.[481] He is captivated by Rose's enduring optimism and likability despite her "completely selfish, merciless and unceasing […] efforts to dominate her helpless children."[482] But Watts gives the performance of Louise more coverage than most: "Nevertheless, while this is Miss Merman's show, her performance by no means thrusts young Sandra Church in the background. With remarkable deftness and variety, touching emotional honesty and notable personal attractiveness, Miss Church traces the development of

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[478] Ibid.

[479] Ibid.

[480] For instance, Brooks Atkinson calls Merman's Rose a "juggernaut" who "struts and bawls her way through [the show] triumphantly." He singles out the "wonderfully garish" performance of June as one full of "gusto." Atkinson then pauses to praise the "lovely performance" of Church as Louise, writing, "A slight young lady with small features and a delicate style of acting, she conveys with equal skill the shyness of the adolescent and the tough assurance of the lady who becomes a star"—moving abruptly to, "But 'Gypsy' is Miss Merman's show. [… Her] performance expresses her whole character—cocky and aggressive, but also sociable and good-hearted. Not for the first time in her career, her personal magnetism electrifies the whole theatre. For she is a performer of incomparable power." See "Theatre: Good Show!" in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 301. Also see Walter Kerr, "'Gypsy,'" in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 301; and John Chapman, "Miss Merman Has Her Best Role In 'Gypsy,' a Real-Life Musical," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 302.

[481] Richard Watts, Jr., "Ethel Merman Has Another Success," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 300.

[482] Ibid.

Louise from the shy and retiring child who stood meekly in her sister's shadow to the assured and successful Gypsy in a portrait of unfailing rightness."[483]

Of the New York critics, only John McClain of the *New York Journal American* is dissatisfied with the presentation of Louise/Gypsy Rose Lee. He writes, "In the final act Gypsy is briefly featured, but in what should be the monumental moment of the show—the emergence of Gypsy in full flower—she slinks quickly into the wings covered in heavy net foliage. Then enter Ma with her socko finish. It's tough to have two heroines: they both begin to bore you."[484] Just as it seems the unthinkable—a negative review of Merman—has happened, McClain corrects himself: "Of course, Miss Merman can never really bore anybody and she doesn't come close here. But I'm afraid Sandra Church, as […] Gypsy, does. It wasn't her fault as a performer, but what happened to her didn't seem very important."[485] Here, Gypsy Rose Lee's ascension pales with Momma Rose's powerful storyline, and the famous stripper has not stripped enough for McClain's satisfaction.

Overall, the New York theatre critics see Louise as a delicate, awkward character whose turn as a confident stripper is a triumph. All she or anyone else does, though, is out-shown and out-blown by Momma Rose's continual combustions. As we have seen in the stage reviews for plays featuring home girls, the more emotive, loud, and gesticulating characters are praised more consistently than the shy characters. In presenting Louise's arc from a non-talented performer into a charismatic one, and in presenting Momma Rose's über-charisma as a seductive,

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[483] Ibid.

[484] John McClain, "A Huge Night For Merman And Her Fans," in *New York Theatre Critics' Reviews: 1959*, ed. Rachel W. Coffin (New York: Critics' Theatre Reviews, 1959), 302.

[485] Ibid.

unstoppable, and laudable force, *Gypsy* reinforces the idea that shyness is a personal failure that risks financial ruin. That *Gypsy* was one of the most financially successful and beloved musicals of the 1950s doubly reinforces the triumph of confident performance.[486]

Unsurprisingly, scholars too have focused their analysis of *Gypsy* on Momma Rose, particularly Ethel Merman's rendition. Mentions of Louise typically tell us that the titular character (Gypsy Rose Lee) is actually a minor character compared to her forceful mother. Keith Garebian's *The Making of Gypsy*, for instance, describes the musical thus:

> Ostensibly about the metamorphosis of young Rose Louise Hovick from clumsy novice vaudevillian to the stylish ecdysiast Gypsy Rose Lee, it manages to bump her carefully aside in order that her mother, a benevolent demon of ambition, might shine out in her tough, gritty, playful individuality. Almost singlehandedly this character (with something of a rogue heroine about her) transforms what could have been a low-brow story into high art. In one undeniable sense, she is a larger-than-life representation of American Mom-ism, that syndrome that so bedevils many a generation that feel smothered by the hand that rocks the cradle […]. Yet, Rose is not grotesque; she is a human being, subject to her own chimeras of pain and travail, who transcends everything because of the hard-earned wisdom of surviving lost loves, poverty, and chaos. When her turn comes to dream for herself, she seizes it with the sort of rough readiness that we, not inappropriately, identify as the essence of American enterprise and opportunism.[487]

It seems that Louise does not participate in "American enterprise and opportunism" until she undergoes her transformation into Gypsy Rose Lee—but even then, she is seen as the extension of Momma Rose, whose outgoing, tough personality signals her 'Americanness.' Indeed, Garebian describes Louise's pivotal "self-discovery" of her own "latent beauty" in the mirror: "She becomes, in effect, the Cinderella of Rose's dream."[488] But if Rose's psychology overruns

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[486] *Gypsy* was the thirteenth longest running musical of its decade. See Geoffrey Holden Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from 'Show Boat' to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber, 2nd Edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), W32.

[487] Keith Garebian, *The Making of Gypsy* (Oakville and Buffalo: Mosaic, 1993), 12.

[488] Ibid., 48.

the musical, it is because she "is the most vividly drawn, rounded person in the play. It is really because of her personality that the play remains coherent, for her outrageousness is the only consistent tone in the script."[489] In other words, despite Louise's more recognizable character arc, Rose stays with us because her personality is more interesting than Louise's. (Garebian supports this reading with backstage knowledge: Sandra Church, who played Louise to Merman's Rose, "had to really work at making her shy, retiring, juvenile Louise register vividly."[490])

In his reading of Momma Rose's final number, "Rose's Turn," Jason Fitzgerald contemplates "musical theatre's star-making power," which has freed Louise/Gypsy from her mother, and trapped Rose in a self-destructive cycle.[491] While most of his analysis concerns Rose, Fitzgerald reads the ending of *Gypsy* as a role reversal, wherein Rose becomes childlike and Louise becomes maternal.[492] This is the result of Louise inhabiting an independent stage persona (Gypsy Rose Lee) which—unlike her previous roles in the vaudeville acts—was "*not* constructed by Rose."[493] By inhabiting and embracing a popular adult star persona, Louise has displaced Rose as both a "perpetual spectator" and a mother.[494] When Rose thus tries to turn herself into a star with "Rose's Turn"—but fails, as she performs for an empty theater—her vulnerability turns her into a childlike figure in need of love from the only audience left: Louise, who sincerely applauds. Though Fizgerald's reading does not make a point of it, the final role

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[489] Ibid., 51.

[490] Ibid., 109. Even performances of shyness cannot be too true to form, apparently.

[491] Jason Fitzgerald, "'I had a dream': 'Rose's Turn,' musical theatre and the star effigy," *Studies in Musical Theatre 3*, no. 3 (2009): 286; 290.

[492] Ibid., 286.

[493] Ibid., 290.

[494] Ibid.

'reversal' highlights the dual-track emotional and physical labor Louise provides throughout *Gypsy*: as an understudy—one who watches—she supports others in the form of giving them positive feedback and emulation; as a star, she gives the audience her positive attention and physical energy. Instead of trading one position for the other, Louise oscillates between giving herself *as* an audience member (for Momma) and giving herself *to* her audience.

Following the genre logic that musicals end in marriage, Raymond Knapp argues that, because Herbie does not sing much and eventually leaves, *Gypsy*'s 'marriage' is ultimately between Rose and Louise.[495] But unlike theorists who, as we will see, explore the queer dimensions of this mother/daughter union more fully, Knapp reads them in terms of identity formation. He sees *Gypsy* as a "quest narrative," where an inner ideal (embodied by Rose's idealism) aligns with an external performance (embodied by Louise-cum-Gypsy onstage).[496] Until Louise first refuses to perform as 'June,' her personality is "not fully formed," and she acts as a boy and retreats to the background in order to take *refuge* from Rose's overpowering will.[497] Louise's personality forms gradually as she asserts her own ideas, while also incorporating the performance material of others (e.g., June, Rose, the three strippers); by using bits of other performances in her own, and becoming comfortable onstage, Louise finally gains an identity separate from her sister and mother.[498] Here Knapp describes Louise as going from "shy" to "ladylike," suggesting that shyness is a sign of immaturity—and that performance competence is

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[495] Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity* (2006; repr., Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 217.

[496] Ibid., 21.

[497] Ibid., 223; 225.

[498] Ibid., 225-6.

a sign of maturity. But he also notes that Louise partially owes her strong persona (Gypsy) to her mother's "idealist drive conjoined with crass amorality," asserting that Louise's ladylike aura is thus "precarious."[499] Overall, both Rose and Gypsy falter during their big numbers ("Rose's Turn" and Gypsy's first strip, respectively), then recover as they become more familiar with the material and conditions of performing.[500] Just as Gypsy incorporates Rose's material into her act (June's song and patter in "Let Me Entertain You"), Rose incorporates Gypsy's striptease into her performance.[501] Knapp therefore sees Rose and Louise/Gypsy as having interdependent personalities which show us "how identity involves a learning process as well as a quest—through which one observes, imitates, and ultimately owns what one imitates by performing it, thereby making it one's own even though originally it may have been only borrowed."[502] Thus, Louise has learned to perform her own femininity.[503] Considered in Goffman's formulation of the trainer and the performer, Louise (the performer) is bothered by Rose (the trainer) at the story's

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[499] Ibid., 221; 223.

[500] Ibid., 228.

[501] Ibid.

[502] Ibid.

[503] More-so than other critics, Knapp's analysis traces the development of the sister act material into a stripper's gimmick—and finds traces of these gimmicks in *Gypsy*'s child acts. (The costuming includes one little girl covered in balloons, whom Rose threatens with her hat pin, an image akin to Sally Rand's "bubble dance" in the 1930s, and those of her predecessor, Noel Toy.) Besides costuming, Knapp observes that foreshadowing lyrics like "I will do some tricks" are cloaked by Louise's soft voice. By not 'singing out,' child Louise obscures what adult Louise reveals as Gypsy Rose Lee; 219-20. Tough economic conditions brought on by the death of vaudeville mean that burlesque becomes a viable option for Louise and Rose, while the audience is primed for such a transition: "stripping is but a baby step beyond the emphasis on feminine display that has always lain close to the heart of show business in America, especially when—as is often the case when a young girl is a featured performer—a hint of perverse voyeurism is already part of the package;" 218. So Knapp argues that *Gypsy* draws "a *connecting* rather than a *dividing* line between striptease and accepted modes of performing femininity," reflecting not just a stage mother's opportunism but an extreme rendering of the "societal expectations for the presentation of femininity;" 220. Louise is not just the understudy to June, then, but to a tradition of feminine display on- and offstage.

end because Rose is a constant reminder of Louise's long and awkward learning process—which stands in deep contrast to, and exposes the artificiality of, Gypsy Rose Lee's polished, sophisticated image.[504]

In the world of *Gypsy*, shyness is an obstacle to performing femininity. Tracing Louise's development into a woman from another angle, D.A. Miller analyses what musical theatre means for himself as a gay man and for a community of gay men; he sympathizes with Louise insofar as she is "boy-Louise." In *Gypsy*, boys and men feature only as assistants to the girls and women who own the feminized space of the musical stage.[505] Miller argues that Louise suffers onstage because the stage only cares about girls and she's effectively a boy.[506] But unlike other boys onstage, Louise can always strip to prove/reveal her femininity;[507] therefore, she has access to the privileged feminized space. Likewise, women watching *Gypsy* (or other shows) do not feel deprived of performing as do male spectators, because women are *allowed* to perform, and identify with the star "giving it her all" to the audience, because they play that "martyr" role in real life.[508] Still, Miller concedes that women's 'privilege' to enact femininity onstage recalls the societal expectation to enact feminine gender codes offstage (e.g., the receptionist who daily makes herself appear glamorous for a decidedly unglamorous job)—which shows that "female preeminence" on the stage is a utopian vision that does not exist elsewhere.[509] Thus, Miller reads

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[504] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 101.

[505] D.A. Miller, *Place for Us*, 71.

[506] Ibid., 74.

[507] Ibid., 75.

[508] Ibid., 87-8.

[509] Ibid., 89.

Louise's mirror scene as "invidious," having different meanings for different spectators, and arousing both envy and ire.[510] He further suggests that women only appear onstage as signposts for heterosexual desire which secretly allows male spectators to enjoy the musicality, the dancing, the spectacle—in short, the femininity—of musical theatre.[511] Hence, Miller reminds us that Tulsa "needs" a girl for his act, but he doesn't say he "desires" one; so his dance duet with boy-Louise takes on homoerotic dimensions.[512] Invested with personal meaning, part memoir, Miller's analysis thus gives some voice to the gendered expectations which Louise takes on (of becoming glamorized, of "giving her all" to the audience) as a girl/woman, while also turning her into an analog for a boy/gay male spectator/D.A. Miller. In a sense, this reading compellingly gestures to Louise's gender queerness, while Miller's gay male perspective also side-steps her status as a gender queer young woman.

Enter Stacy Wolf, who reads *Gypsy* as a site of lesbian and feminist pleasure. Wolf starts from the proposition that Rose (as ghosted by Merman's star persona) always already has a butch style with Jewish inflections, masculinity in her voice, gesture, and aggressive behavior.[513] Rose creates a queer family, communal rather than nuclear,[514] and—referencing D.A. Miller—Wolf asserts that *Gypsy* presents a "gynocentric world," full of single women, and ending with a two-woman partnership in Louise and Rose.[515] Thus, for Wolf, *Gypsy* is not about heterosexual

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[510] Ibid., 88.

[511] Ibid., 90.

[512] Ibid., 100; 103.

[513] Stacy Wolf, *A Problem Like Maria: Gender and Sexuality in the American Musical* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 90; 115.

[514] Ibid., 118.

[515] Ibid., 108.

relationships, as Rose tries to evade coupling by postponing her marriage to Herbie again and again. Female characters are also seen backstage together in various stages of undress, their bodies in close proximity to one another, watching each other.[516] And though burlesque generally stripped women of the voices they had used onstage prior to the rise of striptease (instead raising the status of the body onstage), Louise *and* Rose gain a voice through Gypsy's unique patter striptease and "Rose's Turn," an imagined performance and confessional.[517] Finally, Wolf observes that "*Gypsy* portrays sex as work," an idea which taps into Cold War anxieties about increasing numbers of women in the workforce and increasing expressions of female sexuality (such as Alfred Kinsey's report on women's sexual practices in 1953):[518]

> Louise gains monetary power through her labor, and hers is the labor of the performance of sexual allure, as she transforms herself from gawky chorus girl to star. She not only combines sex and work but she does so through the mockery of male heterosexual desire, singing, 'Let me entertain you, let me see you smile,' showing no skin in a teasing striptease. *Gypsy* offers non-normative ways of seeing women's sexuality and women's bodies.[519]

Combined with Miller's reading of the female star's "giving it her all" to the audience, we might add to Wolf's analysis that, by showing "sex as work" (and theatrical performance as physical and emotional work), *Gypsy* allows sex and performance to operate independently from the desire of the performer. In other words, the carefully navigated sexual allure and affect which Gypsy Rose Lee gives her audiences are *labor*, not necessarily indices of her sexual desire as audiences might prefer to believe.

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[516] Ibid., 123.

[517] Ibid., 124.

[518] Ibid.

[519] Ibid., 125.

Erin Hurley unpacks the sex work in *Gypsy* through her analysis of theatrical performance as not just physical but also emotional labor. She reads female performers as "the primary feeling technology" in the "service economy" of theatre—that is, they use their bodies to project emotions to the spectators' bodies, thereby altering the spectators' own emotions/bodies, or "feeling bodies."[520] As in a service economy, the performer must appear to be an eager participant. Hurley notes how the desire to participate inflects the recurring song "Let Me Entertain You," from "the child performers' (cute) desire to please by entertaining," to burlesque, where it "assumes its full affective, sexual significance."[521] For Hurley, "Let Me Entertain You" also sounds like an "audition plea," which underlines the stressful precariousness of this freelance work: "Louise's story, which transpires over a period of some years spent on the road searching for fortune and fame, highlights the kind of repetitive, not always fulfilling yet personally and emotionally taxing labour that is so many actors' experience of theatre work."[522] Explicitly connecting the body-work of theatre to the emotional work it requires, Hurley understands the economic implications of a feminized theatrical space. Hence, *Gypsy* presents "the feeling-labours required especially of female talent, a talent pool always already associated with bodily pleasures and feeling-labour because of its gender."[523] Thought of this way, when Rose tells June to, "Smile, Baby!"[524] she instructs her daughter to project the eagerness to entertain, thereby obscuring the labor involved in performing. Of women's emotional labor,

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[520] Hurley, *Theatre & Feeling*, 68-9.

[521] Ibid., 67.

[522] Ibid., 68.

[523] Ibid., 67.

[524] Laurents, Sondheim, and Styne, *Gypsy*, 6.

Hochschild writes, "As with doing housework well, the trick is to erase any evidence of effort, to offer only the clean house and the welcoming smile."[525]

The Striptease and *Playboy* Culture

Given the push toward marriage seen in the home girl plays and films, we might ask why otherwise conservative Broadway audiences of 1959 accepted Louise's transformation into a stripper as a kind of triumph. There are several reasons.[526] To begin, Gypsy Rose Lee was a celebrity at the time, still occasionally touring her world-famous strip show, but also appearing as a host and panel member of television shows, and publishing best-selling memoirs to boot.[527] As such, the story had interest as the rags-to-riches tale of a real-life star—and censoring Louise's actual means to fame would run counter to common knowledge. Next, the rise of Gypsy Rose Lee in the narrative marks Louise's independence from her overbearing mother. Rachel Shteir sees Laurents, Styne, and Sondheim's (re)framing of Gypsy's biography in these mothered terms as a manifestation of "Cold War morality and their own *meshugas*"—that is, issues with their own overbearing mothers.[528] Considering the demonization of assertive and overly-attentive mothers in the postwar era, Louise's total embrace of stripping—to the point of taking it on permanently and devising her own acts, while refusing her mother's help—incidentally puts

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[525] Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 167.

[526] While there has long been an association between actresses, dancers, and prostitutes—given female performers' status as bold, itinerant, and usually single women, and the circulation of prostitutes in theaters and in theatre districts; some women also moved between these professions—postwar audiences and censors had not necessarily embraced this as a positive association. (For example, the association between prostitutes and female performers is portrayed as shameful and fraught in Chaplin's *Limelight*, discussed later in this analysis.) Thorough treatments of connection between actresses, dancers, and prostitutes appear in Kirsten Pullen's *Actresses and Whores: On Stage and in Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), and in the *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work, Vol. 1*, ed. Melissa Hope Ditmore (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2006).

[527] Rachel Shteir, *Gypsy: The Art of the Tease* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 159; 164.

[528] Ibid., 168.

Rose 'in her place,' more on the sidelines than usual. Still, it would be remiss to omit major changes occurring in the rhetoric surrounding men's, and in some ways women's, sexuality in the years following Hugh Hefner's publication of *Playboy Magazine* in 1953.

Though scholars like Carrie Pitzulo make recuperative readings of the allowance which *Playboy* made for female sexuality in a time when American women were not supposed to display such desire outside of marriage,[529] certainly the construction of "the playmate" upholds normative aspects of ideal heterosexual white femininity in the postwar era. As Elizabeth Fraterrigo explains, "*Playboy* promoted prolonged, commitment-free bachelorhood with the implication that delaying adult responsibility would ultimately strengthen marital bonds. The playboy and his bevy of female companions challenged the conservative, family-centered society without upsetting the gender order; the women in *Playboy* were not wives and mothers, but they remained supportive and solicitous to men."[530] Akin to the professional young men to whom the magazine appealed, playmates were often said to be career girls who worked as secretaries, flight attendants, or shop-girls—"physically attractive and sexually willing" customer service agents who provided service with a smile.[531] As in Hochschild's analysis, women's labor involved in professional, emotional, and sexual relations is obscured by the positive affect and enthusiasm expressed by their smiles.

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[529] Carrie Pitzulo, *Bachelors and Bunnies: The Sexual Politics of* Playboy (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 40.

[530] Fraterrigo, Playboy *and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 5.

[531] Ibid., 4.

Overall, the playmate was meant to be seen as the girl next door (read: white), "nice"—that is, attainable and not too sophisticated.[532] Hefner wanted the playmates in his magazine to show just the right amount of nudity, "exposed, and yet covered."[533] Fraterrigo notes that "Hefner's espoused preference in women mirrored the cinematic shift away from strong, independent female characters. Certain actresses 'never had any sexual effect on me, the *femmes fatales*, the old ones, or the intelligent ones,' he claimed, explaining that he did not know 'what to do' with an intelligent woman."[534] Instead, Hefner championed varieties of niceness—"I like innocent, affectionate, faithful girls"[535]—which contributed to playmates who seemed at once urbane (professional young women not reliant on men for money) and traditional (affectively open and giving; physically covered and only 'hinting' at availability).

Blaming national problems on changing postwar gender roles, Hefner opined that men and women naturally had complementary gender roles but in a hierarchical structure where men were naturally dominant.

> You know it goes back to the very beginning of time. The man goes out and kills a saber-toothed tiger while the woman stays at home and washes out the pots. Fair, unfair, good, bad, or indifferent, the roles were clearly defined. Sadly, as they become less defined and more confused, we get into a situation such as we have today with a tremendous amount of national neuroses and real confusion in terms of the woman in a state of emotional flux. She wants to dominate the male, and the man gets into a position in which he feels dominated, and thus the woman loses identity. Without it things begin to be very unhappy. Marriages collapse, etc.[536]

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[532] Ibid., 42.

[533] Hugh Hefner, correspondence with photographer Russ Meyer, March 29, 1955. Quoted in Fraterrigo, Playboy *and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 41-2.

[534] Fraterrigo, Playboy *and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 42.

[535] Diana Lurie, "An Empire Built on Sex," *Life*, October 29, 1965, 71.

[536] Simon Nathan, "About the Nudes in *Playboy*," *U.S. Camera*, April 1962, 69-70.

Hefner also made clear that his magazine was for the enjoyment and edification of heterosexual males. During the Red Scare's concurrent Lavender Scare, which saw suspected homosexuals fired from government and military positions, and subjected to surveillance and harassment from state authorities, Hefner remarked, "A picture of a beautiful woman is something that a fellow of any age ought to be able to enjoy. […] If he doesn't, then that's the kid to watch out for."[537] He also asserted that "there were two kinds of boys—those who liked to pull the wings off flies and those who liked girls. We confess to a preference in the latter. The deviates, the perverts, the serious juvenile delinquents—they're not interested in healthy boy-girl relationships."[538] Here, Hefner positions his magazine as a locus of healthy heterosexual desire and consumption for men (with the unintended insinuation that the spreads of sexually alluring women were not meant for the enjoyment of lesbians). Thus, *Playboy* encouraged a fantasy of impermanent and unrestricted heterosexual encounters wherein the man led and the woman followed—all of which ultimately 'cured' the nation of its 'neuroses.' Hefner's imaginary was therefore linked to the Cold War rhetorical project of strengthening men's minds against the threat of Soviet Communism through shows of unfettered heterosexual virility and capitalist acquisition. Moreover, by naturalizing traditional gender hierarchies that emphasized the 'natural' sexual prowess of men and 'natural' cooperation of women, the magazine and its ilk obscured the emotional and physical labor of the playmates—the work of achieving sexual appeal; particularly in achieving Hefner's demands for both modern sexiness and conservative femininity.

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[537] Mike Wallace, "Mike Wallace Interviews *Playboy*," *Playboy*, December 1957, 83.

[538] Ibid., 83.

Gypsy aligns with the *Playboy* imaginary in several ways. First, because the magazine was marketed to upwardly mobile men,[539] it would have shared much of the same audience as postwar Broadway: the managerial class. Second, in her final rendering, Gypsy is both urbane—by the end she speaks French phrases and makes intellectual allusions—and traditional in her humble roots, her loyalty to her mother, and her embrace of a 'ladylike' striptease which never shows too much of her body. And third, we know from Louise's story arc that she is a kind, supportive young woman, who admits to enjoying her striptease ("I'm beginning to like this!").[540] Although she defies Momma Rose in some ways, Louise's independent will is tempered by her invisible affective labors. Spectators are made to believe that Gypsy (and the actress playing her) loves performing for them and giving them some access to her body. Much of the unswerving faithfulness she had toward her mother in the first act is transferred to the audience, which is now worth "singing out" for. This understudy's transition to stardom mimics the common narrative of a girl maturing into womanhood, as she turns away from parental authority and embraces the desires of men outside her family unit. So, in overcoming her shyness to strip, Louise/Gypsy has achieved a more acceptable form of femininity because she has fully entered into the circulation of the theatre economy and heterosexual matrix; she has made her feeling body accessible and, in so doing, strikes the audience as a "nice girl." Although she denies the audience full access to her body, we might think of her striptease as another kind of "mask of shyness" which pleases others through the performative denial of self. In this rubric, Gypsy pleases her viewers by acting coquettishly, talking to them, looking at them, and titillating

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[539] Fraterrigo, Playboy *and the Making of the Good Life in Modern America*, 49.

[540] Laurents, Sondheim, and Styne, *Gypsy*, 96.

them with the fantasy of how far she might go in moments of self-revelation. Like a *Playboy* playmate, Gypsy stops short of full nudity, but this denial fuels desire because it makes no negative or difficult demands on her spectators. Because she is a competent and confident performer, everything she does—or does not do—seems to be about *them*. This other-directed attentiveness neutralizes any threat of sexual aggression or radical self-assertion on the stripper's (or playmate's) part. From this standpoint, it becomes as easy to project different intentions onto Louise/Gypsy as it is to project thoughts onto an inert *Playboy* playmate. One could say she is just putting on an act; one could say she strips because she really wants to. Or maybe a bit of both. (Or neither. But who would say *that*?)

Louise on the Screen

The 1962 film adaptation of *Gypsy*, directed by Mervyn LeRoy and scripted by Leonard Spigelgass, makes the stage musical more cinematic by changing locales and giving Momma Rose more say in the form of narrative voiceover; but Louise's storyline largely remains the same. The film's use of deep focus allows Louise to stay in the background or to direct our attention to her as a sight unseen who silently watches others. And close-ups and other camera angles give a more pointed insight into her desires and human relationships. For example, after Rose tells June that she cannot work alone with the New York producer T. T. Gertzinger to cultivate a solo career, Louise comforts June, kneeling down before her little sister who is perched on a chair. June sits at a higher level and angle in the frame, and we see Louise—ever the supporting character to her sister's 'stardom'—looking up to June, and vice versa. The younger sister drops her pout for a moment to say, "You never worry about yourself." Until

Louise's transformation into Gypsy is complete, she does not visually appear as situated above other characters.

As Tulsa shows Louise the new act he has been practicing, she likewise sits at a lower angle and level. In a long shot, we see Louise hunched meekly on a bench, watching Tulsa—upright and energetic—taking up all the space in the alley outside the theater. The moment Louise starts to imagine that she might be "the girl" for Tulsa's act, we see a head-on medium shot of her brown and beige hair, skin, and costume, against the brightly colored alley. She says, "Makeup could help…," looking more plain than the red, blue, and green barrels behind her. When Tulsa imagines his girl—"She appears all in white!"—he remains in the foreground, stretching his hand out ahead of him. But at this angle, his hand holds Louise's head as she stands up in the background. Here, we are given a medium shot of Louise's "yearning" (from the stage directions), and she stands—unseen by him—with her arms out to Tulsa, looking hypnotized by his performance. In another long shot, Louise's body seems to sway next to Tulsa's, as they are on the same visual plane; but again, he is in the foreground, far from her. When Tulsa pretends to lift his imaginary girl, Louise's shoulders and chest arch as though she's being lifted. And on the third lift, we see Louise in a medium closeup, clasping her hands to her chest and leaning her head back in ecstasy. While they do dance together when Louise physically joins Tulsa in the same plane and takes his hand, the intimacy created between the two through camera distance and angles makes his later parting words more stinging. In the film, June has married a different chorus boy, but Tulsa still leaves the act. In their goodbyes, he tells Louise, "I would've loved June to be my partner." And it almost sounds as though he said "you," not "June." With Louise's eyes welling up with tears, the oblivious young man says breezily:

"You're a great girl. You're the cat's whiskers. That's what we all say. You're just like one of the boys." Louise laughs nervously, thanks Tulsa, and quickly walks away with her eyes averted.

The film also gives us Louise-as-Gypsy's perspective as she strips for the first time. Before she steps onto the stage, we see a long shot of her back and the curtain opens to reveal a crowded house of men looking at her. We then see Gypsy from a low angle, as if looking up at her from the front row. With an uncomfortable look on her face, she looks left—men—and right—more men. Even more than the stage version, then, the film adaptation encourages us to feel the performance pressure and unfamiliar experience Louise faces.

One crucial element of the film adaptation that seems to go unnoticed by many critics is the subtle ending change. The stage version has reconciled Rose and Gypsy, but Rose, unseen by Gypsy, sneaks back to steal the spotlight once more. Only the spotlight, by going out in her face, can end the show; Momma Rose is not a willing participant in the *end* of *any show*. In the film, though, mother and daughter walk offstage with their arms wrapped around each other, laughing. Rose willingly relinquishes the spotlight and takes her rightful place as a mother who can "let go." Thus the film subtly reforms the stage mother and allows the audience to feel the daughter's 'triumph' more definitively. (Of course, we might also see this as a lesser punishment than Hollywood films of the era typically dole out to headstrong, deviant women—many of whom are killed, imprisoned, or institutionalized.) *Gypsy* the film elevates the understudy's victory over shyness, her mother, and obscurity, above the theatre version's reluctance to let go of Rose's backstage stardom.

Most reviews of the film adaptation of *Gypsy* spend most of their space negatively contrasting Rosalind Russell's performance of Momma Rose with Ethel Merman's stage

portrayal,[541] while Natalie Wood's Louise is given a largely positive reception—even if some reviewers find her an unconvincing stripper. Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* notes that, just as Russell becomes a "drag" on the show,

> Natalie Wood emerges as the daughter growing up to be something more than a footstool for her mother, even though it is just a burlesque queen. She actually makes something stalwart and inspiring of the limpid little thing who has played a decided second fiddle to her mother's favorite in the early scenes. And, except towards the end, when she affects a bit of a Gallic air, Miss Wood puts solidity and sparkle into the ratty goings on.[542]

In other words, Louise's transformation into a more independent person redeems the film from the weight of Momma Rose's sheer will.

Other critics, however, see Louise as an "awfully pretty" but ultimately less powerful character who is steamrolled by Rose, and whose transformation is bemusing rather than redeeming.[543] As *Variety* remarks on Wood's performance: "it is not easy to credit her as a stripper but it is interesting to watch her, under LeRoy's guidance, go through the motions in a burlesque world that is prettied up in soft-focus and a kind of phony innocence. Any resemblance of the art of strip, and its setting, to reality is, in this film, purely fleeting."[544]

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[541] For example, Bosley Crowther writes: "THAT tornado of a stage mother that Ethel Merman portrayed on Broadway in the musical comedy 'Gypsy' comes out little more than a big wind in the portrayal that Rosalind Russell gives her in the transfer of the comedy to the screen. […] No, it takes a lot of magic to make this old biddy bearable, and Miss Russell doesn't have it for us." (Note how this contains a negative judgment of Rose as a single woman, a spinster type.) See "Screen: 'Gypsy' Arrives: Role of Mother Played by Rosalind Russell," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Nov. 2, 1962.

[542] Ibid.

[543] *The New Yorker*'s Brendan Gill writes, "[*Gypsy*] tells the story of a psychopathic mother who, in a campaign of self-aggrandizement that would have made Napoleon blanch, uses and destroys everyone within sound of her extremely loud voice. […] Natalie Wood and Karl Malden [Herbie] are Miss Russell's fellow-stars, and have almost nothing to do but be ranted at and, once or twice, rant back. Miss Wood is awfully pretty, though, and I had the feeling that she and Mr. Malden would have liked to step out of character and demand, 'What on earth are *we* doing in this hateful botch?'" See "The Current Cinema: Family Matters," *The New Yorker*, November 10, 1962, 235.

[544] Staff, "Review: 'Gypsy," *Variety*, December 31, 1961.

Arthur Knight of *The Saturday Review* prefers Natalie Wood's performance to Rosalind Russell's, seemingly because Rose's oversized antics belong more properly on a stage:

> It would seem that Miss Russell's greatest concern these days is to make it clear that, whatever role she may assume, she is only *acting*. But acting and being are two different things when a camera is looking on, and consequently her Rose emerges as an irritating travesty on all stage mothers rather than a deftly drawn portrait of one. Natalie Wood, who is rapidly becoming quite an actress herself, fares far better in the title role.[545]

As we have seen with the reception of home girl characters, film critics typically appreciate the quieter characters more than do theatre critics, which may be because more internalized characters appear to be "being," not "acting." Considering the well-worn myth that the face and eyes are "windows" to the film subject's interiority,[546] we might also view critics' attraction to Wood's relative lack of pretense not just as a claim about authenticity, but one about access and accessibility. Closeups which allow us to see her subtle expressions suggest—along with the film's narrative—that we are repeatedly invited into an intimate realm with Louise/Gypsy. Because she's less of a brash character than Momma Rose, and "awfully pretty," the seeming intimacy is desirable.

Overall, *Gypsy* presents us with a shy understudy who transforms into an ironic stripper—ironic because she hides even more than she reveals: most of all, the demands on a boyish girl to perform as a woman. Louise overcomes her shyness *qua* professional inefficiency by applying her sister's act and mother's performance tips to striptease, thus completing her transition from understudy to star, and from tomboy to woman. Although Louise/Gypsy remains single, the musical and its film adaptation present her as unabashedly heterosexual through her longing for

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[545] Arthur Knight, "Bring on the Dancing Girls," *The Saturday Review*, December 8, 1962, 50.

[546] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society, 2nd ed.* (London: Routledge, 2013), 98.

Tulsa, her wish that her mother would marry Herbie and 'settle down,' her stripping flirtation with her male audience, and her sexy photoshoot with a male photographer—all of which are tinged with her positive affect and eagerness. When she talks intimately with a "friend" on the phone backstage in one of the last scenes, the stage and film in no way suggest that this unseen person is anything but a man. Louise/Gypsy has in many ways bucked her mother's overwhelming influence, but she has transferred her energies to the male audience. Now a consummate performer and adult woman, she gives physical and emotional labor to, and does not make any serious demands on, any of the men we see. This once shy, inefficient understudy has learned the game of heterosexual performance and, in the process, has been discursively contained through her willingness to play it.

In somewhat of a twist on the common narrative of postwar gender relations, Charles Chaplin's *Limelight*, our next chapter's case study, tells the story of a quiet ballerina who has lost the ability to move her legs and is coached back to health and stage success by an aging male clown. Here, shyness is presented as the precursor to physical and, with it, career collapse. Although the music hall clown acts as a caretaker and mentor to the ballerina—thus providing emotional and physical labor to her—he also acts as a psychiatrist who urges her to reunite with a missed romantic prospect—thus reinforcing the imbalanced power dynamics between male doctors and female patients, and re-inscribing the supposed curative properties of heterosexual romance. What's more, as the old clown deteriorates, the ballerina replaces him as the primary caretaker, restoring the film's early reversal of gender roles to their normative order.

CHAPTER 6: PHYSICAL COLLAPSE IN *LIMELIGHT*

Thereza (Terry) Ambrose

Set in 1914 London, Charles Chaplin's *Limelight* (1952) follows Calvero, a washed-up music hall clown, who saves the life of Thereza, a suicidal ballerina. After Calvero nurses Terry back to health and inspires her to dance again, her determination inspires Calvero to give up drinking and return to the music hall stage—but a flop drives him back to the bottle. The film then asks: can Terry save Calvero? Can they both make a comeback on the stage? Though Calvero and Terry are not initially recognizable as having a typical star-understudy relationship, principally because they are not in the same performing profession or pursuing the same stage role (though they thrice perform together in the film), they do have a star-understudy relationship in the sense that one is an old, setting star, and the other a young, rising star who seeks to learn about performing. Thereza is inspired by Calvero's stardom, determination, and performance abilities, and he imparts his life wisdom to her. As with other stars who look back at their understudies in self-reflective ways, Calvero also studies Terry; her performance abilities inspire him to pursue his professional aspirations despite the setbacks which often accompany the end of a star's lifecycle (substance abuse and indifferent or hostile audiences). Diegetically, too, Terry overtakes Calvero as the new star, seen most successfully performing onstage while the fading star continually watches from the wings.

This chapter explores how *Limelight* constructs shyness as a precursor to physical collapse and the inability to perform onstage. As Calvero assumes the role of Terry's psychiatrist, he draws her out of her silence with a 'talking cure,' and diagnoses the psychological cause of her lameness. In this sense, the physical and emotional support he provides her are

'masculinized' by his adoption of the therapist role and the typical male doctor-female patient dynamic, which places the male doctor in a position of authority and the female patient in a position of dependence and submission. As Terry's health improves and she regains her dancing abilities, Calvero's health and performing abilities decline, and the ballerina becomes the clown's devoted caretaker and would-be wife, which further positions her in a normatively feminine role. Calvero ultimately distances himself from Terry, repeatedly encouraging her to rekindle her previous infatuation with a young male pianist, thereby acting as a match-making and normalizing force for the film, the vehicle by which another shy girl is saved.

Terry's Shy Girl Traits

Terry's lameness marks her difference and is especially inflected with tragic sentimentality since she is a ballerina unable to walk or dance. She tells Calvero that this physical limitation was one of her reasons for attempting suicide.

For much of the film, Terry is bed-ridden—part of her solitary pastime. As she sleeps or sits in bed, Calvero moves around her in the frame. When she's awake, she watches him and acts as his audience—for both his grandiose motivational speeches and the bits of comedy he does to cheer her up. Chaplin also visually isolates Terry by using many closeups of her face from different angles. First, we see a shot of her through a peephole (when Calvero first discovers her fainted from the gas oven), and later, the landlady spies her through Calvero's keyhole. These shots set her apart as a point of visual interest, but also highlight Terry's immobility and despair.

Once Terry has begun to dance again, we see her dance solo at an audition, in a ballet, and on tour. These shots emphasize the specialness of her talent, and her triumph over physical

debility and depression. In a sense, her self-centered pastime is recovery—both physical and psychological.

There are not many other women in the film to act as models of womanhood for Terry, but the boardinghouse landlady, Mrs. Alsop, makes it clear that Terry's quiet disposition, illness, and status as a single women living in the city, all mark her as suspicious. Gossiping to her cantankerous-looking old friend, Mrs. Alsop says of Terry, "I knew she was no good. That *quiet* type. Still waters that run deep usually stink." And when Calvero asks the landlady who the young woman is, she replies, "Said she was a working girl. That's what they *all* say. […] You watch out for that hussy. She's no good, and what's more she's been sick ever since she came here." Calvero quips, "It wouldn't be dandruff, would it?" (It turns out to have been rheumatic fever, not venereal disease.)

As Mrs. Alsop's insinuations about Terry suggest, the film is haunted by the image of the prostitute.[547] While Terry is shy and awkward around a young man she fancies, Chaplin juxtaposes these scenes with a tracking shot at the back of a theater, where, without dialogue, a lone woman confidently sidles up to men (one leaves alone, and one leaves with her). We never see her again nor learn who she is, but the woman occupies a deviant position of being too-forward, brazenly confident with strange men. On a spectrum of femininity, then, Terry is positioned as too withdrawn, Mrs. Alsop is talkative and makes a great show of decorum, and the prostitute at the back of the theater is positioned as too aggressive. As a kind of paternal figure steeped in romantic idealism, Calvero urges Terry to be open to the possibility of a young man's

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[547] As Erin Hurley notes, actresses have long been associated with prostitution, due to their circulation in public spaces and to their use of their own bodies as labor to procure income. See *Theatre & Feeling*, 65-6. This subject is more thoroughly treated by Pullen in *Actresses and Whores*, 2-4; and by Ditmore in *Encyclopedia of Prostitution and Sex Work*, 9-11 and 55-6.

true affections. The clown also protects the ballerina's reputation by pretending to be her husband.

We learn of Terry's social anxiety in flashbacks of her feeling shy around a young American composer, Neville, who used to buy paper at the stationery shop where she worked. He was poor and she wanted to lend him money, but she didn't know how to tell him.

Terry also has recurring problems with her legs—she feels paralyzed—before going onstage for her first big solo on opening night of the ballet. Here, her performance anxiety mirrors not knowing how to act around Neville. She is stuck in the wings.

The young ballerina has repeated failed romantic encounters with Neville. Calvero asks Terry if she's ever been in love. She giggles, looks away, and says, "not really. […] I think it was more a feeling of pity." When Calvero presses her for more, she insists, "I hardly knew the man. It was something I built up in my own mind." At this point, we see a flashback of Terry working in the stationery store. "He seemed so lonely, so helpless and shy." Terry helps him in various ways: not letting another man butt in front of him in line, giving him extra paper, and once giving him extra change. Here, there is a head-on closeup of Terry giving Neville his change, looking him in the eye, smiling, and slightly bowing her head—keeping her gaze on him/the camera lens/us—as if hoping to make a connection. But she never knew if he noticed.

Some nights, Terry would stand outside Neville's house, listening to him play the piano. And at their last meeting in the shop, she was fired for giving him extra change from the till. She saw him only from afar after that, when his symphony was played at the Albert Hall "with a great success." Calvero concludes: "Of course you're in love with him." And he predicts that she and Neville will meet again and confess their love to one another.

At her solo audition, Neville is coincidentally the ballet's composer and accompanist for auditions. He recognizes Terry but she acts cooly and coy. That day, Terry bumps into Neville at lunch. He tells her that he remembers her as the girl from the stationery shop, "very shy, reticent; she seldom spoke. But her smile was warm and appealing." He also remarks that he remembers all her many kindnesses. By this time, however, Terry has fallen in love with Calvero and tells Neville that she is about to be "an old married lady."

As Neville is about to leave for the army (drafted in World War I), he tries to kiss Terry—the trope once more of physically marking the shy girl. She stops him, and he begs, "Say you love me, just a little." Slumped near the door, Calvero overhears Neville tell Terry that she doesn't love Calvero; she only pities him. She denies this, but Calvero has already gone upstairs.

When Terry tells Calvero she wants to marry him, he laughs it off, and says she would be "wasted on an old man." Then he adds that Terry and Neville "look so well together." That day, Calvero leaves her. Hence, Terry ultimately has failed romantic encounters with both Neville and Calvero.

Calvero's physical contact with Terry greatly shapes her recovery. Saying, "Dance, dance, dance!" Calvero delicately spins Terry around the room, as she hobbles to keep up with him. He teases her by letting go, but catches her—they both laugh. This shot dissolves to another day of this activity, where Terry is more upright and balanced. Calvero says, "Come on, come on!" as she takes a small step toward him without supporting herself. In the next scene, she continues, like a toddler, to lean on sturdy objects. Inspired by all his "preaching and moralizing," Calvero relates that he hasn't been drinking and feels confident about an upcoming performance. But he flops. Back home, when he says he regrets not being drunk for the performance, Terry

emphatically tells him not to give into his demons and to "Fight!" In her fervor, Terry has stood up without support. She laughs and cries, "I'm walking! I'm walking! I'm walking!" Terry's first triumph occurs at Calvero's low point. Now she is determined to get a dancing job and support him. "You and me—together." Later, he is drunk, immobile as Terry had been, and she moves about the room, taking care of Calvero.

On opening night of the ballet, Terry's legs give out right before she goes onstage for her solo. In horror, she cries to Calvero, "I can't go on!" He slaps her, yelling, "Get on that stage!" She is shocked but goes out and performs exceptionally well. In both the domestic and theatrical space, Calvero disciplines Terry's body to perform, to go forward, to take care of her audience and—by extension—of him. He is the physical catalyst for her transformation.

In addition to training Terry's body to walk again, Calvero gets at the root of her emotional/mental malaise by psychoanalyzing her. His pithy explanation of her leg problems as psychosomatic manifestations of shame allows her to overcome the physical and mental issues causing her performance anxieties. Terry's performance triumphs are her dance audition and her ballet solo (which is repeated at the film's end). Her ascension is marked by Calvero's physical and performative descents into chronic drunkenness, and failure on the music hall stage. But Chaplin configures Terry and Calvero's moral triumphs as arising from each being a mentor/fan to the other. Just as the clown pushes the ballerina to become a star, she pushes him to try and try again, all of which culminates in her fame and his comeback performance at a benefit concert. By the film's end, Terry—while insisting that she still loves Calvero—has also become more receptive to Neville's advances, which pleases the clown. Thus, like Calvero, Terry ends a hero:

successful as both a dancer and a heterosexual woman who supports others. She has overcome her social and performance shyness.

Critical Reception of Terry

As expected, reviews regarding the 1952 release of *Limelight* focus on Chaplin, the star actor and director releasing one of his last films. One of the difficulties of transitioning to "talkies" for Chaplin seemed to be that he talked too much—or so said the critics who nostalgically invoked the image of Chaplin's silent Tramp persona. (They prefer the communicativeness of his body to that of his mouth.) For example, *The New Yorker*'s John McCarten captures this sentiment with ironic flourish: "Charles Chaplin, for whom silence used to be golden, is furiously loquacious in 'Limelight,' and while the ideas he is expounding are meritorious (he is in favor of charity and love), he pours them out in such wordy freshets that it is sometimes hard to remember that he is a master of pantomime, able to put more into a shrug than most actors can put into a soliloquy."[548] And the review of Terry is positive but comparatively scant: "Mr. Chaplin has installed Claire Bloom, an English actress, as his heroine in 'Limelight,' and she is superb."[549]

Hollis Alpert seemingly devotes more attention to Bloom's Terry, but only as a means of criticizing Chaplin/Calvero's suspicious amount of psychoanalytic wisdom:

> Clair Bloom, another of his waifs, is appealing as the girl who couldn't bring her legs to dance because she had learned that her ballet lessons were paid for by her sister's prostitution. Her psychosomatic condition is remarkably clear to the music-hall artist of 1914, and he is able to explain it to her (and also achieve one of the speediest

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[548] John McCarten, "Charles but Seldom Charlie," *The New Yorker*, October 25, 1952, 141. Similar negative sentiments about Chaplin's verbosity appear in Arthur Knight and Hollis Alpert, "Spotlight on 'Limelight,'" *The Saturday Review*, October 25, 1952, 29-30; and Bosley Crowther, "The Screen: Chaplin's 'Limelight' Opens," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 24, 1952.

[549] McCarten, "Charles but Seldom Charlie," 141.

> psychoanalyses on record) in the popularized terms of today, but Mr. Chaplin banks too much on our powers of suspension of disbelief."[550]

Overall, reviewers praise Terry's success as a visual subject, as William Barrett suggests: "Sometimes the care is a little too static, as when, in the early parts of the picture, the camera freezes, from almost every conceivable angle, upon Claire Bloom's lovely face. (She is in fact one of the most beautiful heroines to come into motion pictures lately, and it is a tribute to Chaplin's sharp eye as a director that he should have cast her for the part.)"[551] As with other critics, the most praise Bloom's Terry receives often concerns her physicality rather than personality.[552] This is perhaps most clear in Robert Hatch's evaluation of the double-cast Terry:

> When Terry dances, she is played by Melissa Hayden [a body double]. […] When Terry is not dancing, she is played by Claire Bloom. Miss Bloom has a lovely and responsive face. Like all Chaplin heroines, it is her business to look lovely and to respond. In the later scenes, she seems to have more authority, but that is after Miss Hayden has danced. It may be that Miss Bloom's Terry takes on character when you have seen what Miss Hayden's Terry can do.[553]

Here, it is Claire Bloom's sensitive, expressive qualities (especially her face), matched with Melissa Haydon's captivating dancing, that make Terry an interesting character. Without the strong dance performance, she is merely a support for Calvero/Chaplin. Hatch's review emphasizes the assumed connection between dynamic stage performance and strength of character.

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[550] Ibid., 31.

[551] William Barrett, "Chaplin as Chaplin," *The American Mercury*, November 1952, 93. Barrett also blames the films static quality on Calvero's endless philosophizing.

[552] See, for example, Bosley Crowther, "The Screen: Chaplin's 'Limelight' Opens," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 24, 1952; and Staff, "Review: 'Limelight," *Variety*, December 31, 1952. Such reviews pair Bloom's/Terry's beauty with her "sensitivity."

[553] Robert Hatch, "Chaplin: The Trouble with Being a Myth," *The Reporter*, November 25, 1952, 38.

Like the critics in 1952, contemporary scholars have read *Limelight* largely in relation to Chaplin's star image and biography;[554] as a result, there is not much analysis of Terry—another marginalized shy girl, even in a film with only two leads. Charles Maland sees Terry as both a Chaplin trope and an autobiographical reference. On one hand, Terry is a waif involved with Chaplin's character, around and for whom there is unrequited love and sacrificial love—familiar plotlines from earlier Chaplin films.[555] On the other hand, Terry is seen as a cipher for Oona O'Neill, Chaplin's young wife at the time—his support and muse.[556] Of course, such psychobiographical readings overlook Terry's character as separate from Chaplin's family members, lovers, and even the heroines of his other films.

Rather than lumping aspects of *Limelight* together with earlier Chaplin films while dismissing the differences, Donna Kornhaber reads the film in relation to Chaplin's other late works and looks for its internal coherence; consequently, she more fully sees Terry as a

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[554] For instance, Charles Maland put the film in context of the star's Cold War struggles, when Chaplin was investigated by the FBI for his left-wing politics (from 1946-49, and 1951-52, until his reentry permit to the U.S. was revoked); 265. Maland argues that *Limelight* is Chaplin's attempt to reconcile with audiences who now thought of him in terms of controversy (supposed Communist sympathies; sex scandals and a paternity lawsuit; an unpalatable previous film, *Monsieur Verdoux*); 136. Thus, *Limelight* concerns the "unraveling of his star image" (288)—that is, both Calvero's and Chaplin's—and Terry is an afterthought. Ibid., 136. *Limelight* premiered in New York City on October 23, 1952. Prior to the national release in January 1953, the film was projected to do well because it made good box office returns in NYC and overseas. However, due to national boycotts organized by the American Legion against Chaplin's assumed anti-American politics, the film floundered and was pulled out of distribution early in 1953; 299; 310. I include the film in my analysis because of its success with the early NYC audiences—many of whom would be patrons of the Broadway productions I discuss. See *Chaplin and American Culture: The Evolution of a Star Image* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991).

[555] Ibid., 290-1.

[556] Ibid., 292. Similarly, Glenn Mitchell reads Terry as an "amalgam of Chaplin's first love, Hetty Kelly, and, especially, his mother, Hannah [who had taken ill]." Mitchell speculates that Calvero and Terry's relationship enacts Chaplin's wish to have better helped his mother. See Mitchell's "*Limelight*—An Annotated Commentary," in *Chaplin's "Limelight" and the Music Hall Tradition*, ed. Frank Scheide and Hooman Mehran (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2006), 8.

performer.[557] Arguing that the late films are visually and stylistically indeterminate, backward-glancing, and self-referential, Kornhaber suggests that "*Limelight* presents a kind of celebratory triumph of Chaplin's unmovable frame."[558] Where other critics see unbearable stasis in the film's long takes with little-to-no camera movement, Kornhaber understands such shots to emphasize the daunting experience of performing. Here she cites Thereza's one-take audition scene and praises the shot composition, an extreme long shot which positions the ballerina's body in one narrow strip of light that traverses the length of the stage. Kornhaber remarks that this use of space and time captures "the enormous feat of performing in such a space."[559] (Likewise, the unmoving frames and long takes of Calvero's music hall scene communicate the "unrelenting" and brutal aspects of performing in a music hall).[560] Thus, Kornhaber's defense of Chaplin's directorial choices makes a unique critical gesture to the physical and psychological labor of Terry's performances.

Kornhaber further defends Chaplin's speeches as "grounding points" that give us the "philosophical purpose" of his film, meditating on Terry's relationship with Calvero.[561] Providing one of these philosophical purposes, Sigmund Freud is central to *Limelight* because Calvero acts as a "pseudo-psychiatrist," and "the film offers itself as a kind of extended confirmation of Freudian connections between the work of art and the psychology of the

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[557] Donna Kornhaber, *Charlie Chaplin, Director* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2014), 238. As Kornhaber notes, most major critics of Chaplin's oeuvre—Siegfried Kracauer, Andre Bazan, and Walter Kerr—link his decline as a director to his transition to "talkie" films.

[558] Ibid., 239; 247.

[559] Ibid., 247.

[560] Ibid., 248.

[561] Ibid., 255.

artist."[562] For example, after Terry confronts her bad memories, "her drive to dance becomes a drive to replace those memories of squalor and shame with something beautiful."[563] Despite the fact that Calvero's wisdom is undercut by his drunkenness and status as a has-been, Kornhaber contends that *Limelight*'s Calvero "is perhaps the greatest exponent of the talking cure ever put on film," arguing that his explanations "literally [cure] Thereza."[564] As mentor and doctor, Calvero has "given her the gift of his words, which she has internalized and turned into her art."[565] Yet, she cautions, Chaplin problematizes the grand theoretical discourse in *Limelight* with his dream of performing a flirtatious sketch with Terry, which "throws into question the whole idea that Calvero and Thereza might be getting at anything more in their discourse than a kind of sublimated sexual desire"—perhaps, as in the dream, "they are just performing for each other and with each other."[566] Here, Terry's and Calvero's stage lives and personal lives are inextricably intertwined, as "the talking cure" is refigured as part of an extended performance in which the two take turns being each other's understudy regarding both life and career.

Psychoanalysis and Gender on Film

Limelight valorizes and problematizes "the talking cure" in various ways. Though this film does not appear in other scholarly discussions of psychoanalysis on film, it is clear from Kornhaber's reading that Calvero temporarily occupies the psychoanalyst's position, and Terry the patient's. We might then consider the work as borrowing from and contributing to a long line

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[562] Ibid.

[563] Ibid.

[564] Ibid., 257.

[565] Ibid., 261.

[566] Ibid., 259.

of films that dramatize the analyst-patient relationship.[567] As Kaja Silverman notes in her feminist reading of psychoanalysis on film, women's pictures of the 1940s often used "the talking cure" as an organizing principle for dramatic action and/or resolution.[568] In these films, a male doctor treats a female patient, and exhibits a fascination for something he assumes is inside the patient's body ("interiority"). The woman talks, then the doctor imposes an external order upon—or makes meaning—of her words. Thus, Silverman argues that such film specularize the female voice and interiority as an extension of her body, and "deprivilege the female psyche by denying to woman any possibility of arriving at self-knowledge except through the intervening agency of a doctor or analyst."[569] Because female patients are obliged to speak (to reveal their psyches) at moments only determined by the doctor, their interiority is put "on stage" for viewers, rather than contributing an authoritative voice to the film.[570] Authority and interpretation are supplied by the male doctor's voice.[571] Because of the imbalance of power in "talking cure" films, Silverman links classical Hollywood cinema's use of psychoanalysis to other, more physicalized, portrayals of medical intervention, where doctors 'get the same thrill' from operating on the body's surface as they do by extracting a female voice.

I contend that *Limelight* valorizes and problematizes "the talking cure" because Terry's admissions are portrayed as being helpful for her recovery, but ultimately insufficient. After all, Calvero physically disciplines Terry to varying degrees, which both points to the limits of a cure

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[567] See, for example, Gabbard and Klin Gabbard, *Psychiatry and the Cinema*.

[568] Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis and Cinema* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), 59.

[569] Ibid., 65.

[570] Ibid., 63.

[571] Ibid., 31.

through talking, and physicalizes the operation of power within their doctor/patient relationship. Acting as a proxy medical doctor and then psychoanalyst, Calvero first nurses Terry back to consciousness (for several scenes, she lies asleep), then probes the depths of her subconscious when she is awake but bed-ridden. The clown draws on the expertise of a local medical doctor who tells Calvero that there's nothing wrong with Terry's legs, speculating that she has "psycho-anaesthesia," a "form of hysteria" which is self-imposed in this case. The doctor reasons that, because she failed in her suicide attempt, Terry has decided to become lame. When Calvero asks if he can help Terry, the doctor declines: "it's a case for a psychologist." Calvero perks up: "Dr. Freud, eh? […] Well, I'll see what I can do!"

Once the doctor is gone, Calvero asks Terry about her sister Louise. When Terry was eight, she discovered that Louise was a streetwalker. Since their mother had died, Louise was Terry's caretaker and paid for her dance lessons. One day after dance class, Terry was walking with some of her classmates, when they saw Louise 'walking the street.' Though traumatized at the time, Terry tried to forget the incident. But two years later, when Terry saw one of her old classmates, the trouble with her legs began. Calvero pronounces that "it doesn't take Mr. Freud to know that since meeting this girl again you don't *want* to dance. […] You associated it with the unhappy life of your sister, you paid for your lessons—paid for them out of a life of *shame*. You've been afraid to dance ever since." This explanation starts Terry on a path to recovery, but not instantly or completely: she slowly relearns to walk and dance again with Calvero (and the apartment furniture) acting as a literal support. Only when Calvero is despondent at his music hall flop, and Terry starts to act as *his* support, does she fully recover the use of her legs. This suggests that instead of a "talking cure," the cure consists in a combination of talking, physical

practice, and the affective reciprocity of providing emotional support, that is, her own power to cure. The film suggests that both Calvero and Terry are ennobled and made stronger by their mutual care-taking, which renders their fake marriage more real. Linking the very meaning of life to heterosexual marriage, Calvero tells Terry, "Think of how meaningless life was a moment ago. Now you have a temporary husband and a home."

The final challenge to both "the talking cure" and the doctor's/Calvero's diagnosis is the inexplicable return of Terry's paralysis just before her opening night solo. She has had no difficulties dancing since she regained her ability to walk, and there are no suggestions of prostitution to 'trigger' a relapse. Almost as puzzling is Calvero's response: to strike her in the face. Terry is startled and hurt, but the showbiz end ("the show must go on") appears to justify Calvero's means. As she backs away, he tells her, "You see? There's nothing wrong with your legs!" and orders her to go onstage and dance. The whole moment is swept aside by Terry's magnificent solo and Calvero's utter joy at her success. And so the murky side of their analyst-patient relationship is overwhelmed by the positive affect of a performance gone right. Considering that critics and scholars do not mention this moment, we might suppose that the audience is also too dazzled by the dancing to remember this 'slapping cure.'

Limelight thus places shyness in a negative and extreme relation to performance: it literally prevents the body from moving as the performer needs it to, either onstage or in the performance of everyday life, and it creates such a state of crisis that it warrants extreme forms of therapy. Though the film uniquely positions Calvero as a star and a man who gives physical and emotional labor in caring for the ailing Thereza, it normalizes gender roles by making him her fatherly and authoritative psychiatrist who 'fixes' her mental and physical problems, and

directs her into an age-appropriate heterosexual relationship with Neville. Moreover, Terry's growing devotional support for Calvero, in addition to her graceful performance prowess, acts as proof of her femininity. Mirroring other popular understudy narratives, Terry overcomes her physical lameness in conjunction with overcoming her social lameness (shyness), and her romantic prospects increase in conjunction with her stage performances' increased acclaim. Calvero's transfer of Terry's psychological investment in her sister, to himself, then to Neville—all while she gains physical and performance strength—aligns with the goals of psychiatry during the Cold War era to weed out mental weakness caused by deviance. For if we re-invoke Freud and go beyond Calvero's diagnosis of shame, and see Terry's nervous preoccupation with her sister as an "inverted" sexual object attachment,[572] the mentally and physically weak ballerina is configured as queer. In this sense, overcoming shyness towards Neville means giving up the queer attachment to her sister, then the socially suspect attachment to Calvero. These moves away from shyness are aligned with mental and physical health, and with respectability and class advancement afforded by an age-appropriate heterosexual attachment to a patriot (Neville, a returned soldier). Terry, then, is not only a stronger performer, but represents a stronger all-around heterosexual feminine force against the threat of Communist infiltration. Terry's stardom also rises as Calvero's fades, suggesting the inevitability of the star's decline, and emphasizing the need to *act* in the face of life's fleetingness. In this sense, shyness is also a wasted opportunity to perform anything, anywhere, anytime. Calvero would relate that to something poetic about life; Hollywood would relate that to lost profits. *Limelight* thus employs

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[572] Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 136.

performance directives as a method of friendly containment, reintroducing the shy girl into heterosexual and cultural circulation.

Such self-reflexive meditations on the acting profession appear in our next chapter's focus, MGM's 1951 adaptation of the musical *Show Boat*, which links shyness—in the form of situational stage fright—to the modern alienation of urban environments and the emotionally detached aspects of show business. In particular, the emotional detachment of casting practices underpins *Show Boat*'s story of a white understudy's transition to stardom which is contingent on a black actress's willingness to abdicate her own stardom. More overtly, this film constructs situational shyness as arising from the white actress being single and alone in a big city, curing her stage fright by reuniting her with her family and her childhood home aboard a theatrical riverboat on the Mississippi River. I therefore explore how *Show Boat* transfers women's emotional labor from the theatre to the domestic realm by stressing the warmth, goodness, and intimacy of the showboat theatrical life. For leading actresses in the film, leaving the domestic realm leads to the distress of stage fright, and financial and sexual ruin.

CHAPTER 7: ALIENATION IN *SHOW BOAT*

Magnolia Hawks (Ravenal)

By the time MGM's *Show Boat* premiered in 1951, the musical had seen multiple stage and film revivals. Based on Edna Ferber's 1926 novel, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein adapted *Show Boat* into a wildly successful Broadway show in 1927, which Universal Studios subsequently adapted to film in 1929 (dir. Harry A. Pollard) and 1936 (dir. James Whale).[573] The MGM production, directed by George Sidney, came on the heels of a 1946 Broadway revival, which then toured the country until 1949.[574] And MGM, which had helped finance the stage revival and tour, provided a condensed version of the show in the Jerome Kern musical biopic *Till the Clouds Roll By* (1946, dir. Richard Whorf).[575] So although the story was decades old, *Show Boat* had never been far from the American public's mind. MGM and John Lee Mahin's screenplay greatly altered many elements from the original story and its predecessors, but this film was the second-highest grossing picture of 1951.[576] Set largely on a 19th-century Mississippi River boat designed for theatrical entertainments, Sidney's *Show Boat* follows Magnolia Hawks, the timid daughter of the Cotton Blossom's white owner, Captain Andy, as she goes from stagehand to leading lady. She is mentored by Julie LaVerne, a famous showboat actress, until Julie is exposed as being mixed-raced in a Jim Crow Southern town where miscegenation laws forbid her from appearing onstage with whites. With Julie and her actor-

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[573] Todd Decker, *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 4.

[574] Miles Kreuger, *Show Boat: The Story of a Classic American Musical* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 164; 170.

[575] Decker, *Show Boat*, 179-80.

[576] Ibid., 183.

husband Steve forced from the Cotton Blossom, Magnolia takes Julie's place and marries the leading man, Gaylord Ravenal. Ravenal whisks her away to big city life in Chicago, where he takes up gambling full-time, only to fall deeply into debt. After Gaylord abandons Magnolia, she returns to the stage. Unbeknownst to Magnolia, Julie hears her audition and vacates her own position as a singer at Chicago's Trocadero club, telling management to hire Magnolia. Come New Year's Eve, Magnolia steps into the bright lights of the Trocadero stage and freezes. Captain Andy just happens to be in the audience and coaches her through the harrowing moment. After a successful performance, Magnolia confesses to her father that she is pregnant and would like to return to the Cotton Blossom. Four years later, Julie, who has been following newspaper stories of the Cotton Blossom's intergenerational family, happens upon Gaylord on a riverboat and tells him about his daughter Kim. He immediately goes to the showboat, meets his young daughter, and reunites with his forgiving wife.

In this chapter, I argue that Magnolia's public performance abilities are directly tied to her success as a heterosexual and family-oriented woman. Her situational shyness on the Trocadero stage—her stage fright—-is linked to her modern urban alienation. Magnolia is rescued by her father, but also by Julie's physical and emotional labor—her self-sacrifice—linked here to postwar self-improvement manuals marketed to African Americans. Both actresses are ultimately bound more by their familial attachments than by their showbiz ambitions, demonstrating the careful balance actresses often had to strike between their stage career and the public performance of domestic femininity.

Magnolia's Shy Girl Traits

Unlike many of our shy girls, Magnolia is not visually strange in her everyday appearance. In the beginning of the film, her youthfulness is underlined by the bow in her long hair and her short puffy sleeves, ruffled in a girlish contrast to Julie's more mature and glamorous dresses and sophisticated up-do. (Actress Kathryn Grayson's large eyes add to Magnolia's visual innocence and immaturity.) However, in Magnolia's moment of stage fright, she wears a garish costume: an ill-fitting black dress and shoes accented by fluorescent pink and green plumes and pom-poms.[577] In addition to her stiff body, the ridiculous costume ironically makes her look out of place and awkward onstage. All other scenes, including her performances on the Cotton Blossom stage, present Magnolia as an appropriately groomed young woman.

When Magnolia is alone on the Cotton Blossom, she rehearses the featured play on the showboat stage, even though she should be doing other backstage work. In one scene, Gaylord Ravenal strolls along the riverbank, wondering "Where's the maid for me?" when he hears Magnolia vigorously performing a melodramatic scene. Onboard, he finds her alone, wearing glasses and a kerchief, hurling her lines at no one. When she ends the scene, Gaylord applauds, startling and embarrassing Magnolia, who rips off the costume and carries it offstage.

> Magnolia: I really should be getting these clothes brushed and aired…
> Gaylord: Well, isn't that rather menial work for a leading lady?
> Magnolia: Oh, but I'm not the leading lady.
> Gaylord: You're not? Well, that's hard to believe. You certainly look like one.
> Magnolia: As a matter of fact, I'm not even a member of the company.
> Gaylord: No?
> Magnolia: No. Well, I mean, not professionally.

As the captain's daughter, Magnolia has been raised as a member of what Captain Andy calls "one big happy family." But her puritanical mother Parthy forbids her from performing, so

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[577] The irrepressible Miles Kreuger puts it best: "[S]he looks rather like a deranged chicken in some bizarre fairy tale"; *Show Boat*, 195.

Magnolia is an unofficial understudy, both motivated by and ashamed of her secret desire to perform. Her backstage work is part of her home chores, but also a means of studying onstage methods.

Magnolia principally studies the Cotton Blossom's star actress Julie LaVerne who acts as her more feminine counterpart. While it is only implied that Magnolia watches Julie perform onstage, we see her watching Julie offstage. The young woman looks on as the more mature Julie exhibits passionate devotion to her husband Steve: in a closeup, the couple shares a long hungry kiss. Afterward, Magnolia wonders if she'll ever have a love like that. She then watches Julie sing "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man," which celebrates blind devotion to a man who doesn't behave so well. When Julie's crooning ends, she teaches Magnolia some shuffle steps she learned from "the gals on the levee," as two black men provide musical accompaniment from the deck below. Magnolia proves a quick study (in all these things, really), and the two women laugh, as Julie stops to watch Magnolia do a short solo dance. The dance and music die down when Parthy appears, grimacing. Despite acting as a business manager of the Cotton Blossom, Parthy tells her daughter that Julie is a "hussy," and forbids the girl from participating in any kind of theatricalism. When Captain Andy announces that Magnolia will replace Julie after the latter has been forced off the boat, Parthy protests but relents on the condition that there will be no kissing onstage. Parthy also disapproves of Magnolia's engagement to Gaylord, whom she does not trust. Although the film overtly presents Julie as Magnolia's sympathetic teacher and showboat kin, it covertly reinforces the lessons of Parthy's white puritanism when Gaylord leaves Magnolia in financial and emotional ruins, and Julie becomes a 'hussy' after Steve abandons her and she leaves the acting profession. The film revels in Julie's and Magnolia's

physicality and performance prowess even as it conservatively positions these traits as dangerous.

Magnolia's social anxiety appears in a dramatic moment of stage fright. She has had great success on her family's Cotton Blossom stage, and successfully auditions at the Trocadero club in Chicago (thanks to Julie quitting). On the Cotton Blossom, Magnolia was surrounded by family and friends, and at the Trocadero audition, the Cotton Blossom dance duo Frank and Ellie are there to cheer her on. But during the New Year's Eve show, Magnolia's Chicago debut begins with a whimper. Dressed in strange attire, she hesitantly steps onstage. In a long shot, we see Magnolia screen left, the band bottom screen left and center, and the crowd screen right and top screen right. This claustrophobic composition is accompanied by loud music and a rowdy, drunken audience—all of which corners the singer. She steps forward, but remains small in the frame (now an extreme long shot), mirrored by her small, unsure voice. Soon audience members yell, "Can't hear you!", mumble in dissatisfaction, then start booing. Clearly worried and shaken, Magnolia glances around the theatre, still singing quietly. In the crowd, an inebriated and slightly oblivious Captain Andy makes eye contact with her and moves to the foot of the stage. He screams at the audience, ordering them to be quiet, then turns to his anxious daughter, saying, "Nolie, remember what I told you: smile!" She does so and begins singing more loudly. Soon the audience starts swaying to her singing of "After the Ball is Over." The whole time, Andy conducts her and the music as he had on the boat. The crowd starts singing along and Andy gets up onstage and hugs Magnolia, waltzing her around the stage. Next to her father, she has a huge finish, robustly singing her loudest and highest notes in a closeup—here she dominates the frame and stage. Magnolia's stage fright, a situational shyness, has come and gone with the absence and

reappearance of family and the showboat theatrical patterns of performer-audience interaction. With this supporting structure, the demure understudy has become a star in Chicago.

Because Magnolia's shyness appears when she feels alone in a strange place, her romantic encounters with Gaylord are not awkward as they first develop on the Cotton Blossom. When the two meet, they only share about a minute of dialogue before launching into the romantic duet "Make Believe," in which they use the theatrical apparatus as impetus for making an immediate emotional and then physical connection. With lyrics such as "I could make believe I love you," Magnolia and Gaylord echo each other's words and look longingly at each other, first occupying separate frames, then the same frame when they move in closer and sing in unison. At the song's ending, "For to tell the truth, I do," these strangers nearly kiss as they confess their not-so 'make believe' love. Only the returning of the showboat party prevents them from physically performing the song's reality. This almost-kiss/interruption pattern organizes their entire courtship, which takes place during a montage of their rehearsals and performances of the Cotton Blossom's romantic melodrama. When they finally kiss during a performance, they reveal that they are engaged during the next scene. In this way, *Show Boat* directly links successful heterosexual coupledom to showbiz success—social performance and stage performance are crowd-pleasing acts, and the crowd wants the kiss and the happy ending. Ultimately, Magnolia's failed romantic encounter is a slow burn: Gaylord leaves her after she loses patience and shames him for his injurious gambling addiction. And this failed social performance of heterosexual marriage is where her stage performance problems begin…

Important physical contact which shapes Magnolia's behavior comes from Gaylord and Captain Andy. As mentioned above, the duet "Make Believe" as well as Magnolia and Gaylord's

romantic rehearsal and performance scenes—all focused on the moment of embrace—bring the couple into closer and closer bodily contact, stopping short of a kiss. When they finally do kiss onstage, the next scene shows them engaged in real life. Thus, Magnolia's body has been rehearsing on- and offstage for a binding sexual relationship with Gaylord. In Chicago, when he loses money, the newlyweds play a 'scene' in their living room, wherein they pretend to be an arguing couple. Gaylord drops the act and sweeps Magnolia in his arms, sweeping aside any real underlying tension as they break into laughter and snuggles. Even when Gaylord has left her, Magnolia maintains a physical connection to him, rubbing the lucky walking stick he used to carry, as she secretly wishes for his good fortune. But perhaps the most interesting contact comes from Captain Andy, who is always quick to tell his daughter to smile. He pats her under the chin —"Smile!"—and uses his fingers to *make* her mouth smile. She always obliges, laughing until she cries when he comforts her after their Trocadero reunion. Magnolia therefore remains devoted to her husband no matter what, and smiles for her father no matter what. Between the husband/costar and father/theatre director, Magnolia (re)produces emotional labor—telegraphing desire for the former and happiness for the latter—as a heterosexual woman and an actress. Here it becomes nearly impossible to distinguish between theatrical and social performance.

Magnolia goes through several transformations, ultimately circling back to something very like the Magnolia of the film's early scene. First, the understudy takes Julie's place on the show boat stage; second, the young woman becomes a wife; third, she takes Julie's place on the Trocadero stage. At this point in earlier versions of *Show Boat*, Magnolia takes her newfound stardom from Chicago to New York, where she has great success as both a performer and a

single mother. But the 1951 film changes all that in a pivotal scene backstage between the actress and her father:

> Andy: Well, from now on, you can just be thinking of yourself. Why, after tonight, you're a big star. You can go to New York.
> Magnolia: No, I can't. No, I can't. I can't just think of myself, either. I'm going to have a baby. […] Don't worry, Papa. I wanna come home, if you'll have me.

He welcomes her home, of course, so Magnolia's fourth transformation comes when she returns to the showboat and raises daughter Kim in the same theatrical setting in which she herself was raised. And fifth, when she reunites with Gaylord, and Captain Andy gleefully pronounces, "It's Saturday night forever!" while the white family floats away on the Cotton Blossom and Julie, watching from the shadows ashore, blows them a loving kiss. In these ways, the film cycles back to Magnolia's youth and the beginning of her full-fledged romance with Gaylord. Thus, while this narrative does not contain as much stasis as some of the home girl narratives, there is not ultimately as much transformation here as in other understudy narratives whose heroines end up in very different places character- and career-wise.

Critical Reception of Magnolia

The 1951 film critics gave *Show Boat* mixed reviews, usually comparing it negatively with previous versions, but sometimes charmed by certain filmic elements and casting choices of the MGM iteration.[578] Overall, the *New Yorker*'s John McCarten decides that the plot "about the showboat captain's daughter and the gambler, with a subplot concerning a fine-looking female whose father hadn't taken the case against miscegenation seriously—need not trouble us here.

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[578] John McCarten, for instance, praises William Warfield's performance of Joe, but finds Kathryn Grayson's Magnolia too operatic, and dislikes Ava Gardner's poor lip-syncing and the fact that she is "subjected to such close scrutiny by the camera that her handsome face often takes on the attributes of a relief map of Yugoslavia." See "The Current Cinema: Old Perdurable," *The New Yorker*, July 28, 1951, 73.

What I think we should all remember is that the music by Jerome Kern and the lyrics by Oscar Hammerstein II are as good as any you're going to get in a very long, long time."[579]

In contrast, Hollis Alpert of *The Saturday Review* admits that he has never liked any version of *Show Boat* because, among other things, he "never could work up the proper amount of sentimental steam over the story-line, a gob of pure schmaltz if ever there was one."[580] Much of the film's schmaltz lies in the love affair between Magnolia and Gaylord: "[W]hen Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel sing the sixty-four-dollar question ['Why Do I Love You?'] to each other in Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's big, blowzy Technicolor version of the musical: they swoon right into each other's arms. In fact, they keep diving in and out of each other's arms all through the thing."[581] With notes of heavy irony, Alpert questions the "moral values" of Magnolia and Gaylord's reunion at the end of the film, as it has been enabled in part by his gambling winnings. Here he questions the censor: "Mr. Breen, how come you let that one through?"[582] Unlike most other reviewers who are content to comment on Ava Gardner's appearance, Alpert points out that her character Julie's fate is "[m]uch more lugubrious" than anything that happens to Magnolia or Gaylord.[583] His review both mocks the high melodrama of Julie's story and suggests that it has

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[579] Ibid., 73. Likewise, *Variety* stresses that the original songs have survived the passage of time. But here, both Kathryn Grayson's singing ("show-tune ableness") and acting are praised: "Grayson is a most able Magnolia, the innocent show boat girl who runs off with the dashing gambler." There is once more a focus on Gardner's appearance, as she brings "to her role of Julie, the mulatto who is kicked off the Cotton Blossom because of early southern prejudice, all the physical attributes it needs to attract attention." On the whole, the review is enraptured by elements of the MGM *Show Boat*'s "freshness" and its ability to "tear at the emotions." See Staff, "Review: 'Show Boat," *Variety,* December 31, 1951.

[580] Hollis Alpert, "A New Crew and An Old Spanking," *The Saturday Review*, June 9, 1951, 26.

[581] Ibid.

[582] Ibid.

[583] Ibid.

more of a true bite than Magnolia's. Grayson's acting is not mentioned, nor is Magnolia characterized apart from her tortured coupledom with Gaylord.

Bosley Crowther provides perhaps the most glowing endorsement of the film, which he compares favorably to earlier versions in terms of "visual splendor," sets, sound quality, and handling of the music.[584] He enjoys Kathryn Grayson and Howard Keel's renditions of "Make Believe" and "You Are Love," giving Ava Gardner credit for a "haunting and moving" rendition of "Bill."[585] But Crowther cautions that "shortcomings" are found in Gardner's overly dramatic acting and the film's over-reliance on her face.[586] In counterpoint to the excesses Crowther sees in the portrayal of Julie, he highly praises Kathryn Grayson's playing of the show boat captain's daughter: "Miss Grayson as Magnolia is a doll, combining all the wholesome spunk and beauty of Edna Ferber's original girl."[587] This is markedly different from reviews that downplay Magnolia as an individual character, or as anything but a strong (if ridiculously overpowering) singing voice.

Overall, these reviews suggest that Magnolia is one half of a pair with Gaylord. She also strikes most reviewers as less interesting than Julie. She is not thought of as a shy girl, but neither is she thought of as a dynamo, despite her prowess as a singer. No critical review considers her character arc from understudy to star, then to stay-at-boat mom.

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[584] Bosley Crowther, "The Screen: A Musical Favorite at Radio City," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Jul. 20, 1951.

[585] Ibid.

[586] Ibid.

[587] Ibid.

Much of the later scholarship on *Show Boat* has considered it in the context of its structure, mode, or other generic exemplariness, all of which has the effect of minimizing analysis of Magnolia herself, while providing lenses for understanding her role in *Show Boat*'s backstage musical traits. For instance, Jane Feuer argues that backstage musicals link the success of a romantic couple to the success of the onstage show[588]—which is certainly the case for Magnolia and Gaylord when they first begin acting together and becoming romantically involved; and on a meta-level, their re-coupling in the final scene contributes to the financial success of *Show Boat* the film. Feuer adds that *Show Boat* perfectly captures Hollywood's "nostalgia for live entertainment" in the form of folksy theatre, like melodrama and minstrelsy, with the boat acting as a floating proscenium that goes to its audience.[589] In a self-reflexive yet conservative way, the film recreates these live forms of theatre using the backstage musical genre's tropes while also obscuring the production of the film itself.[590] Along similar lines, Rick Altman's generic structural analysis in *The American Film Musical* points to Magnolia and Gaylord's duet "Make Believe" as an exemplary "echo duet," in which voices copy and alternate the same line, then merge together, which solidifies "the couple's attributes and emotions."[591] He further asserts that "Make Believe" is an example of a song which allows each member of the couple to 'try on' other behaviors, or to become more like the other person (so Magnolia becomes bolder like Gaylord normally is, and he becomes more sentimental and soft like she normally is; they also engage in the traditional taboo of making romantic contact with a complete

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[588] Jane Feuer, *The Hollywood Musical, 2nd. ed.* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1993), 80.

[589] Ibid., 95-6.

[590] Ibid., x; 47.

[591] Rick Altman, *The American Film Musical* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 37-8.

stranger).[592] The duet here creates a temporary and hypothetical performance of gender or sexual deviance without consequence or judgment.[593] So, Feuer and Altman agree that Magnolia is embroiled in the simultaneously conservative and potentially subversive or self-critical aspects of the Hollywood musical genre. However interesting, such attention to genre subsumes Magnolia's individual character to an abstraction.

Other scholars of *Show Boat*'s generic and modal qualities expand on the above readings to understand Magnolia's privileged white position. Interpreting *Show Boat* in the context of racial melodrama, Linda Williams argues that the show boat itself acts as a moralized place, presented as a "space of innocence" and a "good home," like the slave home in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, only it acts as a "floating plantation."[594] The boat is a complex of home/plantation/stage, so that performing takes on the virtues of home while maintaining racial inclusions (a harmonious grouping of white performers with white and black crew members) and exclusions (non-white or mixed-race performers like Julie); it is thus an idealized "make believe" home which pulls into the reality of Jim Crow ports.[595] Following the logic of melodramatic pathos which associates suffering with virtue,[596] Williams argues that Magnolia is an upwardly-mobile white woman who both financially and morally capitalizes on her knowledge of black music—she gains employment and moral virtue through her closeness to black culture and characters

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[592] Ibid., 81-3.

[593] Ibid.

[594] Linda Williams, *Playing the Race Card: Melodramas of Black and White from Uncle Tom to O.J. Simpson* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 7-8.

[595] Ibid., 162.

[596] Ibid., 25.

associated with the black suffering of slavery.[597] Julie and Steve are banished from the narrative as a punishment for their miscegenation, and Magnolia and Gaylord's relationship takes center stage with a more acceptable form of "forbidden love," but Julie's later abandonment by Steve emphasizes and adds pathos to Magnolia's abandonment by Gaylord.[598] Citing Julie's central role in the melodrama, Williams observes that "*Show Boat* is punctuated […] by the pathetic, processional exit of this self-sacrificing woman" [Julie], who transfers her suffering virtue to the white woman [Magnolia].[599] Overall, Williams reads Magnolia's ties to black culture and characters as a sign that she is "headstrong"—clinging to Julie and black music against her draconian mother's wishes and in line with her father's indulgent encouragement. Seen in this light, Magnolia embodies *Show Boat*'s "integrationist ethos" which acts a "covert expression" of interracial love.[600]

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[597] Ibid., 158; 161. In Richard Dyer's reading this process is mirrored by Kern and Hammerstein, Jewish men who capitalize on the black music tradition. "Ol' Man River," for example, is vaguely modeled on spirituals and remains the most iconic song of *Show Boat*. See *Heavenly Bodies*, 83-4.

[598] Ibid., 184-5. Lauren Berlant's brief mention of the 1951 film deserves note for its trenchant explication of the consequences of displacing race issues onto the white couple's relationship: "Magnolia's and Gay's love plot, intricately bound up *as realism* with the melodramatic love they perform as actors, thus coordinates a number of transformations: it retroprojects slavery as a nostalgic origin of the narrative of modern life, it establishes acting as a means of flight and deliverance for women, who have no public access to power outside of careers on the stage that dominates the modern U.S. public sphere; it establishes imitating what gets acted as a realistic means of securing women's cultural and affective value; it also installs the love plot, here an amalgam of fantasy plus realism, as an index of female subalternity in America." See *The Female Complaint: The Unfinished Business of Sentimentality in American Culture* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 6.

Similarly, Raymond Knapp argues that *Show Boat*'s foregrounding of the white couple acts as a method of narratively bypassing race debates and "managing America's Others," in *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 182; 194.

For another interesting reading of the miscegenation scene's relation to race, ethnicity, and gender, see Alison Walls's "Vampires on the Mississippi: The Miscegenation Scene in *Show Boat*," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 8, no. 3 (2014): 281-9. Reading *Show Boat* in relation to gothic drama, Walls sees Julie's deterioration and displacement by Magnolia as resulting from Steve's vampirism in the miscegenation scene—and the vampirism of white cultural appropriation of blackness; 284; 286.

[599] Williams, *Playing the Race Card*, 185.

[600] Ibid., 185-6.

Daniel Bogle complicates Williams's reading by pointing out the casting practices of various productions of *Show Boat* and other films featuring non-white characters, where many studios "cast whites in important Negro roles to insure audience identification and box-office success. The film versions of *Show Boat* in 1929 and 1936 had featured white actresses as the doomed mulatto Julie. (The 1951 version was to repeat the casting procedure […])."[601] Bogle also has a different take on the mixed-race female character passing as white, the "tragic mulatto," originally a character in racial melodrama who became the "moviemaker's darling" in classical Hollywood films, who probably had the sympathy of white audiences "because of her whiteness, no doubt." He claims that "the audience believes that the girl's life could have been productive and happy had she not been a 'victim of divided racial inheritance.'"[602] In this reading, Julie does not impart sympathy to Magnolia by means of her black heritage, but Julie's pathos arises (to white audiences) from her 'tainted' whiteness.[603]

Another complex reading comes from Susan Smith in *The Musical*, where she argues that the song "Make Believe" contains Magnolia and Gaylord's "utopian vision" of pretending (a

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[601] Daniel Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films, 4th ed.* (London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2001), 150. Mixed-race MGM star Lena Horne, who had played Julie in the excerpted *Till the Clouds Roll By*, had bid to reprise the role in the 1951 remake, which ultimately went to the white Ava Gardner. Bogle reports that one of the reasons Horne was overlooked was a growing suspicion of her left-wing political ties, including her friendship with the suspected Communist actor Paul Robeson; 128. Following Horne's contribution to Gardner's autobiography, Elaine Walls Reed reports that the studio did not cast Horne as Julie as punishment for her refusal to play a "whore" in another film. See "'A Very Unusual Practise [sic]': Miscegenation and the Film Industry in the Hays Era," *West Virginia University Philological Papers* 49 (2003): 48.

[602] Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 9.

[603] Moreover, Magnolia's relationship with Julie may tap into what Bogle calls "huckfinn fixation," the pairing of a white character with a black character which 'matures' the white character through her/his association with blackness. "Traditionally, darkness and mystery have been attached to the American Negro, and it appears as if the white hero grows in stature from his association with the dusty black. Blacks seem to possess the soul the white man searches for"; *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 140.

worldview also espoused by musicals and Hollywood) that slowly erodes, revealed to be illusory as the film unfolds.[604] Moreover, this utopian vision is shown to be a middle-to-upper-class white worldview, as the toil of black characters and the anguish of their songs suggest that they don't think of "make believe" in the same way as do the white characters.[605] To support this, Smith provides an incisive study of the juxtaposition between the lyrics of "Ol' Man River" and "Make Believe": "the mood of resignation to black suffering that Dyer observes in 'Old Man River' arguably takes on a stronger political force, with such lines as 'I gets weary and sick of tryin', I'm tired of livin' and scared of dyin'" following on in stark contrast to the white characters' earlier complacent dismissal of social realities: 'Our dreams are more romantic/Than the world we see - And if the things we dream about/Don't happen to be so, *That's just an unimportant technicality*.'"[606] Smith contends, however, that the 1951 version of *Show Boat* contains a more critical use of this juxtaposition at the end of the film.[607] Although there are problems with the fact that the reprisal of "Ol' Man River" accompanies the visual and narrative resolution for white characters, and the reprisal of "Make Believe" allows Gaylord to wipe away his past family abandonment (Kim says she would pretend like he was never gone if he were her father),[608] Smith observes that the "Ol' Man River" reprisal also critically highlights the different ending for black workers for whom it is *not* "Saturday night forever," and the "racially privileged nature of the happy ending" emphasized by Julie's appearance on the dock. Unlike Magnolia,

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[604] Susan Smith, *The Musical: Race, Gender, and Performance* (London: Wallflower, 2005), 18.

[605] Ibid., 19.

[606] Ibid. (Smith's emphasis).

[607] Ibid., 19-20.

[608] Ibid., 21.

Julie is not reunited with her man.[609] Smith adds that, while the film is sympathetic toward Julie, it also reinforces her passive self-sacrifice for a white woman.[610] In other words, Julie gains pathos but always at a personal cost, while Magnolia gains pathos but only sometimes at a cost—and one ultimately recouped.

Show Boat scholars are invariably interested in the changes that occur between adaptations of the story, finding the 1951 film the most flagrantly altered version in terms of its representations of race in general, and the leading ladies in particular.[611] Perhaps the most far-reaching and in-depth study of these adaptations appears in Todd Decker's *Show Boat: Performing Race in an American Musical*, which, unlike many other studies, does not neglect the 1951 film version in favor of the more widely analyzed 1936 film. Rather, Decker includes the 1951 *Show Boat* for the story it tells—and contributes to—about white appropriation of black innovations in music.[612] Decker argues that all versions of *Show Boat* reveal that musical and performance styles are learned indices of race, not inherent to either black or white performers/characters: just as Magnolia learns black songs and dance steps from Julie, Julie has learned

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[609] Ibid., 22-3.

[610] Ibid., 23.

[611] Scholars who trace in depth the *Show Boat* variants focus on the different presentations of Magnolia, Julie, and other black characters who are either minimized or removed altogether from the 1951 film. See Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 137; Reed, "'A Very Unusual Practise [sic]," 51-2; Decker, *Show Boat*, 168; 181; 184-5; Geoffrey Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from "Show Boat" to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber, 2nd. ed.* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 48; 158; Todd Decker, "'Do you want to hear a Mammy song?': A Historiography of Show Boat," *Contemporary Theatre Review* 19, no. 1 (2009): 9-11; J. E. Smyth, *Edna Ferber's Hollywood: American Fictions of Gender, Race, and History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 106; and Bethany Wood, "Ol' (Wo)man River?: Broadway's Gendering of Edna Ferber's *Show Boat*," *Studies in Musical Theatre* 4, no. 3 (2010): 325-6.

[612] Decker, *Show Boat*, 1. *Show Boat* also uses a highly innovative structure, featuring blacks in musical highlights and whites in plot development, which still allows for some onstage/onscreen racial integration, as well as integration of differently 'raced' aesthetic approaches to song and dance; 6.

white modes of performing on and offstage; moreover, Julie has learned black music and dance, and Magnolia has learned how to sing, talk, and move like a white woman.[613] Because Julie is presented as white-identifying—that is, seemingly ashamed of her blackness—she is pathologized in other ways, namely, in her sexuality. She transforms, it is suggested, into an alcoholic hooker "with a heart of gold."[614] And, playing into Gardner's star persona, this Julie is a "happy drunk," always surrounded by men (unlike more solemn and solitary portrayals of Julie).[615] *Show Boat*'s racial issues and black characters are further minimized and its heterosexuality is further expanded, Decker notes, because the 1951 film makes Gaylord Ravenal a central character who leaves and then must find his way back to his family.[616] With MGM's mandate for "family entertainment," its *Show Boat* upholds the nuclear family as a social and narrative zenith.[617] In this particular iteration, the Ravenal family unit is separated, then restored, this time with Julie's help (for her new task in this film is telling Gaylord about his daughter Kim

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[613] Ibid., 6-7. On a related note, Allison Graham recounts a bit of the ridiculous history of MGM's soundtrack album to the 1951 *Show Boat*: "As the passing Julie LaVerne, Gardner had lip-synched the film's famous love songs, 'Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine' and 'Bill,' for the screen. For a test record of the album, however, she used her own voice imitating Lena Horne's phrasing. Yet MGM did not want to use Gardner for the album; 'they took my record imitating Lena and put earphones on her so she could sing the songs copying me copying her.' When the studio discovered it could not release the album displaying Gardner's name and image without including her actual voice on the soundtrack, MGM had Gardner use 'earphones to try to record my voice over [Horne's] voice, which had been recorded over my voice imitating her.' However absurd the vocal 'layering' of the album might have seemed, it only amplified the racial superscription of the film's previous version, in which professional singer Julie—a black character once again played by a white actress—after having taught white singer Magnolia how to sing like a 'Negro,' finds her career eclipsed by an impersonator"; *Framing the South*, 39.

[614] Decker, *Show Boat*, 186.

[615] Ibid., 189; 184. Because of Julie's overt sexuality—including her passionate embrace of her husband Steve, in front of Magnolia's virginal wide eyes—and the fact that she alone teaches Magnolia shuffle steps and the song "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" (while nearly absent black deck workers accompany them mostly offscreen), the musical moment becomes less a transfer of racial than of sexual knowledge.

[616] Ibid., 184-5. Following the lead of the 1946 Broadway revival which had expanded the roles of black performers, Mahin had originally wanted to expand the black chorus in the MGM film, but his other, more 'family-friendly,' script changes took precedent with the studio; 172; 192; 195.

[617] Ibid., 184-5.

and encouraging him to return to the family).[618] Magnolia plays her part in this "family entertainment" by her surprising choice to return to the Cotton Blossom after her Trocadero success, rather than going on to become a star in New York City, as she does in earlier versions.[619] The MGM version also truncates the story, which normally spans from the late-19th well into the 20th century, reuniting the Ravenals in the 19th century. In effect, this erases any trace of Magnolia and her family's adaptation to modernity from the story, instead offering a melodrama with a "predictable happy ending […] anchored in a mythic past."[620] Decker explains that these narrative changes perfectly encapsulate MGM's escapist tendencies; the studio was known for its "premodern musicals" (pre-World War I) which side-stepped contemporary problems of the postwar/Cold War era.[621] And yet, we see the timeliness of its anxiety about an independently successful woman who must be brought back to the domestic sphere whence she came.

J. E. Smyth's *Edna Ferber's Hollywood* also provides a helpful and detailed account of Ferber's original take on Magnolia and Julie, and on gender and race, which have largely been obscured or lost in subsequent adaptations (particularly in the 1951 film), and often overlooked in critical scholarship. While I do not put authorial intention on a pedestal, Smyth's use of this lens in reading the MGM *Show Boat* produces some interesting points against critics who are quick to dismiss the film due to its problematic handling and evasion of race and non-white

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[618] Ibid., 192.

[619] Ibid., 193.

[620] Ibid., 194.

[621] Ibid. Smyth concurs that MGM made white 'utopian' films, while Twentieth Century Fox was known for its integrated musicals that more directly faced racial issues and themes;105.

characters. First, Ferber intended to critique the "make believe" ethos of Southern belles, so she wrote Magnolia as learning from her abandonment by Gaylord to become independent, self-reliant, and financially successful, unlike what critics like Miles Kreuger calls the "domestic" Magnolia of the MGM version,[622] who almost always remains reliant on men and puts motherhood ahead of her career.[623] Second, Ferber intended Magnolia and Julie to be like twin sisters, with race unfairly affecting one but not the other, to demonstrate the absurdity and injustice of racial prejudice.[624] Focusing on the sisterly transference of knowledge between Julie and Magnolia, Smyth writes that Magnolia has "mixed cultural, romantic, and racial inheritance from Julie."[625] Moreover, female show boat performers like Magnolia and Julie have been excluded from theatre history; their tales are only more recently approximated in studies about gender and race in Vaudeville—one of the few institutions in the Jim Crow era (such as show boats) that allowed black and white bodies to coexist onstage.[626] Smyth notes that Mahin's screenplay immediately identifies Julie as black in stereotypical ways: her pet monkey, Pete's remark that she is a "zebra gal," and her passivity in deferring to her husband and Captain Andy even though she is a regionally famous show boat star.[627] Julie is thus quickly made into "Mahin's tragic mulatta," and Magnolia "absorbs some of her passive tragedy," as the younger woman becomes "passive and dependent on men."[628] Ferber's and Hammerstein's Magnolia has

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[622] Kreuger, *Show Boat*, 177.

[623] Smyth, *Edna Ferber's Hollywood*, 71.

[624] Ibid., 72.

[625] Ibid., 84.

[626] Ibid., 82.

[627] Ibid., 104.

[628] Ibid., 105.

more "gumption," but MGM's "remains a dutiful wife and mother" who seems to have given up acting once she returns to the show boat to raise Kim, as if overwhelmed by the alienating outside world.[629] Further, Smyth sees Julie's physical decline as punishment for her mixed-race status. But she also asserts, in line with Ferber's original story, that the MGM production turns Grayson and Gardner into visual and vocal twins/doubles who only become physically different following Julie's racial "unveiling":

> Both actresses had similar pale coloring, and Grayson's brown hair was darkened and curled to match Gardner's naturally curly black hair. So whether he intended to or not, Sidney made the two women doubles. In some sense, there is no way to tell them apart except through their speaking voices. While Gardner was a throaty alto, Sidney dubbed her with Annette Warren's soprano, so her screen singing voice is almost undistinguishable from Grayson's somewhat shrill soprano. While in earlier versions the difference between Julie and Magnolia was emphasized in both appearance and voice, in MGM's film there is no difference between the two women in the opening sequences. The filmmakers avoided leaving any visual traces of race on Julie, thereby rendering her mixed blood irrelevant except as a social construction. Therefore, in some key ways, MGM's version unwittingly is the most critical of racial differences and miscegenation laws. But after Julie's unveiling, her coloring and closeness to Magnolia start to deteriorate. By the time Julie meets Ravenal aboard a gambling boat, her skin has taken on an almost yellow tinge. Poorly groomed, in a stained red dress, she travels in white society, but is now visually marked as a racial and moral degenerate.[630]

Thus, through the doubling of its leading ladies, the 1951 version stresses the performative aspects of race even as it "evacuates race from its historical discourse."[631] Smyth returns to the MGM film's emphasis on the "transference of knowledge between women," noting that the newspaper clippings about Magnolia and Kim which Julie keeps constitute "her own archive of Magnolia's life, or even her family album, staying close [though out of sight] when Ravenal

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[629] Ibid.

[630] Ibid., 106.

[631] Ibid., 110-1.

abandons them."[632] She concludes that the film effectively reveals white and black women's "shared history of bondage to white men and the varied performances demanded by popular culture."[633]

While I appreciate Smyth's analysis as an interesting counterpoint to critics who more often dismiss the 1951 *Show Boat* for its evasions of interracial casting and dramaturgy, and those who focus more on Julie than Magnolia, she seems to overlook the one-sided nature of Magnolia and Julie's relationship after Julie leaves the Cotton Blossom. Yes, Julie keeps an archive of Magnolia's life and steers Gaylord back to his wife, but we do not see Magnolia thinking about Julie in the same way. Once Gaylord has left her, Magnolia thinks of *him*, as evidenced by her staring off into the distance and rubbing his cane for good luck, between shots of him gambling on other riverboats. And while Julie asks Gaylord not to tell Magnolia that he saw Julie in her deteriorated state, *he* does not do anything to help her either. So, as the film leaves it, Julie looks on as Magnolia's marriage is mended—but her own marriage remains broken, and she remains impoverished. Yes, this is an unfair consequence of Julie's racial makeup in a Jim Crow South, but it is also an uneven distribution of emotional labor. If Julie has been Magnolia's twin or "romantic double" as Smyth calls it, she has effectively been replaced by Gaylord, the new object of Magnolia's attention, affection, and comfort. And when Gaylord is gone, Captain Andy fills the void, coaching Magnolia through her difficult circumstances on- and offstage. Because Julie has provided Magnolia with the role onstage at the Trocadero, she also

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[632] Ibid.

[633] Ibid., 111. Wood's article adds to Smyth's work on Ferber the ways in which women's issues in the novel were transferred to black male characters in the first stage adaptation; "Ol' (Wo)man River?," 325-7.

reunites Magnolia with her father (as later with Gaylord). The mixed-race star continually vacates her stardom to the benefit of the white understudy. Thus her alienation is complete.

Modern Alienation and Interracial Emotional Labor

Magnolia has situational shyness which surfaces as stage fright when she performs alone. There is a hint of this in her embarrassment when Gaylord first discovers her rehearsing a scene alone on the showboat stage, but her stage fright reaches its apex in her Trocadero performance. The light is bright, the crowd is noisy and hostile when she fails to sing loudly enough. She nearly freezes, her face pinched with dread, as a small inarticulate voice hesitantly leaves her throat. Nicholas Ridout's work on stage fright helps us understand Magnolia's plight as a sign of modern alienation. As Ridout explains,

> Urban life encourages latent antipathy between individuals as the basis for their social interaction. The habitual method for dealing with the latent antipathy of others is the development of a self-enclosing shell—the 'blasé attitude'—that might resemble the development of 'public solitude' as a device for managing relations between performer and audience. The public at large, perceived as harbouring latent antipathy for the performer, based purely at first on the fact that they are fellow inhabitants of the modern city, becomes, for a performer, an even greater threat, once they take the shape of a particular audience. The audience may now share an additional set of reasons for harbouring latent antipathy towards the performer. Each of them has paid money to see a performance at a specified time. The economic conditions of modernity mean that they are giving both time and money to the performance in question, which in the context of an increasing division of work and leisure, carries greater weight than ever before. Furthermore, the actor herself is acutely aware that her own specialised professional career depends, to a greater degree than in the past, on the approbation of the public. Trained to do nothing other than this, the actor is, at least theoretically, more vulnerable to the economic power of the audience than actors of an earlier period might have been.[634]

The "horrible feeling" performers experience under the pressure of professionalizing their emotions and bodies to win the approval of antipathetic audiences is the uniquely modern

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[634] Ridout, *Stage Fright, Animals, and Other Theatrical Problems*, 51.

condition of "stage fright."[635] Magnolia is performing on a large, non-showboat (non-home) stage in big city Chicago, where she knows no one and no one knows her. Gone are the supportive familial bonds of her showboat theatrical life. Also gone is her one and only scene partner aboard the Cotton Blossom: her husband. She auditioned well enough, but showboat folk Ellie and Frank were looking on. Now alone on stage, Magnolia is exposed and vulnerable to an indifferent and soon aggressive crowd. Ridout comments that the only cure for stage fright is making eye contact with audience members, which almost never occurs because eye contact shames and embarrasses the spectator.[636] We see Magnolia looking around the Trocadero, but no friendly eye looks back. That is, until her father locks eyes with her, and she begins to relax and perform with more confidence—particularly after she follows Andy's manual "advice" to "smile," which she does primarily for him and then the audience. Her confidence and singing ability increase when her father joins her onstage, taking the space of her old scene partner/lover. Thus, while we might think of Magnolia's stage fright as an individual psychological response to stress, Ridout helps us see the socio-technological context of her shy moment onstage.

Show Boat does not treat only Magnolia as an alienated actor. When Julie and Steve leave the Cotton Blossom, Gaylord Ravenal conveniently appears and, with Captain Andy gleefully blessing him as a replacement actor, jumps aboard just as the boat disembarks. Here, Andy's quick affective change from disappointed and sad to relieved and welcoming presages the strange contrast between the dark gloom and musical/vocal tones of the "Ol' Man River" scene and the sunny, bright colors and cheery piano music of the next one. Inside the Cotton Blossom,

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[635] Ibid., 52.

[636] Ibid., 69.

a sign reads "Rehearsal - *new cast*." Captain Andy enters the rehearsal space and says, "I see everyone's so chipper this morning! Well, that's the spirit. High wind or high water, the show must go on!" Here we see that the technology of modern theatrical show business requires a surplus labor supply of eager and expendable actors—especially expendable black bodies.[637] The showboat setting further shows that this phenomenon is not unique to city life.

Julie's alienation appears as related to but distinct from Magnolia's. In addition to being released from her work on the Cotton Blossom, she too has been abandoned by her husband and must survive in Chicago. The fact that she has found employment performing at the Trocadero does not necessarily fulfill her. When Mr. Green orders her to rehearse her song "Bill," she slowly gets up and meanders to the stage with a drunken laugh: "Yes, Massa! YES, Massa!" This utterance is complicated, because it seems likely that Julie is passing as white in Chicago (there are no other black performers at the Trocadero, and no one there comments on her race). So perhaps Julie says this as a double-edged joke, something that only she and the audience would fully understand as indexical of her black heritage. Tellingly, though, Julie—the Cotton Blossom's surplus entertainment labor—links the acting profession with slave labor. In a Hollywood film which relies, as do many others, on what Bogle calls the "Negro Entertainment Syndrome," "the myth that Negroes were naturally rhythmic and natural-born entertainers,"[638]

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[637] Gardner's Julie, for example, is particularly sexualized and fetishized by the camera even as she deteriorates, which, tied to her expulsion from the Cotton Blossom and later the Trocadero, narratively and filmically creates the fascination with expendable black female bodies that bell hooks observes in Western cultural production in the 19th century and beyond. See "Selling Hot Pussy: Representations of Black Female Sexuality in the Cultural Marketplace," in *Black Looks: Race and Representation* (New York: Routledge, 2015), 64.

[638] Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 118.

Julie's casual remark alludes to the double standard of white audiences who crave and marvel at black entertainers' talents but treat them as second-class citizens offstage and offscreen.

But just as Magnolia forces a smile and keeps singing, so does Julie. Like Magnolia, she seems to think fondly of her absent husband. But unlike her (as far as we know), Julie also thinks fondly of her absent friend Magnolia. Julie is suffuse with almost unceasingly positive emotional labor: to Steve, to Magnolia, to her audience. (The only times she loses her temper are when she quiets people backstage in order to hear Magnolia sing and when she confronts Gaylord about Magnolia and Kim.) Because Mahin's screenplay expands the role for Julie in the 1951 film, we might ask why, if she bravely comes to Magnolia's aid, is Julie not rewarded with a happier ending than merely being happy for Magnolia? What about Julie in this revisionist *Show Boat* resonates with postwar audiences?

To begin, unrewarded and unreciprocated emotional labor has been discursively naturalized for people of color who are most often represented as servants to whites in popular culture. Additionally, self-improvement manuals and finishing schools were becoming popular with many blacks in the postwar era, as they sought to fight negative stereotypes and gain more employment opportunities in an expanding economy.[639] African-American educator and activist Charlotte Hawkins Brown helped ignite this trend with her popular manual *The Correct Thing To Do—To Say—To Wear*. Marketed primarily to young black people, the etiquette book went through several printings between 1940 and 1965.[640] In 1947, Brown's Palmer Memorial Institute (1902-71) in North Carolina was featured in the lifestyle magazine *Ebony*, where it was

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[639] Carolyn C. Denard, "Introduction," in *Charlotte Hawkins Brown: 'Mammy': An Appeal to the Heart of the South; The Correct Thing to Do—To Say—To Wear* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1995), xxix.

[640] Ibid.

touted as the premier black finishing school in the country.[641] Brown was also invited to speak on the CBS radio program *Wings Over Jordan* in 1940, where she delivered an address on the link between good manners and social progress:

> [T]he success of the American Negro depends upon his contacts with other races who, through the years, have had greater advantages of learning the proper approach to life and its problems. The little courtesies, the gentle voice, correct grooming, a knowledge of when to sit, when to stand; how to open and close a door; the correct attitude toward persons in authority; good manners in public places, such as railroad stations, moving picture houses, and other places where we are constantly under observation—the acquisition of these graces will go a long way in securing that recognition of ability needed to cope with human society, and will remove some of the commonest objections to our presence in large numbers. […] The white race, having reached such heights of culture in their civilization, oft times feel that they can afford to go back to earlier stages of barbarism, to sweatshirt grooming, to hilarious party and dance performances. Unfortunately many of our Negro youth are wont to follow this as a proper way of life. But in order for the Negro to get even half the recognition which he may deserve, he must be even more gracious than others, more cultured, more considerate, more observant of little courtesies and social finesse if he would gain a decent place in the sun.
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> Let us take time, therefore, to be gracious, to be thoughtful, to be kind, using the social graces as one means of turning the wheels of progress with greater velocity on the upward road to equal opportunity and justice for all.[642]

In addition to Brown's emphasis on cultivating personal dignity to be seen by the ever-watchful eye of the public, she reminds young blacks who associate politeness with servility and slavery that "[o]ne needs only to read any book, fiction or fact, associated with the life of Negroes in the households previous to 1865 to see that it was the Negro butler and maid who actually taught the social graces to the children of the aristocracy of the Southern white group; everything from

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[641] See Griffith Davis, "Finishing School: Wealthiest Families Send Children to Highly-rated Palmer to Become Ladies and Gentlemen," *Ebony*, October 1947, 180-1. Charles W. Wadelington and Richard F. Knapp report that Langston Hughes suggested the article to *Ebony* after visiting the school. See *Charlotte Hawkins Brown and Palmer Memorial Institute: What One Young African American Woman Could Do* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 261, n. 50.

[642] Charlotte Hawkins Brown, "The Negro and the Social Graces," *Wings Over Jordan*, CBS Radio, March 10, 1940.

learning how to curtsy to the art of walking with charm and grace across the ballroom floor."[643] She thus appeals to the tradition of "social graces" that was passed on generationally among and between races, as something learned and not inherent to whites.

Having grown up in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, Brown's advice to young people is perhaps unsurprisingly Victorian.[644] *The Correct Thing* offers the instructional means by which "a more desirable and pleasing personality may be achieved," for

> [t]he practice of fine manners is an art, but it should always be so natural that there be nothing of affectation about it. The habit of being one's best self daily in the little courtesies at home, to those nearest to one, so establishes the individual's expression of fine and gracious personality that meeting a stranger at any time has, for him or her, neither fear nor dread. […] Some people are born with charm, that essential, airy, indescribable something without which all else sinks into insignificance in an attempt to establish in any measure our place in human society. However feminine the word 'charm' in its essence, no man feels underrated when he is said to possess a personality of great charm.[645]

So the etiquette advice is meant to overhaul one's core identity—not merely the outer appearance of one—partly as a way of fending off the fear of strangers (Ridout's idea of the "latent hostility" underlying modern social interaction), but also as a way of gaining a higher social status. Because social graces are not only performative but meant to be *sincere*, they require affective tempering: the cultivation of truthful eagerness to gird graceful word and deed. Brown links this sincere politeness to the good life: "So it is with the natural and unaffected practice of the social graces, little courtesies which combine thoughtfulness of others and forgetfulness of self into a unified and unconscious effort we create an atmosphere of happiness and contentment in pursuit

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[643] Ibid.

[644] Denard, "Introduction," xvi-ii.

[645] Charlotte Hawkins Brown, *The Correct Thing to Do—To Say—To Wear*, in *Charlotte Hawkins Brown: 'Mammy': An Appeal to the Heart of the South; The Correct Thing to Do—To Say—To Wear* (New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1995), 33-4.

of those things which keep life always on a high level."[646] In practice, courtesies include: not being a "grouch" in the morning or at night, always greeting your family with cheeriness;[647] "appearing calm and gracious" in the presence of guests;[648] contributing to stimulating conversations which appeal to and include others;[649] participating in school assemblies with "enthusiasm" by joining in with the group, and by applauding speakers and performers with an appropriate amount of energy (careful "not to overdo it");[650] dancing gracefully without "[a]wkwardness, indecision, and self-consciousness;"[651] and standing erect and speaking in a sufficiently loud and clear voice.[652] On this last point, Brown conjures her contemporary Dale Carnegie when she addresses the shy person:

> To be able to speak well, to enunciate clearly, to pronounce words correctly, to talk interestingly of the subjects of the day, giving evidence of one well read without affectation is an accomplishment to be desired beyond beauty or physical charm. […] People who are shy and timid, however pleasing their personality, must give a great deal of time and practice to imaginary conversations until they can speak with assurance on subjects in which they are interested. Real speaking power is to be desired by anyone.[653]

Hence, like other self-improvement manuals of the postwar era, *The Correct Thing* connects an other-directed, affectively positive, simultaneously social and self-abnegating personality to inner bliss, higher social standing, and economic gain. To these ends, of course, she adds social

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[646] Ibid., 34.

[647] Ibid., 42.

[648] Ibid., 53.

[649] Ibid., 60.

[650] Ibid., 63.

[651] Ibid., 70.

[652] Ibid., 107.

[653] Ibid., 107-8.

progress in the form of overturning stereotypes about African Americans as a means to achieve racial equality. In *Show Boat*, however, Julie is both well-spoken and self-abnegating, yet she still suffers from racial inequality. The distance between Brown's rhetorical ideal and Julie's reality gestures to tendency of postwar self-improvement and etiquette manuals to reduce complex racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic problems to seemingly surmountable (inter)personal ones.

As Patricia McDaniel notes, *The Correct Thing* shares the complicated gender dynamics of shyness and courtship of other postwar manuals. While the above passages illustrate Brown's negative view of shyness as a social handicap, her rules for young woman encourage them to don what McDaniel calls a "mask of shyness."[654] As Brown advises in a section titled "Boy and Girl Relationships": "A girl must be considerate, not overbearing or dictatorial. She must give the boy plenty of room to be gracious, chivalrous, but confident in his ability to entertain her in a wholesome manner. […] A girl must not do all the talking. It is the nature of man to dominate. Feed his pride by letting him get all the glory for the planning of a swell evening."[655] Acknowledging the postwar resurgence of Victorian gender relations, she further observes that "[w]omen are again becoming the 'clinging-vine' type, produced by frills and furbelow in dress. This is all right, girls, if not overdone. Real gentlemen like to do things for fine women. Give them the opportunity to be gallant and chivalrous and show your full appreciation for every little attention."[656] In these two statements, as in other manuals, the young man is at once cast as dominant and delicate, and the young woman the caretaker of his ego. In this sense, *The Correct*

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[654] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 70.

[655] Brown, *The Correct Thing*, 93.

[656] Ibid., 94.

Thing's overall advice in other-directed behaviors is not gender neutral, but requires more affective labor and self-managing from women who must be careful not to upset the fragile balance of traditional heterosexual power dynamics.

For black women in the postwar era, Brown's advice was particularly resonant because of the long-standing stereotype that they were naturally aggressive and socially dominant over black men (who were seen by turns as naturally childlike or 'savagely brutish' if not held in check).[657] Works such as *The Mark of Oppression: A Psychosocial Study of the American Negro* (1951) by Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, influenced by earlier studies by Gunnar Myrdal and E. Franklin Frazier,[658] seemed to confirm that black men suffered from low self-esteem and sexual dysfunction, attributing much of this to the 'dysfunctional' black family structure, wherein black women dominated black men financially and psychologically.[659] Because black men were not 'allowed' to hold their 'natural' place at the head of the family, they supposedly developed a slew of pathologies.[660] This gender role reversal was also seen to negatively affect black women whose aggression interfered with intimate relationships and caused a sense of feminine inferiority.[661] McDaniel smartly suggests that, through adopting the "mask of shyness" espoused by Brown and other advice manuals, black women could pay lip service to white middle-class

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[657] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 68-9.

[658] Myrdal's 1944 *The American Dilemma* discusses low socioeconomic "performance" of African Americans in terms of "inferiority" complex, though he attributes this to the internalization of white prejudice; 100-1. E. Franklin Frazier's long-influential *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939) traces the development of black 'matriarchy' from the era of slavery to the early twentieth century. See *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939; repr., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1940), 106-7; 125.

[659] Abram Kardiner and Lionel Ovesey, *The Mark of Oppression: A Psychosocial Study of the American Negro* (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1951), 54-5; 117; 337.

[660] Ibid., 342-3; 365.

[661] Ibid., 291-2.

norms of nuclear family dynamics, even where economic conditions precluded them from staying home as dutiful wives and mothers.[662]

In *Show Boat*, Julie wears a "mask of shyness" in her interactions with her white husband, Steve, and Captain Andy. Smyth argues that Julie's blackness is subtly coded in her "passivity and failure to assert herself or her desires. As the famous Julie LaVerne, she could have asked Andy more directly to choose another performance locale" when threatened with being exposed as mixed-race in a particular town.[663] Instead, Julie defers to her husband's thoughts on the matter, asking the captain, "Don't you think it would be better—as Steve suggested—if we went on down to Booneville?" Moreover, each of Julie's solo performances, the songs "Can't Help Lovin' Dat Man" and "Bill" (and their preambles), concern how much she loves Steve, even though he's apparently dumb, ugly, lazy, and a bad actor! Julie reveals that she doesn't know why she loves him, except to say that "sometimes his eye's are like a little boy's." This hint at Steve's perceived vulnerability aligns with postwar manuals urging women's deference to men as a means of protecting men's fragile egos—here, a childlike ego that requires nurturance. When Steve is gone, Julie queerly transfers her nurturance to Magnolia by ceding her a gig in Chicago and reuniting her with Ravenal. Thus, wearing a "mask of shyness," the star often undercuts her own on- and offstage magnetism and power. In the world of MGM's *Show Boat*, this performance of shyness signals Julie's blackness, her femininity, and her interracial "social feeling."

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[662] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 70-1.

[663] Smyth, *Edna Ferber's Hollywood*, 104.

If we follow Linda Williams's proposition that the Cotton Blossom is positioned as the home of *Show Boat*, we might therefore consider Julie's continual self-sacrifice for Magnolia as another way of paying lip service to a woman taking care of her family when she cannot always be home. By giving up her Trocadero job so that Magnolia might take it, Julie shields her from the harshness of urban unemployment (although this unwittingly leads to Magnolia's momentary alienation on the stage) and sets the white woman on a course back home. This underscores the fact that black women in the postwar workforce were in no small way providing the strong economy which allowed so many middle- and upper-class white women to become full-time housewives.

To be sure, Julie's self-sacrifice and virtuous suffering originate in 19th-century melodramatic portrayals of sympathetic black female characters, especially the maternal "Black Mammy" who is faithful to her white family no matter what happens.[664] (Her sexuality also harkens back to the Jezebel type, a dangerously seductive black woman.)[665] But Charlotte Brown's influence provides another explanation of why the portrayal might have resonated with postwar audiences who were becoming more self-aware of interracial etiquette and racial injustice. On a more cynical note, the film could also be said to be constructed for wide appeal to both Northern and Southern audiences: for liberals, Julie's other-directed behavior reinforces modern social codes of conduct, proving that she deserves better treatment no matter her racial makeup; for conservatives, Julie's 'mammy' side is familiar, unthreatening, and protective; and her 'Jezebel' side is punished.

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[664] Ibid., 38. Also see Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, and Bucks*, 9. He discusses the postwar Hollywood mammy (exemplified by Hattie McDaniel's portrayals) as even more devoted and self-sacrificing than earlier iterations on p. 162.

[665] McDaniel, *Shrinking Violets and Caspar Milquetoasts*, 38.

Because Magnolia's dependence on Julie is overshadowed by her own domestic and romantic preoccupations—emotional labor scattered in several other directions—she fulfills her womanly duties to her family while failing to reciprocate Julie's watchful care. Magnolia 'matures' into a star, then wife, then mother, overcoming her situational shyness and modern alienation, always with the help of her extended showboat family. But her own emotional labor is socially mandated as belonging to her tiny nuclear family; her friendly containment thus ironically precludes her from greater social engagement. When the unseen Julie blows Magnolia a kiss in the final scene, can it be felt as surely as Gaylord's rapturous embrace? Mirroring the national economy, the white family's success is predicated on unsung black emotional and physical labor. So, the white nuclear couple is contained in a moment of bliss which both relies on and repels outside influence.

While *Show Boat* ends with a closed family circle, in the next chapter's film, *All About Eve*, the openness of star Margo Channing's theatre family leaves it vulnerable to the manipulations of her understudy Eve Harrington. Using shyness as a mask to win people's trust and pity, Eve deliberately takes over Margo's stage role, and attempts to seduce Margo's lover, Bill. Even as this backstage drama self-reflexively explores personae, it constructs Eve's shy girl persona as the most dangerous because of its inscrutability and seeming harmlessness; her true intent is discovered 'too late,' and only Margo and her small circle of friends know the truth. Who else would believe this nice, quiet young woman capable of such malice? *All About Eve* thus taps into Cold War anxieties about infiltration, as Eve assumes Margo's identity and hurts other members of Margo's group. In a sense, the innocent mythos of theatre- and filmmaking is

likewise compromised, as we see stardom not as the joyous result of luck and/or talent for a deserving young actress, but instead the result of cold calculation, cunning, and betrayal.

CHAPTER 8: INFILTRATION IN *ALL ABOUT EVE*

Eve Harrington

In Joseph L. Mankiewicz's *All About Eve* (1950), Eve Harrington is an ardent young fan of the great stage actress Margo Channing. After Karen Richards—the beneficent wife of playwright Lloyd Richards—welcomes Eve backstage to Margo's dressing room, the star and her friends are taken with Eve's devotion and tale of taking solace in the theatre after her husband died during World War II. Soon Eve becomes Margo's assistant, confidante, and protégée. But seemingly innocent Eve has ambitions to perform Margo's role onstage and off, as she manipulates her way into an understudy position, and attempts to seduce Bill Sampson, the star's lover and director. It seems only the famed theatre critic Addison De Witt knows Eve's true colors, but he has ill intent of his own.

This chapter examines *All About Eve*'s construction of shyness as a tool for psychosocial and professional infiltration. In contrast to the shy girls of earlier chapters who genuinely struggle with their social maladroitness, Eve Harrington knowingly performs as a "shy girl" for her own benefit. Whereas shyness makes one vulnerable to infiltration in *The Heiress*, here the apparent innocence and pitiableness of shyness leads people around Eve to drop their guard, allowing her to take advantage of them. Moreover, while Eve's deference, and the emotional and physical labor she performs for Margo, code her as normatively feminine, her overriding ambition and deep calculation code her as dangerously masculine. In these ways, Eve wears a mask of shyness and femininity which allows her affective and gender deviance to go largely unnoticed and unchecked. For postwar audiences, Eve's personae show that even the seemingly weak and naive person can be an infiltrator, and even people wise to performing (such as Margo

and her theatre circle) are vulnerable to infiltration. *All About Eve* thus reinforces paranoia about Cold War aspects of infiltration—spying, brainwashing, and bodily or identity theft—while reinforcing popular culture's negative associations with shyness. Here, shyness's inscrutability is ultimately positioned as untrustworthy and dangerous.

Eve's Shy Girl Traits

Compared to Margo Channing's glamorous furs and full, cascading hair, and Karen Richard's refined up-dos and smart dresses, Eve Harrington is physically plain, even frumpy, seen early on in an ill-fitting rain hat and dirty, boxy trench coat. When Karen asks Margo if she remembers seeing Eve every night in the alley outside the theater, Margo calls Eve, "the mousy one." The young fan is also physically different from the others because of her intense staring—mostly at Margo, but also at Karen, Bill, Lloyd, and Addison. Even as Eve's style of dress becomes more like Margo and Karen's, her intense stare remains.

As suggested by her long stares, Eve spends a great deal of time acting as a spectator. She is often seen alone, watching others: watching Karen in the alley, watching Margo onstage, watching Bill lounge, intently listening to his speeches and stories, watching Addison and his date, Ms. Caswell, at the party. Mankiewicz often positions Eve in her own shots, away from the others. For example, when Eve first meets Margo and her companions backstage, a shot/reverse shot sequence between closeups of Eve and long shots of the group establishes the young woman's outsider status. But even when she has been accepted into the circle of Margo and her close associates, Eve can be seen apart from them, in separate shots or in the background. This visual failure to integrate into the group emphasizes her isolated watchfulness, which slowly takes on menacing dimensions.

Both Margo and Karen act as idealized feminine counterparts to Eve. Besides their physical differences, which mark the great actress and the playwright's wife as more feminine, Margo and Karen are both in long-term heterosexual relationships. Karen is fiercely loyal and understanding; she can't stay mad at anyone for very long. And she supports the ambitions of those around her, including Eve. Moved by what she thinks is Eve's loyalty to Margo, Karen introduces the two. Later, Karen helps Eve become Margo's understudy and, wanting to give the hopeful Eve a chance to perform, Karen even makes Margo miss a performance.

Margo seems to be unfeminine in her forcefulness and disregard for manners. But later, she reveals her inner vulnerability in particularly gendered terms. Apologizing to Karen for her tantrums at the party—which had been directed at Eve and almost everyone else—Margo wonders about "Margo Channing" the star, versus her *real* self. In Goffman's terms, she has gone from being "fully taken in by [her] own act" to being "cynical" about her own performance as a star.[666] About Eve, she says: "At best, let's say I've been oversensitive to, well, to the fact that she's so young, so feminine, and so helpless. To so many things I want to be for Bill." Then she decides she needs to work at "being a woman," claiming that heterosexual marriage makes one such:

> [F]unny business, a woman's career. The things you drop on your way up the ladder, so you can move faster. You forget you'll need them again when you go back to being a woman. That's one career all females have in common—whether we like it or not—being a woman. Sooner or later we've all got to work at it, no matter what other careers we've had or wanted... and, in the last analysis, nothing is any good unless you can look up just before dinner or turn around in bed—and there he is. Without that, you're not a woman. You're something with a French provincial office or a book full of clippings—but you're not a woman.

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[666] Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, 10.

In needing to be at home with a husband, Margo thus reinscribes postwar middle-class values, chiding her own 'childishness' and 'selfishness' as a star, and revealing her *real* self to be as domestic and devoted a woman as Karen. So, although Eve appears to be affectively supportive like Karen, she is shown to be disloyal; and unlike Margo, her career ambitions overshadow all else. Eve is unfeminine by contrast, for she never makes 'being a woman' her 'career,' substituting instead the life of a star.

Eve exhibits signs of being anxious around others through her self-deprecation and apparent stage fright. From the first time Eve talks to Karen, she seems to be full of self-doubt: "I hope you don't mind my speaking to you. […] It took every bit of courage I could raise." When Karen says she'll take Eve to meet Margo, the young woman whimpers, "Oh, no! […] No. I'd be imposing on her. I'd be just another tongue-tied, gushing fan." She also worries about her looks, but Karen comforts her.

When the group inside the theater wants Eve to tell them her backstory, she says, "Oh, I couldn't possibly interest you." And in telling her story with far-off gazes and downturned eyes, which includes her memory of performing in a play for three nights, where she "was awful," she interrupts herself and asks: "I'm talking a lot of gibberish, aren't I?" Lloyd encourages her to continue.

Soon after a curtain call sequence (with Margo bowing profusely for an enthusiastic crowd), the star finds Eve bowing with her costume dress before a mirror—as if practicing her own curtain call in the role. When Margo says, "Eve," Eve is startled and freezes with a frightened look on her face; but Margo is amused and gently tells her that the wardrobe woman will want to pick up the dress herself. Eve relaxes and slowly walks the dress back to Margo.

When Eve asks Karen for another favor, disparaging herself in the process, Karen says, "You've got to stop thinking of yourself as one of the 'hundred neediest cases.'" Encouraged, Eve requests the role of Margo's understudy: "I do know the part so well." But then she stops with dread: "Suppose I had to go on one night, for an audience that came to see Margo Channing. Oh, no, I couldn't possibly!"

Even after proving that she *could* and *would* play Margo's part onstage, Eve maintains her self-deprecation. During her acceptance speech for a prestigious acting award, Eve speaks with much false modesty, ending with the line, "That is, if you want me back." The audience goes wild with applause. So her social and performance 'anxiety' seems more like a ploy to win sympathy and praise.

Eve belies her seeming shyness during her failed attempt to seduce Bill. Having replaced Margo onstage for the night, the understudy—still dressed in Margo's costume—invites Bill to take her. The seduction fails, not because Eve is shy or awkward, but because Bill is turned off by her aggression: "What I go after, I want to go after. I don't want it to come after me." After he leaves, Eve rips the wig from her head and throws it violently on the vanity table, then picks up the wig and tries to tear it apart. When Addison knocks and announces himself, Eve softens and smiles coyly to him.

Like other (genuinely) shy girls, Eve is shaped through her physical contact with Addison. When she tells him that she has successfully seduced Lloyd Richards, who (she says) insists on leaving Karen to be with her, Addison turns from her confidant and co-conspirator to commander. He declares that she will not be with Lloyd, but rather, "you will belong to me." Eve laughs at this and Addison slaps her. He reveals his knowledge of her true past, including that she

was paid to leave town after having an affair with her boss at the brewery where she worked. Eve weeps, prone on the bed, and Addison sits looking down upon her:

> ADDISON: Are you listening to me? *(Eve lies still and nods.)* Then say so.
> EVE: Yes, Addison.
> ADDISON: And you realize—you agree how completely you belong to me?
> EVE: Yes, Addison.

And so the budding starlet is physically and psychically disciplined by the critic who had helped make her famous at the expense of Margo Channing. Far from controlling her own image, Eve is at Addison De Witt's mercy.

Unlike other backstage films, we do not see any of the onstage performances, but Addison tells us that understudy Eve was an outstanding performer every time she filled in for Margo. We know that Lloyd Richard gives Eve the lead in his new play, and we see Eve win the Sarah Siddons Award for her stirring performance. But her transformation into a star culminates when we meet Eve's ardent fan, a teenage girl who 'calls herself' Phoebe. Phoebe seems innocuous enough, offering to clean up Eve's spilled drink, answer the door, and help her pack. But the young fan has also sneaked into the star's apartment, and lies to Eve. Now in a position of power, Eve lets her bad mood show, but she's curious about her fan. Eve tells Phoebe to put her award by the trunk, and the girl goes into the bedroom, dons Eve's cape, and bows with the award before a triptych mirror which multiplies her image and fills up the screen with dozens of Phoebes and their overwhelming ambitions of stardom. Eve, the former understudy, has become a model for her own replacement.

Critical Reception of Eve

Critics generally praised *All About Eve*, reacting with special favor toward Bette Davis's performance as Margo Channing, but also intrigued by Anne Baxter's Eve. John McCarten of *The New Yorker* writes,

> In place of the usual heroine of this kind of thing—a bright-eyed girl who doesn't doff her Mary Jane pumps until she's called upon to take over from somebody like Helen Hayes on Broadway—Mr. Mankiewicz has substituted an alarming little schemer, willing to indulge in anything from adultery to blackmail to realize her theatrical ambitions […]. As the Eve of this enterprise, Anne Baxter is always interesting to watch, even when her claws are showing a trifle too obviously.[667]

In contrast to Baxter's "interesting" if "obvious" performance, McCarten assigns Davis unabashed praise, saying that she dynamically transforms "a most difficult character into a lady who, however shrilly emotional, commands the sympathy of one and all."[668]

Giving more attention to Eve than Margo, *Variety*'s Abel Green calls Anne Baxter/Eve "radiant."[669] "The basic story is garnished with exceedingly well-cast performances wherein Miss Davis does not spare herself, makeup-wise, in the aging star assignment. Miss Baxter gives

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[667] John McCarten, "The Current Cinema: Bonanza for Bette," *The New Yorker*, October 21, 1950, 128.

[668] Ibid., 128. He adds that men in the film are inconspicuous compared to the women, and defends drama critics, saying that they could never be as vicious as Addison De Witt; 129.

Bosley Crowther of the *New York Times* echoes many of McCarten's sentiments, noting that "[a]lthough the title character—the self-seeking, ruthless Eve, who would make a black-widow spider look like a lady bug—is the motivating figure in the story and is played by Anne Baxter with icy calm, the focal figure and most intriguing character is the actress whom Bette Davis plays. This lady, an aging, acid creature with a cankerous ego and a stinging tongue, is the end-all of Broadway disenchantment, and Miss Davis plays her to a fare-thee-well. Indeed, the superb illumination of the spirit and pathos of this dame which is a brilliant screen actress gives her merits an Academy award." Crowther adds that "Celeste Holm is appealingly normal and naive as the [playwright's] wife." See "The Screen in Review: Bette Davis and Anne Baxter Star in 'All About Eve,' New Feature at Roxy Theatre," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Oct. 14, 1950.

Leo Rosten also sees Eve in stark terms. He writes *in The Reporter* that the story "unravels the tale of the young actress—who turns out to be an ambitious, conniving bitch who insinuated herself into the graces of a great star and played upon vanity and malice to gain the triumph she desired." About the performances: "No film could be better acted. As Margo Channing, a brilliant actress with alcoholic episodes and a profound anxiety about her age and herself as a woman, Bette Davis is superb. Celeste Holm is a delight as a 'nonprofessional' (i.e., a wife), and Anne Baxter is perfect as the little schemer." See "Mostly About Mankiewicz," *The Reporter*, December 12, 1950, 40.

[669] Abel Green, "Review: 'All About Eve," *Variety*, September 13, 1950.

the proper shading to her cool and calculating approach in the process of ingratiation and ultimate opportunities."[670] Green reads the ending as "Miss Baxter hugging the coveted trophy" but as "a stranger to her friends."[671] Here, it seems Eve's punishment is not the threat of Phoebe, but the loss of affection from her former allies.

Providing a more nuanced review, William Poster supposes that the film "serves for a discussion of the psychological difficulties of actresses," pointing to Margo's anxieties about age and femininity.[672] Though he never mentions Baxter by name, Poster reads Eve as a *femme fatale* and particularly enjoys the scene in which Eve and Addison square off:

> Eve's innocent appearance, hypocrisy and underhanded exploitation of the nice people who befriend her has needled the spectator to the point where he is fairly panting with the desire to see her crushed. […De Witt] draws sympathy at this point because he is a self-confessed, completely consistent scoundrel, and also because he prevents Eve from ruining the lives of the only likeable people the picture presents.[673]

In his defense of Addison, Poster overlooks the fact that the critic projects a grumpy but overall harmless persona, telling Margo early on, for instance, that Eve is in his "safe hands." The disparity between negative assessments of Eve and more positive assessments of Addison seems to be gendered and/or stemming from self-defense. Perhaps, like McCarten and Green, Poster cannot easily admit that an arts critic could be just as devious as an understudy!

Hollis Alpert of the *The Saturday Review* thinks that the film presents "a fairly familiar story about some fairly familiar theatre types. There is the stage-struck girl, sweet on the surface

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[670] Ibid.

[671] Ibid. Like McCarten, Green defends critics from the negative portrayal of Addison DeWitt.

[672] William Poster, "New Tricks in Dreamland," *The American Mercury*, January 1951, 95.

[673] Ibid., 95-6. And Poster goes against the critical consensus about Bette Davis's performance. Despite the fact that "[n]early everyone in the cast seemed out to break a world's record for perfect acting," Poster thinks that Davis's is too "toned down and muted" compared to her more "semi-hysteric" roles in other films. He doesn't mention Baxter by name.

and ruthless underneath, who wrangles her way into the star's dressing room and then proceeds coldly to knife everyone who stands in the way of her own path to stardom. *Her* name is Eve."[674] Alpert thinks that the film and role of Margo Channing were "made to order" for Bette Davis, and spends much room praising her performance.[675] Baxter's performance, however, strikes him as too "transparent."[676] It is difficult to know what type of conniving understudy Alpert sees in Eve, since most backstage films made before 1950 presented innocent, eager female understudies ready to rise to the challenge of putting on a show when called upon.[677] Still, gossip surrounding theatre and film productions sometimes told the tale of understudies usurping the spotlight by less-than-noble means.[678] And the 1943 film *Phantom of the Opera*, based on the popular 1910 novel, featured a man who poisons a diva so that his young female protégée can perform in the Paris Opera House. So while there was precedent for *All About Eve*'s storyline, most female understudy characters in classical Hollywood cinema do not procure performances for themselves through manipulation; the opportunity is usually presented to them through luck and from someone with more power.

Scholars read *All About Eve* as a meditation on women's roles in spectatorship and stardom. In *Stars*, for instance, Richard Dyer tells us that the film negotiates the complexity of our assumptions about the star's relationship to public and private spheres. Western culture tends to equate *private life* with something uncontrolled and authentic (e.g., how the Id functions in

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[674] Hollis Alpert,"The Case of Joseph L. Mankiewicz," *The Saturday Review*, October 21, 1950, 31.

[675] Ibid.

[676] Ibid.

[677] Sam Staggs. *All About 'All About Eve'* (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 2001), 33.

[678] Ibid., 103. Such gossip provided the source material for Mary Orr's popular short story and radio play, "The Wisdom of Eve," upon which Mankiewicz's screenplay is based.

psychoanalytic formulations of the psyche), and *public life* with something 'put on' and inauthentic.[679] In this equation, then, privacy is linked to truth. At first, *All About Eve* keeps with these equations, as the beautiful star Margo is rough-mannered and "monstrous" in her cold cream backstage. By contrast, the fan Eve seems like a "sweet girl" in her voice, costume, good manners, and prettiness. However, the film slowly reveals that Eve is really monstrous and Margo is really vulnerable and caring. Still, this softening of Margo's character is achieved through the assumed authenticity of her confessional to Karen in the car (a private moment and space), and the seeming 'rightness' of Margo's true (normative) views of womanhood.[680] By contrast, Eve becomes more aggressive (non-normative) and we see that her good manners are an act. Using Dyer's explanation of how interiority is communicated on film—private moments and confessions, and closeups[681]—we could add voiceover (a form of internal monologue or memory), which Margo, Karen, and Addison provide. Eve has no voiceover, which further positions her as more *public*, or put on. The perceived negative changes in Eve therefore coincide with her becoming less of a spectator and more of a star.

Complementing and complicating such meditations on stardom are treatments of Eve's sexuality and its relationship to her spectatorship. Eve is commonly thought to be a lesbian, with critics debating to what extent she desires "to be like" Margo and/or desires "to have" Margo. In her essay "Desperately Seeking Difference," Jackie Stacey asserts that *All About Eve* presents a

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[679] Dyer, *Stars*, 122.

[680] Ibid., 123-4.

[681] Ibid., 94;98.

complex of female desire *and* identification based on perceived difference.[682] Margo is a "desirable feminine ideal"—a "great star" that both Eve and the audience wish they could be;[683] "Thus, the identifications and desires of Eve, to some extent, narrativize the tradition and pleasure of female spectatorship."[684] Unlike Eve, Margo is an intimidating and powerful woman who often ignores the imperative of good manners and the feelings of others, and this "difference motivates Eve," who threatens but fails to overturn the difference.[685] Stacey notes that *All About Eve* is unusual for a film at the time because "the active desire of a female character is articulated through looking at a female star"—Eve watches Margo and "becomes intoxicated with her idol."[686] The final shot of Phoebe reenacts and recycles the film's preoccupation with the difference embedded between stardom and spectatorship, as "the reflected image, infinitely multiplied in the triptych of the glass, creates a spectacle of stardom that is the film's final shot, suggesting a perpetual regeneration of intra-feminine fascinations through the pleasure of looking."[687] This configures Eve as transformed both publicly (into a star) and privately (a circulating, sexual being).

While many scholars of the film devote much of their attention to Margo Channing/Bette Davis, Patricia White moves to discuss Eve and finds it difficult.[688] The film is supposedly "all

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[682] Jackie Stacey, "Desperately Seeking Difference," in *Visual Culture: The Reader*, ed. Jessica Evans and Stuart Hall (1999; repr., London: SAGE, 2004), 394-5.

[683] Ibid., 394-5.

[684] Ibid., 396.

[685] Ibid.

[686] Ibid., 397.

[687] Ibid.

[688] Patricia White, *Uninvited: Classical Hollywood Cinema and Lesbian Representability*. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 203.

about Eve," "But what about Eve herself does popular memory preserve?"[689] The trouble is, says White, "Eve is emphatically nondescript. […H]er visibility is paradoxical; it is not the 'to-be-looked-at-ness' of Woman, but the 'always-hanging-around-ness' of the spectator."[690] Further unpacking the budding star's gender queerness, White notes that Eve is not contained or constrained by Margo's realization that to be a "woman" she needs to give up being an actress (or that she should prefer it).[691] And Eve's "liminal status" is marked by the spaces she occupies, like doorways or alleys—places that are between public and private.[692] White argues that the film marks both spectatorship (the gaze) and the object of the gaze as female.[693] Because of this, she reads the film through the lens of a lesbian fantasy, concluding that the end is the "fade-out

[689] Ibid., 202.

[690] Ibid., 204-5.

[691] Ibid., 207.

[692] Ibid., 209.

[693] Ibid., 211.

before the love scene" between Eve and Phoebe.[694] Such readings, of course, position Eve's faux shyness and inscrutability as subversive to heteronormativity.

While acknowledging the identification/desire debate, Sianne Ngai seeks to move beyond it to discuss the negative affect underlying aggression and antagonism between female characters in films like *All About Eve*.[695] She explains that envy and jealousy were discursively feminized and discouraged as immoral in the 19th century, as a way of neutralizing and minimizing women's complaints (particularly those of working-class women).[696] Ngai sees "envy and emulation" at work in films like *All About Eve*, where a feminine ideal is presented as deserving "reverent fascination" and "deference," not "aggression" or "enmity"—hence the films police the

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[694] Ibid., 215. Likewise, Blakey Vermeule suggests that the film "encrypts" Eve's lesbianism into recognizable and acceptable forms of homosocial relations between women: especially star-worshipping and bitchy rivalry. Because Eve's lesbianism is 'enfolded' (and thus neutralized) into these homosocial practices, she remains a mystery, a set of displacements. Vermeule argues that this accounts for Eve's 'boringness' when compared to Margo, who is affectively open. By contrast, Eve remains affectively closed and filmically closeted. Vermeule reads *All About Eve* in terms of both desire *and* identification: "to be a star, you have to want a star." See "Is There a Sedgwick School for Girls?" *Qui Parle* 5, no. 1 (1991): 57; 60; 65; 67; 70.

Britta Sjogren expands the interpretive lens of identification and lesbian desire to include Margo, who is intrigued by Eve's characteristics: "Margo gets 'closest' to Eve, her would-be 'sister' who desires, specifically, to be Margo. Margo's desire, on one level, reflects Eve's. She wants to be what Eve is, young and desirable." This two-way desire to be the other reminds us that Eve is the object of Margo's gaze, too, and that Eve is able to become a star because she contains desirable traits in an overtly heterosexual stardom matrix that covertly relies on (to return to Stacey) "intra-feminine fascinations." By this understanding, we might think of Margo as a kind of spectator or understudy who desires to perform Eve's youthful role. See *Into the Vortex: Female Voice and Paradox in Film* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 124-5.

In *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire*, Teresa De Lauretis pointedly asserts that Eve and Margo's relationship is steeped in identification and not desire, as Lauretis does not want to conflate "lesbian sexuality" with homosocial relationships like "sisterhood, female friendship, and the now popular theme of the mother-daughter bond." Rather, she reads the star/fan relationship as an "Oedipal mother/rival image," where the younger woman wishes to be like the older one "in order to take her place in the world, to become a famous star like her, and to replace her as the object of desire of both her husband and the audience." Basing her interpretation on a close reading of Freud's writings on mother-daughter relationships, Lauretis notes that this rivalry is desexualized and narcissistic, and not driven by eroticism as other critics suppose. See Teresa De Lauretis, *The Practice of Love: Lesbian Sexuality and Perverse Desire* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994), 116-7.

[695] Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 138-9.

[696] Ibid., 120.

female audience to *admire* the feminine ideal but not to actively strive to attain it.[697] For example, Margo is at first flattered by Eve studying her, telling Birdie there's nothing wrong with it (where "wrong" means hostile).[698] Ngai notes that emulation is not the desire to *be*, but the desire to "eclipse" or "dispossess": "Instead of being a form of altering oneself in *deference* to another, emulation can thus be a form of aggressive *self-assertion*: performed solely for the hostile purposes of causing the other anxiety or distress, to 'spoil' her by rendering her self-identity unstable, even to destroy her."[699] Emulation transforms that which it emulates, from an ideal to something reproducible, thereby stripping it of its specialness and making it more like something which is "mass-produced."[700] Within the context of *All About Eve,* I think Ngai's reading (combined with Dyer's framework) points to the tension between the star's ordinariness and extraordinary status, and makes us rethink or revalue luck and hard work. The film reveals the hard work of becoming a star as something devious and cruel, and luck becomes something engineered by Eve. Thus, Margo loses her exemplary status as the only star in the film, but recovers herself as an exemplary woman: a childish star who 'comes to her senses,' wants to get married to a man, and realizes the 'true value' of "being a woman"—that is, being at home with a husband. Meanwhile, Addison and Phoebe strip Eve of her newly acquired exemplary status as a powerful star; Addison "takes charge," and we now see Phoebe as Eve's copy—perhaps her replacement. The film is therefore a series of "aggressive self-assertions" for these characters,

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[697] Ibid., 141-2.

[698] Ibid., 142. This is the only scene from *All About Eve* which Ngai treats; the rest of her analysis concerns the film *Single White Female* (1992), but applies well to Eve and Margo's relationship.

[699] Ibid.

[700] Ibid., 152-3; 160.

but Margo's own aggression is newly cloaked by her professed desire for heteronormalcy, with its idealized affective ordering of women into non-competitive caretakers.

In *Cold War Femme*, Robert J. Corber reads the film within the context of the Cold War era "lesbian panic," arguing that the portrayal of Eve taps into anxieties about femme lesbians passing as heterosexual women. Corber details postwar homophobic rhetoric, which cautioned that, unlike the more visible mannish lesbian, the femme seems like a 'normal woman' and can thus 'convert' other women to lesbianism.[701] Eve's butchness (her aggressive ambition) is disguised with her femininity, and the contrast between her elegant awards gown and frumpy coat and hat in the alley (which mark her as mannish) signals that her femininity is a performance.[702] Moreover, Eve's view of her career (ambition *über alles*) contrasts with Margo's (career gives way to marriage). Margo's view marks her as a 'real woman' and Eve's makes her *not* one.[703] Addison is also coded as gay in his dress, speech, manner, and profession,[704] so his and Eve's sadomasochistic final scene together is used to "pathologize their gender and sexual nonconformity."[705] Corber further suggests that the sight of Phoebe multiplied in the mirror conjures fear of the proliferation and influence of femme lesbians.[706] While *All About Eve* is conservative in some ways, Corber concludes that the film is subversive because it demonstrates the "mobility of femininity," where it is tied neither to the female body nor to heterosexuality.[707]

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[701] Corber, *Cold War Femme*, 28.

[702] Ibid., 30; 34-5.

[703] Ibid., 42.

[704] Ibid., 43-4.

[705] Ibid., 45.

[706] Ibid., 43.

[707] Ibid., 47.

Of course, this mobility adds to the menace of the understudy and the risks posed by her infiltration.

While Sam Staggs mentions only in passing that we could "read Eve's treachery and deceit as a veiled allusion to conspiracies and witch hunts of the time,"[708] he also reads the final shot in terms of contagion and enmity, metaphors that circulated in both the Red and Lavender Scares: "We gasp at [Eve's] deadly error, which is the same one Margo made: the enemy was at the gate, and now the enemy is invited in . . . to devour. Mankiewicz implies, with his mirrored multiplicity of Phoebes, that the plague of Eves and Phoebes is unstoppable; cut one down and a hundred more spring up."[709] Moving beyond the *femme fatale*, Staggs suggests that Eve fits into the lineage of the "Killer Lesbian" in film. He further notes that Addison's lecture to Eve draws on postwar medical and psychological literature on homosexuality, when he calls her an "improbable person," saying that they both have a "contempt for humanity, an inability to love and be loved."[710] This speech hints at homosexuals' presumed narcissism, hiding it behind the presumed narcissism of showbiz folk.

With all these references to Eve's lesbianism (or at least her gender queerness), how did *All About Eve* make it through the Production Code censors? As suggested above, its showbiz narrative of triumph over obstacles (e.g., achieving fame) and its appeal to heterosexuality effectively pushed gender and sexual deviance into subtext. Staggs reports that the Production Code paperwork on the film included a questionnaire on which was written that the film had a

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[708] Staggs, *All About 'All About Eve*,' 233.

[709] Ibid., 149.

[710] Ibid., 251.

"happy ending, in sense that each achieved his or her goal," (!) also saying "Yes," the "picture end[s] with promise of marriage or continued love."[711] It seems the film infiltrated the country right past the censors.

Tools for Infiltration

While I find Corber's and Stagg's analyses compelling and clearly helpful for exploring many aspects of Eve's gender queerness, I view her as a symbol of infiltration in general. As discussed in connection to *The Heiress*, postwar rhetoric surrounding the possible infiltration of Communists into American society encouraged citizens to guard their families from outside influence. While Margo, Karen, Bill, Lloyd, and Birdie create a kind of backstage family threatened by the outsiders Eve and Addison, *All About Eve* concerns a different sort of infiltration: the personal threat to an individual, and to the institution of Broadway and Hollywood stardom more generally. And in contrast with *The Heiress*, wherein shyness makes one vulnerable to infiltration, shyness is used here as the vehicle for infiltration. With a series of concealments and deflections, Eve *performs* the shy girl to win sympathy and favors from others, to further her career at the expense of those who take pity on her, and to overthrow Margo's stardom.

In identifying the shy girl traits of Eve, we have already seen some of the ways she conceals and deflects: particularly though her constant self-deprecation and retreat to spaces away from others. And the film is nearly bookended by visual and vocal cues about hiding. The first shot of Eve is an extreme closeup of her hands resting on a table, one covering the other, as if concealing something; she sits in silence, waiting to accept her award. Later in the film,

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[711] Production Code Administration document, quoted in Staggs, *All About 'All About Eve*,' 192.

Addison tells Eve that he plans to write a profile on her. When he starts asking questions, she has already gone into another enclosed dressing space within the larger dressing room—a spatial deflection. The door is ajar, and we can only sense Eve by her voice and the movement of her shadow. When Addison asks her her husband's last name, her movement stops and she hesitates to answer. Dodging his query, Eve appears again and tells him with a mollifying and seductive look that she is going to take a shower. The scene ends seemingly without Addison or the audience learning more about her background.

These sorts of benign concealments raise a fascination with and good will toward Eve, without much suspicion (until, that is, Eve begins to reveal her aggressive side). At the airport, Bill says of Eve, "She's quite a girl, this what's-her-name. […] That lack of pretense, that sort of strange directness and understanding." Margo agrees: "Isn't it silly? Suddenly I've developed a big protective feeling toward her. A lamb loose in our big stone jungle." At the party, Lloyd says, "I like that girl. That quality of quiet graciousness." (By this time, Margo has grown suspicious of Eve, and sneers, "Amongst so many *quiet* qualities.") After the audition, Lloyd says Eve is "a born actress. Sensitive, understanding, young, exciting, vibrant! […] Margo's great and she knows it! That's the trouble." This suggests that Eve's modesty is attractive, too. Part of Eve's performance of youthful femininity lies in her quietness, her shy show of devotion, and her apparent dependence on stronger characters. This makes her treachery possible and more disturbing, as it comes from a *successful* performance of femininity.

It may be due to Eve's youthful innocence that the men in the film discount the women's growing suspicions that Eve has ill intent. Bill calls Margo "paranoid" and "jealous," and Lloyd calls Karen "hysterical." This recalls Ngai's discussion of how envy and jealousy are used to

dismiss women's complaints. Interestingly, it is Birdie, Margo's long-term assistant (who has dispensed with the positive affect usually associated with servitude), who first suspects something 'off' about Eve. When Margo asks her assistant, "She thinks only of me, doesn't she?" Birdie replies, "Well, let's say she thinks only *about* you, anyway. […] Like she's studying you, like you was a play, or a book, or a set of blueprints. How you walk, talk, eat, think, sleep —" Margo-as-star stops her: "I'm sure that's very flattering, Birdie! I'm sure there's nothing wrong with it." Suddenly Eve enters, wearing one of Margo's old suits. Here, imitation is flattery, tinged with infiltration. The surveillance that typically surrounds stars takes on a more menacing tone.

The film includes other references that suggest infiltration in Cold War language. When Lloyd and Karen argue over giving Eve the lead in Lloyd' s new play, Karen says, "It strikes me that Eve's disloyalty and ingratitude must be contagious!" Lloyd snaps: "All this fuss and hysteria because an impulsive kid got carried away by excitement and the conniving of a professional manure slinger named DeWitt! She apologized, didn't she?" Notice the word choices: disloyalty, contagious, hysteria, manure slinger (or mudslinger). In this exchange, Eve is coded as an infiltrator, Karen as a witch-hunter, and Lloyd as a liberal who blames the media for stirring up "all this fuss." And although the women's suspicions about Eve are dismissed by Bill and Lloyd, the film creates anxiety because we see that the men are *wrong* not to be suspicious of Eve. She *is* disloyal. And as the rapture with which she is received at the awards gala shows—followed by the appearance of super-fan Phoebe—Eve *is* contagious.

Unlike other characters, who suspect Eve too late, Addison's spying on and investigation of Eve give him power over her because he knows and reveals the truth about her past. In this

sense, the film conservatively justifies surveillance, even as it presents Addison as another despicable, power-hungry figure masquerading as a benign, if supercilious, observer. It is a scenario in which only one villain can contain another, a process by which the 'shy girl' is outed as a 'bad girl.' By the end of *All About Eve*, one might be inclined to believe Mrs. Alsop in *Limelight*, who insisted that "still waters that run deep usually stink." Here, shyness is configured as a screen for hiding something, and the pity which shy girls sometimes receive dangerously allows them to hide their secrets in plain sight. Thus, as with *The Heiress*, friendly containment operates in *All About Eve* not through Eve's transformation into a more socially acceptable woman, but through the negative affects she evinces in critics and audiences alike. The Cold War era cautionary tale encourages prosocial behaviors through its psychological deployment of disgust, pity, and fear.

THE PROBLEM OF UNDERSTUDIES

The understudy is a fitting figure for the socialization of shyness, because she learns the roles of others and waits patiently for the chance to perform them. Unless the understudy is more calculating, the performance may never materialize; unless she is precise and adept onstage, the performance may not benefit her career.[712] To survive, she must compete with the stage presence, the emphatic gesticulation, the striking vocal dynamism of more established actresses like Ethel Merman (Mama in *Gypsy*) or Bette Davis (Margo Channing in *All About Eve*). The stage is no place for hesitation. The understudy might need a slap (Terry in *Limelight*), or a man's supporting presence (Magnolia in *Show Boat*), but the show must go on.

In Part I, we saw how depictions of home girls connect behaviors within the private domestic spaces of family dramas to popular psychology. The analysis of understudies connects performance demands to the imaging and circulation of celebrity bodies. The understudy's transformation into a star requires physical and affective disciplining; her desirability increases as she becomes more confident ("sure-footed"), dynamic, and engaging onstage. Louise's transformation in *Gypsy*, from a boyish girl into a confident woman who performs within a heterosexual matrix of desire, puts the shy girl on public display. Where previously, only women of color were 'allowed' to be so explicitly sexual, in the context of the rise of *Playboy*, it seems that even the stripper is a more acceptable form of white femininity in the otherwise conservative 1950s than is the shy girl. Badgered to perform by her mother, Louise ultimately wins a kind of independence only by expanding her affective domain to include a largely male audience.

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[712] Bennett, "Understudies," 1017; 1019.

In Chaplin's *Limelight*, Terry becomes the subject of the psychologist's gaze, and Calvero effects both a physical and psychical cure by teaching her to walk and perform. As in *Gypsy* and *All About Eve*, however, Terry's transformation into a prima ballerina ultimately requires the protégée's power to draw upon and reconfigure her mentor. In *Limelight*, Terry draws strength from her own chance to care for and cure Calvero; her affective labor supports her man and thereby herself. Chaplin thus links Terry's triumphs on the dance stage to her performance of interpersonal devotion.

In *Show Boat*, Magnolia learns from, and benefits at the expense of her mentor, Julie. Though she declines the stardom and worldly success that overcoming her stage fright promises, the film rewards Magnolia with familial love and togetherness, while denying it to the mixed-race Julie. While Magnolia's shyness is situational, the film aligns it with urban alienation, suggesting that remaining close to family and friends will inhibit such paralyzing performance failure. And just as Magnolia benefits from Julie's race-based expulsion from the showboat, she benefits from Julie's selfless decision to leave her position at the Chicago nightclub where Magnolia auditions, and from Julie's decision to direct Magnolia's husband back to his wife. However, the affective labor Magnolia gives to her husband, father, and daughter narratively precludes her from reciprocating Julie's devotional acts. Thus, leaving the domestic realm of the showboat creates a recoverable crisis of situational shyness for white Magnolia, but a continual downward spiral for Julie, whose blackness bans her from the showboat's "big happy family."

Because *All About Eve* uses the shy girl understudy ironically as a sexually aggressive, manipulative infiltrator, we see the convergence of conventional Cold War film narratives and backstage stories—replete with anxieties about performance, secrets, surveillance, and

treacherous shyness. Eve draws upon stereotypical portrayals of shyness which, as we have seen with home girls and shy understudies, are often sentimentalized as deserving of pity and needing help. Using this guise, Eve manipulates the sympathies of others—which has the overall effect of pathologizing shyness further, because we are shown that people can use shyness to hide their dark secrets. And unlike Louise and Terry, whose transformations into stars are accompanied by their increased affective labor, Eve's transformation is negatively marked by her refusal to care for others.

We now turn to concluding thoughts about directions for future research on shy and other socially awkward female characters, consider the ambivalent relationship between shyness and feminist activism, and reflect on the consequences of postwar depictions of shy young women.

CONCLUSION

Shy girls in U.S. postwar theatre and film appear in narratives about home girls—socially awkward young women who are reluctant to leave the family home of their youth to marry or have children—and understudies—awkward female performers who watch and learn from more seasoned performers how to command the stage and their professional lives. The plight of shy understudies emphasizes the performative aspects of social identity, adding pressure to perform well onstage to the pressure of offstage social settings—such as those navigated by shy home girls, who similarly experience social interaction as pressurized moments of their own specularization. In the socialization narratives of this period, shyness is negatively constructed as personal inefficiency (*The Glass Menagerie*), selfishness (*The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*), emotional vulnerability (*The Heiress*), a precursor to mental collapse (*The Three Faces of Eve*), professional inefficiency (*Gypsy*), a precursor to physical collapse (*Limelight*), a symptom of modern urban alienation (*Show Boat*), and as a devious tool for infiltration (*All About Eve*). Because dominant attitudes linking shyness to failure—in mental, physical, professional, interpersonal, and citizenship terms—inform these shy girl narratives, I read shyness as a simultaneously personal and political problem. And because so much of the postwar rhetoric about shyness concerns affective labor (e.g., self-improvement and dating manuals that denigrate social withdrawal as selfishness), shyness is a gendered state which can negatively impact views of shy women (where nurturance is coded as a naturally feminine trait) more than those of shy men (where the stoic, "strong, silent type" is coded as masculine, even heroic in some contexts

and cultural artifacts). In short, shy girls in U.S. postwar theatre and film are a problem that demands fixing. What are the consequences of pathologizing shy women in this way?[713]

Of course, shy women are not the only female characters who pose 'problems' for society. In what follows, I consider directions for future research on mid-twentieth-century (1940s-60s) cultural production in the U.S., considering character types related to shy girls by their marginalized or peculiar social status. Finally, I consider the current personal and political implications of embracing shyness in women, especially through a feminist lens.

Directions for Future Research

Future research of character types related to shy girls would concern not only their heteronormative socialization (as some scholars have done), but also the gendered emotional labor involved in this process. Here I will trace some (dis)connections between the home girls and understudies of this project and the following types in popular media: old maids and widows; deaf-mutes; librarians, schoolmarms/teachers, and nerdy girls; best friends and little sisters; housekeepers, maids, and personal assistants; and tomboys. These character types may undergo a reformative process of socialization or may enforce the socialization of others. Where these characters are not the stars of their diegesis, their minor status and seeming oddness is used to enhance and communicate the normative or idealized status of the star(s) proper. Thus, such characters underline the conventionally 'right ways' to perform white middle-class femininity.

Two of the most popular mid-century widows to grace novel, stage, and screen, are Mrs. Dolly Levi from *The Matchmaker* (1955 play; 1958 film) and its musical stage adaptation *Hello,*

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[713] These gendered, popular understandings of shyness continue into the twenty-first century, even if there are more nuanced and sympathetic portrayals of socially awkward girls and women in U.S. cultural production (particularly independent cinema and television of the past three decades).

Dolly! (1964), and the old maid-cum-widow Mame Dennis from *Auntie Mame* (1956 play; 1958 film) and its musical stage adaptation *Mame* (1966). Against the type of the dour, withdrawn woman in mourning, Dolly and Mame are robust and highly active figures, captivating other characters and audiences with their infectious energy. They are unconventional women for their times—professional single women who comfortably move about in public and pursue their own interests and desires (somewhat like the budding class of women propounded by Helen Gurley Brown's *Sex and the Single Girl* but, importantly, in their middle age rather than their early twenties).[714] Yet, as Stacy Wolf argues, these widows' transgressive status is tempered by their conservative comic endgame: they act as the ringleaders who manipulate clients or family members to prosocial, heteronormative ends.[715] In a sense, then, Dolly and Mame are agents of socialization while resisting conventional socialization themselves.[716] While these outrageous widows are partially entertaining because they upturn common stock portrayals of sad, quiet widows, their box-office success and subsequent prominence in the archive is a familiar kind of erasure which upholds a stark preference for energy and outgoingness in entertainment, leaving physically and affectively shriveled widows such as Mrs. Windle Vale in *Now, Voyager* (1942) by the wayside. *Now, Voyager* also contains a 'boring' old maid/spinster figure in Mrs. Vale's daughter Charlotte, who for much of the film is a shy, bespectacled, avid reader with bushy

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[714] Stacey Wolf, *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 72-3. Unlike Dolly, who works as a professional matchmaker, Mame is a socialite until the stock market crash forces her to take on a string of jobs; her fortune is restored through a brief marriage to a wealthy man who soon dies in an Alpine accident on their honeymoon.

[715] Ibid., 74-5; 81-2. Also see Judith Roof's discussion of Mame in *All about Thelma and Eve: Sidekicks and Third Wheels* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 143-5.

[716] As Wolf observes, "Both Dolly and Mame do marry but the marriage plays a small role in these musicals; the male principal sings little, and the single woman emerges as the musical's center;" *Changed for Good*, 82.

eyebrows. Like other prominent shy girls, Charlotte Vale undergoes a dazzling physical, mental, and affective makeover and enters into heterosexual relationships (however temporary).[717] More work could be done to excavate less exciting constructions of widows and old maids in theatre, film, and other media.[718]

Socialization narratives involving deaf-mute women and girls could likewise use more attention in terms of how communication disabilities are constructed. In the 1940 play and 1948 film *Johnny Belinda*, and the 1959 play and 1962 film *The Miracle Worker*, for instance, a large part of the narratives concern teaching deaf-mutes[719] forms of sign language which both allow for communication but also instill prosocial behaviors. In both cases, the teacher figure who provides communication instruction is regarded as a heroic figure for overcoming the deaf-mute's opacity, for drawing out the pupil's heretofore inaccessible interiority. I would never suggest that this process is necessarily harmful, as communication channels allow for the deaf-mute woman and blind deaf-mute girl to communicate their needs and desires in personally unprecedented ways, but the negative construction of deaf-mutism (and blindness)—which finds various characters resenting, neglecting, physically or sexually abusing, or otherwise taking advantage of deaf-mute characters—is certainly related to negative attitudes surrounding

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[717] For more on Charlotte Vale's transformation in *Now, Voyager*, see Greven, *Representations of Femininity in American Genre Cinema*, 1-2; 29-34. Elizabeth A. Ford and Deborah C. Mitchell consider Charlotte's makeover as prototypical for all other makeover films in *The Makeover in Movies: Before and After in Hollywood Films, 1941-2002* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2004), 9-19. Also see Berlant's chapter "Remembering Love, Forgetting Everything Else: *Now, Voyager*" in *The Female Complaint*,169-205; and White's discussion of the film's queer female attachments in the chapter "Films for Girls: Lesbian Sentiment and the Maternal Melodrama" in *Uninvited*, 94-135.

[718] Both Betsy Israel's *Bachelor Girl: 100 Years of Breaking the Rules—A Social History of Living Single* (New York: Harper Collins, 2002) and Trisha Franzen's *Spinsters and Lesbians: Independent Womanhood in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 1996) provide helpful overviews of shifting attitudes and cultural constructions of single women in the U.S. Israel's study traces single womanhood since the 19th century, while Franzen's work focuses on the Progressive Era and mid-20th century.

[719] *The Miracle Worker*'s Helen Keller is also blind.

shyness. Moreover, the possibility of faking deaf-mutism may appear as a threat to a community, or as a fantasy to a less socially-oriented individual, as when Holden Caulfield in J.D. Salinger's novel *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951) wishes he could move to a new town and pretend to be a deaf-mute to avoid making conversation with anyone, further wishing he could marry a "beautiful deaf-mute" girl.[720] Thus, deaf-mutism is a site of rhetorical contention over what it means to connect—or not—with others.[721]

The stock librarian—stereotypically a bespectacled (nerdy) older women (an old maid, at that) with her hair in a bun, severely shushing and upholding library rules—combines several negative images of failed feminine heterosexual socialization: she is smart and rigid as opposed to affectively soft; she prefers the company of books to people; consequently, she is manless and childless. This type of librarian also appears not as the heroine of library films, but as the supporting character to a young, glamorous, non-nerdy female librarian who ends up landing a man and leaving librarianship for good, or less visibly as a bit comic part in a film not overtly concerned with librarians.[722] In these bit parts, the severe librarian often interrupts kissing or cuddling in the library, reinforcing her sexless and un-fun status—she puts the *rigidity* in

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[720] J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (New York: Little, Brown & Co., 1951), 255-6.

[721] Tom Humphries provides an interesting discussion of deaf-mutism's rise and fall as an identity marker in U.S. deaf culture. He notes that, prior to the standardization and popularization of American Sign Language in the 1950s, deaf people were labelled but also self-identified as "deaf-mute," a term which fell out of favor by the 1960s, as both deaf and hearing culture negatively associated deaf-mutism with illiteracy, silence, and dependence. See "The Modern Deaf Self: Indigenous Practices and Educational Imperatives," in *Literacy and Deaf People: Cultural and Contextual Perspectives*, ed. Brenda Jo Breuggemann (Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet University Press, 2004), 30-1.

[722] Ray Tevis and Brenda Tevis, *The Image of Librarians in Cinema, 1917-1999* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2005), 9; 11; 19. Tevis and Tevis note that these conventions were introduced with two films released in 1921—*The Lost Romance* and *The Blot*—and solidified with three films in 1932: *Forbidden*, *Young Bride*, and *No Man of Her Own*. These stereotypical representations of librarians continue into the 1950s and beyond.

frigidity.[723] This bespectacled librarian haunts nerdy girl makeover films, such as *Funny Face* (1957), wherein removing the bookstore clerk's glasses transforms her from a militant left-wing intellectual into an overall docile model fit for both image consumption and heterosexual marriage.[724] Both nerdy girl makeover films and films about librarians link physical and affective attractiveness as the keys to making heterosexual attachments and achieving upward mobility. Women who put their pleasant bodies and positive emotions into social circulation are narratively rewarded, while those who keep their bodies and emotions in circulation with books and anti-social ideas are forgotten or laughed off. Here, the link between women's introspection, refusal to socialize according to standards of mainstream etiquette and dating manuals, and negative diegetic and/or heteronormative outcome, clearly relates to shy girl socialization narratives. There is a need for more analyses of minor librarians, nerdy girls, and related types such as schoolmarms, whose gender queerness in films like *The Children's Hour* (1961) may be linked not only to their status as unmarried women and mentors in the homosocial environment

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[723] Tevis and Tevis, *The Image of Librarians in Cinema*, 31. Not only sex acts but sexual attraction is interrupted by librarians, as exemplified in the emphatic "shush" that impedes conversation between the would-be couple Macauley Conner and Tracy Lord in *The Philadelphia Story* (1940 film); 38-9.The library's sexlessness is also emphasized as the setting for the ballad "(I Ain't Got) Nobody" in the Judy Garland-Mickey Rooney vehicle *Strike Up the Band* (1940); 38.

[724] Timothy Shary traces the negative depictions of homely "nerdly girls" and "stylish smart girls" in some films spanning the 1960s and '70s, but focuses his analysis on films released in the 1980s and '90s. His article is insightful but overlooks the connection between the nerdy girl makeovers in, say, *Funny Face* and *She's All That* (1999). See "The Nerdly Girl and Her Beautiful Sister," in *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood*, ed. Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002).

Ford and Mitchell discuss the many feminine makeovers in Audrey Hepburn films (e.g., *Funny Face*, *Sabrina* (1954), and *My Fair Lady* (1964)) primarily as they provide access to social mobility and upper-class white men; *The Makeover in Movies*, 132.

of an all-girls school, but also to their association with books, introspection, and an overall quiet life.[725]

Women and girls who are best friends and/or kid sisters to a heroine are minor characters who often act as sly or aloof confidantes, give unsolicited advice, and make wisecracks. Their deviant femininity can be easily dismissed or narratively punished (e.g., they may disappear from the story, or are denied a happy ending or coupledom).[726] Unruly little sisters are sometimes reformed (Amy in the 1949 film adaptation of *Little Women* develops from a snooty manipulative girl into an affectively softer sophisticated woman); sometimes they are not, but their 'acting out' is seen as a normal sign of youth (Tootie in *Meet Me in St. Louis* (1949) remains a firecracker whose final violent tantrum is excused because it keeps her family together in St. Louis). As variously discussed by Judith Roof, Molly Haskell, and Patricia White, actors Eve Arden and Thelma Ritter have often been typecast as the sarcastic, manless best friend to a cinematic heroine, with the effect that their masculine—and, in Ritter's case, ethnic—difference augments the heroine's status as a desirably feminine, middle-to-upper-class heterosexual white woman.[727] This masculinized best friend type further appears in teen films like *Gidget* (1959), where Gidget's tomboyish athleticism is rendered feminine when she appears next to her best

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[725] Scholarly coverage of schoolmarms is patchy. *The Children's Hour* has received a fair amount of attention, particularly in LGBTQ studies (see, for instance, Corber, *Cold War Femme*, 48-7 and 63-70; and White, *Uninvited*, 21-8), but what is the relationship between these schoolmarms and those found in, say, Westerns, and vice versa? Cynthia J. Miller mentions the construction of white schoolmarms as a generally 'civilizing' force in Western films (as opposed to the dancehall girl or *bandida*), but does not treat these individual characters with any specificity. See "'Wild Women': Interracial Romance on the Western Frontier," in *Love in Western Film and Television: Lonely Hearts and Happy Trails*, ed. Sue Matheson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 78.

[726] Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve*, 14-6.

[727] See Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve*, 14-7; White, *Uninvited*, 173-5; and Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974), 180-1.

friend Betty Louise (nicknamed B. L.—"butch lesbian"?), who has boyishly cropped hair and wears baggy Oxford shirts and Panama shorts.[728] And although Mattel introduced Barbie's best friend Midge in 1963 to tone down Barbie's threatening sexuality,[729] Erica Rand makes the case that certain Mattel accessories hint at the possibility that Midge and Barbie could be lovers.[730] But until Midge's boyfriend Allan was introduced in 1964, Midge—who is made to look more down-to-earth (freckly) and affectively open (wider eyes and smile, contrasted with mid-century Barbie's vacant but elegant *femme fatale* expression)[731]—is a tagalong to Barbie and Ken's dates, and in that sense could also be read as a teenage analog of the spinster librarian who interrupts sexual contact between nearby lovers. (Of course, Midge could form a *ménage à trois* with Barbie and Ken, but the tagalong identity marker is directly suggested by early television ads for Midge.)[732] More research could be done on the gendering, emotional labor, and socialization (or lack thereof) of best friends and kid sisters who are essentially "third wheels."

Housekeepers, maids, and personal assistants play a role similar to comic best friends in that they are usually construed as single women who act as sly co-conspirators, sometimes offering up advice or wisecracks. However, a greater power differential exists between these women and the heroine because they are hired help. Comic housekeepers, maids, and assistants

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[728] Allison Whitney, "Gidget Goes Hysterical," in *Sugar, Spice, and Everything Nice: Cinemas of Girlhood*, ed. Frances Gateward and Murray Pomerance (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2002), 63-5. Though B. L. supposedly has a boyfriend named Buck, Whitney asks, "[I]f B.L. really has a serious boyfriend, why is she spending her entire summer in Gidget's bedroom?"; 64.

[729] Amy McKinnon, "Midge," in *Girl Culture: An Encyclopedia, Volume 1*, ed. Claudia A. Mitchell and Jacqueline Reid-Walsh (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2008), 434.

[730] Erica Rand, *Barbie's Queer Accessories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995), 43.

[731] McKinnon, "Midge," 434.

[732] See, for instance, TheBarbieCollection, "Introducing Midge—a Vintage Mattel Commercial," *YouTube*, Apr. 16, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUjv_nr-4r4.

generally appear to be more masculine, awkward, and racially or ethnically different and, of course, poorer than the heroine. Representations of non-comical hired help usually preserve racial, ethnic, and class difference between female servants and the women they serve, but they are typically coded as more feminine because they are silent, polite, deferential, and sometimes exhibit devotional attachment to the main character(s). And herein lies the difficulty in discussing shyness in relation to depictions of hired help in general: if they are demure, submissive, or seemingly shy, it could simply be because their jobs, racial, and class standings demand it. In this sense, the "mask of shyness" described by Patricia McDaniel is not just a tool for dating success, but also one for achieving professional poise (a sign of emotional labor as described by Arlie Hochschild). We cannot consider the quiet disposition of personal assistant Annie Johnson in *Imitation of Life* (1959), for example, without also considering her status as a black professional factotum to a white actress. If we simply consider Annie's quietness to be dispositional shyness, we overlook that this demeanor brings her continued professional success. We might also have difficulty reconciling the fact that Annie's one fantasy consists of having an elaborate funeral procession throughout the city. Is this the fantasy of a shy person? (Perhaps, since death means never having to socialize…But perhaps not, since the procession is a grand spectacle which places Annie's body/coffin on display for all to see.)

In contrast to gracefully deferential servants, socially awkward housekeepers and assistants seem more readily tied to shy girls precisely because they lack poise and enter into queer territory. For example, the housekeeper Emma in *White Christmas* is overly blunt, meddling, and further masculinized by her tallness, "geeky" facial expressions, and deep

voice.[733] The converse to glamorous and graceful female leads, Emma reads as an undesirable old maid. And nerdy-girl stenographer Agnes Gooch in *Auntie Mame* wears thick glasses and oversized clothing, walks with a hunch, and blurts things out with a too-loud voice and heavy Brooklyn accent. Quite in line with shy girl socialization narratives, Mame gives the uncertain Agnes a makeover—encouraging the young woman to "Live, live, live!"—and sends her on a date with a man who marries and impregnates the drunk, socially unprepared Agnes that very night. It is both a botched makeover and a conventionally correct outcome which blurs the line between Mame's eccentric behavior and conservative endgame for others. More importantly, the makeover blurs Agnes's status as Mame's employee and her plaything (after all, Mame gleefully yanks off the young woman's clothes).[734] There is much more to be said on the links between paid physical and emotional labor and the socialization (or, again, lack thereof) of hired female help.

While tomboys—physically active, loud, and affectively open—seem to be in many ways the opposite of shy girls, they are almost always narratively "tamed" (read: socialized in accordance with heteronormative gender codes). In some popular tales and their theatrical and filmic adaptations, tomboys partly undergo this transformation into normative femininity with the help of a dying shy girl. Michelle Abate observes this trend in both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852), where the 'wild' black tomboy Topsy is 'civilized' through her emulation of the meek, dying, platitudinous, blonde Little Eva; and in *Little Women*, where the adamantly tomboyish Jo

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[733] Roof gives her the moniker "geeky," and suggests that Emma's lack of white femininity positions her as an analog (and postwar replacement) of the cheeky black mammies who populated films in the 1930s and '40s; *All about Thelma and Eve*, 154-5.

[734] For more on "Mame's Gooch-girl project," see Roof, *All about Thelma and Eve*, 143-5.

is inspired by her dying shy sister, Beth, who imparts gentleness (femininity) to Jo's character.[735] These interesting overlaps have particular resonance for this project, where mid-twentieth-century self-improvement manuals and psychological studies again and again align mental, physical, and civic health with a 'happy medium' of sociability—being neither too shy nor too in-yer-face. So it is that the death of the shy girl and the (metaphorical) death of the tomboy unite into a vision of a well-socialized young woman. In this light, more work could be done on the interplay or interdependence between tomboys and shyer female counterparts.

Implications

Shyness is a tricky subject in gender studies because it has a decidedly uneasy relationship to feminist narratives of verbally and physically resisting the oppression of women. On one hand, shyness is coded as impotence and victimhood. On the other hand, dispositional shyness is an issue of self-determination and health, even the resistance to relentless socializing pressures. Consider, for example, one postwar film lauded as an early material feminist approach to cinematic narrative and composition: the controversial and largely suppressed *Salt of the Earth* (1954),[736] which follows the struggles of Chicano miners' wives to make their demands met for better sanitation during a mining strike, despite the fact that the men are primarily seeking better safety regulations. The heroine, Esperanza, is an overall deferential and quiet woman who obeys her husband's wish that she not join the other women in the picket line. However, during a riot,

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[735] Michelle Ann Abate, *Tomboys: A Literary and Cultural History* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2008), 43-6. Beth is not merely a gentle character in the 1949 film, but a shy one. Her stage fright is referenced by her sisters, and her mother encourages her to attend a party or else she will hurt the host's feelings, adding, "you must learn not to be afraid of people."

[736] For a detailed and fascinating account of the production and largely failed attempts at distribution of *Salt of the Earth*, see James L. Lorence's *The Suppression of Salt of the Earth: How Hollywood, Big Labor, and Politicians Blacklisted a Movie in Cold War America* (Albuquerque, NM: The University of New Mexico Press, 1999).

Esperanza hands her husband the baby and literally joins in the fight. She later procures voting rights for women at union/town meetings. Finally, Esperanza convinces her skeptical husband that women and men must unite in their struggle for the same rights as Anglos who work in the mines, which leads to such unified resistance that the company bows to the union's demands. In this narrative, Esperanza's transformation from a quiet, domestic woman into a louder, more politically active and articulate woman is key for gaining improvements for Mexican-American women, men, and children alike. This type of narrative, which we might call *feminist socialization*, locates women's shyness as part of the problem, as complicity and submission to systemic oppression.

In one sense, of course, the "mask of shyness" or silence adopted as a sign of submission to men is a significant problem for women. Women in the U.S. and globally still must carefully navigate their social interactions in public spaces, political spaces, private spaces, and virtual spaces—all of which continue to reward submissive behaviors and affects from women, and adherence to other heternormative codes of feminine identification (such as certain dress and grooming habits). Part of women's submission, whether personal or professional, relies on their willingness to undertake emotional labor, demonstrate care-taking prowess, and therefore maintain a certain level of sociability. Verbal, physical, and written protests from women interrupt the social circulation of positive affect, which can lead to social and legal gains, but they also continually draw mockery, dismissal, and threats of violence.[737] To back down, to become quiet, then, signals complicity.

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[737] See, for example, Amanda Hess, "Why Women Aren't Welcome on the Internet," *Pacific Standard Magazine*, January 6, 2014, http://www.psmag.com/health-and-behavior/women-arent-welcome-internet-72170.

Moreover, in a culture driven by social media, to become quiet or 'opt out' signals cultural, political, and professional indolence or ignorance—and unfriendliness in both common usage and in a way similar to the Cold War era's use of "unfriendly." Consider, for example, the currently fraught status of privacy in rhetoric surrounding mobile technologies and global terrorism: data encryption is seen as an important measure in protecting sensitive information from falling into the wrong hands (e.g., hackers, identity thieves, other governments); however, social networks are surveilled for suspicious pronouncements and interactions (so, simply engaging social media does not necessarily make one 'friendly' to a state or group), and data encryption is labelled a threat to national and international security because it impedes surveillance efforts.[738] Interestingly, the rhetoric in favor of making oneself open to surveillance reappears in dating advice columns, where not having a social media presence makes one "suspicious" because it suggests that one is hiding serious secrets.[739] Here, the implication at the level of both government and social etiquette is that only people with "something to hide" opt-out of or obscure their online usage. In this sense, friendly containment continues to inform our present-day methods of self-presentation; scaling back one's level or method of social engagement is construed as an act of unfriendliness to state and local groups that encourage self-

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[738] "Breaking Down Apple's iPhone Fight with the U.S. Government," *New York Times*, March 4, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/03/03/technology/apple-iphone-fbi-fight-explained.html?_r=0; and Jerry Markon, "Homeland Security to Amp Up Social Media Screening to Stop Terrorism, Johnson Says," *The Washington Post*, February 11, 2016, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/federal-eye/wp/2016/02/11/homeland-security-to-amp-up-social-media-screening-to-stop-terrorism-johnson-says/. As Markon's article demonstrates, U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson employs the language of infiltration to describe the threat of radical Islamic ideas circulating online: "We have moved from a world of terrorist-directed attacks to a world that includes the threat of terrorist-inspired attacks — in which the terrorist may have never come face to face with a single member of a terrorist organization, lives among us in the homeland, and self-radicalizes, inspired by something on the Internet."

[739] Farhad Manjoo and Emily Yoffe, "Revenge of the Facebook Stalker (Transcript)," *Slate Magazine*, March 6, 2012, http://www.slate.com/articles/podcasts/manners_for_the_digital_age/2012/03/transcript_facebook_stalker_should_i_tell_a_cheating_guy_s_girlfriend_that_we_hooked_up_.single.htm

circulation. And given the cultural link between women and nurturance, those who are 'unfriendly' in social terms are negatively labelled 'unfeminine.' But traditional feminist narratives do not often consider that these unfriendly, unfemininely quiet women can be aligned with feminist principles of self-determination and resistance to paternalistic modes of surveillance.

In another sense, the physical and emotional labor involved in maintaining a standard of sociability has exponentially increased with the near ubiquity of online social networks, and it must be possible to resist performing this unpaid labor. As in the postwar U.S., there is today a cultural emphasis on the happy mythos and social surveillance of "togetherness," but instead of being contained in a nuclear family unit, togetherness now includes one's family, friends, coworkers, acquaintances, strangers—often simultaneously and in multiple modalities (think of sitting with your friend who's texting another friend while you're texting still *another* friend who's "liking" something online which other people are also "liking"). While these new networks undoubtedly provide women rapid and widespread access to important information which can facilitate political action, for the dispositionally shy or introverted (or less-socially inclined for whatever reason), the daily maintenance of such networks can become a genuine harm—a kind of social overload that was historically avoided by simply going home or otherwise physically leaving a group. Studies detailing the large-scale differences between men's and women's social network usage suggest that men typically use social network accounts for compiling contact lists, while women typically use social networking as a form of daily social bonding, interacting with others more often and in more emotionally-charged ways than do

men.[740] Such studies appear to reduce internet usage habits to heterosexual gender stereotypes, of course, but they also support the ideas that neglecting or withdrawing from social networking potentially affects women more negatively, and that women are more likely to face pressures to maintain online relationships at deeper, more demanding levels of engagement. Thus, social burnout threatens shy girls in new ways since the postwar era.[741]

How does one become legibly shy in a positive way? In a capitalist economy, wherein identity and choices are constructed through a range of consumer products, the option to self-identify as shy is severely limited by both its associated products and current social practices of consumption/self-identification. Self-help books and pharmaceutical drugs don't lend themselves well to conspicuous consumption insofar as they lack widespread desirability. (And recall that shy girls in the narratives treated here are partly associated with their over-attachment to strange purchases—a glass menagerie, a lucky walking stick, a lamb—or by their *lack* of materialism, which is coded as unfeminine.) After all, who posts online photos of their social-anxiety medication the way they post photos of concert tickets or a personalized cafe latte? And doesn't the persistent pressure to post such photos in a social forum contribute to a shy person's distress? In a sense, this is both how we know that shyness is stigmatized, and how we perpetuate the stigma.

In her investigation of the U.S. imperative for makeovers and self-improvement, Micki McGee offers the idea of the "belabored self," one who perpetually seeks to improve oneself and

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[740] Jenna Goudreau, "What Men and Women Are Doing on Facebook," *Forbes*, Apr. 26, 2010, http://www.forbes.com/2010/04/26/popular-social-networking-sites-forbes-woman-time-facebook-twitter.html

[741] I do not mean to suggest that only shy, quiet types can be overwhelmed or burned out by sustained pressures to maintain one's online presence. Rather, I understand it as a labor of self-presentation which can fatigue anyone.

one's surroundings, performs daily labor of self-improvement lifestyle rituals, and submits to the judgmental surveillance of others and to self-surveillance, in hopes of securing an ever-better job, which then financially supports further self-improvements.[742] Under this model, the self becomes fatigued from the labor involved in presenting the everyday self. Surely the performance of self-presentation which occurs in online social environments—particularly those with audiovisual platforms, I would argue—requires the labor of the "belabored self." Within the heterosexual matrix, self-presentation typically demands an already greater attention to detail from women, both in regards to their own bodies and minds, and in the expectation that they care for others. Thus, if overcoming shyness is seen as a necessary step of self-improvement, and if self-improvement is proven through constant self-surveillance and self-presentation, shy women's increased "belaboring" presumably makes them more prone to exhaustion.

Consumer choices and identity markers aside, the most pressing issue surrounding our pathologizing of shyness is the medication of shy people. This particularly applies to women, since their shyness is seen as more gender deviant, since they are more likely to seek treatment than are men, and since doctors are more likely to prescribe medication for emotional imbalances and disorders in women.[743] In an effort to eradicate 'social anxiety,' these women take drugs which often negatively alter their brain chemistry, energy levels, sexual desire, and degree of social or experiential engagement.[744] This returns us to a feminist issue and final question: which is preferable, a shy woman who feels confident enough in her shyness to say "no" to social and

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[742] Micki McGee, *Self-Help, Inc.: Makeover Culture in American Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 16.

[743] Julie Holland, "Medicating Women's Feelings," *New York Times* (New York, NY), Feb. 28, 2015.

[744] Ibid.

political engagements when necessary for her own mental and physical wellbeing, or a medicated woman grown tired and apathetic, who feels like a shell of her former self and cannot engage at all?

I am reminded of Halberstam's inspiring conclusion to *Female Masculinity* which points to the physical and mental detriments of cultivating femininity in young girls and women, and the practical benefits of embracing masculine athleticism for girls and women as a sustained program of healthy living.[745] Another kind of female masculinity lies in shyness—with its affective opacity and occasional refusal to "share" or "play nice with others"—and we might promote another *kind* of health program for shy or less socially-inclined women, one based on introspection, self-knowledge, and social boundary-setting. How exactly to achieve this in a late-capitalist service economy which understands all social interactions as requiring affective labor? I hesitate to prescribe a blanket solution in the fashion of self-improvement manuals. Let us agree that the experience of shyness and social withdrawal is personal and varied, as is each woman's point of burnout. Discovering and responding to one's own limits—rather than one's potential for changing into a social ideal—are important goals of seeking self-knowledge. But in putting forth these goals, we must buck the expectation for affective and physical labor that appears in contemporary rhetoric about women's self-care. While some psychology, healthcare, and lifestyle gurus rightly advocate self-care, they specifically couch it in terms of non-selfishness to appease women's guilt, as in the oft repeated, "You have to take care of yourself before you can take care of others." In effect, this exhortation validates self-care while reinscribing women's roles as caregivers. Instead of suggesting that women need self-care as a

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[745] Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*, 269.

kind of ‘tune up’ for their caregiving machinery, I advocate the selfishness of self-care—with the suggestion that women sometimes turn away from others because they can and need to, full stop.

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