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WEST END WOMEN: REPRESENTATIONS OF  
WOMAN, THE FEMALE AND FEMININITY, IN PLAYS BY  
WOMEN ON THE LONDON STAGE 1918 - 1962.

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## THESIS SUMMARY

This thesis is an attempt to identify and reposition the work of a number of women playwrights whose work was produced on the London Stage between 1918 -1962. The existing academic assumption about these playwrights is either that they have no significant place in a history of the drama, or that their work was not rooted in feminist ideology. The thesis sets out to analyse their work in the context for which it was created; a time in which both women's lives and the British theatre, were transformed by war, cultural change and a change in their status within the public domain. As such, the plays are examined in relation to social, cultural and ideological developments and change, which particularly affected both women's lives and the perception of what it meant to be a woman. Similarly, the emergent theories of femaleness and femininity, which grew in number during the period under examination and are outlined in the thesis, have a relevance to a reading of the dramatic texts in question. There are, as far as I am aware, no other detailed studies of plays by women playwrights of the period analysed here. As such, it is hoped that this thesis constitutes at least the beginnings of such a study. Some of the plays quoted here, were treated in less detail and within a far less theoretical framework in a Masters thesis which was submitted in 1988.

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## INTRODUCTION

Old paint on canvas, as it ages, sometimes becomes transparent. When that happens it is possible, in some pictures, to see the original lines: a tree will show through a woman's dress, a child makes way for a dog, a large boat is no longer on an open sea. That is called *pentimento* because the painter "repented", changed his mind. Perhaps it would be as well to say that the old conception, replaced by a later choice, is a way of seeing and then seeing again.

Lillian Hellman<sup>1</sup>

It's a curious thing that nobody ever has a good word for the modern girl. Nevertheless, she is more useful than the weather as a subject of conversation. She is always the centre of interest and always in disgrace.

When she wears long skirts men rail upon her for her unsanitary ways: when she shortens them they tell her that she is immodest ...When she sits at home and takes no interest in public life she is told that she is a doll in a doll's house; when she beats the Senior Wrangler they exclaim indignantly that a woman's place is in the home ...It is a fact I'm afraid, that she is less reverent than once she was ...She is too busy keeping fit: educating herself: playing games: running a business: running a home: flying an airplane, or looking after a baby ...Seeing her thus healthy, able to be wealthy by her own exertions, and much wiser than most of the "modern girls" who have preceded her, the critic has only one weapon of offence left: so nowadays he tells her that in becoming what she is she is losing her femininity, that she may become a female magnate, but that she will never again be a Helen of Troy!

...But nowadays Helen is not married off to an elderly husband before she has a chance to know her own mind: and if she does make a mistake she doesn't involve everybody within a thousand miles in the family row. Instead, she sets it right as decently and quietly as she can: and if you are shocked at her, she laughs.

Clemence Dane<sup>2</sup>

This thesis began as an attempt to understand why the inter-war years and those leading into the early 1960s, were seemingly un-fruitful for women playwrights. The attempt was fuelled by the question of whether an absence of

evidence is sufficient evidence of absence. By the early 1980s research on the Actresses Franchise League and the post-1968 activities of women in British and American theatre had already filtered through to undergraduate Theatre Studies courses. Aphra Behn, too, was gaining a certain credibility amongst academics whose work had been inspired by their involvement with the women's movement. Yet, courses which assimilated this work as part of a general syllabus were rare. Even now, in the University where I hold a lecturing post, plays by women are not seen as relevant to a history or analysis of playwriting. The number of academics carrying out and publishing research centred on a study of women's playwriting and performance has grown, yet in real terms this work is only in its infancy. This thesis takes as its focus an historical era, namely 1918-1962, which falls between two periods where research into women's work in theatre is fairly well established. As such, it will, I hope, add to a growing area of research and possibly raise questions about research methodology and considerations.

In a recent anthology of plays written by women and produced on the London stage between 1900 and 1950, the editor frames her choice of included texts with the following statement:

There were, surprisingly perhaps, scores of women playwrights during this period, I have however ignored most of them as they fall outside of the mainstream of the theatrical movement ...I started my search for plays by reading everything that had been put on in London, including shows seen only in tiny theatre clubs and arts theatres, hoping that I would stumble across a lost masterpiece. It didn't take long to realise that the likelihood of this was slim, and the task would take a lifetime.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the speed with which twentieth-century women playwrights, who at one time were household names, and whose work certainly did not fall outside of the mainstream, have seemingly disappeared from conscious historico-theatrical memory, it is surprising just how many there were. It would take a lifetime to analyse all of the plays by women produced in the London theatres of 1918-1962, the period of exploration used here, in detail. It would not however take a lifetime to find a lost masterpiece, especially if the framework for defining a masterpiece was more transmutable than is suggested by the above statement.

When I began my research I naively assumed that it was my task to unearth and document all of the plays written by women of the period in question. When taking into consideration the limitations of time, it became clear that this task was too great and that my research could only realistically represent the beginnings of

such a study. Yet, I also began to question the validity of such a task. So little research on their work existed, that it felt more important to be selective but to analyse in depth. Thus, it was as important to contextualise their work as it was to analyse it. The structure of this thesis bears these deliberations in mind.

Although there is no immediate common political thread which binds the work together, many of the texts examined shared certain key thematic obsessions which shaped the way in which woman and the feminine were inscribed within narrative and plot. Consistently, the 'female condition' appears to have been dramatically constructed through considerations of the discrepancies between the social expectations and the lived experiences of women. Discourse around women's role in the post-war economy and the 'making of Britain', women and work, mothering, marriage and family life and women's social status, became increasingly frequent and overt, the more plays I studied. These were the same issues which both fuelled public discussions and created debate within the women's movement of the period under examination. What became apparent during the initial research was that over the forty or so years covered in this thesis, debate and theorising on what it *meant* to be a woman was fervent. Thus, the choice was made to examine the plays and thematic obsessions in the context of this debate.

What has resulted is a thesis in which I have chosen to examine a range of plays written by women, which appeared to rely on the dramatisation of key concerns. These concerns are placed within a historical framework and one which takes into account emergent social and psychological theories for which the 'woman question' was pivotal. In terms of methodology, the range of plays have been selected from a pool of possible texts, most of which are listed in Appendix 1. Some of the plays were more successful than others. Most of the texts were produced either within the mainstream commercial, or within 'private' club, subscription and independent theatre organisations, or both. All have been chosen because of the way in which the authors have perceived and represented the female experience.

A history of the London stage during the first half of the twentieth century is characterised by complaint, disorder, difference, indifference, innovation, financial crisis, élitism, populism and competition. The plays written by women or male/female teams, moreover, represent approximately one sixth of the total number of new plays which were previewed and produced during the period. The drama, as exemplified by the 'well-made play', is only a proportion of that which made up the dramatic and theatrical content of the London stage as a whole. The bulk of the thesis is used to examine the context, content and reception of plays



written by women in the commercially oriented theatre. Here, a distinction must be made between the commercial drama and the commercial theatre. There is a wealth of research still to be carried out on the nature and workings of the commercial theatre of the first half of the twentieth century, which catered for the theatre-going as opposed to the play-going public of the period.

Out of the late nineteenth century grew a belief in an ideology that theatre as art could exist for art's sake. The idea that the drama could be educational as well as entertain resulted in the placing on stage of discourse centred around social and moral attitudes and possibilities of change. The argument for a theatre which was not oriented towards profit plagued the minds of many of the critics and much of the writings of the theatre historians of the inter-war and post-Second World War theatre. Similarly, the search for a drama which contained the means to interest and represent an audience beyond the social élite inspired the work of many playwrights and a number of producers. Others, however, were concerned that the drama maintain its interest for the minority, as an art form that should not pander to the needs of the 'masses', lest it be contaminated by the trivial concerns of their lives. The identification of 'trivial' concerns in the drama has had a significant influence on the way in which the work of the women playwrights in question has been historically and critically positioned.

Numerous critics and historians in the 1950s hailed the new Royal Court and the writers whose work it promoted as a new departure point for the drama. Through the Royal Court a new generation of writers emerged in London, playwrights whose interest lay in an 'other' class, and an 'other' perception of playwriting and the power of the drama as an art form. Yet the new in drama, as perhaps in other arts, always appears to define itself in relation to the way in which it differs from the old. As such, in the early days, the Royal Court may have reached out to different audiences, but certainly not larger ones. The plays may have reflected more honestly the lives of the 'masses', but this does not mean that the masses flocked to see them. New playwrights may have borrowed from the popular but it would be difficult to prove that their work re-popularised drama and play-going as a leisure activity.

A history of the drama during the period in question is not only plagued by the frequent questioning of purpose and form, but also by a number of assumptions about the desired effect of theatre, both as a culture-producing and culture-reflective institution. Many of the critics questioned the fact that drama should entertain, finding it hard to accept that for some the theatre represented a social event more than anything else. In their eyes, entertainment was the job of the entertainment industry, not the serious playwright. That a play should contain a

serious and discernible social or moral message was primary, entertainment value was a secondary concern.

Thus, that which concerns us here is not an art form with clearly defined lines for critique. The value system applied to the task of defining what constitutes a 'good' play used by a critic, will differ somewhat from that put into operation by the playwright, the historian or the theatre producer, at any point in theatre history. Each has a specific agenda which influences the whole framing process of their evaluative system and this is extremely important when examining women's work in theatre, where gender difference could arguably be said to be the primary factor in the development of historical documentation and the application of any critical value system.

"Women have no history", said Virginia Woolf in 1929. History "is the story of the male line". Men have encoded the events of their lives, written them down, passed them on and constructed a visible, active and glorious line of male descent. But for women the past is silence, an absence; the pattern of women's lives " lies at the present locked in old diaries, stuffed away in old drawers, half obliterated in the memories of the aged"... "The corridors of history are for women, unlit", said Virginia Woolf, and the "figures of generations of women are so dimly, so fitfully perceived".<sup>4</sup>

The agenda which underpinned the research was the desire to discover firstly, whether there were women writing for the British theatre during the years between the wars and into the early 1960s, and secondly, whether their work shared any common traits. After a while it became apparent that there were in fact many, but that their work had been poorly acknowledged by many of their contemporary critics and theatre historians, perhaps *because* they were women, seen to be writing in a particularly *feminine* way, or perhaps because they were seen as oddities, whose work did not justify historical documentation or critical analysis.

Briefly, in Clemence Dane and Dodie Smith we have the tempest and the teacup-storm. Each in its way, has been felt in the theatre. Yet I think Aphra Behn, turning the play-bills of nearly three hundred years, would have to shake her head. Women's Hour upon the stage is sparsely filled indeed.<sup>5</sup>

When these women have been acknowledged by contemporary theatre

historians and critics, analysis and documentation is equally brief and uninformative. Often their work is dismissed because they were middle class, writing for a commercially oriented theatre, or simply because their plays did not reveal their authors to have been feminist, in a contemporary sense of the word. I am interested in how their work mirrors developments in feminist thinking, but the fact that they were women, at a time when the meaning of 'woman' was in flux, writing for an industry which was predominantly controlled by men, has been more significant.

The tools of research were varied. Using national biographies, a selection of theatre magazines and journals, theatre archives, (of which there are relatively few in Britain), numerous libraries, newspaper cuttings and play and production catalogues, I began to construct a list of women playwrights of the period. Certain names such as Dodie Smith, Clemence Dane and Esther McCracken regularly appeared in theatre histories and critiques, but many more emerged as the research progressed. The fact remains that women playwrights were indeed a forceful presence on the London stage between 1918 and the early 1960s. This thesis represents an analysis of a small proportion of their work it is hoped however, that it goes some way toward the discovery of a link in a chain of twentieth century women playwrights, whose work contributed greatly to the development of the dramatic medium and the British theatre.

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1 Lillian Hellman, *Pentimento* (London: Macmillan, 1974), p. 1.

2 Clemence Dane, 'Modern Beauty Has Nothing To Fear', *Evening Standard*, 27 March 1930.

3 *The Years Between: Plays by Women on the London Stage 1900-1950*, ed. by Fidelis Morgan (London: Virago, 1994), p. xv.

4 Dale Spender, *There's Always Been a Women's Movement This Century* (London: Pandora Press, 1983), p. 1.

5 J.C. Trewin, 'Women's Hour: Clemence Dane and Others', in *Dramatists of Today*, (London: Staples Press, 1953), p. 132.

## THE LONDON STAGE 1918 - 62; HISTORY AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

It would appear that no-one has yet taken up the challenge of formulating a social and economic history of British theatre and more specifically the London stage during the twentieth century. Many of the histories which exist are either anecdotal, aesthetically biased or simply refuse to treat the London stage and all its constituent parts as a whole in great need of analysis as a particular cultural phenomena. As such many of the different components have been examined in some detail, but more usually in isolation. With this in mind, Richard Findlater's *The Unholy Trade* remains the most detailed and inclusive, albeit brief, account of the state and history of theatre in London during the first half of the twentieth century.

There is no one kind of theatre, and no one solution to all its problems. That platitude needs to be repeated. The theatre exists by compromise, and feeds on contradiction. It exists to explain life, and to deny it, to decorate it and to strip it bare. Man goes to the play to understand himself, God or his neighbours, but he also goes to pass the time. He goes for uplift and amusement, a bit of fun and a movement of catharsis. The theatre is a weapon, a magic a science; a sedative an aphrodisiac, a communion service; a holiday and an assize, a dress rehearsal of the here and now and a dream in action. It taxes all senses, holds all worlds in one. It is the most conservative and the most ephemeral, the most opaque and the most transparent, the strongest and the weakest of arts. It is everything and nothing, all or none of these things. The theatre is what you make it.<sup>1</sup>

Findlater outlined the structure of British theatre and production patterns in a way which allowed for a pluralistic definition of what theatre as a cultural phenomena signified. His approach is one which insists on the stating of a number of cultural, political and aesthetic positions. Thus, it was as important then as now to stress the variety of theatres and in turn contexts, for which the women playwrights whose work is examined in this thesis wrote.

Writing after the demise of the club and subscription theatres which thrived during the inter-war period, Findlater was concerned that theatre, in particular the drama, had reached a point of crisis. Yet, the 'theatre society' about which he wrote had been undergoing constant and significant change

throughout the first half of the century. If we take theatre as a sign which signifies or embodies an institution within society, which both reflects and effects change, then it is possible to see theatre as a generic term for an institution which is in flux, a institution whose significance and definition is entirely dependent on cultural and economic change, as well as changes in aesthetic taste. Thus, the crisis which Findlater identifies as being specific to his time was arguably as relevant to any point in theatre history between the wars and into the 1960s. The crisis concerns the incongruity of a theatre devoted to drama and the dramatic text, and a theatre which is run as a commercial enterprise.

In general twentieth century theatre in Britain has been periodised according to either social or economic events such as the First and Second World Wars, or 'theatre events' such as now almost mythologised introduction of the 'angry young man'.<sup>2</sup> Equally, there is a temptation for theatre historians to use the inauguration of the new state-funded theatres as some kind of measuring stick for turning or even starting points, new eras, carrying with it the assumption that a new era in terms of structure and economics, brings with it a new kind of play. The political events of 1968 in Western Europe are pinpointed as the context for the fruition of the Fringe and later the 'alternative' theatre for which the ideological position was that of Left or Socialist politics and a desire to reinvest theatre with the 'popular' simultaneous to finding new audiences. Although these events have a great significance for theatre history, there has been a tendency to see them as fixed points in history, each one inspiring a completely new direction in the making of theatre. However, the 'well-made play' still dominates the theatre which produces plays. Equally, Findlater's observation in 1952 that, '...Going to the theatre is still for most Englishmen (sic) ...a holiday treat. The Englishman, whatever his income, does not visit the play for week-to-week entertainment...',<sup>3</sup> would arguably be just as applicable today. Play-going is still, it would seem, a predominantly upper and middle-class habit.

In terms of research which aims to re-evaluate plays written by women there has been a tendency to focus on specific periods in theatre history where the 'feminist' content of plays is particularly visible. Apart from the reappraisal of women writing for the Restoration theatre, there has been a bias toward an investigation of women's creative theatre output from the late 1890s to the outbreak of the First World War and a number of studies of the women's theatre groups and women's playwrighting which occur after 1968. These latter practitioners are seen predominantly as writing for *feminist* theatres and audiences, and their work has rarely been placed inside a context of theatre as a whole, or theatre society. The result has been that although some work by

women has been re-discovered, and re-placed inside a body of British theatre history, it has been re-marginalised and neatly packaged into pre-existent periodised categories. The point here is that the criteria used in the periodisation of theatre history and especially in the histories of women's playwriting are dependent on the ideological agenda of the particular historian. As Postlewait makes clear, this agenda frames the way in which history is re-created and received.

The concept of periodization, in its normative if somewhat misleading usage, delineates one aspect of history, the condition of stability (or identity), in relation to another aspect, the process of change (or difference) ...The continuous flow of time is organised into heuristic categories, episodes of our creation. As such, periods are interpretative ideas of order that regulate meaning.<sup>4</sup>

The history of women playwrights has often been regulated by the eye looking through the lens of a post 1968 ideological feminist framework, fulfilling a desire to find *feminist* issues dramatised in the plays, as much as it is regulated by a desire to investigate the contributions which women as a group may have made to the development of the dramatic text.

It has been assumed by many feminist critics that, in general, women were not writing for theatre during the period in question, and that those who did gain successes with their plays, only did so because the plays fed into the needs of a coercive middle-class commercial theatre. The assumption has been that these women were not feminists who were attempting to change the theatre system through their work. However as theatre historians interested in re-defining women's historical role with theatre, it is imperative that we re-assess assumptions which promote absence of women's work from history. Thus, whilst taking into account pre-existing key points in theatre history, it is important to see the period in question as some kind of whole, when attempting to define the context in which women playwrights between 1918 and 1962 worked. This whole can be characterised largely by its exclusion from analysis, and by the fact that the theatre system for which the playwrights in question were writing differs in many ways from that of the pre 1914 years and that of the post 1968 years.

In this chapter, the theatrical and social context for these dramatic texts will be examined. If, as Findlater stressed, theatre as a social phenomena was made up a number of contrasting and sometimes contradictory elements, then it

is vital to examine and define these elements as well as the social and cultural changes within which these elements existed.

## THE STRUCTURE OF THE LONDON STAGE

### OWNERSHIP OF THEATRES; MONOPOLY

The aftermath of the first World War, saw a change in ownership of the commercial theatres in Britain, and specifically in London. The theatres closed for the first few weeks of the war and when they re-opened, it was clear that they were catering for a new audience. John Pick has pointed out that 'soldiers on leave sought escapism', similarly, women moving into the public field of work, might seek an evening's entertainment in the West End. Theatrical Revues became popular, arguably as a result of a new theatre clientele, and it would seem there was great concern that these 'new audiences showed signs of ill-breeding'<sup>5</sup>.

During the years which span 1918 to 1962, the running of theatres moved from actor-managers, who were effectively both business men or women *and* performers, to the investor, or financial speculator.

As early as the 1914-18 war we hear complaints about the activities of speculating middlemen, who bought up theatre leases with the object of re-letting at a profit to the producing managements. The same tendencies have appeared in all subsequent periods of theatrical prosperity.<sup>6</sup>

During the late nineteenth century, theatre as a cultural art form had become more acceptable to the moneyed middle classes,<sup>7</sup> and the new drama of the fin de siècle demanded smaller casts and more intimate theatre spaces; actor managers could profitably produce the plays in which they sought to perform. However, after the Great War, the rents in London rose to such an extent that it was no longer viable to be an actor-manager on a grand scale. Thus the immediate ownership of performance spaces changed and the means of production were no longer owned by performers. John Pick has pointed out that this meant an inevitable distancing between the managers and audience. Although the class of audience had changed, or at least the range of classes going to the theatre had widened, 'ultimately the view of what was "lifelike" came from a deep armchair somewhere in London's club land'.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the cultural bias or impetus behind the choice of what was being produced in the London

theatres, to the disdain of a number of critics, a '...new business man of uncertain theatrical pedigree entered management'.<sup>9</sup> Theatre had become an economic investment for those who were less interested in the aesthetic content of plays than they were in the financial viability of a play in production. That which chiefly concerned a number of historians and critics was the fact that during the inter-war period and into the late 1940s the theatre system, through company buy-outs, gradually came under the control of a small number of investors and company directors; the drawing-in of theatre ownership to an 'élite group created a fear of monopoly and control.

The period of the 1920s and 1930s was characterised by frustrations and vexations arising from the vested and usually conflicting interests of the theatre managements (owning the buildings) and the production managements (presenting the plays). Much of what is presented in this section of the thesis sets out the attempts to solve the problems arising from this new divorce between business and aesthetics. The playwright J.B. Priestley, took over the management of a West End theatre, The Duchess, and backed and produced his own plays to give some coherence and independence to their production. But the most significantly successful manoeuvres in the mainstream, commercial theatre, were concerned with a series of take-overs, amalgamations and consolidations between property-owning and play-presenting managements. By the early 1940s these had led to the creation of a small cartel of companies, linked by the mutual inclusion of a number of individuals, which reunited in their operations both entrepreneurial functions.

The Prince Littler Consolidated Trust Ltd. took over the Stoll Theatres Corporation in 1942, and as managing director of Stoll Theatres Corporation, Littler then took over the controlling interest in Associated Theatre Properties (London) Ltd in 1943. In 1945, Moss' Empires Ltd appointed Prince Littler and Stewart Cruickshank (already working with Littler) onto their board of directors, at which point the announcement was made that Stoll Theatres Corporation had acquired substantial shares in Moss Empires Ltd. Then in 1947, Moss Empires announced that it intended to buy eight of the General Theatre Corporation Ltd.'s theatres. Stewart Cruickshank also had a working relationship with Howard and Wyndham Ltd. and a 'substantial interest in the old-established Daniel Mayer Co.'<sup>10</sup> H.M. Tennent and Hugh (Binkie) Beaumont became joint managers in 1933 of a newly-formed touring productions company, Moss Empires and Howard & Wyndham. Tennent and Beaumont who in 1936 formed H.M. Tennent, Ltd. were, alongside the Group, the main operating forces in terms of production and ownership of the West End theatres. The list of West



End theatre buildings connected with the Group is astounding it includes the Apollo, Aldwych, Drury Lane, His Majesty's, St. James', Lyric, Phoenix, Shaftesbury, Hippodrome, Fortune and the Ambassadors theatres. Principle producing managements directly connected with the Group included Tom Arnold, Emile Littler and C.B. Cochran as well as those names already mentioned.

So by the late 1940s in any one week one may have found sixteen London theatres occupied by the Group or its associates, out of which eleven were owned by the Group. Similarly, one may have found that out of twelve theatres occupied by major independent productions companies, four were owned by the Group.<sup>11</sup> By the early 1950s, including the number of damaged or non-operating theatres, there were 85 British theatres in which the Group had a interest, less than a fifth of the country wide number. However, they had either control or interest in 42 percent of the London theatres, which contained over 50% of the seats country-wide. Of the larger theatres 15 out of 24 were controlled by the Group.

For some the Group represented only a quasi-monopoly. For example, the Group were not were entirely responsible for forcing up London rents, property prices in London had risen enormously since the end of the First World War. When the Group did lease some of their venues to independent production companies, their prices were in line with other property owners. Thus, when a boom in theatre meant a rise in rental costs, the Group were not in competition with the independents because they owned their production venues, rises in rent did not affect their costs, only their income.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, in real terms, the Group and H.M. Tennent Ltd., along with their associated and satellite companies, owned or controlled by the late 1940s, the most potentially profitable part of the theatre industry. They were largely responsible for the fact that the British theatre had 'been put on a proper industrial footing, employing all the devices of horizontal and vertical combination that this involves.'<sup>13</sup>

In terms of the control of venues, many dramatists were critical of the system of management and ownership of the West End theatres. J.B. Priestley was very clear about the consequences of the monopoly of ownership:

In my view, the Theatre at present is not controlled by dramatists, actors, producers or managers, but chiefly by theatre owners, men of property who may or may not have a taste for the drama. The owners not only take too much out of the Theatre, but they also decide what kind of plays shall be produced there ...it is not that the

owners are purely 'commercial', but that they cannot help satisfying their own particular tastes ...What I condemn is the property system that allows public amenities and a communal art to be controlled by persons who happen to be rich enough to acquire playhouses.<sup>14</sup>

The other factor which both Pick and Findlater stress is that ownership of the theatres in the West End was concentrated amongst a few who were closely 'linked in a network of companies and the outsider cannot unravel the tangle.'<sup>15</sup> This factor not only affects the West End, but also theatre production around the country:

Their productions not only occupy the chief London playhouses for months and months and sometimes years on end, but also provide most of the plays for provincial tours and repertory companies and amateurs. The new piece they describe with enthusiasm at the Ivy Restaurant to-day will probably, within the next three years, be applauded from Torquay to Aberdeen.<sup>16</sup>

There were smaller management concerns such as Wyndham's Theatres Ltd., run by Bronson Albery, and a number of independent theatres. In the provinces smaller theatres not under the control of the Group were run on a purely profit making basis.<sup>17</sup> As a parent company H.M. Tennent Ltd. re-invested in less profit-oriented theatre, co-operating with the Arts Council in its promotion of educational theatre (Tennent Productions Ltd.) and subsidising the productions of the Company of Four at the Lyric Hammersmith, also giving a contract to a chosen R.A.D.A. graduate every year. The directorial and board management connections between the independents, H.M. Tennent Ltd. and the Group created a serious concentration of power within the British theatre production system.

Tennent Plays Ltd. was the brain-child of Hugh Beaumont. Arguably it was thought up as a means of avoiding payment of the Entertainment Tax. In order to legitimate non-payment of the tax, the organisation had to be educational and later, partly educational. There was, however, a clause in the ruling which demanded that if profit was made and the company wished to stop trading, any profits could to be handed over to another non-profit oriented production company.<sup>18</sup> The drawback of this system is obvious and until Tennent Plays Ltd. very few companies other than the Old Vic took advantage of

the exemption. Tennent Plays Ltd. came about as a means of preserving capital and avoiding tax by starting up a non-profit making distribution company. Operating from the Globe Theatre offices and with the support of C.E.M.A., the company was allowed to charge a £25 management fee per production. According to Kitty Black, employed in an administrative capacity for the company, Tennent Productions Ltd received no subsidy from the Government, simply their support.<sup>19</sup> The criticism of this project was that it simply extended the range of control which H.M. Tennent Ltd. had over what was or was not produced in the West End theatres and ultimately in the provinces. As such, many felt that the government was, whether intentionally or not, sanctioning monopoly.

H.M. Tennent Ltd. launched another production company in October of 1945, the Company of Four.<sup>20</sup> Originally the idea of Rudolph Bing,<sup>21</sup> this was seen as a means of presenting 'experimental theatre of quality in London', the venue for which was the Lyric Hammersmith. Other members of the original administrative and managerial body included Murray MacDonald and Tyrone Guthrie. The principle behind the scheme was to rehearse a play for four weeks, tour it in the provinces for four weeks and then give it a four-week run at the Lyric. It was 'experimental' in that the aim was to 'produce new plays with new directors and designers and to provide jobs for actors returning from the Forces'.<sup>22</sup> Within the first year, all the productions had run at a loss and many original members had withdrawn. Yet, where the critics slated a production, often the audience, many of whom worked the local markets, would applaud the production.<sup>23</sup> The programming was a never ending stream of rehearsing, touring and so on, with three plays in preparation at any one time. The company produced classic English and European drama as well as new plays and works by American authors such as Arthur Miller and Lillian Hellman.<sup>24</sup>

The monopoly of ownership and production control created a peculiar irony in that, by the early 1950s, the average production of a West End play was influenced and shaped by the aesthetic tastes of a small group of owners and managers. To an extent, therefore, the identity of West End theatres, seen by number of critics, historians and even playwrights during the immediate post-Great War years to have been lost, was re-established, but the control of identity had changed hands and the impetus was clearly financial as opposed to artistic.

#### A CRISIS OF IDENTITY

Over the period in question, critics share the view that this change in ownership of the means of production had a distinct influence on the

development of British theatre, but they vary as to the degree of affect which they are prepared to blame on the investors. James Agate seemed in 1926 to be more concerned about the loss of identity:

In our commercial theatre ...that is to say the playhouses dotting an area having Piccadilly Circus for the centre and a radius of something not much over a mile ...you cannot be certain today of finding any particular type of entertainment at any particular theatre always of course with certain exceptions.<sup>25</sup>

Agate cites Daly's, the Gaiety and the Winter Garden as 'remaining faithful to the musical comedy' but points out that a playgoer could expect to see anything from 'revue to Tchekov' in any of the main West End theatres. Cicely Hamilton characterised the tendency of the average London playhouse as having frequent changes to programme, indefinite policies, loss of distinctive character and generally no settled method of attracting the public and no definite policy in the choice of plays or actors. Hamilton despised the fact that the theatres changed hands from backer to backer, losing the chance of being governed by a permanent authority, as well as losing a sense of tradition or character.<sup>26</sup> Hamilton was writing specifically about the Old Vic and the need for tradition and permanency, but never the less, her critique was shared by many others.

In his analysis of the West End ethos and management system, Pick finds little sympathy for the state of the commercial theatres during the inter-war period, finding them to be mere promoters of an archaic life-style and class system:

Although it seemed anachronistic as the nation drifted through recession to war, the West End sought above all to retain its smartness and glamour, the Edwardian graces which established its rank and as an inevitable product of both, its indelible narcissism.<sup>27</sup>

He also stresses that the cost of producing theatre, from the days of the great actor-managers onwards, arose not from the demands of the art itself but from the 'social rituals surrounding it'.<sup>28</sup> Other critics and historians have, however, seen the economic constraints on the production of theatre as being the basis from which the history of twentieth century British theatre has developed. Findlater stressed that although after the Great War theatres went into the hands of 'unscrupulous profiteers and speculators',<sup>29</sup> economic factors came into play as

much as the aesthetic taste of the new owners. Costs went up by some six hundred percent, and rents sometimes as much as a thousand percent, yet admission prices rarely rose by higher than fifty percent. After the Second World War there was little improvement in this economic situation:

West End rents, unchecked by the government, have soared since 1939, and a powerful combine, linking production and distribution, has entrenched itself without intervention from the state.

Post-war social changes have brought new customers to the cheaper seats but they have whittled down the income of the middle class playgoers and of the private patrons who kept the theatre arts alive between the wars.<sup>30</sup>

#### GOVERNMENT INTERVENTION; THE ENTERTAINMENT TAX, C.E.M.A. AND THE ARTS COUNCIL.

The government did not intervene with financial aid for theatre until the 1940s, and governmental policies had a problematic affect on theatre production. There were a number of taxes which caused concern to theatre managements and again affected the nature of what they perceived as financially viable productions. The key tax was the 1916 Entertainment Tax, primarily a war-time emergency, which meant that the government could make money from the run of a play which lost money for the management. In 1924 the tax, based on gross box-office receipts rather than profit,<sup>31</sup> was abolished on all seats under the price of 1s 3d but this was more beneficial to the cinema than to the theatre. By 1942 the Entertainment Tax was being charged at 33.3 percent.<sup>32</sup> The amateur movement was virtually tax free, which could account for the ability of amateur production organisations to be more adventurous and experimental in their choice of plays and styles of production.

In 1934 the Old Vic was able to claim tax exemption on the basis that it was an institution founded on a non-profit making basis, and 1942 saw the decision to give exemption to production companies who made no profit on what were seen as partly educational productions, although by 1946 this exemption was based on the company concerned establishing partly educational policies. Findlater stresses that this change in Governmental policy only really helped established large production companies. Thus, under the auspices of a partly educational policy, sub-companies of the larger corporate owners and managements such as H.M.Tennent Ltd., could produce financially risky plays. The production could be made financially viable by using already contracted

'star' performers to attract audiences who would not normally go to the theatre to see a play by a seemingly high-brow playwright, such as Bridie, Eliot, Priestley or Fry. As the production was backed by a management with a partly educational policy it would not be liable to Entertainment Tax,<sup>33</sup> but because the management had star actors on their books, they could make the production attractive and therefore profitable. These profits could be transferred to another satellite company, owned by or closely connected to, the original partly educational company. Thus, pre-Arts Council state intervention had advantages, but in the main only for production companies who were already in a profitable position.

Some financial aid was however given directly to theatre organisations before the formation of the Arts Council. When the theatres closed down as part of the total blackout in 1939, many actors who were not conscripted into the army, worked alongside other actors as part of the state sponsored association E.N.S.A.; some well known producers, such as Basil Dean, took part in the organisation of E.N.S.A. events providing, amongst other things, entertainments for the troops.<sup>34</sup> The Pilgrim Trust originally gave a grant of £25,000<sup>35</sup> and alongside the war-time coalition government helped to initiate C.E.M.A. (Council for the Encouragement of Music and The Arts). In 1940 £50,000 was given by the government to match public funding of the arts.<sup>36</sup> Sybil Thorndike and Lewis Casson amongst others were responsible for organising and performing in C.E.M.A. backed touring productions which took account of the provinces rather than focusing on middle-class audiences in London.<sup>37</sup> Davies proposes that C.E.M.A. 'played down' the normally rigid distinction which separated professionals from amateurs, organising factory concerts and giving, in 1940, financial help to the Old Vic, especially when it transferred to Burnley and formed a permanent repertory company in 1942. By 1942 C.E.M.A. were funding fourteen touring theatre companies<sup>38</sup> including some of those under the E.N.S.A. scheme, and had also become a totally government controlled body.

The development of C.E.M.A. is interesting in terms of the speed with which it moved from an organisation in which the initial efforts and finances were directed toward the work of amateurs, as part of an 'arts for all' criteria. It began as,

...a morale boosting exercise with a limited life expectancy ...(with a ) definite vision of the importance of the arts for all ...encouraging arts activity in every village and town. <sup>39</sup>

By the end of 1941 C.E.M.A. had however, handed over any responsibility for amateur drama to the voluntary sector.<sup>40</sup> By 1946, C.E.M.A. transformed into the Arts Council under whose auspices, 'a clear distinction between amateur and professional work',<sup>41</sup> had been made. The emphasis of Arts Council funding policy did not show any positive bias toward drama, as opposed to other types of theatre, such as opera.<sup>42</sup> Thus, even when the State did intervene in the production of theatre, it showed bias toward what form of theatre it was prepared to support in the name of national art. Although many critics and theorists felt this financial aid to be significant, it was not on a sufficient scale to combat the high cost of producing new plays in a commercially oriented theatre industry.

### THE OTHER THEATRES

The commercial theatres constituted the financial backbone of the British theatre industry during the first half of the twentieth century. Norman Marshall chose the name of 'other theatres' for those which existed largely outside of the economics of the commercial theatre. Some of these 'other theatres' produced revues and musical shows, but many experimented with new writers using both the form of the 'well-made play', and new forms of drama such as the expressionist play. The major criticism of the West End programming policies, was that they represented the tastes of the minority and in effect constituted a, 'timid and reactionary commercial theatre'.<sup>43</sup> However, despite what some viewed as the 'benevolent' monopoly on management and production in the West End, both Findlater and Marshall are clear that these 'other theatres' fed into the commercial theatre market, and to some extent constituted a 'trying out' ground for new plays and playwrights.

It is astonishing how few even of the West End theatre's biggest box office successes, apart from musicals, farces and thrillers were originally created by the West End managers. For instance, Noel Coward owed his first real success both as an actor and a playwright to the Everyman where *The Vortex* was produced after it had gone the rounds of the West End managers in vain. Emyln Williams' first London production was given him by a Sunday society which afterwards persuaded a West End management to put on the play for a run. John Gielgud established himself as a West End star through the success of *Richard of Bordeaux*, originally produced on a Sunday night at the Arts ...I can only think of three

playwrights of any note which the West End managements discovered for themselves during these years. They are A.A. Milne, Dodie Smith and Clemence Dane ...J.B. Priestley's early plays were given their first performances in West End theatres, (although) he could only achieve this by backing them himself.<sup>44</sup>

Marshall's argument is that it was the 'other theatres' which kept the British theatre alive, with their policies of trying out new plays, new writers and new performers. For him, these 'other theatres', comprised of subscription clubs which produced Sunday-night and sometimes Monday afternoon performances, and small independent theatres, whose seating capacity would just about enable the producers to cover costs, were in effect organisations formed in 'self defence against the standards of commercialism.'<sup>45</sup> Because many of these organisations were private, that is they functioned as subscription clubs, and were non-profit oriented, they were able to forgo the powers of censorship dealt out by the Lord Chamberlain's office at the same time as being able to take risks in producing plays by unknown or commercially non viable writers.

The extent to which the West End had become dependent on these private theatres and Sunday societies for their plays during these (the inter-war) years was fully revealed when the war put an end to the activities of this other theatre.<sup>46</sup>

Theatre producing societies blossomed during the inter-war period. In London these included The Stage Society, the Pioneer Players, the Three Hundred Club and The Venturers; the small independent theatres included the Embassy, the Everyman and the Gate. The ideological premise of this group of theatres was based on a desire to keep theatre fresh and new, to provide a platform for experiment and to combat the monopoly of the West End managements for whom a prospective play held no interest unless it was financially viable. Marshall points out that the West End managements were only interested in a play if they smelled potential profit, if it could be marketed as 'another so-and-so', in other words, it had to have a similar feel to an already successful production; '...Freshness and originality were un-sellable qualities'.<sup>47</sup>

#### SUBSCRIPTION, CLUB AND INDEPENDENT THEATRES; BEFORE THE GREAT WAR., AND AFTER

Subscription, club and independent theatres were not new to the inter-



war period. The production pattern of this system of non-commercial theatre had been used during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras by individuals who shared a similar ideological perception of the social and aesthetic function of theatre to the inter-war generation. Very few of these organisations, however, saw themselves as having a specific political function. For this reason, it is important here to outline the work of one of the few non-commercial theatre organisations which specifically sought to use the dramatic medium as a means of discoursing and promoting a political cause. The Actresses Franchise League, founded and run by women, is seen by a number of contemporary scholars, as being the first feminist theatre in Britain, as such it is interesting to examine the way in which it operated.

The Actresses Franchise League, which aligned itself with the already established Suffragette cause, was begun in an atmosphere of great publicity in 1908, with advertising for membership aimed at theatre professionals.

The A.F.L., is a neutral society working for Women's Suffrage by the usual educational methods etc., and assists all Suffrage Societies by professional services. Members of the Theatrical, Musical and Music Hall Professions are eligible for membership.<sup>48</sup>

Membership was made up of known and little known actresses, although Claire Hirshfield has suggested that because, 'many of its earliest members enjoyed celebrity status and public esteem, the A.F.L., was perhaps the most successful of all 'professional' women's organisations in drawing popular attention and sympathy to the cause of female enfranchisement.'<sup>49</sup> According to one of the early members the 'league grew and grew until nearly every actress in the business joined'.<sup>50</sup> The headquarters were situated on the ground floor of the Adelphi theatre, and meetings were held once a week.

The A.F.L. originally supported both the N.U.W.S.S. and the W.S.P.U. despite their different strategical approaches toward political change. Some actresses however left the league at an early stage because of political difference, for although the A.F.L. supported the Suffragette cause many members were not prepared to 'jeopardise their careers' through being associated with political militancy.<sup>51</sup> The actresses entertained at political meetings and trained non-professionals in the art of public speaking. The play department, set up and run by Inez Bensusan, was responsible for the requisitioning and production of purpose made plays. These were toured at

both traditional and non-traditional theatre venues, with production profits donated to relevant political organisations. Not all of their plays were written by women, and many of the productions were largely ignored by the press, except when they were full of star performers, such as the 1909 production, *A Pageant of Great Women*.<sup>52</sup> Providing an endless stream of actresses who represented positive images of women, the production was one of the key events responsible for spreading the work of the A.F.L. into the East End of London.<sup>53</sup> By 1912 the A.F.L. had become more brave in its affiliation with the Suffrage movement, the plays became more complex, both in their characterisation and in the 'confrontation (of) the political issues which dominated the suffrage movement'.<sup>54</sup> By 1913 the A.F.L., although never cutting links entirely with the W.S.P.U., put more energy into its affiliation with the N.U.W.S.S. and their work in the East End, supporting the Men's League For Women's Suffrage. Circa 1913, there was also a men's group for actors and dramatists, and the A.F.L. began to focus on the position of its some 900 members within their own profession.

In 1913, encouraged and organised by Inez Bensusan, the A.F.L. set up an 'independent Women's Theatre Company', run, controlled and managed by women. The company produced two full scale productions but with the advent of the war, the A.F.L. turned its attention to entertainments for the troops. Some of the original writers for the A.F.L. turn up later in theatre history as writers used by the Workers Theatre Movement and the Independent Labour Party theatre events. There were many cross-over points between the legitimate theatre and the A.F.L.; Edith Craig's Pioneer Players were unquestionably influenced by early associations with the A.F.L., and many of the actresses worked for both the legitimate theatre and the A.F.L. before the Great War, continuing their work in legitimate theatre afterwards.

#### AFTER THE GREAT WAR

The Pioneer Players provide us with a link here as it was formed in 1911, with a final season in 1919-1920. The company revived in 1925 for a production of Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*.<sup>55</sup> Along with the Stage Society it was the only Edwardian theatre society to survive the First World War. Unable to find work in legitimate theatre Craig set out to produce plays,

...dealing with all kinds of movements of interest at the moment. To assist social, political and other societies by providing them with plays as a means of raising funds; and to undertake when

desired the organisation of performances for such Societies by professional or amateur players ...and to produce plays which, although they may be outside the province of the commercial theatre, are sincere manifestations of the dramatic spirit.<sup>56</sup>

The early work of the Pioneer players reflects the political interest of the Suffragette movement. However, 'scattered among the Pioneer's repertoire of plays on the oppression of women in the home, workplace and brothel, were several showing generalised exploitation of labour by capital'.<sup>57</sup> The twelve month subscription fee, covered the cost of hiring venues such as the Kingsway, The Savoy or the Ambassadors, and paid for around four productions per year.<sup>58</sup> After the war Craig produced numerous plays by foreign writers such as Yevreinov's *Theatre of the Soul* and *The Merry Death*, Paul Claudel's *Tidings Brought to Mary*, as well as numerous others by new English writers, such as Gwen John's *The Luck of War*. Before the 1914-1918 war, half of the plays produced were written by women, but by 1921 less than a third.<sup>59</sup> The company experienced financial problems brought on by the increase in rents for London theatres after the war, and when in 1920 Ellen Terry went bankrupt, financial support was limited. The Pioneer Players, however, were instrumental in setting a pattern for other play producing societies which were to follow. Primarily their interest was in political theatre, that is theatre as a means of promoting through entertainment certain specific political ideologies, but as time went on their productions reflected a wider political concern, centred around a desire to widen the artistic sphere of theatre, experimenting with new writing, which may directly or indirectly reflect a specific political ideology. Within the context of theatre at the time, however, the desire to widen the repertoire of plays available to audiences, was in itself a *political* act.

Edy Craig's group along with other Sunday play producing societies, provided the opportunity for professional and amateur to work together. In addition, many of the professional performers might be working in both the commercial and the 'other theatres' at any one time.

Many actors already playing in West End runs, spent most of their spare time from October to May rehearsing for one Sunday night production after another.<sup>60</sup>

It was also quite common for writers to work in both commercial and non-commercial theatres, Miles Malleon for example was both a film and stage actor,

and writer whose work was produced by both commercial and independent theatres.

Just as many of the plays by new or foreign writers which were later picked up by West End production managements, began their performance life in non-commercial theatres, so many of the performers in the 'Sunday Theatres' later went on to West End successes. Auriol Lee, for example, who became one of the most prolific women directors in the 1930s, started out as an actress and performed in the Pioneer Players' production of Christopher St John's *The First Actress*.<sup>61</sup>

One criticism of the Sunday societies aimed in particular at the work of The Three Hundred Club, was that they seemed to be founded on the basis of 'deliberately choosing plays which were otherwise unlikely to be produced',<sup>62</sup> and that this in itself went against a notion of theatre as a popular art. This is an extraordinary criticism when considering the limited accessibility of the London commercial theatres which were the hunting grounds of the critics. As Marshall has pointed out:

No literary critic would dream that it is silly of a publisher to bring out a fine book knowing that it is likely to appeal only to a small section of the reading public, but in the 1920s most of the lesser dramatic critics and theatrical journalists were openly hostile to any attempt to cater for the minority playgoer ...a large section of the press was fawningly sycophantic towards the 'plain man'...his taste was far better than that of the ...highbrows, the minority, the 'long-haired intellectuals' ...In the theatre any attempt by this minority to cater for their own tastes by means of theatre clubs and Sunday societies was apt to be resented by the popular press as an insolent declaration of superiority.<sup>63</sup>

Nevertheless, it is possible to argue that it was the formation of these Sunday societies and subscription based theatre clubs, which provided the foundations for the production of new forms of theatre and more specifically dramatic writing, in the early part of the twentieth century. Some of the societies were formed by professionals, some such as the Three Hundred Club, were set up by playgoers whose taste either did not agree with that of the Lord Chamberlain's office or that of the financially oriented theatre managements. By the beginning of the 1939-1945 War, the vast majority of these societies were no longer functioning, a lack of funding and difficulties with performers' touring and

rehearsal schedules being amongst some of the problems which the societies were up against. Nevertheless it was the general ideological basis of these theatres which inspired and fuelled a number of small independent theatres run on a belief system of art for the sake of art rather than profit, whose work continued beyond the Second World War.

The Everyman, Embassy, Arts Theatre<sup>64</sup> and The Gate, to name a few, were all theatres with a comparatively small audience capacity, which produced short runs of new and experimental plays. Again, many of the performers went on to work in the West End and in films.<sup>65</sup> Wages were low and sometimes non-existent, facilities were minimal. They received no state funding and many were defunct by the end of the inter-war period, either becoming cinemas (such as The Everyman at Hampstead) or simply not being used as theatres any longer.

The Gate was founded by Peter Godfrey and his wife Molly Veness in 1925 in what was essentially a small attic in Floral Street. By 1927, The Gate had moved to Villiers Street, where the stage was only 18 inches high in order to allow height for setting.<sup>66</sup> Productions were put on for short runs and because wages were low, actors often had to leave for better paid assignments in larger theatres. There was a certain amount of inverted snobbery on the part of some theatre critics to the work produced at The Gate and at other small theatres, but just as with the societies of the Edwardian era and 1920s, many of the productions were bought up by commercial theatres and many of the actors effectively used the little theatres as a training ground. Godfrey's interest was in the Expressionist drama, but this by no means ruled out the production of different dramatic styles. Productions of American expressionist dramas by Glaspell and O'Neill under Godfrey, were followed by many later productions which transferred to the West end. Some plays, such as *Parnell* and *The Children's Hour*, produced under the management of Norman Marshall at the Gate, were originally banned by the Lord Chamberlain's office, and thus could not have been produced in the public theatres of the West End. Yet, these 'private' productions transformed the plays into 'classics' which were later adapted into films. As with many of the other little or independent theatres, the taste of the management affected policy, but there appears to have been a general consensus that the job of these establishments was to keep theatre alive by refusing to pander to commercial dictates.

The studio or art theatre exists to prevent dramatic art from being wiped out by the commercially minded. It is a movement to keep alight the torch of drama by performing neglected works ...The

art producer is apt to have read illustrated books about the theatre ...may also have worked as assistant stage manager in the commercial theatre, and possibly have played small parts on tour ...Unlike ordinary theatre goers, the supporters of art theatres have dramatic convictions.<sup>67</sup>

Although the above is taken from a rather critical and superficial survey of the British theatre in the early thirties, it is a statement which holds true for both the Sunday societies and the small independent theatres as much as of the Repertory Movement, another part of the industry, begun before the First World War, which was more concerned with the art of theatre and the possibilities of theatre being made available to and representing audiences which did not necessarily belong to the ruling and upper-middle classes.

The repertory theatres were classical and at the same time experimental theatres, avant-garde and 'independent', but meant also for an ordinary provincial public, who were good lovers of art but not too fond of novelty ...their seasons of plays could be seen to be accentuating more strongly the already noted characteristics of middle class drama.<sup>68</sup>

There are numerous publications on the development on the Repertory Movement in Britain and Ireland, but it is relevant to stress at this point that the Repertory theatres established in the early years of the twentieth century produced another kind of 'other theatre'. Unlike many of their European counterparts, the Repertory theatres were non-government funded and were often set up by wealthy theatre patrons.<sup>69</sup> The Repertory managements frequently promoted the production of plays by new writers, which had more interest to provincial audiences. Before the end of the First World War for example, Annie Horniman's work at the Manchester Gaiety had encouraged a new breed of writers for whom it was important to write about the experience of the common man, albeit that they kept to the formula of the well-made play.

Between the two World Wars approximately one hundred and fifty provincial theatres closed down and for many of the Repertory companies, 'keeping alive meant struggling against economic obstacles and public indifference'.<sup>70</sup> Basil Dean's early career before he went on to production for the West End, was spent at the Liverpool Repertory theatre, one of the two original repertory theatres to survive the financial and other pressures of the inter-war

period. As with provincial theatres such as the Oxford Playhouse, there was an interest amongst the Repertory theatres in trying out foreign plays, classical pieces, new plays by new playwrights, providing work for young actors, encouraging experimentation in design and so on. The Repertory and small provincial theatres often produced plays which were bought up by commercial London managements, and for some these London transfers were the basis of their economic survival. This in turn led to the criticism that because they were often relying on West End transfers productions became dependent on West End tastes, thus the desire to experiment ultimately had to give way to financial constraints.

The sociological and to an extent the aesthetic position and function of the Repertory theatres changed after the Second World War, and the building of new municipal arts centres provided newer state funded venues for drama.

#### TYPES OF DRAMA

It is not only the structure of the theatre system which defined what was and what was not produced from the end of the First World War and up to the early 1960s, but also, the style and content of the plays. The statement made by James Agate in 1926 about the differentiation between theatre and drama,

The drama is an aesthetic phenomenon, the theatre is an economic proposition.<sup>71</sup>

exemplifies the distance which was increased by the First World War theatre profiteers, between theatre as entertainment and theatre as the realisation of dramatic texts which were seen to appeal to an audience more concerned with narrative and meaning than glamour.

At the end of the Twenties there were no great kinds of play and no grand manner of acting. The drama had dwindled both creatively and interpretatively. The kind of play most popular during the Thirties was the domestic dramatic play ...belonging to the lap-dog class...<sup>72</sup>

Agate's statement is indicative of what seems to have been a longing for both a style of presentation and dramatic content which belonged to the late-nineteenth century. It also shows an unwillingness on the part of the critic to positively evaluate the work which was going on in non-commercial theatres, as well as a

refusal to come to terms with the fact that theatre was moving toward the economic structures of an industry. That the 'adramatic domestic play' (incidentally, usually authored by a woman or male/female team) was popular was somehow seen as a sign of its lack of aesthetic worth, and a signifier that the drama was in a state of disintegration.

The form of the well-made play changed very little during the inter-war period, but what often changed were the writers and the areas focused on within the plays. Although as Pellizzi points out:

Since the war young writers (showed) signs of more direct contact with the continental and American literature, of feeling foreign influences more strongly...<sup>73</sup>

Literary experiment in form rarely found success within commercial theatre. On the London stage during the 1920s and 1930s there was a prevalence of historical or chronicle dramas, numerous farces and thrillers, detective plays and professional dramas about working people in their work environments. Although the upper and middle-classes still prevailed as the dramatic and narrative centres of the drama, there was a move, adumbrated by the pre-First World War writers, towards foregrounding the lower-middle classes, those who inhabited the new suburbs, the new white collar workers and their families. The prevailing style was that of realism, the setting was very often the drawing room, the front parlour, or in the case of historical dramas, the Great Hall or Chamberlain's office. In 1935 Pellizzi surveyed the drama rather cynically, asserting that the changes in dramatic writing which, it would seem, had been indicated in the period immediately preceding the First World War, gave way to a middle ground of entertaining but fairly uncritical middle-class oriented dramas. According to Pellizzi, the speed of change was halted by and never recovered from, the social and economic consequences of the war:

England at the dawn of the century showed signs of setting forth on these new ways confusedly; her intellectuals and artists, the advance guards of history, had reached a seriousness and serenity which seemed to announce and anticipate the birth of a new form of post-middle class aristocracy and the wealth and power which the nations enjoyed guaranteed that the new developments would have unfolded themselves in an atmosphere of relative calm ... (However) the last phase of tragic and despairing realism,



fantastic or intimate, which carries to its close the tradition of polemic middle-class drama and pushes the impulse of social realism of 'social remorse' to its extremes continues up to the present day...<sup>74</sup>

According to Pellizzi, the audiences who went to see 'well-made plays' in the commercial theatres, did so out of curiosity, a desire to experience insight into the lives of people with whom they in reality, had little contact, his proposal is that the audiences endured the dramas rather than learnt from them. Although to an extent there appears to be a certain truth in his perception, it again relegates theatre history to an analysis of the production and reception of dramatic texts produced by commercial theatres, and fails to pay any great attention to the different function of theatre in any one period of history. As Jon Clark has written:

British 'naturalistic' theatre in the first half of the twentieth century has often been criticised as sentimental, thematically dated and lacking in creativity. The plays of Galsworthy, Maugham, Priestley, Barrie and Coward are quoted in evidence to support such a dismissive evaluation: the works of Shaw (and in the 'poetic drama' the works of Eliot and Yeats) are seen as the exception that proves the rule. What is immediately striking about such assessments is that they are based on highly restricted concepts of literature and theatre, and also a narrow textual analysis approach to literary and cultural criticism.<sup>75</sup>

During the inter-war period specifically, there were numerous critics who drew a line of distinction between the playwright, as someone who worked with the needs of the audience in mind and the dramatist, who was inevitably a poet, a linguistic craftsman. One would therefore place Noel Coward or even Ben Travers in the first category and Eliot or Fry in the second. These distinctions are seemingly based on the refusal to define a dramatic text within the context of both theatre and the social economy. It is also interesting to note that much drama was written with the amateur market in mind; during the twenties and thirties in particular, the amateur movement became almost an institution, which reflected the growing public interest in drama as a means of entertainment and performance for pleasure without monetary reward'.<sup>76</sup>

The British Drama League was founded by Geoffrey Whitworth in 1919 to promote and organise,

The encouragement of the art of the theatre, both for its own sake and as a means of intelligent recreation among all classes of the community.<sup>77</sup>

The B.D.L. also organised annual summer schools for amateurs interested in acting, producing, and writing for the theatre. By the mid 1920s there were some 360 affiliated societies and the B.D.L. was publishing its own journal and building up a collection of theatre books for use by its members. During the inter-war period guest professionals were invited to lecture, direct and so on. The most frequent criticism as put forward by Marshall amongst others, of the Amateur movement, is that it tended to follow West end trends, that members were not interested in theatre per se, but rather, in the entertainment values of dressing up and performing in front of their friends and families. Even though according to the B.D.L. by the late 1930s over five million people a year paid to see amateur performances, Marshall interprets these figures in terms of the fact that there were so many amateur companies at this point that the audience at each production must have been very small. Despite the criticism of the amateur movement, it is clear that the *amateur* has a very distinct place in the history of 'alternatives' to the commercial theatre. The Maddermarket (Norwich), The Leeds Civic Theatre and the Newcastle People's Theatre to name a few, were all theatres which began life in the hands of amateurs and went on to break away from the dominant taste of the commercial theatres. The other area where the amateur movement can be seen to have contributed to a development in the variety of British theatre is in work as part of the socialist and labour movement. There are numerous in-depth and detailed publications on and studies of the Workers Theatre Movement, whose productions often involved both amateurs and professionals.<sup>78</sup> Many of these productions took place in non-theatre spaces and certainly provided along with the influences of German and Russian Agit prop theatre, a foundation for the 'political theatre' movement in Britain after 1968.

Theatre work carried out by the W.T.M. fed into and influenced small theatres. The Embassy, initially under the management of Ronald Adams, often encouraged artistic directors such as André Van Gyseghem to search for new plays which appealed to and recognised the importance of wider less middle-class audiences. Van Gyseghem had been influenced by developments in Russian theatre, and his work with the Workers Theatre Movement led him to promote the production of plays which looked at the position of the working classes

within culture. He was also interested in new forms of drama as a possible solution to the quest for a theatre which could educate and entertain simultaneously.<sup>79</sup>

Once C.E.M.A. became the Arts Council, coupled with the fact that after the Second World War the rents for London theatres rose once more, there were fewer alternatives to the mainstream commercial theatre. It is worth noting here that plays by female playwrights were produced in all of the theatres indicated above; equally there appear to have been significantly more women writing for the theatre in the twenty years immediately preceding the disintegration of the 'other theatres' and the establishment of the Arts Council than afterwards, although it should be taken into consideration that after the Second World War, there were fewer theatres producing plays generally.

## SOCIAL CHANGE

There are still living in Britain today some quarter of a million women and men who were born under Queen Victoria and grew up as young Edwardians. They have lived under six monarchs. Just a few of them can remember the Boer war; many of them fought in the First World War and many of the women lost their men in it; and all of them lived on to hear the bombing of the British cities in the Second World War. When they were small, men fought wars on horseback, but by the time they were middle aged the Americans were killing tens of thousands with a singular Nuclear bomb on a Japanese city. They were middle aged too when the British Empire, which had framed many of their lives, dissolved; and were already elderly when Britain entered Europe ...They saw Churchill turn from a radically reforming liberal to a defiant conservative. They witnessed the tentative first labour coalition governments in the 1920s, and the great landslide victory of 1945 which heralded the setting up of the Welfare State and the nationalisation of the economic infrastructure; and then when they were in their eighties, they watched it all dismantled in the name of the 'Victorian values' with which they had grown up.<sup>80</sup>

The social changes which have occurred during the twentieth century are immense and the ramifications of these changes in terms of human experience are immeasurable. In terms of vital social and historical events, the above

statement contains only the surface of a list of phenomena which have, during the decades of the twentieth century, radically changed our perception and experience of what it means to be living in Britain, and especially the experience of being a woman in British culture. The main emphasis here is to provide a social context for theatre in the years under examination. In this section I can only hope to outline key developments in the shaping of British society which may have affected either the making of theatre, or the nature of the audience for whom that theatre was supposedly made.

Both the social and economic changes caused by and felt in the aftermath of the First World war, meant that,

...for the middle aged, middle classes, England bore very little resemblance to the pre-war years ...The old order had passed away, the halcyon days of the privileged classes. The war had cut across everything and created an enormous gap between the generations.<sup>81</sup>

During the immediate post Great War years the whole nation suffered from a state of loss, a falling away of the old order with depression and chaos as key elements in the void. These years were experienced by many as being an era of disintegration. Although of course the war only provided an historical focal point for changes which had already been set into motion in the late nineteenth century, both culturally and socially.

#### SOCIAL MOBILITY AND LIVING STANDARDS

In reality, although the technological advances made in the early twentieth century arguably improved the quality of life amongst the lower classes,<sup>82</sup> there was relatively little social mobility. The middle and upper classes still controlled the economy, were the owners of the means of production and still dominated the high status professions. In the years immediately preceding the First World War, three-quarters of all in employment was in the manual trades.<sup>83</sup> Although there was a significant increase in the number of white collar workers after the war, the education system which did little to close the class gap limited possibilities of social mobility until the Butler Education Act of 1944. Mowat describes the education ladder as being narrow during the first four decades of the twentieth century and, although the increase in numbers of universities, following the installation of the University Grants Committee in 1911<sup>84</sup> made a significant difference, the gap between rich and poor was still immense and the

possibility of closing the gap in real terms was fairly low. The new road systems, bus services and the improvement in public services in general, increased the speed with which the gap between the 'have and the have nots' could be geographically closed. Yet poverty and hardship, unemployment and a lack of prospects, was the experience of the masses during the 1920s and 1930s in Britain. Economically the 'roaring twenties' as a description of an era, had relevance to only a few in the more privileged sectors of society. For most, Britain the 1920s signified poverty, depression and a sense of frustration at having fought a war for nothing. The 1920s saw the General Strike and hunger marches in Britain, and the growth of European Fascism in the 1930s came about in a general atmosphere of economic depression.

During the 1930s in particular, the north/south divide, in terms of levels of wealth, was stronger than ever and differed very little from the nineteenth century. In Glasgow, for example, at any one time, as many as half of the population could be unemployed. Ostensibly, there were,

...four Englands during the inter-war period; old England, represented by the southern counties with their rich middle and upper class families who still had land and servants, the industrial north, with its coal tips and silent blast furnaces resembling the nineteenth more than the so called twentieth century England, which was represented by the home counties with their new housing estates, suburban villas and gleaming chromium cocktail bars, and then there was the Britain on the dole, geographically situated in much the same place as in the nineteenth century in the north, industrial Scotland, South Wales and parts of north Wales.<sup>85</sup>

After the Second World War, the landslide labour victory of 1945 and the setting up of the Welfare State met with its first generation of disillusioned critics by the mid 1950s, for whom the social and economic changes had not happened fast enough, nor in a great enough number.

#### HOME LIFE AND LEISURE

Despite the gloom which prevailed after the First World War, the years between the inter-war years saw the emergence of a new 'spirit' in literature and the arts, although as Noreen Branson points out, the impact of literary work which reflected a dissenting point of view on the events and consequences of the First World War was not generally felt until the late 1920s.<sup>86</sup> The new social

sciences gained ground and credibility: 'psychology was destroying reason as a guide to conduct and the physicists, certainty in the order of the Universe'.<sup>87</sup> Einstein's Theory of Relativity in 1919 came into existence alongside new and adventurous attitudes towards architecture epitomised by Le Corbusier. The opening of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1923 created a fervent mass interest in archaeology and anthropology. The B.B.C. began regular broadcasting in 1922 and although for many years radio drama was undeveloped:

Most of the entertainment industry ...looked on the B.B.C. as a threat to their prosperity. The theatre managers believed that listening to radio at home could mean a drop in box office returns, so they banned live broadcast from theatres.<sup>88</sup>

Housing conditions had greatly improved in terms of standards; building programmes set in motion before the First World War, which included projects such as Welwyn Garden City, provided new housing, but benefited the higher strata of the working classes and the lower-middle classes for whom home-making became almost a new hobby. With each household struggling to keep up with the new home trends, the expanse in the furniture trade catered for the boom in home furnishings; three piece suites and dining room sets were the new status symbols which could be bought via higher purchase.<sup>89</sup>

By 1931 home life was revolutionised by the fact that one in three families owned a wireless set. Although church attendance was fast dwindling, the B.B.C. broadcast religious programmes on Sundays,<sup>90</sup> and popularised traditionally inaccessible classical music, and although there was an initial ban on broadcasting sports commentaries, it was broken by the B.B.C. by 1927.

Competition for the highest sales of newspapers, which much like the theatre, were owned by a minority group, reached an all time high in the 1930s; by 1939 most families subscribed to some kind of morning paper.<sup>91</sup> Communications in general had advanced unimaginably since the end of the Great War. There was an emphasis on organised leisure time for industrial and white collar workers, for whom the arts and social sciences became more accessible through the establishment of the B.B.C. and the new publishing houses such as Penguin Books in 1935 and from the 'left', Victor Gollancz and the Left Book Club. The late 1930s saw the beginnings of the boom in women's magazines, with *Woman* being published in 1937. Leisure became a mass market fed by new technologies. Family leisure became more institutionalised and, especially in the 1930s, moved toward outside activities such as cycling and

motoring, with a proliferation of cycling clubs and by 1931, there were some 2,000,000 motor vehicles on the road of which 1,000,000 were private cars, 600,000 motorcycles, 350,000 commercial vans and lorries and 85,000, buses.<sup>92</sup> Yet some have argued that overall,

Big business dominated and exploited entertainment and leisure, taking advantage of people's spare time and money ...the commercialisation of leisure was making ordinary people more passive in their enjoyment, receiving ...culture rather than making their own.<sup>93</sup>

## CINEMA

Perhaps the most important aspect of the new mass media culture for a theatre historian is the growth of cinema which, 'rather than religion', fast became, 'the heart of a heartless world, the opium of the people.'<sup>94</sup> Cinema had been in its infancy before 1914 but, just as with the motor trade and aviation, by the time the war had ended, technological improvements meant that it became possible for cinema to be perceived as an industry in its own right. American film companies who carried on producing films during the war, were able to buy British theatres and music halls and convert them, imposing block bookings on other theatres as a condition for allowing them to hire the most popular American films.<sup>95</sup> Metro Goldwyn Mayer for example bought the Tivoli and the Old Empire in 1919, and the Leicester Square in 1921, which they reopened in 1928 as a grand cinema.<sup>96</sup> Before the advent of 'talkies' in the closing years of the 1920s American films such as *Robin Hood* in 1922 and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* in 1923 were both costly and impressive, and comparable in style to the great Victorian theatre spectacles.<sup>97</sup> British films were unprofitable and Hollywood dominated the British screens, setting trends for fashion, promoting a star system and providing some kind of an escape from the depression.<sup>98</sup> The Cinematograph Films Act in 1927 represented an attempt by the government to intervene in the rapid and almost total influx of American films, by forcing distributors to take a percentage of British films, yet Heinemann argues:

The American domination of the screen dream world which indirectly helped to weaken respect for the old British ruling class values of titles, hereditary wealth, Oxford accents and public school manners among the working classes.<sup>99</sup>

It was the cinema more than any other cultural development which most

threatened theatre, as a new form of leisure it cut across class barriers.

Everyone went to the cinema: the well to do and the unemployed, the highly educated and the hardly literate, the sophisticated and the naive. For the most part, they all saw the same films. As a leisure activity the cinema superseded the music hall and competed not unsuccessfully with pub, church and political meeting.<sup>100</sup>

By 1929 there were some 3,300 cinemas in Britain, under the ownership of Gaumont and British International, the two controlling chains until the establishment of Odeon in 1933. By the late 1930s some twenty million British people attended the cinema weekly, with an estimated twenty five percent going twice or more each week. The programmes would often change twice weekly and might include cartoons and news reels.<sup>101</sup> The popularity of cinema as a form of entertainment worried theatre managements, but provided a new avenue of expression for the playwright and more lucrative possibilities of work for actors and actresses. The cinema industry took, absorbed and exploited the financial benefits of star system, feeding on popular stage successes by making them into films for mass distribution. It could be argued that the advent of cinema depleted theatre audiences, but it must also be taken into account that cinema reached a far wider and less middle-class audience than either the commercial or the 'other theatres' of the years between 1918-1962, as did the advent of television which began to replace the cinema as a form of mass entertainment by the mid-1950s. Many critics and theorists were already talking of the theatre in crisis well before the growth in mass popularity of cinema.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, theatre in Britain between 1918 and the early 1960s appeared in many different forms. The most significant difference, both in terms of economics and aesthetics, was between the commercial; those theatres whose primary objective was to make money, and the 'other theatre', for whom the primary concern was the development and maintenance of theatre and especially the drama, as an art form. Although on the surface the differences are immense, in reality each type of theatre was to a large extent dependent on the other. Commercial theatres had become popular venues of entertainment during the 1914-1918 war, at which time speculators had taken over management much to the angst of those who believed the function of theatre to be aesthetic or intellectual. After the war, few new theatres were built and those which



remained by the beginning of the Second World War were owned or managed by an élite social group who had control over what was produced. The club, 'little' and subscription theatres, with their ideology of theatre for theatre's sake, grew in number during the inter-war years and provided venues for new or foreign playwrights' work. They survived because of the public interest of a minority who were not all necessarily from the ruling class and because many productions were bought up by West End managements and transferred into the commercial theatre. Many of these theatres and play-producing societies had, however, disappeared by the end of the Second World War. Although the amateur movement grew during the inter-war period, it fed very little back into the professional theatre except arguably through the work of the Workers Theatre Movement.

From early on in the period under discussion, there was thought by many to be a crisis in theatre. For some, it was due to the monopoly of control being in the hands of a small group, for others it was due to what they saw as the impoverished and defunct nature of the 'naturalist' and 'realist' dramatic form. For others, the theatre was in a state of crisis because of a lack of organisation; again partly due to the hegemony of control, but also because theatre was not being seen as a national asset which needed nurturing and support from the state. To all intents and purposes this support did arrive in the form of The Arts Council, whose original objective was to maintain 'the highest possible standard in the arts',<sup>102</sup> but by the end of the period in question it became clear that this support was financially inadequate. Arts Council policies had not created opportunities in which independent theatres could continue to flourish. With fewer theatre buildings after the Second World War and production costs soaring, the 'other theatre' was unable to thrive, without state support. Touring companies had fewer venues to play and by the mid-1950s many were given over to revues or revivals.

Until the establishment of the Royal Court in the mid 1950s, there was no government subsidised venue or company which worked specifically with new playwrights. Peter Hall took over the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in 1959 with an ensemble company, and the National Theatre opened its first season at the Old Vic in 1963, representing the first realisations of the much desired National companies.<sup>103</sup> Critics and practitioners such as Marshall foresaw the danger however, of the transformation of state aid into state control of theatre, a fear which has been confirmed in the eyes of a number of recent critics of the Arts Council.

Social and economic changes during the period under discussion were

immense. The labour party had its first government, women finally received full franchise in 1928, the education system was developed in such a way as to recognise the need for state funded continuing education for the young and the Welfare State was installed. The nation experienced mass unemployment, a second World War, the tremendous acceleration of communications systems and the social and psychological impact of previously unimaginable new inventions such as the Atom bomb. The cinema became the new form of mass entertainment and by the early 1960s television was beginning to bring entertainment back into the home.

By the mid-1960s, theatre no longer had the same social function as it had in the early part of the century, and, for a multitude of reasons, as early as 1947 it was feared by many that the 'race of English dramatists may soon become almost extinct'.<sup>104</sup> Seen as a whole, theatre as a social and economic phenomenon during the years in question was made up of the two seeming polarities of the legitimate theatre and the entertainment industry. The dramatic text more often found its home in the former. However, even within the legitimate theatre there were vast differences between venues, audience size and social group, styles of presentation and so on. The entertainment industry characterised by the large and expensive revue shows and those of such 'theatre men' as C.B. Cochran, had much in common with the commercial side of the legitimate theatre. Both theatres were part of the same economic and social system. The situation was perhaps best summed up by Philip Godfrey:

The nearest approach to a working generalisation of 'the theatre' seems to be to regard it as a sort of Siamese twins of markedly different personalities, but dependent on the same bloodstream. Our theatre twins, however, differ from their Siamese originals in size as well as in character. The small one, at his best, is thoughtfully serious and creatively comic; the big one, at his worst, is sentimental, pornographic, cheaply musical ...and commercially minded ...it is rare for both of them to flourish at the same time ...neither is very strong; both suffer from frequent collapse ...their dissimilarities are most striking on the side of each which is farthest from their point of junction; where they merge (and they are joined by a very large area) their differences disappear.<sup>105</sup>

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1 Richard Findlater, *The Unholy Trade* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1952), p. 13.  
2 John Osborne, *Look Back In Anger* (London: Faber, 1957). Jimmy Porter is seen by  
many to have been the first 'angry young man' and as such heralded a breed of angry  
young male characters in the late 1950s and early 1960s in British theatre. The  
play may represent a different class as protagonist, the content is 'new', but the form  
adheres to that of the well-made play, toward which the author shows little  
subversive intention.  
3 Findlater, p. 194.  
4 Thomas Postlewait, T, 'The Criteria for Periodization in Theatre History', *Theatre  
Journal*, 40: 3 (1988), 299 - 320.  
5 John Pick, *West End Management and Snobbery* (London: John Offord  
Publications, 1983), pp. 110 - 111.  
6 Gordon Sandison/ Federation of Theatre Unions, *Theatre Ownership in Britain*,  
(London: The Federation of Theatre Unions, 1953), p. 52.  
7 Camillo Pellizzi, *English Drama; The Last Great Phase* (London: Macmillan, 1935)  
8 Pick, p. 111.  
9 Ibid., p. 112 - 114.  
10 Gordon Sandison/ Federation of Theatre Unions, p. 22.  
11 Ibid., p. 77.  
12 Ibid., p. 27.  
13 Ibid., p. 7.  
14 J.B. Priestley, *Theatre Outlook* (London: Nicholson & Watson, 1947), p. 6.  
15 Findlater, p. 41.  
16 Priestley, p. 36.  
17 See Findlater, pp. 40 - 45., for more detailed information.  
18 Kitty Black, *Upper Circle*, (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 70.  
19 Ibid., p. 71.  
20 The first production was *The Shouting Dies* by Ronda Keane.  
21 Bing was the general manager of Glydebourne Opera, then the first administrator of  
The Edinburgh Festival . Black, pp. 112 - 114 .  
22 Ibid.  
23 Ibid., p. 119.  
24 Arthur Miller's *All My Sons* was produced in 1948, transferring to the Globe Theatre  
in the same year. Lillian Hellman's *Montserrat* was produced in 1952. For a full list  
of The Company of Four productions and those of H.M.Tennent Ltd. productions  
between 1936 and 1973 see Black, pp. 231 - 243.  
25 James Agate, *A Short view of the English Stage* (London: Jenkins, 1926), pp. 26 -27.  
26 From Cicely Hamilton, *The Old Vic* (London: Cape, 1926), quoted in Agate, p. 27.  
27 Pick, p. 131.  
28 Ibid., p. 97.  
29 Findlater, p. 36.  
30 Findlater, p. 15.  
31 Ibid., p. 40.  
32 Black, p. 70.  
33 Findlater, pp. 41 - 42.  
34 For more details on E.N.S.A. activities see, Basil Dean, *The Theatre at War*  
(London: Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1956)  
35 The Pilgrim Trust withdrew aid in 1942.  
36 Andrew Davies, *Other Theatres* (London: Macmillan, 1987), p. 127.  
37 For more details on her work with C.E.M.A., see, Elizabeth Sprigge, *Sybil Thordike  
Casson* (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1971)  
38 For more details on and insight into the working lives of performers working in these  
types of companies, see, Pamela Dellar, *Plays Without Theatres* (Highgate: Highgate  
Publications Ltd., 1989).

- 39 Robert Hutchison, *The Politics of the Arts Council* (London: Sinclair Browne, 1982)  
p. 44.
- 40 Ibid., p. 41.
- 41 *The State and The Arts*, ed. by John Pick (London: John Offord Publications, 1980),  
p. 12.
- 42 From the 1950 grant of £643,994 only £119,000 was put aside for theatre which  
as Findlater points out was half the amount received by the Comédie Française, and  
far less than the total grant awarded to Covent Garden. Findlater, p. 68.
- 43 Norman Marshall, *The Other Theatre* (London: Lehmann, Ltd., 1948), p. 14 - 16.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 Ibid.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid.
- 48 Vivian Gardner, *Sketches from The Actresses Franchise League* (Nottingham:  
University of Nottingham Press, 1985), p. 10.
- 49 Claire Hirshfield, 'The Actresses' Franchise League and the Campaign for  
Women's Suffrage 1908 -1914', *Theatre Research International*, 10: 2 (1985), 124 - 153.
- 50 Julie Holledge, *Innocent Flowers* (London: Virago, 1981), pp. 50 - 59.
- 51 Ibid.
- 52 Ibid. Produced at the Scala, toured by the A.F.L. and afterwards performed by  
many other Suffrage societies around the country. Holledge, pp. 69 - 75.
- 53 The A.F.L. was largely a middle and upper class organisation, but when Sylvia  
Pankhurst spread the work of the W.S.P.U. into the East End just before the war, the  
A.F.L. was a useful tool for gathering support. See Vol. 10, no. 2, 1985. Vivian  
Gardner, (1985) and Holledge, (1981)
- 54 Holledge, p. 86.
- 55 Christine Dymkowski, 'Entertaining Ideas', in Vivian Gardner & Susan Rutherford,  
*The New Woman and Her Sisters* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992) pp. 221 - 234,  
(p. 234).
- 56 Ibid. This quote is a collation, derived from the first and the fifth annual reports of  
the society. The second half according to Dymkowski, reflects the societies interest in  
producing foreign plays and the work of dramatists 'not engaged with  
contemporary issues. However, Craig was as much a theatre producer as a feminist,  
and I would argue that the difference reflects more, a shift away from focus on  
suffrage issues, the fight for which was virtually halted by the war.
- 57 Holledge, p. 133.
- 58 Ibid., p. 128.
- 59 Ibid., p. 143.
- 60 Marshall, p. 71.
- 61 Dymkowski, p. 229.
- 62 The Three Hundred Club was founded, financed and directed by Mrs Geoffrey  
Whitworth in 1923 and due to lack of funds amalgamated with the Stage Society in  
1926. Marshall's chapter on the Sunday Theatres gives a concise description of a  
number of these play producing societies. Marshall, pp. 72 - 85.
- 63 Ibid., p. 79.
- 64 A recent and very informative account of the work of the Arts Theatre, founded  
by Alec Clunes is J.C. & Wendy Trewin, *The Arts Theatre London: 1927-1981* (London:  
The Society for Theatre Research, 1986)
- 65 Marshall points out that Gwen Ffrançon-Davies, Flora Robson and Margaret  
Rawlings all gave some of their finest performances at The Gate. Marshall, p. 46.
- 66 See Marshall, pp. 42 - 53., for a detailed but brief history of The Gate theatre  
under Godfrey.
- 67 Philip Godfrey, *Back Stage* (London: Harrap & Co. Ltd., 1933), pp. 160 - 170.
- 68 Pellizzi, pp. 132 - 133.
- 69 John Elsom, *Theatre Outside London* (London: Macmillan, 1971), p. 23.  
The Birmingham Rep for example was founded by Barry Jackson, who subsidised

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- the theatre for some twenty years, reportedly lost some £100,000 in the process.
- 70 Marshall, pp. 50 - 54.
- 71 Agate, p. 20.
- 72 Ibid., p. 64.
- 73 Pellizzi, pp. 145 - 148.
- 74 Ibid., pp. 143 - 157.
- 75 John Clark, 'Agitprop and Unity Theatre: Socialist Theatre in the Thirties', in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s*, ed. by John Clark, Margaret Heinemann and others (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), pp. 219 - 239 (p. 219).
- 76 George Taylor, G, *The Amateur Theatre* (New York: Venton, 1976), p. 9.
- 77 Davies, p. 81.
- 78 Useful publications are Colin Chambers, *The Story of Unity Theatre* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1989), *Theatres of The Left*, ed. by Raphael Samuel, Ewan MacColl, E, & Stuart Cosgrove, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985) and Tuckett, A, *The People's Theatre Movement in Bristol 1930-45* (London: History Group of The Communist Party of Great Britain), "Our Pamphlets", no. 72. (Also a large number of archive holdings documenting the work of Angela and Joan Tuckett's Bristol People's Theatre can be found in the Modern Records Centre at the the University of Warwick, England.
- 79 André Van Gyseghem, 'British Theatre in the Thirties: An Autobiographical Record', in *Culture and Crisis in Britain in the 1930s*, ed. by John Clark, Margot Heinemann and others (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1970), pp. 209 - 218.
- 80 Gloria Wood, & Paul Thompson, *The Nineties* (London: BBC Books, 1993), pp. 9 - 10.
- 81 Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 199 - 201.
- 82 Ibid., p. 202.
- 83 Wood & Thompson, p. 10.
- 84 Mowat, p. 202.
- 85 Ibid., pp. 480 - 485.
- 86 Noreen Branson, *Britain in The Nineteen Twenties* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975), p. 240.
- 87 Ibid., p. 202.
- 88 Branson, p. 236.
- 89 Noreen Branson, & Margot Heinemann, *Britain in the Nineteen Thirties* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1971). By 1938, it is estimated that at least 60% of all furniture was being bought on higher purchase. ( See Chapter 1; New Patterns of Living)
- 90 Ibid., pp. 232 - 236.
- 91 Branson & Heinemann, pp. 240 - 245.
- 92 Ibid., (Chapter 1; New Patterns of Living)
- 93 Ibid. pp. 240 - 253.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Branson, p. 229.
- 96 Pick, (1983), pp. 111 - 117.
- 97 Branson, p. 230.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 Branson & Heinemann, p. 253.
- 100 Branson, p. 229.
- 101 Branson & Heinemann, pp. 250 - 254.
- 102 Marshall, p. 227.
- 103 John Elsom, *Post -War British Theatre* (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd., 1976), pp. 160 - 163.
- 104 Marshall, p. 235.
- 105 Godfrey, p. 171.

## WOMEN IN SOCIETY, WOMEN IN THEATRE

One thing, however, is beyond doubt: that woman is in the same process of transition as man. Whether this transition is a historical turning point or not remains to be seen. Sometimes when we look back at history, it seems as though the present times had analogies with certain periods in the past, when great empires and civilisations had passed their zenith and were hastening ...towards decay. But these analogies are deceptive, for there are always renaissances. The woman of today ...gives expression to one of the cultural tendencies of our time: the urge to live a complete life, a longing for meaning and fulfilment ...The woman of today is faced with a tremendous cultural task - perhaps it will be the dawn of a new era.

Carl Jung<sup>1</sup>

We have proved in two wars that we can pull our weight, just as in peace-time we have always proved it when we were allowed the opportunity ...Give us after the war that continued opportunity to be paid according to the value of our labour and let our taxes be adjusted to our human needs and actual responsibilities without regard to the accident of sex.<sup>2</sup>

The social and cultural changes of the first half of the twentieth century in Britain, influenced the lives of middle-class women perhaps more than any other. Change affected women's expectations, but perhaps more importantly, the social expectations which others had of them and at times, even the defining of the sign *woman* itself. Thus, a middle-class woman in the mid 1960s may have been a mother, lawyer, teacher, graduate, a woman with political affiliations which she could confirm through her voting power, a single working woman, or even, a divorced woman. Her lived experience was unimaginably far removed from that of her foremother of a hundred years previously.

One of the most immediate affects of The Great War on many women in Britain, was that for a short time, they were moved into the visible public workplace. Although their wages were not at the same level as those of the men who had been conscripted, they were nearer to male wage levels than ever before. This gave many a taste for an economic independence which few women had experienced before hand. After the war many women wanted to

maintain their new-found independence through work. However, post-war economy demanded that work be made available for men. Public fear of women's desire to work outside of the home promoted numerous debates as to whether a woman could work and still be considered to be a *feminine* woman. Carl Jung was greatly concerned in 1927, with what he saw as the *masculinisation* of woman, a symptom of both her desire and the economic need for her to work. Jung proposed that through doing the jobs once expected only of men, woman would upset the 'natural' male/female balance within culture. His perception and affirmation of what was desirable female behaviour was based on the notion that woman ought ultimately to be able to fulfil her ambitions through the love of a man and family; woman's creative urges would be realised through child rearing. His view differed little from Victorian ideology on this level. However, Jung asserted that firstly, women were changing, partly as a result of their relationship to the changing needs of the economy, and that secondly, the effect this had on society was inescapable, very real and in need of constant analysis and reappraisal.

The purpose of this chapter is to outline key social changes and cultural developments which shaped women's lives. Equally, the aim here is to provide a context for the work of women in the theatre industry outlet of the London Stage, thus positioning their careers, albeit on a very general level, inside of the economic and social field in which they worked.

## ENFRANCHISEMENT

The sequence of events leading up to the two stages of the women's enfranchisement are seen by many to be one of the primary causes of the change in twentieth century perception of womanhood and femaleness. The depth of change not only increased but also caused much discussion and analysis, both offensive and defensive, during the period which spans the end of the nineteenth century to the early 1960s. The Suffrage movement involved both male and female potential voters and existed inside a period of general social and political change.

From the vantage-ground reached by human beings in the middle of the twentieth century, with the sky stormy and the path arduous, the years before 1914 seem to lie in the background, like a golden valley, where all is order and contentment ...Yet it is possible that in reality the years before 1914 were neither quite so golden nor quite so prosaic as they appear today ...The political

Labour movement, the safeguarding by the state of those who through misfortune or immaturity had no place in the thriving throng of wage earners, and the claims of women to equality were all established by 1914. But if the last was established it was certainly generally not accepted.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly the Suffragette movement inspired much humour and cynicism aimed at the New Woman, who rather than stay at home or look after her widowed father, wanted independence, education and the freedom to come and go as she wished.

The fifty years from 1867 to 1917 had seen a long, hard and often bitter campaign. In the course of it, thousands of women developed a social consciousness and political understanding, along with great abilities as organisers, writers, propagandists and lecturers. Abuse, derision and social ostracism were often their lot. "Warped old maids", "destroyers of the family", "the shrieking sisterhood", "viragos and disappointed cast-offs of the marriage market" were amongst the printable epithets that were hurled at their heads.<sup>4</sup>

#### WOMEN AND THEATRE : THE FEMINIST FRAMEWORK AND THE 'WOMAN QUESTION'

The Suffragette movement came out of a general shift in political thinking, albeit one which did not focus specifically on and in many ways frowned upon the rights of women. Likewise, the Actresses Franchise League arguably took the form of similar small independent theatre organisations which were breaking away from the traditions of actor-manager centred production. The difference being that, rather than promoting 'new forms' of drama, their interest was in the use of theatre as a means of discoursing and gathering support for the Suffragette cause, and their work was specifically woman centred. This is not to undermine the work of the A.F.L., but rather to point to the more general context of what has become known as the *first* feminist theatre. The objective of this chapter is not to analyse in any great detail the Suffragette movement nor the Actresses Franchise League, although both are relevant.

Within the area of women and theatre, if we are prepared to take this as a specific focus for research which exists both inside and outside of the field of



theatre studies, there are many areas, too many to list here, which are still in need of active research and analysis. Susan Bassnett has pointed to the dearth of studies in the area of the history of performers and analyses of the history of the female performing body.<sup>5</sup> Bassnett stresses that although the study of texts is often prioritised to the cost of any other area of study, it is still far too early in the development of the field to make assumptions about the non-existence of female playwrights in certain periods of history. Tracy Davis has also pointed out that many of the studies of women's theatre are based upon a feminist agenda<sup>6</sup> and it is important to note here that a great deal of studies of plays by women are framed by the question of whether the plays could be considered to be feminist or not.

It has become clear over the last decade or so that 'feminist' is too closed and geographically specific a term to apply to all cultures, a notion of *feminisms*, a multiplicity of identities, which have more to do with ways of thinking rather than any specific political struggle, would allow for a far less Anglo-American or even Eurocentric approach to analysis. Another factor is that many of those who have historicised women's contribution to the history and development of the dramatic text, have done so by seemingly negating the existence of texts written by women in periods other than those which they happen to be focusing on themselves. For example, Sue Ellen Case quotes Nancy Cotton's study of women playwrights in England 1363-1750:

During the period from 1660-1770, over sixty plays by women were produced on the London stage - more than from 1920 - 1980.<sup>7</sup>

In this particular case misleading information is used in order to justify a focus on a particular period of study. Here, the author justifies her examination by noting the number of performances of plays by women during this period by comparison to another. This kind of ill-informed justification should not be necessary and merely reflects a seemingly defensive position in terms of the importance of studying women's creative work in theatre. There is an inherent danger in this approach, as it often leads to a negation of much of the same work it is trying to promote. Research on women playwrights, let alone performers, managers, directors and designers is, in real terms, only just beginning. It is important that we look at what was there, rather than trying to fit our findings into some preconceived notion of what it is that, for example, women ought to have been writing.

In a recent short study of women dramatists in Britain and Ireland between 1958 and 1968, Lib. Taylor focuses on the work of Enid Bagnold and Agatha Christie, with a later mention of Iris Murdoch, Anne Jellicoe and Doris Lessing. She is critical of the ultimately conformist ideological stance inscribed within much of Christie's work and of Bagnold for her lack of concern to 'reveal women's situation or challenge a form of social organisation that specifically oppresses the female'.<sup>8</sup> Within the framework of her study there appears to be a biased agenda which is based on proving the non-validity of the work of other commercial and non-commercial female playwrights who are not included in the chapter. Obviously one of the limitations of the material used is already defined by the limit in required wordage and by the framework of the book in which the chapter is placed. Yet, there is a clear bias which again involves assumptions about theatre or rather, dramatic texts written by women. These assumptions are not dissimilar to those made by male theatre historians of the past. Taylor goes on to say:

As the history of women's theatre makes evident, when women dramatists have flourished, it is on the fringes rather than within the mainstream theatre. The political expediency of occupying a marginal position is not something that can be considered here ...<sup>9</sup>

Here clear and rather obvious assumptions about women playwrights continue to be made.<sup>10</sup> Taylor expands her argument by including Joan Littlewood's pioneering work at Stratford East and looks at the work of women playwrights whose plays were produced at the Royal Court. However, although as she says, both were theatres which worked in ideological opposition to the mainstream, it should be pointed out that certainly both were either financially dependent on the mainstream system, or on State subsidy in order to survive. The point is, that if we use a closed or fixed notion of feminist as a starting point for analysis, or make fairly arbitrary or unclear disassociations between different types of theatre in order to justify an inclusion of women's creative theatre work in a history of theatre, we continue to defer their work to a marginal position and negate the possibility of rediscovering an historical continuum. Part of the problem is to do with a desire to create and be included in a canon, or to fit history into a theoretical framework. However, using this as the primary basis for historical categorising limits the depiction and analysis of history to the extent that it becomes a discipline used to verify or justify our own contemporary position. It is arguably just another way of *fixing* history.

During the period 1918-1962, plays written by women were produced in the commercial theatres, Repertory theatres, club and subscription theatres, amateur theatres and as part of the work of politically-focused theatre companies and groups. In some cases their work was seen as representing a real threat to the 'male hegemony' in theatre, with a number of critics, both in Britain and America, complaining about the *feminisation* of theatre.<sup>11</sup> Although as yet there are no extensive detailed studies of women's writing for political theatres in Britain during the period in question, there are a number of small studies which indicate the existence of either all women groups, groups run by women or plays written by women specifically for the political theatre.<sup>12</sup>

The Women playwrights, whose work is examined here did not all share the same class origins, education or political ideology. Some wrote plays which were concerned with class, some about women's lives, some simply put their work on to the market in a desire to earn a living from their craft regardless of their gender. In the same way that it is inadvisable to exclude on the basis of political ideology or content of work, it is equally inadvisable to assume a similarity between plays written by women simply because they are written by women.

This study is based on a desire to identify and analyse plays written by women which were performed on the London stage between 1918 and 1962. Michelene Wandor states:

During the 1920s and 1930s organised feminism was far less visible; struggles to improve the position of women within society continued less publicly. Organisations continued to argue and work around specific issues, such as contraception and child care, and within working-class organisations ...feminism still found a presence. But theatre work controlled by women, and linking feminism and aesthetics, ceased to command its own space. There were a number of women who were active within the Unity Theatre Movement ...and there was the occasional play about the 'women question' - equal rights for women, equal educational opportunities, abortion. But it was only well after the Second World War that feminism and theatre again came together; this time in a greatly changed social and political situation in which radical post-war changes to the family had produced intense and contradictory pressures on women.<sup>13</sup>

Again, Wandor is writing about a specific historical period in general terms. There was apparently no centralised theatre organisation similar to the A.F.L., during the period under examination here. However, there were many women managing small companies or theatres, directing, producing or writing plays. The criteria for the inclusion of plays here is simply that the play was performed, not necessarily professionally, and that it is available in print. My study is limited by time, space and the possibilities of obtaining what seem to have become obscure texts. The framework within which the plays are examined is the social, historical and theatrical context in which they were performed. Although on one level Wandor's statement about the linking of 'feminism and aesthetics' in theatre can be taken as true, it is based on a simplified notion of what happened to the feminist or women's movement during the period in question. It also negates the existence of many plays written by women which in effect centred their narratives on the 'woman question' and the intense and contradictory pressures on women which were felt, developed and grew in intensity continuously between the two World Wars, up until the early 1960s and beyond.

#### WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS 1918 - 1962

Although many of the playwrights in question were not self-professed feminists, much of their work positioned perceptions of the private lives of women inside the public arena of the theatre, foregrounding the female experience in order to create the central narrative in their plays. A number of the plays only ran for short periods, but many of the writers were household names, writing serious and complex parts for actresses and creating a working wage from theatre writing. The evidence of these playwrights provides a strong counter argument to Helen Keyssar's proposal that 'it was not until the last decade that playwrights in significant numbers became self-consciously concerned about the presence - or absence - of women as women on stage'.<sup>14</sup> They also provide evidence that a creative culture which expressed and confirmed the idea that for women 'art is related to their condition as women' did not simply cease to exist after the vote was won. Many of the plays specifically deal with social change in relation to ideas of femininity and femaleness, exploring the transformations taking place in the social and cultural perceptions of womanhood.

Women working in theatre during the period with which we dealing here worked within a transitional theatre system. Their ideas about the female condition filtered through in their work, in a social environment where the

women's movement took on a different shape and form to that of the years immediately preceding the first World War. Very little research has been carried out in recent years on the non-political theatre of the years between the wars and up until the mid-1950s. From the point of view of theatre history, many of the female playwrights have been critically dismissed because the theatre of their era is thought to have been both middle class and lacking in either conceptual or ideological challenge. The general pattern of theatre history research negates their work; current ignorance about their contribution to British theatre is by no means entirely due to the false marginalising practices of recent feminist theatre historians. The framework for critique used by critics who were contemporary to the inter-war and post-Second World War period however, does appear to be based on an overt recognition of and emphasis on the gender of the female playwrights in question. Equally, the form of the domestic comedy, used frequently by a number of these playwrights, was often seen as a feminized form in itself. Obviously, not all the plays written by women during the period were domestic, neither were they all comic. Although it is inadvisable to group their work as a whole, there are clear thematic obsessions at different junctures over the 40 or so years under examination. Many inevitably promoted a questioning of both class and gender stereotypes, others did nothing to undermine these stereotypes. But to ignore their work, even if the ideological basis of that work is difficult to accept, is tantamount to re-writing an important aspect of women's contribution to the development of the dramatic text out of history.

#### WOMEN WORKING IN THEATRE AFTER THE FIRST WORLD WAR; MANAGERS, ADMINISTRATORS AND DIRECTORS

The A.F.L., was the first mass effort of 'theatre women' to direct their energies towards a particular political end. However, in order to re-discover a history of women's theatre we must be careful not to take each discovery and place it completely out of context. The historical event of the A.F.L. took place in a political and social climate that was in a state of flux, in the same way that many of the feminist theatres of the post-1968 period began life at a time of political ferment and unrest. The interesting question here is, what happens to the role of women in theatre and specifically of women playwrights, when theatre has no one political agenda in mind and does not directly and consciously aim to reflect or promote social unrest or change? It might be relevant also to ask, what happens to women working in theatre when there is no one mass political or literary movement with which to affiliate, associate or

disassociate themselves?

The key social and economic changes which influenced the structure of theatre after the First World War have already been examined. It is true to say that in general women's position within the power structures of theatre, especially the commercial theatre, did not change greatly; it was still a system largely controlled by men; men were at the centre of the power bases and at the centre of the decision-making processes in most cases. We should however, take into account the number of women who were in secondary or tertiary positions of power, usually behind closed doors. The observation made by Kitty Black, who worked for H.M. Tennent Ltd., is relevant here:

In the present climate of women's lib, its quite surprising to look back and remember just how many successful women literary agents there were at that time. Margery Vosper, Joyce Weiner, Helen Gunner and Dorothea Fasset were all leading figures on the London scene, and Paris boasted Marguerite Scialtiel ...as well as Denise Tual and Ninon Tallon. Kay Brown, Leah Salisbury, Monica McCall and Audrey Wood dominated the New York scene. Quite why females are so successful is probably hard to say - perhaps women are more temperamentally suited to dealing with private problems as well as literary dilemmas, with methodical minds to register details of contract and remember anniversaries and celebrations.<sup>15</sup>

There is very little evidence to suggest that a woman literary agent is any more likely to show preference towards work written by women than her male counterpart. It is however interesting to note that even within the gender hierarchies of the mainstream commercial system, there was room for mobility from secretarial to management roles within the administrative areas of production. The implication here is that perhaps certain areas of the management and production process were seen as being feminine, for example dealing with customers, gate keeping for the male boss and so on.

Previous to the 1914-18 war a number of women had been instrumental in setting up the successful management of the early Repertory theatres; Annie Horniman in Manchester, and Lady Gregory in Dublin and Madge McIntosh in Liverpool,<sup>16</sup> are particular cases in mind. Similarly, a number of women were instrumental in the establishment and running of small theatre companies which were effectively part of the circuit of independent or little theatres which

thrived in London and elsewhere, especially between the wars.

Beatrice de Leon's work at the Q Theatre in Kew, in London, was vital to the developmental shape of the London stage. She encouraged and taught young actors and new playwrights, as well as those who were already finding work in the London theatres. Many new plays opened at the Q Theatre or ended their performance run there after a long run in the West End. She was known as being 'unsentimental, tough and honest',<sup>17</sup> and in her time produced many plays, taking under her wing young performers, many of whom went on to later stardom. Because of the nature of the theatre system during her time at the Q Theatre, her management skills required a great sense of adventure and willingness to take risk. Just as De Leon had originally been an actress, Lena Ashwell began her career as an actress and was integral to the formation of the British Drama League. Whilst manager of the Kingsway theatre Ashwell was heavily involved with the work of the A.F.L. and was responsible for organising entertainments for the troops during the First World War. After 1918 she continued to organise work for unemployed artists at The Century Theatre, where she took over management in 1925, producing a number of new plays as well as her own adaptations of *Crime and Punishment* and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Described by many critics as an actress of great emotional power, she has been likened to both Annie Horniman and Lillian Baylis because of her active role in the development of the British theatre. Nancy Price was another actress turned manager who began her acting career in 1899 and played literally hundreds of roles, directing some eighty seven plays during her lifetime. She founded the People's National Theatre in 1930 through which she disseminated many of the ideas and influences of innovative European theatre practitioners and produced over fifty plays in seven years. During the late 1930s Price also founded the English School Theatre Movement, touring Shakespeare to working-class children, often using star actors willing to work for low wages. There still exist very few studies of the work carried out by these women, who through their desire to have some kind of control over the kind of theatre work with which they were involved, or through their desire to expand the repertoire of theatre in England, moved from the position of employee to that of employer.

The women directors whose work was either achieved inside mainstream commercial or outside political categories of theatre history, during the years in question, is also poorly documented. Irene Hentschel for example, trained at R.A.D.A. and joined the Lena Ashwell Players as actress and director after 1918. Her many West End productions include, *Eden End* (1934), *Time and The Conways* (1937), and *Jeannie* (1940). She worked in both the mainstream-

commercial theatre and on the independent circuit, was known for her direction of classics and also worked at the Shakespeare Memorial Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon. Hentschel at one point identified the value of women as directors and producers claiming that women had a more suitable psychological disposition to bring to the work, especially with regards to working with women.<sup>18</sup> Margaret Webster, another actress turned director, appeared on the stage as a young child performer in the famous production of *The Trojan Women* (1924) alongside Sybil Thorndike, and worked in both in Ben Greet's and J.B. Fagan's companies. Productions of classics such as *Othello* (1943) starring Paul Robeson, which broke box office records for a Shakespeare production on Broadway, made her reputation as a director. Both of Webster's autobiographies reflect, albeit in a very personalised and anecdotal manner, the depth and range of her prolific directing career and her strong desire to take theatre into new venues to audiences for whom theatre was ordinarily a luxury.<sup>19</sup>

Auriol Lee, who had worked for Edith Craig as an actress, not only played an enormous number of stage roles, but was one of the most prolific directors of her time. Her skill as an actress and director was praised by many including both Noel Coward and John Van Druten. Lee directed many West End hits during the 1920s and 1930s and was praised in particular for her productions of Van Druten's plays. Engaged as a director by Hitchcock at Elstree studios in 1932, Lee spent her later years in America, where she died in a car crash in 1941, as an American citizen.

In 1939, Auriol Lee was heard declaring at a Hollywood party that 'history will reveal Hitler as the greatest man of the last one hundred years', and that 'Germany deserved Czechoslovakia'. After being challenged on her comments, she declared that she didn't like to 'talk politics'. A few months after this report was made by a gossip columnist for the *Daily Mirror*, there was an apology made by the journalist who claimed that his sources were incorrect and that in fact Lee had never made such statements.<sup>20</sup> Despite the disclaimer, the implication is that Lee's politics would not be seen as 'desirable' by either feminists of today or by those of her own day. Enid Bagnold, one of the few women playwrights of the era whose work has to some extent been re-evaluated, is also known to have had sympathies with Hitler's early ideas.<sup>21</sup> Although unable to support the politics of either, it is problematic that their 'questionable' politics should be added to the already strong bias against the documentation and analysis of their work. Doubtless, a great deal of the political ideas held by many of the women working in the theatre of the period,



were to our contemporary eye, naive and ill-thought through. However, many of the concomitant social theories and ideas in a number of fields, including areas which affected women in far greater numbers than men, such as the Eugenics movement and the contraceptive movement, are now viewed as being inherently classist, racist and Imperialist in nature.

If the objective of re-defining and re-discovering a history of women in theatre is a primary aim, then we should question the validity of statements such as,

...the major assault on the male dominated stage of the day came from ...the A.F.L. and, not until the 1970s did the question of women's theatre surface one more.<sup>22</sup>

There was very little in the way of theatre made by women, about and for women from a specifically feminist-focused political standpoint, but there was a great deal of theatre both facilitated and written by women. Just as the women's movement did not disappear but rather became dissipated during the years between the end of the First World War and the mid 1960s, so dramatic texts written by women displayed a multitude of ideologies and political positions, as well as being written with a variety of potential audiences in mind.

#### THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT AND SOCIAL CHANGE

When the initial franchise was granted to women over the age of thirty who owned property in 1918 amid great scares of an impending 'petticoat government', women who had fought for equal rights did not simply disappear. It was even then a contentious argument that women had won the vote because of their efforts in the war, as if the vote was a prize rather than something which had been fought for with consistent determination. Using different strategies and working within a different agitational structure, the fight continued albeit in a fragmented form. Even when the vote was finally given to women on an equal basis to men in 1928, the 'struggle for equal rights', contrary to some popularised histories of the women's movement, continued. During the inter-war years and into the early 1960s there was still 'a vigorous and varied women's movement which addressed similar issues and conducted similar campaigns to those which we have engaged in'.<sup>23</sup> The 'woman question', birth control, women in education and work, were still very much subjects for public discussion during the period under examination here. The nature and force of the debates changed so that for example, what was unacceptable in the public

eye during the 1920s, may have gained support by the 1940s. Woman's role within society was however, consistently a point of public and private debate.

Thus, the years after the war and up until 1928 represented a period of reassessment and change. After the initial franchise was granted in 1918, women's organisations and groups which had focused on the fight for the vote began to organise around how the vote should be utilised. The publication *Time and Tide* founded and initially run by women, created a journal in 1920, which, amongst other things, publicised campaigns aimed at increasing the numbers of women in parliament, printed book reviews, theatre reviews, articles on education and the new legislations which would affect women's lives. It was a journal 'devoted to an examination of society and the specific part played by conventional politics ...from a women's perspective'.<sup>24</sup> Many of the women who attained positions of political power continued to agitate and organise around women's issues after the vote was won. Some, despondent about the distant relationship between legislation and actual social change, continued working at a grass roots organisational level, others believed that the only means of change was through legislation.<sup>25</sup>

#### THE PRIVATE SPHERE/PUBLIC SPHERE DICHOTOMY

There was a growing tendency in the years between the wars, to recognise the relationship between the personal/private and political/private. The difficulty of these oppositional relationships became a major concern within the fragmented women's movement which no longer had one political aim in mind, that is to say the affirmation of equal citizenship through the vote.

The issues around choices for women were frequently discussed in newspaper articles, women's magazines, and academic or social treatises.

Marriage and work? Marriage or work? Education - for what?  
The difficulties of maintaining a home, rearing children - and having this work valued by society - of entering the paid workforce, of being financially and psychologically dependent on men; the problems of not enjoying the same opportunities in education, in the home, in the workplace, of not earning the same pay or enjoying the same legal rights as men ...<sup>26</sup>

Discussions of these issues within the popular press more often than not prioritised men's needs over those of women. They were however clearly issues which concerned women activists of the era and the discourse around these

concerns often formed the basic narrative through-line of many of the plays which are examined later.

Gaining the vote did not prove to be more than a starting point for a shift in the relationship of women to the power structure. Ironically, women who had been treated as an homogeneous group to a large extent did not vote on a block basis, many in fact did not even use their vote for some years. Equally, when women did use their new found voting power, party political attitudes to 'women's issues' were not the only basis on which they voted.

For even in this year of grace there are still women who evade the responsibilities of citizenship by declaring that "woman's sphere is in the home" sitting down in it with the windows shut: forgetting that if they will not take their share of national housekeeping they run the risk of having their private housekeeping threatened by forces - laws, wars, strikes and revolutions - outside their control ...If any woman accustomed to the seclusion of the Women's Side is sufficiently provoked to look over the fence, join in the general discussion (she should) ...assert her disagreement ...by means of the vote that she has not yet bothered to use.<sup>27</sup>

## LEGISLATION

Although a number of laws aimed at equalising women's position within British society were passed during the period in question, they were often open to interpretation and rarely originated, worded or practised without a gender bias. The bias was grounded in an assumption of either women's 'natural' inferiority, irrationality or passivity. It is not my intention to detail all the relevant legislation, but rather to indicate a number which had a significant effect on both the personal and working lives of women. These laws also provide the historian with an indication as to the perceived and received ideas about both the nature of woman, her role within society and 'femaleness' itself.

The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 stated that,

...a person should not be disqualified by sex or marriage from the exercise of any public function or from being appointed or holding any public function or from being appointed or holding any civil post or from entering or assuming or carrying any civil profession or vocation.<sup>28</sup>

Although the Act indicated a move toward equality in the labour market, it was no guarantee of employment for women. More often than not it was interpreted negatively and along with the less egalitarian Marriage Bars was often used as law to keep women out of the job market. The Marriage Bars, which many women fought against and which were not generally removed until the years which followed the Second World War, meant that women who were married were easily removed from employment. This especially affected teachers who, despite in some cases taking local authorities to the courts, often lost their jobs in favour of younger, less experienced men:

...it was taken for granted that a married women did not work unless there was some special reason.<sup>29</sup>

The rationale here was based on discrimination backed up by so called 'scientific theory' which claimed that because of their biological make-up, women were unsuitable for responsible posts in education. For some, it was obvious that the marriage bar system was more a symptom of the economic system than anything else. During the economic depression, which maintained a stronghold from the mid 1920s into the 1930s, employment for men was a priority. Many feminists and campaigners for women's rights accepted this view to a large extent, and concentrated their efforts on improving women's lives within the private sphere, the home. It was not until the Factories Order Act in 1950 that there was any real governmental attempt to adjust the conditions of work to the condition of women's lives by the official introduction of twilight shifts and so on.<sup>30</sup>

The Married Women's Acts which went through many changes and adjustments during the inter-war years, were concerned with legal rights of matrimonial property. By 1935 married women were given the right to attain, dispose and hold property as chosen, but it was not until well into the 1940s that matrimonial property rights were equalised, and again, the benefit to middle and upper-class women was often greater. The Divorce Laws, which had gradually been changing since the late 1900s, were 'liberalised' by the late 1930s. Although the divorce rate rose continuously from an average of 832 in 1910-1912 to 4249 in 1930-1932,<sup>31</sup> steadily rising as the law became more equal in its treatment of the sexes, divorce was not generally seen as positive and it is not a subject which widely featured in the plays examined. A divorced woman was often seen as having somehow failed in her duty as a woman.

Educational opportunities improved, especially with the provision of free education for all until the age of 15, but girls were still not taught on an equal basis with boys; it was assumed that education should be divided by gender, with girls being encouraged to take non-scientific subjects or to train for low-skilled low-paid work.

Despite numerous legislations and new primarily ideological and practical reforms, such as the contraceptive movement, (which at least gave women some amount of choice as to the frequency of pregnancy) by the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, women were still paid on unequal terms with men, educated to different levels, expected to want to become mothers, housewives and so on. The commercialisation of femininity, through the mass media and the new consumer society, necessitated that women took on feminine roles, keeping their interests based in the home and family life. This had a growing affect on the way in which woman as a signified was perceived and for the way in which women saw themselves. Yet, because of the demands of the economic system, especially during war time, women were supposed to shift back and forth through single generations from work and public life to home and private life and back again.

The many women's magazines founded and flourishing from the mid-1920s onwards promoted home life and the idea that women could contribute to the welfare and growth of British society through her work in the home and through child rearing. There was no one single image stronger than that of the housewife, confined to the private sphere, encouraged to fantasise about being more wealthy with more leisure time, just like the glamorous women in the Hollywood films. Although some women's magazines ran articles on training men to help in the home, the domestic sphere was presented as the woman's kingdom.<sup>32</sup> As a popularly used term the 'flapper' denoted a fairly androgynous image of female independence. The associations of sexual promiscuity with this image, (in fin de siècle Germany it was a word used to describe a young prostitute) existed alongside the fact that, during the 1920s a woman with a burning desire for independence was frowned upon and seen as somehow a signifier of all that was problematic within the social order,

...in the early 1920s 'Flapper' was a term of abuse which could be used against independent women who sought to consolidate upon women's wartime gains and upon the partial suffrage victory of 1918.<sup>33</sup>

The 'perfect lady' of the late nineteenth century was transformed into the loyal and dutiful housewife by the 1930s. The Second World War,

...had a total domestic impact because it was global. Its effect in emphasising at once Britain's world imperial role in defence of democracy, and the breakdown of class division at home was contradictory.<sup>34</sup>

Just as women were driven back into the socially re-evaluated home after the First World War, so were they encouraged to 're-build' the nation from the home base after the Second World War. Beveridge's *New Deal For Housewives*, showed that although the situation of the 'tired housewife' was recognised as being socially significant, there was no real desire to see women fill gaps in the labour market. The idea of housewifery and motherhood as careers was promoted, with working-class women being encouraged once more to go into domestic service by the early 1950s. Women's magazines now focused on motherhood, rather than simply marriage, as a career.

A number of women theorists, journalists and writers questioned this ideology, pointing out that housewives were becoming the new proletariat, and that the professionalising of the domestic sphere for middle-class women did not hide the fact that the home was outside of the market economy. In the mid-1940s Viola Klein and Alva Myrdal stated that,

...the anachronism between the economics of the household and those of society at large is to a considerable extent responsible for the sense of frustration and futility which fills so many housewives today when going about their daily tasks.<sup>35</sup>

Combined with the fact that in many respects the graduate wife was seen as something of an embarrassment, it is possible to see why the relationship between the private and public, so crucial for women during the inter-war period, transformed into the growing recognition of the personal as political, in turn, one of the ideological focus points of the 'reborn' women's movement in the late 1960s.

## SOCIAL REFORM AND CHANGES IN PERCEPTIONS OF THE FEMALE ROLE AND DEFINING THE FEMININE

The sociological and psychological effects of women's increased

participation in the economic field would be no less far reaching than the material changes involved, and may well effect the whole mental climate of our society.

Revolutionary as the development towards outside work for married women may appear in some of its consequences, it is a readjustment, under changed conditions, to a more equitable division of labour between the sexes such as existed before the beginning of industrialisation. In a sense therefore, if women are today leaving their homes to set out on a new road to work, this is a road which will take them 'back home' to their proper place in the community.

This 'return of the prodigal' is entirely to be welcomed, and is in the interest, not only of women, but of the community as a whole.<sup>36</sup>

By the mid 1950s it was once again accepted on supposedly scientific grounds that woman's rightful place was in the home. Woman was praised for her ability to function as part of the public economic workforce but only in times of national need. Ultimately the role of mother and child rearer was seen as belonging to woman alone. Some social theorists and political activists alike saw that conditions within the home had to be improved and from the 1930s through to the 1960s, domestic life became more scientifically based both in terms of the increased numbers and general availability of technological domestic appliances and in terms of the number of theories around housewifery as the female art of the private but vital workforce.

The key issue around which notions of femininity and sexual difference were based, was that of the oppositional forces of biology and culture; the nature versus nurture argument. Many women were actively involved in attempts to prioritise either one or the inevitably inextricable nature of both. Winifred Holtby was concerned with the traditional view of woman which she saw as having, through history, been internalised by both sexes. Writing in 1934 she was perplexed by the negative response of young women to the Suffragette movement:

Why in 1934, are women themselves often the first to repudiate the movement of the last one hundred and fifty years, which has gained for them at least the foundations of political, economical, educational and moral equality ...one of the great

virtues of the militant suffragette movement was its mastery of the art of ritual ...pageants and processions...<sup>37</sup>

Her view was that a traditional perception of the male as the active, strident, ruling breadwinner was so strongly a part of culture that it necessitated an automatic inferiority complex in women, and the opposite in men. The positive value of 'pageants and processions' was that they gave a value to women in large numbers; both in terms of identity as a group and as a body with its own history and vital place within culture. Her point was that single women in the early 1930s found it easier to get jobs because they were cheaper to employ than men during the economic 'slump'. This automatically turned women as a group into a direct threat to both the earning power of men and to the potential of emotional stability gained from knowing one's place as the breadwinner which came from that earning capacity. Holtby saw that the 'slump complex', encouraged a 'narrowing of ambition and a closing-in alike of ideas and opportunities for women'.<sup>38</sup> Along with the all-consuming power of the 'inferiority' and 'slump complex', Holtby identified the 'chivalry complex', a phenomena whereby an active masculinity could only exist through the maintenance of its binary opposite, a passive femininity. Holtby recognised that the acceptance of this binary opposition contributed to the confusion of identity felt by many women of her generation. The popular media presentation of the 'modern girl' made her out to be selfish, uninterested in public matters, impatient with authority and uncontrolled in her habits. Again, as with the flapper, any identity of the feminine which was associated with independence was seen ultimately as being negative. Holtby's fear was that, with fascism and right-wing ideologies which saw women's inherent and natural role as being that of the wife, mother and homemaker, gaining a renewed credibility and popularity in Europe, there would be a new generation of fatalist women who would accept this proposed role rather than fight against it. For Holtby the choices were clearly polarised, either one chose to be the fashionable 'womanly woman' or one chose to fulfil one's own ambitions and self identified potential.<sup>39</sup>

Holtby stressed that it was imperative to recognise and restate the ideological links between her generation and that of the women of the late nineteenth century who had fought for women's political rights; the revolution for women had only just begun:

The revolution, in the ideological superstructure fails to take



place, because the bearer of this revolution, the psychic structure of human beings, was not changed.<sup>40</sup>

Certain parallels can be drawn between Holtby's analysis and Reich's observations of post-revolutionary Russian family life. Reich saw that it was individual attitudes and psychology which needed to change in order for the ideological superstructure to undergo a process of revolution. In the same way Holtby stressed that women had to learn to see themselves as different from the representations of the feminine which became gradually popularised in the decades which followed the First World War. Economic factors were vital to the shaping of ideological notions of femininity; the relationships between economy and the defining of the female and the feminine were inextricable.

Other more widely accepted movements than fascism, seen at the time as radical in outlook, especially with regards to women's status, proposed and promoted the idea that a woman's place within culture was that of child bearer and home keeper. The Eugenics Movement, founded on the notion that in order to prosper a nation must produce healthy babies of good stock, was ultimately aimed at creating an imperial race to compete with fast growing other imperial races. Initially, the basic tenets of Eugenics were applauded by both extremes of the political spectrum. Integral to the Eugenics movement was a desire for population control, more than environmental improvement.<sup>41</sup> One of its founders, Francis Galton, was an 'arch-conservative' who was greatly concerned by the rising working-class birth rate. Other initial supporters came from a more liberal standpoint. Havelock Ellis who, although he was against fanatical eugenics, saw the movement as,

...the ultimate movement for social reform ...It was now necessary to purify the 'stream of life' at its source, and to concentrate on the 'point of procreation' ...It was only possible to develop a negative eugenics, designed to eliminate the unfit, he believed that this would only come about through education, not direction.<sup>42</sup>

The new education in sexual responsibility was to be aimed at women, and, although in his earlier writings he promoted an equality of the sexes, this was inevitably incompatible with the emphasis which he placed on the ideal woman's role within the monogamous, heterosexual couple; co-parent of a family unit, which in turn was to be the basis for both change and stability within his vision of a new and healthy society. For Ellis gender roles were equal

in importance to the social structure but not naturally interchangeable within it. The birth control movement, both in England and America, ultimately proposed the search for a socially acceptable disassociation of sex from procreation, as well as trying to control the class of those babies which were being born. This supposedly scientific approach put women into an uneasy position. The new radical ideas around childbearing and childrearing did not converge with the new economic freedom which women had experienced and enjoyed during the First World War. Again, the change in Ellis' emphasis on the family as opposed to the individual bears a strong relationship to the change in society's needs because of the shift in the economy.

Havelock Ellis was however much more than a follower and supporter of the Eugenics movement. Jeffrey Weeks provides a concise analysis of Ellis' role as one of the first sexologists:

In the first place it is important to recognise Ellis' role as an *ideologist*. The purpose of his works was to change attitudes and to create a new view of the role of sex in individual lives and in society. He set out to rationalise sexual theory, and in doing so helped lay down the foundation of a 'liberal' ideology of sex. The essence of this was a greater toleration of sexual variations ...Its greatest weakness was its inability to ask *why* societies have continued to control sexuality ...He recognised the question of the social roles of the two sexes was of paramount importance in the new century, particularly because of the influence of the women's movement. He therefore attempted to suggest guidelines for more humane and equal sexual and social relations and behaviour. The particular form these guidelines took now seem among the most reactionary aspects of his work - particularly his view of woman's role ...yet, for a long period, his preoccupations were shared by all progressive tendencies, including revolutionary socialists.<sup>43</sup>

Stella Browne and Margaret Sanger pioneered Ellis' work, because it brought discourse on sex out into the open area of public debate. His later work was consumed by those wishing to raise the status of the family and bring it into the range of state support. However, his idea of the reformed family was one whereby partners had supposedly equal rights which manifested themselves in the fact of fixed roles within the family unit. Through the ideas of Ellis and

other sexologists, women were encouraged to put their faith in science, and although many professionals who were far more 'scientific' in both their approach and methodology found Ellis' ideas to be simplistic and rarely founded on anything more than conjecture, his theories fed into a 'cultural fixing' of biologicistic definitions of gender traits and characteristics.

Sexology became popularised as part of the 'new psychology' for a new age. Ellis, amongst others, promoted heterosexual, monogamous partnerships, and by the 1930s those who praised the movement assimilated its ideals as part of their own. Stella Browne absorbed Ellis' ideas of sexual inversion as a means of promoting heterosexuality through denigrating other sexualities. Spinsterhood was often aligned with frigidity; if a woman chose to be single her choice was perceived as somehow abnormal; independence from a marital relationship was not seen as being healthy.

The feminine woman was passive and motherly; man was the hunter, woman the hunted. Women could have power but rarely within the public realm. The interest in 'ideal love' and marriage was fed by numerous publications such as Van de Velde's *Ideal Marriage*,<sup>44</sup> which sold enough copies for it to be published and republished well into the 1960s. Such publications were aimed at promoting heterosexual sex both within and without marriage, but again refused any encouragement of any real level of independence; 'the correct form of marriage ought to be male domination and female submission'.<sup>45</sup> Feminism and feminists were associated with man-hating and 'abnormal' desires for power and independence.

#### SEXUAL DIFFERENCE: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND 'NEW PSYCHOLOGY'

The basic tenets of psychoanalysis had filtered through to the British upper-middle classes and intellectuals by the 1920s. Many of Freud's ideas were based on the primacy of the 'sexual instinct'. The sexologists, for whom Freud had little patience, often aligned their work with his on the basis of his emphasis on 'sexual instinct'. A number of British psychoanalysts, found this emphasis difficult to accept and,

...expressed reservations about certain of his doctrines, ...what was accepted was the energy model of the psyche, notions of unconscious mental processes and unconscious motives, repression, regression, mental conflict and complexes. What was discarded, explicitly or tacitly, was the conception that libidinal energy, or the 'sex instinct', was the organising principal of

mental life ...together with the associated doctrines of infantile sexuality and the sexual origins of neurosis.<sup>46</sup>

Rose labels the 'new psychology' as a body of knowledge and practice which came from a number of sources. One of the initial practical applications of this knowledge was in the treatment of the thousands of shell-shocked soldiers who came back from the First World War.<sup>47</sup> The details of the differences between Freud and the new psychologists are beyond the bounds of this thesis. However as Rose points out, the 'new psychology' enabled,

...an alignment between the register of personal happiness, that of family relations, and that of social adjustment. And where Freud was to write, in 1930, of the unease inherent in civilisation, the new psychology was to be a science of contentment. Personal happiness and social adjustment were now two sides of the same coin.<sup>48</sup>

Amongst many of the earlier psychoanalysts and those who followed a Freudian line of practice, the women's movement caused concern. Women who wanted to follow what were traditionally seen as 'male' pursuits, encompassing independence and a professional life, were problematised and seen as having an unresolved relation to the castration complex as proposed by Freud; effectively they wanted to be men. However, by the early 1920s there were a number of psychoanalysts, among them Karen Horney, who stressed 'the effect of culture upon psycho-sexual development.'<sup>49</sup> In the mid-1920s Horney challenged Freud, asserting that the developmental context of psychoanalysis had been a world dominated by the needs of the male, as was the law, morality and religion. She saw that, historically, men and women had effectively related to each other as master and slave and pointed out that there was no empirical proof that for example a small girl would experience 'penis envy' any more than a young boy might experience 'womb envy'. During the 1930s Horney moved to the United States where she further developed her theories of female development by proposing that men experienced great conflict between their longing for woman and their dread of her.<sup>50</sup> Horney has been criticised by many recent feminists because of the fact that her theories were biologically reductionalist in nature; she saw the desire for motherhood as an imperative. Horney was, however, important because of her work on female development, and because she was one of the first to criticise Freud, making a distinction

between,

...those ideas of Freud which were based on his ingenious, though subjective, speculative imagination and those derived from his experiences and observations of patients.<sup>51</sup>

Horney stressed the connections between the psychological state of womanhood and the demands which were made upon women by the culture in which they existed. Although for Horney, the psychology of woman was inscribed within her biology, she refuted the possibility of defining femininity without the consideration of cultural determinants:

It would not be going too far to assert that ...conflicts confront every woman who ventures upon a career of her own and who is ...unwilling to pay for her daring with the renunciation of her femininity.<sup>52</sup>

As Weskott has pointed out: 'Horney's early criticism of Freud can be interpreted as an attempt to rescue instinctual femininity from a theory in which it is devalued.'<sup>53</sup> It is also interesting to note that Horney proposed that power should somehow be de-sexualised and that, because woman had internalised cultural ideals of femininity, both the problem and the solution for women was to be the breaking through of a fear of what she was, rather than concerning herself with what she should be.<sup>54</sup>

By the end of the inter-war period arguments around the defining of femininity and sexuality were in decline amongst psychoanalysts. During the post-Second World War years various theoreticians, whether consciously or not, once again framed femininity as dependent on 'natural' connections between women, the home and motherhood. John Bowlby, amongst others, stressed the importance of the constant presence of the mother for children under five. Although the approach of Bowlby, Donald Winnicott and Benjamin Spock appears to be rather conservative and traditional, in their time, their ideas were seen as radical because their approach was 'child centred and permissive'.<sup>55</sup> The effect of their work in terms of an idea of women as independent humans able to work and be mothers, was to legitimise state control over women's working hours and indeed state encouragement for women to return to the home. Again, although the ideas of Bowlby and others of his generation were not originated as a means of oppressing women, they were derived from an ideology which

did not consider gender roles as either interchangeable or equal.

Their work was an indictment of élitist upper-class forms of child rearing - nannies and boarding schools ...and implicitly working-class warmth and spontaneity towards children were validated. Their conservative views on women were accepted as part of this package.<sup>56</sup>

The Butler Education Act in 1944 limited the number of adolescents available for work, and so married mothers became more desirable for the workforce. The marriage bars were largely lifted during the immediate post Second World War period, and yet, as well as wanting women to join the workforce on a part time basis, there was fear of a lack of provision for adolescents with new-found leisure time. As the keepers of the home women were made somehow responsible for the guardianship of this fairly new social group of unemployed youth.

For women then, the social changes which took place through the years between 1918 and 1962 were often problematic because the social needs incurred by these changes rarely correlated with either women's desires, or their lived experience. On many levels life changed rapidly, too rapidly for relevant cultural precedents to be set.

Profound changes in the roles of women during the past century have been accompanied by innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies. With our rapidly changing and highly differentiated culture ...the stage is set for myriads of combinations of incongruous elements. Cultural norms are often functionally unsuited to the social situations to which they apply. Thus they may deter an individual from a course of action which would serve his own, and society's interests best. Or, if behaviour contrary to the norm is engaged in, the individual may suffer from guilt over violating mores which no longer serve any socially useful end.<sup>57</sup>

The defining of the feminine and femininity came out of the context of this society which, because of war and fast economic change, was in a state of flux. By the end of the First World War, the class system, although perhaps still rooted in Victorian ideology, had changed in character because of the speed of

change and variation in the economy. Even though there was not a feminist movement which focused on an agreed social and political strategy for change, the women's movement continued to be a cultural phenomena, whether negatively or positively proposed or received. Before The Great War, the feminist movement, not necessarily hegemonous in its representation of class, existed in a world which was far less fragmented than the world of the years between 1918 and 1962. These years provided a context for a women's movement which by 1928 had supposed voting power, but very little real political power. It was a period when the reality of issues fought around before the war were either re-stated or continuously undergoing a process of re-evaluation. Despite the amount of disagreement amongst women and within society about the role of woman, there was an amount of consensus amongst those for whom the 'woman question' was still a very real one. The fact was that women were still not equal on a social or economic level with men in a patriarchal and capitalist social structure.

It was generally accepted by those who fought for equal rights for women, on whatever level and in whatever context, that in a society,

...whose standards are predominantly masculine women form an 'out-group', distinguished from the dominant strata by physical characteristics, historical tradition, social role and a different process of socialisation. As in the case of other groups in a similar situation, preconceived opinions are applied more or less summarily to the class as a whole, without sufficient consideration of individual differences, ...'out groups' are subject to collective judgements instead of being treated on their own merits.<sup>58</sup>

The plays which are examined in the second section of this thesis, are selected from the group of women playwrights whose work was produced between the years 1918-1962. My intention is not to provide a collective judgement, but rather to examine the content and nature of their work. What is important is the way in which as women playwrights, they represented 'woman' in the public arena of the theatre at a time when woman, feminine and femininity as cultural definitions, were constantly undergoing a process of negotiation. My interest is around key questions such as what the women wrote about and in what ways, if any, did their representations of women undermine or attempt to subvert dominant notions of what the experience of womanhood should be, and whether we can indeed identify them as a homogenous group

with similar styles of presentation, areas of concern and focus. The framework for analysis of the plays is a thematic one; the themes have come from an analysis of narrative content. Within the confines of the thesis there is not enough room to identify, analyse and contextualise all of the plays written by women of the period; the appendices provide additional information not available in the main body of the thesis.

When talking of history and of women's contribution to culture and knowledge, it is perhaps important to note that a social system which relies on the supremacy of one group over another will not provide historical links between one generation and another of the socially inferior group. Division is synonymous with control over the possibilities of a uniting subordinate group. Although the group in question here has many differences embodied within it, these women playwrights provide a strong link in a chain which represents a continuum of women's literary contribution to the social and cultural phenomenon of theatre in Britain during the twentieth century.



- 1 Carl Jung, *Aspects of The Feminine* (London: Ark, 1989), pp. 56 - 75.
- 2 Clemence Dane, 'Fair Play and Fair Pay', *Daily Herald*, 20 March 1941.
- 3 Roger Fulford, *Votes For Women: The Story of A Struggle* (London: Faber, 1958), pp. 9 - 10.
- 4 Marian Ramelson, *The Petticoat Rebellion* (London: Lawrence & Wishart Ltd., 1976), p. 171.
- 5 Susan Bassnett, 'Struggling With The Past: Women's Theatre in Search of a History', *New Theatre Quarterly*, V: 18 (1989), 107 - 112.
- 6 Tracy. C.Davis, 'Questions for a Feminist Methodology in Theatre History', in *Interpreting the Theatrical Past: New Directions in the Historiography of Performance*, ed. by Thomas Postlewait & Bruce McConachie (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1989), pp. 55 - 81 (p. 60).
- 7 Sue Ellen Case, *Feminism and Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1988), p. 39.
- 8 Lib Taylor, 'Early Stages: Women Dramatists 1958 - 1968', in *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958*, ed. by Trevor Griffiths & Margaret Llewellyn-Jones (London: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 9 - 25.
- 9 Ibid., p. 18.
- 10 There is often a similar approach to the work of the female playwrights of the Restoration, generally seen to represent the first 'flourish' of women and on occasion, feminist playwrights in a history of dramatic texts written by women. Their work has at times been framed as existing on the margins, yet, in context, they were in the minority in terms of gender but in terms of theatre they were part of the mainstream, producing plays for the two patented theatres of the day.
- 11 For example, the *Literary Digest*, carried an article entitled, 'Men Fading Out of The Play', in which the author suggested the number of plays written by women in production might suggest that the theatre was becoming feminised. *Literary Digest*, 24 December 1932, pp. 114 - 115.
- 12 Ros Merkin, 'Mrs Smith of Wigan; Women and the I.L.P. Art's Guild', in *Women and Theatre Occasional Papers 1; Practitioners Past and Present*, ed. by Maggie Gale & Susan Bassnett, (England: University of Warwick, 1992), pp. 119 - 126. This is a short piece on women playwrights and the I.L.P.
- 13 Michelene Wandor, *Understudies: Theatre and Sexual Politics* (London: Methuen, 1981), p. 10.
- 14 Helen Keyssar, *Feminist Theatre* (London: Macmillan, 1984), p. 1.
- 15 Kitty Black, *Upper Circle* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 219.
- 16 See, Rex Pogson, *Miss Horniman and The Gaiety Theatre Manchester* (London: Rockliff, 1952). Susan Gooddie, *Annie Horniman: a Pioneer in The Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1990) - this is more an account of her work in Dublin, Grace Wyndham Goldie, *The Liverpool Repertory Theatre* (London: University Press of Liverpool, Hodder & Stoughton Ltd., 1935), and Lady Augusta Gregory, *Our Irish Theatre: A Chapter of Autobiography by Lady Gregory* (London: Colin Smythe, 1972).
- 17 D. Bogard, *Independent*, February 1991.
- 18 *Daily Express*, August 1937.
- 19 See Margaret Webster, *The Same Only Different* (London: Gollancz, 1969), for an account of five generations of Webster's theatrical family and Margaret Webster, *Don't Put Your Daughter on The Stage* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1972), for personal recollections of her own work in the theatre.
- 20 *Daily Mirror*, January / April 1939, (Undated cutting).
- 21 Anne Sebba, *Enid Bagnold: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), especially pp. 114 - 115.
- 22 Andrew Davies, *Other Theatres* (London: Macmillan, 1987), pp. 77 - 78.
- 23 Dale Spender, *Time and Tide Wait For No Man*, (London: Pandora Press, 1984), pp. 2 - 6.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Joanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 220 - 226.
- 26 Spender, pp. 15 - 16.
- 27 Clemence Dane, *The Women's Side* (London: Jenkins, 1926), p. 9.

- 28 Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950* (England: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), p. 199.
- 29 Noreen Branson, *Britain in The Nineteen Twenties* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1975), p. 212.
- 30 Lewis, p. 153.
- 31 Charles Loch Mowat, *Britain Between the Wars* (London: Methuen, 1984), pp. 213 - 216.
- 32 Deidre Beddoe, *Back to Home And Duty: Women Between the Wars, 1918 - 1939* (London: Pandora Press, 1989), pp. 8 - 21. The bias of magazines such as *Good Housekeeping* (1922), *Woman and Home* (1926), *Woman's Own* (1932), and *Woman* (1937) was toward informing middle-class women how to manage their housekeeping efficiently without the aid of domestic help. Beddoe also points out that the glamorous world of female film stars was juxtaposed by magazine articles showing their domestically blissful home lives. Thus the fantasy which fed their imaginations of how life *could* be, was presented in co-ordination of the reality of how life *should* be.
- 33 Ibid., p. 40.
- 34 Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Half Way To Paradise: Women in Post-war Britain; 1945 - 1968*, (London: Tavistock Publications Ltd., 1980), pp. 13 - 17.
- 35 Alva Myrdal & Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 186.
- 36 Myrdal & Klein, p. 189.
- 37 Winifred Holtby, *Women in A Changing Civilisation* (London: John Lane, The Bodley Head, 1934), p. 96.
- 38 Ibid., p. 116 .
- 39 Ibid., pp. 118 - 121.
- 40 Wilhem Reich, *The Sexual Revolution* (London: Vision Press Ltd., 1951), p. 157.
- 41 In England, The Eugenics Education Foundation in 1908, founded by Francis Galton, gained ground as a movement because of a fear of 'racial suicide in the wake of the Boer War' (1898-1902) see, Sheila Rowbotham & Jeffrey Weeks, *Socialism and the New Life* (London: Pluto Press, 1977), pp. 170 - 179.
- 41 Ibid.
- 42 Ibid.
- 43 Ibid., p. 181.
- 44 Van de Velde, *Ideal Love*, (London: Heinemann, 1928).
- 45 Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies* (London: Pandora Press, 1985), p. 183.
- 46 Nicholas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England 1869 - 1939* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 182.
- 47 Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady* (London: Virago, 1987), pp. 167 - 194. Showalter points to the fact that the phenomena named as 'shell shock' caused great changes in the direction of psychiatry in Britain because of the symptomatic similarities with hysteria which had hitherto been understood to be a female specific illness.
- 48 Rose, pp. 184 - 186.
- 49 Dee Garrison, 'Karen Horney and Feminism', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture*, 6: 4, (1981), 627 - 691 (p. 687).
- 50 Ibid., p. 683.
- 51 J.L. Rubins, *Karen Horney: Gentle Rebel of Psychoanalysis* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1979), p. 132.
- 52 Ibid., p. 34.
- 53 Marcia Weskott, *The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 57.
- 54 Ibid., p. 213.
- 55 Wilson, p. 189.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Mirra Komarovsky, 'Cultural Contradictions and Sex Roles', *American Journal of Sociology*, November, (1946), 184 - 189 (p. 184).
- 58 Viola Klein, *The Feminine Character; History of an Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 4.

## TO WORK OR NOT TO WORK: SELECTED DRAMATIC REPRESENTATIONS OF WORKING WOMEN.

So there has been a constant and recurrent opposition to the artificial restriction of women's labour. National and international societies have been founded to carry on the struggle. The Open Door International and the Equal Rights International are symptomatic of the tendency both of legislation and its critics to spread across the frontiers of states and continents. The organisation of women teachers and women doctors to uphold equalitarian principles demonstrates the final solidarity of professional with industrial women. But still, in 1934, with the best intentions in the world, public authorities dismiss married women employees upon marriage; factories exclude them from special processes; unequal pay is given for equal work. Still in the sacred names of motherhood and chivalry, women are obstructed in their attempt to earn a living wage; and still, because of their lower pay, they undercut men, lower wage rates, and act as unwilling black-legs throughout industry. <sup>1</sup>

The characteristic feminine dilemma of to-day is usually summarised under the heading 'Career and Family'. The struggle for the right to work is no longer directed against external obstacles; no longer is there the same hostile public opinion to overcome with which our grandmothers had to contend, nor is there a lack of opportunities for women. Today the conflict has become 'internalised' and continues as a psychological problem which may assume many different variations and shades; and just because there is no longer an absolute 'either - or' to be decided on at the beginning of adult life, the pull in two directions goes on practically throughout a woman's life.<sup>2</sup>

Women's position, both social and economic, within the work economy, changed significantly during the first half of the twentieth century. The early years of the twentieth century saw middle-class women being allowed, albeit resentfully in many cases, into the public work-force on a scale which would have

been unimaginable in the mid-nineteenth century. The First World War provided an opportunity for women of all classes to move into the public sector, taking on the jobs which had been left vacant by men conscripted into the army. After the war, however, it was middle and upper-class women for whom the opening up of new areas of work opportunities was more significant. For women from the working classes, the lack of an opening up of previously closed work opportunities was more significant. Women who had worked in the munitions factories during the war, given the accolade of being called heroines or 'our gallant girls', were dismissed within weeks of the war ending. The assumption was they should return to their 'rightful' workplace, namely, the home. Female unemployment reached a high level during 1918 and 1919. One of the problems was that the government considered working in 'service' as an appropriate vocation for working-class women, so much so that women were not given out-of-work pay if they refused to take work in 'domestic service'. Within a couple of years of the end of the First World War many working class women were virtually forced back into domestic service and low-paid, low-skilled work.<sup>3</sup>

Whether or not a woman should work, what work she should be allowed to do and when, continued to be issues which concerned both men and women of the period under discussion. It is important for example, to stress that a cultural and social ideology which produced such laws as the Marriage Bar in all of its variations, continued to connect women's perceived roles within the family and home, to questions around the nature of the work which they should be permitted or expected to undertake.

Although many of the plays written by women of the period focused on the lives and concerns of the middle classes, issues around work and the division of labour, both in terms of class and gender, prevail in a great many of the texts. Perhaps the most predominant thematic focus is on the relationship between work and the family. Interestingly, the working mother becomes almost a standard narrative feature in plays written by women, especially during the 1920s and early 1930s, at a point where discourse about women's employment status was at its height. Although the nature and status of work between the classes is different, there is a clear assertion of the inevitable connection between the problems arising from the incongruities of work, family, femininity and self-fulfilment.

#### MOTHERHOOD, MARRIAGE AND BUSINESS

Sylvia Rayman's *Women of Twilight*<sup>4</sup> focuses on the private lives of single mothers forced to work in order to support themselves and their children.

Rayman's conscious classification of these women as an 'out group', enables her direct critique of the way in which other women, and in turn, society, benefit from and take advantage of this socially invisible class of women. Rayman explores aspects of public work through her dramaturgical focus on life within the private sphere. This is to say, that rather than looking at the action of working outside of the home, the author investigates the way in which for women, the distinction between public and private work places is tenuous and certainly less clear than might be assumed. This is a point which I would like to pick up later, as Rayman is working very much within a field of reference already set by playwrights such as Esther McCracken in the 1940s and Aimée and Philip Stuart in the 1930s, where there is an attempt to promote a public validation and recognition of domestic life and work as being a field in which women work without pay, as well as putting into question the nature and parameters of women's work in general.

During the early 1920s and through until the early 1930s there are a number of plays where the plot is centred around the problems raised for lower-middle and middle-class women, who, having lost their husbands are forced into a position of having to work. Dramatic focus on the lives and experiences of these women had the effect of actively subverting the assumption of women's 'natural' financial dependence on men. In Fryn Tennyson-Jesse's *The Pelican*,<sup>5</sup> Wanda pretends that her son has been fathered by a friend rather than her husband. Her plot to escape the stronghold of her husband's stultifying upper-middle-class family back-fires when they take her to court for adultery. The family wins the case through Wanda's own admissions during the court hearing. However, Wanda returns to the family home and tells her husband the truth, offering him the child to bring up as his own, stating that she will have nothing to do with the family or the child's upbringing:

WANDA: Oh - you fools! Do you think I *want* you to believe me? Do you think I want you to take him? My child! The only thing I've got left? To keep him here, where I shall never see him - here in this house of bitterness and godforsaken respectability, where I've spent the most miserable years of my life. (*turning on* MARCUS.) You asked me why I ran away. I'll tell you. I ran away because I couldn't breathe here any longer. When I knew I was going to have a child I felt that if I stayed here it would be poisoned - ...all the unkindness, all the hatred! ... The life you lead, the thoughts you think - I can't stick them at

any price. (To LADY HERIOT.) You're quite right, I *shouldn't* have married Marcus. ...But I can't decide for *him* - the boy. he may be different when he grows up. He may like the things you like - he'd have lost everything - and it would be my fault ...<sup>6</sup>

The first Act, which presents a critique of a specific class ideology of both family and a woman's rightful position within it, draws to a close as Wanda leaves for a life of economic and social uncertainty, taking her child with her. During the second and third Acts, the action is projected from the immediate post war year of 1919 of the first Act, to the year 1936. Wanda's status as both a business woman and a mother and the inter-dependence of these two roles, both on an emotional and on an economic level, are the key factors in determining the progression of plot and in turn the actions which are taken by the heroine. Wanda's boss Paul Lauzin, falls in love with her via his role as her employer. For Wanda, however, it is her role as business woman and mother which override any romantic desires. Almost as soon as he tells her of his amorous intentions, and speaks of her as a prospective lover rather than a female employee, she responds by telling him how valuable her working years have been to her:

PAUL: I hate to think of these years.

WANDA: I don't. The thing I'm most glad about is that I've made good on my own, - that you took me for what you thought I could do...You didn't take me because of my looks...

PAUL: ...I thought your appearance would help - it was an asset.

WANDA: Oh, well, I don't mind that. I don't mind my looks such as they are, being *business*. I only don't want them to be *pleasure* ...Is it courage? I had something - perhaps just obstinacy - something that wouldn't let me fail, that made me keep on even when I was down and out.<sup>7</sup>

Wanda is able to use both the language of a 'feminine' woman and business woman; she moves with ease from the everyday to using the language of commerce when talking to Paul:

WANDA: ...They've really got something to sell

PAUL: Something worth buying?

WANDA: I think so, I can show you the figures ...I've got their working costs and their selling prices, and there's the balance

sheet - of sorts ...I don't know what their assets are really worth ...The valuable thing is the patent ...Oh I went to the bank and saw the manager ...They'd find twenty-five percent on mortgage, if there were good people behind it.

PAUL: ...As I listen to you now, the very words "per cent" seem full of romance.

WANDA: *They are.* Who knows better than I? If you'd ever made your living, as I have, from day to day, you'd know just how romantic money is. Why its the world's great daily adventure! Paul! you're not going to be silly about me - to try and stop me from working, are you? ...It's work that brought us together - it's been our common interest. And it's part of me - I don't want to stop being myself just because I'm married to you.

PAUL: No fear of that!

WANDA: That's the mistake everyone makes - wanting people to be something else - afterwards.<sup>8</sup>

Having spent almost two decades working to support herself and her son Robin, Wanda's work has become another means, apart from 'family', through which she can attain self-fulfilment and pride. The possibility of re-marriage comes relatively late in life, coinciding with the point at which her son is 'becoming a man', who is planning a career and no longer has the same needs of his mother. Her choice of marriage to Paul is based on the fact that she feels that this will be something for her, which is immediately complemented by her love of business. The ending has a very traditional twist, which even though it comes at the closing moments of the play does much to arguably undermine the narrative development of Wanda as a self-determined business woman as well as a mother and a woman with her own needs and desires. In the final moments of the play, Wanda makes the decision to accept her ex-husband's offer of a convenient re-marriage in order to legitimise their son who wishes to join his father's army regiment, and cannot do so unless he has an 'official father'.

Ultimately then, romance and self-fulfilment through her work are sacrificed because of the demands which are a result of her role as mother, within a fixed social structure regulated by the legitimate nuclear upper-middle-class family and in turn, predominant within theatre and, it would seem, the social structure itself. Despite this fact, it could be argued that Tennyson-Jesse, by locating it into the public arena of the theatre, is promoting the idea that women can be emotionally, but more importantly perhaps, economically independent.

This is certainly the case right up until the last few moments of the play. Certainly the plot has no 'happy' ending for the heroine, who in choosing to support a family structure which outlaws her individuality as a 'spirited' business woman, takes the negative view of herself and her own life as being 'over'. That is to say, she chooses to sacrifice her own self-designed future in order to fulfil her son's wishes and those pertinent to the maintenance of his father's social position. The role of mother ultimately undermines individual choice within a social structure which has fixed notions of position and behaviour. Even though he is his father's real son, Robin has no legitimacy because of a divorce granted on effectively false grounds. Thus the heroine, as mother, gives in to, but does not necessarily condone, a social system which does not cater for her needs as a woman.

Aimée and Philip Stuart's *Sixteen*, first produced at the Embassy and then transferring to the Criterion in 1934,<sup>9</sup> provides another heroine who has to work in order to maintain stability within her fatherless family unit. Jennifer Lawrence works in the fashion business in order to support her mother and two children. Her work means that family life has to come second to business trips abroad. Although much of the play focuses on her relationship with her daughter, who one doctor has diagnosed as having a 'mother fixation', one of the most important narrative devices is the presentation of the dilemma of Jennifer's choice between continuing to work at the pace to which she has become accustomed, or marrying someone who is willing and able to provide for her and her family, in which case she will cease her career and alienate her daughter. Her decisions are based primarily on the welfare of her family, but the discussions around marriage, between herself and her suitor, are interesting because they embody the needs felt by many middle-class women of the time, as well as the opinions of many of those who were against women working after marriage:

JENNIFER: I can't of course

SIR JOHN: (*who is prepared to argue, but not to give in*): Why not?

JENNIFER: The best I can think of is that I'm going back to work to-morrow morning at nine ...I was going to talk to you about that. Even when we do marry, I can't give up my job. It's out of the question. We should be entirely dependent on you ... all of us ...surely you understand ...

SIR JOHN: ... (*Earnestly*) Don't let's have any false sentiment about money. I can keep you fully employed looking after my



interests. You'll earn as much at that as you do at your dressmaking.

JENNIFER: It's not the same. You must see my side of it.

SIR JOHN: I do. I'm not going to allow it. From an economic point of view mine's a sound proposition. I'm a going concern. I'm understaffed ...If you can truthfully tell me you enjoy your present job so much you'd hate giving it up, that's an argument...

JENNIFER: No, I don't. But I'd hate to lose my independence.

SIR JOHN: You're not independent. You're a slave to your employers, a slave to your customers, a slave to conditions. You're not the type for independence. You're essentially a womanly woman, cut out to get your own way by guile.<sup>10</sup>

Ultimately it is Jennifer's relationship with her eldest daughter, Irene, which makes her hesitate in taking up the offer of marriage. Irene tells her grandmother in the opening moments of the first Act:

IRENE: ...Instead of going for my year in the convent in Paris, I want to go as an apprentice to Bouchonner's or some other good dressmaking firm. Then I might be able to take mother's place when she needs a rest ...I'm sixteen today ...If council school girls can get work at fourteen why can't I at sixteen?<sup>11</sup>

Irene has been brought up to see hard work as the embodiment of feminine character. She prides herself in the fact that her mother has continued to work and does not see that emulating her mother would invite accusations of 'unwomanliness'. However, when the doctor tells her in the final Act that she must put her feelings away in order to 'grow up', he could be seen to be representing a whole social ethos which was designed to rationalise keeping women out of the job market once they were married, adhering to the notion that women should only work when they have to, rather than because they want to or have some philosophical need to.

#### THE 'WOMANLY WOMAN' AND WORK.

While there are a number of permissive variants of the feminine role for women of college age ( the "good sport," the

"glamour girl," the "young lady," the domestic "home girl," etc.), they all have a common core of attributes defining the proper attitudes to men, family, work, love, etc., and a set of personality traits often described with reference to the male sex role as "not as dominant, or aggressive as men" or "more emotional, sympathetic."

The other and more recent role is, in a sense, no *sex* role at all, because it partly obliterates the differentiation in sex. It demands of the woman much the same virtues, patterns of behaviour, and attitude that it does of the men of a corresponding age. We shall refer to this as the "modern" role.

Both roles are present in the social environment of these women throughout their lives, though, as the precise content of each sex role varies with age, so does the nature of their clashes change from one stage to another.<sup>12</sup>

Komarovsky's statement, written in the 1940s, shows that there was a consistent pressure on women of the first half of the century to choose between a feminine domestic life and an 'unwomanly' public life. This constant dichotomy haunts many of the female protagonists in plays of the period written by women. Namely, that to be economically independent is to align oneself with the masculine world, despite the fact that often there was little economic choice as to whether one worked or not.

G.B. Stern's *The Man Who Pays The Piper*<sup>13</sup> was first performed in London at The St Martin's in 1931 with a cast which included Diana Wynyard and the young Jessica Tandy. Although, and arguably because, it is a serious attempt to analyse the relationship between gender and socio-economic power, the play only had a short run, (by comparison to the success of her earlier play, *The Matriarch*.<sup>14</sup>) It is a three-Act, 'well made' play centred around seventeen years in the history of the middle-class Fairley family. The prologue is set in 1913 and begins with an argument between the heroine Daryll and her father. He disapproves of her friendships with a suffragette:

DR. FAIRELY: And now since she's stuffed you up with all this fudge about votes for women - Suffragette processions and I don't know what ...the next thing is I shall have you burning down churches ...throwing acid into letter boxes.<sup>15</sup>

To which Daryll replies;

DARYLL: ...Alexia's wonderful. I can't bear silly little half witted flappers ...I wish you'd let me join Alexia's business when I've finished my training ...what's the use of learning anything. I'll sit at home and be useful and cut bread and butter ...I want to be independent.<sup>16</sup>

The differential between the aspirations and needs of three close generations of women in terms of their attitudes to work and their social ambitions, is established during the Prologue. The author also implies that the rule of the patriarch is reliant on the fact that it is *he* who holds the economic power.

The second Act is set in 1926; Daryll's father and elder brother have been killed in action and she is now the head of the family. The male characters are rather inept and their self-importance is undermined by the fact that they are financially dependant on Daryll as the other women. Daryll's mother Rosie, has a new husband, an unemployed musician, who, as such, has no economic power. The men constantly ask Daryll for financial support which she is able to provide through her employment as head of her friend Alexia's business, now a large West End concern. At one point while they are waiting for Daryll to arrive at a restaurant after work two of the financially dependent men discuss women, femininity and economic power:

SCOTT: Oh, yes. She won't even sign the bill in front of her guests.

BEN: Glad to hear it

SCOTT: Yes, one appreciates that. She's a good fellow, Daryll, though she's a bit too lordly at times.

BEN: She's not masculine to look at. I can't bear women with gruff voices who cover half the room in a stride.

SCOTT: No nor can I. Unsexed, that's what they are. Daryll's attractive in a way...

BEN: Oh, yes ...yes ...but of course her mother -

SCOTT: Anthea too - she's so sensitive. Now Daryll isn't. I often say that the difference is that Daryll's a carthorse and Anthea's a racehorse ...Daryll's been wonderfully generous ...to us all. Even I - let's own it - am not in the least ashamed to consult her when I want advice. She's certainly got the best head of the family.

BEN: (*suddenly*) She *is* the head of the family, and I don't like

it!<sup>17</sup>

The men make a direct correlation between economic power and masculinity. Daryll herself feels that she can't get married and take on the feminine role of wife and mother, because she already has such a large family to support. She sees herself, albeit rather uncomfortably, as the 'father' of this family:

DARYLL: ...in this house ...there isn't a father ...not one single father except me ...Of course I come home and behave abominably ...It's got into my bones ...And all the men come to me as man to man and thank me rather resentfully for what I've done ...I'm not going to wish this on any daughter of mine.<sup>18</sup>

Stern creates her heroine in complete contrast to the other women in the play, especially so in the case of her sister Fay.

FAY: This is 1926, Independence and work and bright young bachelor girls ...Oh no I'd much rather live at home.<sup>19</sup>

When Daryll's mother inherits a fortune from one of her dead husband's patients at the end of Act two, Daryll turns to her long time fiancé and asks him:

DARYLL: ...take me, marry me, smash me, begin me all over again, and make me into the usual sort of wife ...it's not too late ...I don't care how you do it ...but break me.<sup>20</sup>

Daryll's ideas change again after two years of marriage by which point she is bored by domestic life and feels intellectually unchallenged. When she discovers that the business which she helped to build up is in a state of collapse, Daryll goes against her husband's wishes and decides to go back to work, telling him,

DARYLL: Oh Rufus ...you're being quite unendurably silly and such a cave man. This isn't the time to stand with folded arms and a rocky scowl ...If I hadn't been bored from morning till night do you think I'd have been so wildly frantically glad to get back again ...back to my business ...oh to have something to do again ...something continuous and constructive ...I'm no good

for marriage ...it's the war, we had to take over then ...I expect there's a whole generation of us ...We're none of us fit for marriage, we fathers of nineteen fourteen ...I'm a freak. We're all freaks my generation of girls...<sup>21</sup>

Rufus feels that they can't both work, that is to say, take on a *masculine* role. He offers to become a 'house husband' saying that it is just traditional prejudice which insists that men must work and women must weep. Daryll rejects his suggestion as being 'unnatural' and because of this reaction he tells her that she is perfectly conventional, perfectly feminine and she falls into his arms. That might be the end of the play except that Daryll does go off to 'save' the business and the ending of the play is left open with her leaving saying, "just this once, we can arrange things differently afterwards."<sup>22</sup>

Stern's play brings up all kinds of questions about the nature of femininity in relation to the need to work. Daryll's femininity has been constructed by social and historical imperatives. She represents a whole generation of middle-class women who were required to leave their traditional feminine roles behind, take control during the First World War, and were then literally dropped from the public domain when the war was over. One of the key questions which Daryll asks, and others ask of her, is whether she can be both economically powerful and feminine. She struggles to find an acceptable feminine identity which fits her actual fragmented experience. The discourse of the play is centred around recognition and a need for transformation. Both genders discuss feminine social roles in terms of their social constructedness rather than their biological innateness. Daryll's confusion and fragmented experience of femaleness is seen as a symptom of a political and economic system based on the supply and demand of labour. The denouement suggests negotiation as a device for the management of gender roles.

Arguably, Stern's heroine is a victim of patriarchal attitudes, the nature of which is structured by their location within a capitalist economy. The author foregrounds questions around whether woman's personal fulfilment will be achieved through family or marriage alone and suggests that a woman should have the opportunity of recognition in the public as well as the private sphere. The play exposes a desire for emergence, a need to break out of constructed roles into ones created by need and experience.

The question of career or marriage was all pervasive during the years under examination here. That one chose to work at all was often used as a contributing factor to a process of defining gender boundaries; at times women

were seen as being somehow 'manly women' simply because they chose to work. If a woman was forced into the labour market because of her economic situation, then she may have been permitted to see herself as womanly, but this would have depended on the type of work undertaken, and whether or not employment was framed by a notion of career, or merely by necessity. Working-class women had always had to work, partly as a means of subsidising the low wages of working-class men. Nevertheless, they were as susceptible to the prejudice of the popular press as middle-class women. The debate over whether or not women should work, taking jobs which could be given to men, to a large extent transgressed class boundaries. As the twentieth century progressed, the level to which women's working lives were controlled by the state intervention and needs of the economy increased. At times of high levels of unemployment women's jobs were given over to men, no matter what their class.

Even in the early 1960s a play like Muriel Sparks' *Doctors of Philosophy*<sup>23</sup> reflects within the narrative, a social attitude to the relationship between femininity and work which associates a woman's need or desire to work with some kind of abnormality. Many of the reviewers found the setting for the play to be too unreal:

Straightforward farce is one of the most difficult of all forms, and woe betide the inexperienced writer who tries to raise it to a more elevated purpose: the form takes its revenge. Thus, although Miss Spark is writing about a society she knows very well - the academic world - the play's idiom gets the upper hand and forces her to exhibit a society that has no existence outside the theatre, and certainly deserves no existence inside one.<sup>24</sup>

An interpretation of this critique must take into account the fact that narrative focus in the play is centred on women and most of the dramatic action is carried out by women. This perhaps adds a further dimension to the critic's point of view, that is to say, the play is as much a treatment of the female condition as it is that of the world of academia.

In the opening scene Leonora, cousin to Charlie Delfont's wife Catherine, appears before him asking him to give her a baby. He reports this to his wife thinking that he must have been dreaming. In Charlie's opinion, Leonora's academic work has made her repress her sexuality.

CATHERINE: After all, if I don't know my own cousin, I

mean ...we grew up together. Leonora's not that type. She's a *born* virgin. I ought to know ...No-one would believe that a university teacher like Leonora -

CHARLIE: That makes her more dangerous than ever.

Remember Sarah Desmond ...Senior Lecturer in comparative religions. The author of *The Life Force*. She was discovered in the bath with a wine waiter in a Folkestone hotel. It was hushed up, but she had to resign. What's more they were both naked.

CATHERINE: Leonora doesn't teach Life Force, Greek is an old sound subject.

CHARLIE: It comes to the same thing in a woman scholar ... Once they break out, they break out.

CATHERINE: I've got as good a degree as Leonora has, and I don't go round inviting men to give me a child.<sup>25</sup>

When the two women discuss the different directions which their careers have taken, it is clear that both see Leonora as having taken on a male profession, and for Catherine, Leonora has as a result, developed a persona which does not align itself with socially acceptable notions of feminine behaviour:

LEONORA: When you come up to visit me in college you have a hankering look. I feel sorry for you - the knowledge that you had it in you to become a distinguished scholar - and have become merely the mother of an average student and the wife of a second class scholar ...A woman of intellectual capacity has a certain manner and expression all the time. They are the manner and expression of detachment, and you can't pick them up overnight.

CATHERINE: I wouldn't want to pick them up at all. I like to please men. Do you think it pleases a man when he looks into a woman's eyes and sees a reflection of the British Museum Reading Room? I don't envy your expression and your manner.

LEONORA: ...I admit sometimes I get tired of being treated as a scholar and a gentleman.

CATHERINE: You ought to have got married, Leonora, if only for the pleasure of pleasing a man. Hundreds of women academics are married these days. They teach in the universities, run their homes, have babies, write books and feed their husbands - I don't

know how they do it all.

LEONORA: ...Badly.<sup>26</sup>

Both the form and content to some extent subvert any idea of a fixed normality. Leonora becomes more and more self-conscious of her position as a woman academic and as a member of a family. She says of her request to Charlie, that it was a 'dramatic urge', that in fact she has been playing a part which they have already devised for her, and that it is through a glimpse of reality that she has developed a 'dramatic sense of herself'.<sup>27</sup>

LEONORA: I have occupied the role in which you've cast me. At times of low spirits when one is tired one behaves largely as people expect one to behave. It has been expected of me that I should be envious of you, Catherine, and should want Charlie to give me a child. I've instinctively played the part in your minds of Leonora the barren virgin.<sup>28</sup>

Although discourse around the possible feminine attributes of a woman scholar may at first seem removed from specific thematic discourse on women and work found in many of the earlier plays of the period in question, Spark is clearly positing Leonora as a working woman whose field of employment happens to be academia, the traditionally male bastion. Thus, the implication is that when a woman moves into a traditionally male area of employment her level of femininity is put into question. It would appear that the issues changed little for the woman playwright who prioritised this discourse within the dramatic medium. In the vast majority of plays where a working, middle-class woman is central to the action, issues around the relationship between gender, femininity and work prevail. The differential in the representation of working-class women reflects the difference in comparative status for working-class and middle-class women as much as it is a reflection of the fact that the majority of the plays under examination, were written by middle-class women for largely middle-class audiences.

WOMEN AND WORK 1918 TO THE EARLY 1960S; THE POSITION AND PERCEPTION OF WOMEN IN THE LABOUR MARKET.

The graduate wife seemed an embarrassment rather than a welcomed addition to society, even when there was an acute



shortage of teachers and nurses.<sup>29</sup>

Elizabeth Wilson has noted that even with the changes in form and access to the education system, employment for women was still dependent on cultural perceptions of femininity as much as it was dependent upon the demands of the economy. During the 1939-1945 war, women had been re-introduced into the labour market on a similar scale to the First World War. Even though the legislation affecting wages and long term employment rights was not as strict as during the Great War, women were still discouraged from staying in the same areas of employment after the war was over. Although the war opened up new possibilities of careers for middle class women, and despite the fact that in the mid-1940s many felt that the housewife was, 'rapidly becoming the oppressed proletariat of the modern world,'<sup>30</sup> the prevailing cultural image projected onto the average British woman was that of the sexy, bright and willing housewife for whom marriage and family management could become a career in itself.

In terms of various legislation, during the mid-1940s work and marriage were still seen as alternatives. The unwillingness to remove the Marriage Bar was a result of an ideology which saw the home and family as needing to be prioritised. However, it was perhaps the immediate post-Second World War fear of a labour shortage which encouraged policy makers to promote the idea that women could manage part-time work as well as family responsibilities. Some legislation was even aimed at encouraging employers to design their labour needs to fit into the life patterns of married women.<sup>31</sup> From the census report in 1901 to that of 1951 the number of married women in insured employment had gone from 13% to 40% percent of the total female work-force. These figures however do not account for the vast number of women working outside the home in jobs where there was little security of tenure, or insurance,<sup>32</sup> that is to say, working-class women in part-time, short-term employment, widows on low pensions in part time-work and so on.

By 1951 women made up 30.8% of the labour force; 52% of working women at this point were single, 40% married. Census figures show that the number of working women between the age of thirty-five and fifty nine increased from 26% in 1921, to 43 % in 1951. The number of women under 35 who were part of the labour market in 1951 had decreased from 69 % in 1921, to 52% in 1951. The nature of 'typical' women's work had changed, although again historians such as Lewis and Beddoe stress the fact that the regional class and married status variants means that it is difficult to ascertain a general picture over the country as a whole. Nevertheless, it would seem clear that certain trades had

become *feminised* by the early 1950s. By 1951, the distribution of women working as clerks or typists had risen to twenty percent compared with one percent in 1901.

The number of women working in domestic service was fairly sustained during the inter-war years, but dropped significantly by the time of the 1951 census. This was not so much because domestic service had somehow become de-feminised, but rather was due to the growth in 'new industries' and in the number of white-collar jobs available to women, such as teaching, retailing, office work and so on.<sup>33</sup> It is also important to note that the decrease in numbers of women working in domestic service was partly due to the growth in the availability of new domestic appliances and the diminishing size of the average family in terms of the number of members living in any one household. As 'new light industries' grew in number, so did the number of women working in them, although the highest increases for percentages of women's employment are in the non-manual trades. Even though women in non-manual trades tended to earn wages which were proportionately more equal to their male counterparts than in other trades, they often worked longer hours and so, similar to many other areas of employment, women were paid less for the same level and often, more hours of work than men.

Despite some legislative changes which affected the position of working women, the ideological basis on which they were allowed to work was one which to some extent justified the enormous differentiation between men and women in the employment market. Although women were encouraged to work in times of social economic need, and although they may have found themselves doing much the same work as their male counterparts, they were rarely paid the same wages, nor did their jobs have the same legislative protection as those of men. Underlying this was the fact that women continued to be seen as responsible for the private domain, their chief duty was to bear and nurture children and to supply a comfortable home for their husbands:

Women's labour was treated by employers as adaptable, interchangeable and temporary, and the comments of writers at the time reflected and justified, but never questioned this treatment.<sup>34</sup>

Single women were in a consistently difficult position within the job market. During the inter-war period for example, whilst there was a shortage of available men to marry, so there were a shortage of jobs for men. Many married

women resented a situation whereby they saw what they considered to be men's jobs, being carried out by women. Similarly, single women resented married women who worked, perceiving them as being already financially supported by their husbands. For single women the job market narrowed as they grew older; in the service trades for example, middle-aged, single women were in danger of being replaced by younger, single women, and yet their pension rights were not equal to those of men. Lewis notes that, '...The National Spinsters Association, formed in 1935, believed that 5% of unmarried women aged between 55-65 were already in receipt of poor relief,'<sup>35</sup> and points out that over 10% of char-women or cleaning ladies were elderly, unmarried women.

There are differences in opinion as to why a situation whereby women are more likely to be employed in low-skilled low paid-work still persists. There is no doubt however as to the fact that this was the general situation from the turn of the century onwards. Working-class women, who had enjoyed a certain freedom and increased level of status while working for the war effort in factories during the 1914-1918 war, were effectively coerced back into 'private' service industries almost as soon as the war ended. When their jobs were given over to the men who returned from the trenches, they were eligible to an 'out-of work-donation', which lasted for about three months. This would have been withdrawn if a woman refused to take a job in domestic service. Thus, attempts to find re-employment in the public sector were often hindered by a social ideology which assumed that factory jobs were appropriate for men only in times of peace:

...The press, and the public opinion it purported to represent, were outraged that women wished to hang on to factory work when what the country needed most was wives, mothers and domestic servants. The operations of the labour exchanges and the angry ravings of the press in the period immediately following the end of the First World War were closely interrelated.<sup>36</sup>

Even when working-class women moved back into the public labour industry during the inter-war period, it was in the main into the new 'light industries' which were mass producing goods to feed the fast growing consumer market. Women moved into these industries as a 'preferred source of labour for firms which introduced methods of mass production, machine powered tools and assembly lines.'<sup>37</sup>

Despite this, Beddoe argues that domestic service and 'office work', the

nature of which could be anything from the clerk in a small shop, to a private assistant and sometimes even to a manager, continued to be the key areas in which women worked, certainly during the inter-war period. Beddoe also points out that although the 'office girl' became a glamorised figure in the Hollywood film industry, her wages rarely ever covered her living costs. Office work was low paid and generally held low status. It is interesting to note at this point, that the unmarried secretary or personal assistant become almost a stock character in many of the plays by women of the period 1918-1962.

There were wide, class and regional differences in the employment situation of women after the second World War. As I have already noted, middle-class women found new openings during the 1940s and, once the Marriage Bars were largely removed, it was more acceptable for them to go back into work, albeit mostly on a part time basis, after their children had reached school age. The vast differential in employment possibilities for women became more obvious during the inter-war period as more middle-class women moved into the labour market. It was very rare, for example, that a working-class girl would have the opportunity to train as a teacher, even though an upper-working-class or lower-middle-class girl might have been able to do so. Social mobility through employment opportunity was unlikely for those at the lower end of the job market.

It should also be noted that there were often differences in the ways in which low-status jobs were perceived by the women who did them. A shop girl, for example, even though she might not receive significantly higher wages, would have frowned upon the factory girl, seeing her as being of a different social class because she worked in a factory. A shop assistant may have seen her work as being better than that of a domestic servant in a large and established family house, even though her hours would have been longer and the financial benefits of her job fewer. In the same way, to work for a large, upper-middle class or upper-class family was seen as more secure and desirable for a middle aged woman than to work in a shop, as the family would possibly feel some kind of responsibility for her as she became older and less able.

#### PREDOMINANT IMAGES OF A WOMAN'S PLACE

Under the heading of *Marriage and Career*, a letter from a reader of *Time and Tide* printed in 1927, goes a long way towards summing up the general attitude toward the issue of women and work and in turn, a woman's rightful place within society:

Under the guise of fitting herself to be a better wife, a better mother, the young girl is urged to train herself for a career. And why? Solely that, when the physical act of motherhood is ended she may not be bored. Not a word about the moral duties of wifeness and motherhood, duties which increase, not decrease, as the children grow older. What more beautiful picture can there be than the mother, the centre of the home, the rest for the husband from his hours of toil, the never failing fount of comfort, of sympathy and of help to the children, of all ages. And this is to be sacrificed for a career? A career which must take her out of the home, must keep her where neither husband or children can depend upon her help, where she can, indeed only help herself.<sup>38</sup>

Until the years which follow the end of the Second World War, the questions raised with regard to women's employment were largely based on the assumption that work somehow disrupted and undermined a woman's 'natural' role as a woman and so challenged 'typical' female behaviour. Thus the fear was based upon the assumption that a woman's first duty was to be a wife and mother, and that the desire to fulfil these roles was a natural feminine trait. Although the situation changed slightly, and despite the fact that working-class women had invariably always worked, albeit relatively invisibly, any woman choosing a career rather than motherhood and marriage was considered to be somehow abnormal. The post-Second World War changes in economy, and to an extent in ideology, held the greatest benefits for middle-class women in terms of the opening up of employment opportunities:

The gains of the post period tended once again to work in favour of those women with a good education, who wished to enter particular jobs and who had the means to buy child-care, domestic appliances and often, domestic help.<sup>39</sup>

With the setting up of the Welfare State government intervention became more relevant to family life, and so legislation around issues of employment was bound up with governmental notions of what it was that women should be doing, that is to say, especially in the case of married women, it was assumed that they could serve their country better through home and family management, rather than through being part of public industry.<sup>40</sup> Even though by the early 1950s it was generally accepted that a woman could have a career, be a wife and a

mother, underlying this acceptance was the belief that the career would not be one of great opportunity or status. Winifred Holtby felt in the mid 1930s, that it was 'acceptable' for a woman to be a doctor or lawyer, to be a part of the 'professional' work force on a higher level than ever before. Yet as Beddoe points out, in terms of real increase, women's position in the professional job market did not really improve until the late 1960s.

A sociological analysis of facts and figures reveals similar issues in terms of women and work, which many of the female playwrights of the period under examination brought to bear in the thematic and narrative focus of their plays. The distinction between the private and public sphere is fore-grounded alongside a questioning of the *real* relationship between femininity, gender and work.

#### BUSINESS OR ROMANCE.

There are a number of plays during the early years of the period under examination, where the female protagonists are seen as choosing to work rather than marry for the sake of convenience. This comes at a time when, partly due to the aftermath of the First World War, eligible men are in short supply. The idea that one should marry for love rather than convenience and that marriage itself could be based on a partnership of souls as much as mutual economic interests, was in fact relatively new. Marie Stopes' *Married Love*,<sup>41</sup> with its advice on how marital partners could live as soul-mates, work as a team, and should be allowed to expect sexual satisfaction from intercourse, sold thousands of copies to willing buyers in search of a blueprint for what Stopes herself defined as the ideal marriage. Her work as part of the contraceptive movement was in its time radical, although she was at the time and is still criticised for her eugenisist beliefs. Just as she believed that women could gain economic independence from controlling their own numbers of pregnancies, so she also believed that certain classes needed the frequency of their pregnancy to be controlled for them.<sup>42</sup> Stopes received some success on the West End stage with her play *Our Ostriches*, which, propagandist in nature, was essentially about the need for the legal introduction and social acceptance of contraception.<sup>43</sup>

Despite the way in which we may interpret her work now, Dr. Marie Stopes' ideas were absorbed by a generation of middle-class women especially, for whom the separate spheres in which husbands and wives functioned during the late-nineteenth century were no longer seen as representing a satisfactory way of conducting a married relationship. These concerns reverberate in many of the narratives in plays written by women especially during the late-1910s and well into the late-1920s. Equally, for many young women, work was seen as an

alternative to the drudgery of married life and motherhood, as one character in Aimée and Philip Stuart's *Nine Till Six*,<sup>44</sup> tells her prospective employer when asked why she would want a career in dressmaking:

GRACIE: I want to see life. I don't want only to be at 'ome. It's either that or being a typist ...Gettin' married only means a lot of kids and no time to yourself the whole blessed day! ...It's getting their breakfast and 'up; then it's getting their dinner and washin' up; then it's getting their tea and washin' up - then you haven't properly started in!<sup>45</sup>

For women like Francis Llewellyn in Kate O'Brien's *Distinguished Villa*,<sup>46</sup> working in a library and refusing to marry a handsome man with a fast car, are priorities presented as being vastly superior to those of her landlady, for whom, home husband and housekeeping provide the real career challenge for a woman. When her husband Natty tells Mabel that he doubts very much if Francis Llewellyn is the type to rush into marriage she responds with,

MABEL: Well, what girl would choose to go on listing up books in a free library when she could be married to a smart young gentleman? Woman's sphere is in the home. I've always held that Natty, and always will.<sup>47</sup>

For Mabel's sister, Gwen, whom the author describes as having an 'ill educated tone', marriage appears to be the only escape from a life of working in a typing pool, even if it means marrying a man who is neither in love with her nor the biological father of her unborn child. In this play the choices for women are shown to be between work and marriage or love and social respectability. In other plays of the period women are presented as having to make ideological choices about what kind of marriage they would want, negotiating the terms on which they can both work and be in a married partnership. In Elizabeth Baker's, *Partnership*<sup>48</sup> Kate Rolling finds romance with a man who actually insists that she keep her business concern, as well as fighting off being bought out by a former suitor.

Elizabeth Baker, born into a lower-middle-class family, began her working life as a cashier and stenographer, moved into professional playwriting after the positive reception of a number of her first pieces.<sup>49</sup> She was actively involved in aspects of the Suffrage movement and was connected with 'innovative repertory

companies in London, Manchester and Birmingham'.<sup>50</sup> *Partnership*, similar to her later play, *Edith*,<sup>51</sup> has a female protagonist who is an unmarried, successful business woman. Kate Rolling and Maisie Glow run a successful business close to the Brighton sea front; Rolling & Co., Milliners and Costumiers. Kate Rolling, played by Laura Cowie in the original London production,<sup>52</sup> is made a proposition by one of her suppliers, Mr. Goodrich. He tells her that he has made an offer for a small firm which she agrees could prosper if handled appropriately. Goodrich also tells her that one of the local business men is buying out the neighbouring shop to her own:

GOODRICH: ...We smaller fry must make a stand against him, Miss Rolling ...He'll swamp us - but there, I oughtn't to say that of you. You're a clever woman ...and now this brings me to what I came to say. (*Gets up and brings his chair down level with Kate and sits.*) I've got a proposition to lay before you. Why not put our two businesses together?...Yours and mine.

(*Kate is too taken aback to reply.*) This thing of mine is a dead cert. I've got the cash alright, and with this biz and yours we could get the pick of the trade ...

KATE: Do you mean a partnership? -

GOODRICH: (*interrupting buoyantly.*) I do, Miss Rolling. And I mean it in another way too, if you'll allow me to out it before you, but I put the business consideration first, knowing what a business woman you are. I ask you to marry me, Miss Rolling, and have a partnership that way ...I've a genuine admiration for you, quite apart from business and all that. You're a woman any man in the land might be proud of, and I'm sure you before this have seen something of what I feel -

(*Kate rises and stands in front of her chair*)

KATE: I've seen nothing of the kind. This is nonsense Mr. Goodrich. I'm not thinking of marrying -

GOODRICH: ...(rising and speaking earnestly) ...You're afraid of the risk - you think I'm offering you a speculation in the business I've put before you, and that it isn't worth your while ...Well that's a natural feeling in a business woman like you ...Let me come again now in six months' time - there's no harm in that?

KATE: It would only be a waste of time. My business satisfies me,



and it would require something certainly very great to make me think of any change.<sup>53</sup>

Goodrich is oblivious to the seriousness of Kate's overt refusal and insists that he'll come back in six months and ask her again, despite the fact that she does not hide her disliking for him. At this point in the play her business is of the utmost importance to her, although she is not entirely against the idea of a partnership. When Maisie Glow suggests to her that she might partner up with Pillatt who is buying the shop next door, Kate is not against the idea in principle, she sees that it would be a good business move, and as Maisie points out, '...It would be better than fighting him'. When Pillatt does in fact make the suggestion that they should join their businesses together, marriage, but not love, is a part of the deal:

PILLATT: Has the idea of a partnership ever entered your head? ...Your business and mine. We two hold the pick of the trade here. We do very well separate, no doubt. Together we could top the lot ...You have style, and not only style but brains - and one can prophesy success for the person who has them ...I very rarely make a mistake in these things ...I want to suggest, to propose a partnership - in another sense, and that is - marriage ...Being a plain business man I wish to be quite frank in the matter, and so I have not hesitated to put the business part of the plan foremost. I am sure you, as a business woman thoroughly understand this ...I'm not a sentimentalist, but then you, as I say, a woman of business, do not wish for any expression of sentiment.<sup>54</sup>

They then continue to discuss the logistics of how they would arrange their shops together and the way in which the partnership might work. Kate becomes absorbed in thinking about the shop's future, but then comes 'to attention' and re-frames the discussion so that they are clear about exactly what is being proposed. She points out that although a business partnership might be a good idea, she had not thought of getting married. For Pillatt however, there is little difference between considering a business partnership with a woman and marriage:

PILLATT: But that part of it will make no more difference than the other.

KATE: It is an important thing to give up one's independence.

Marriage must mean that - for someone

PILLATT: (*earnestly*) Not at all, not at all - in this case. You would have your part of the concern. I should have mine. We should each be responsible for its management, just as two men might. The difference is that in our case the contract is a slightly closer one - which is an advantage ...I thoroughly admire you and - er- respect you - and ...I would never have thought of making my proposal if it had not felt that if you could accept it, it would be to our mutual satisfaction and happiness, I may say ...Well no, to put things on a clear and proper basis, I have drawn up a statement of what I propose. Perhaps you would run your eye over it now and tell me if it seems to you sufficiently good. (*Hands her paper and rises.*)<sup>55</sup>

Pillatt treats Kate 'like a man' in that he takes her seriously as a business manager. He offers to cover the costs of converting the two shops, hence Maisie Glow warns her colleague that Pillatt's offer is not one to turn down lightly. Kate however is unsure of what it is she wants. For her the dilemma is between building up her business and continuing her search for the possibilities of another sort of partnership, that is to say one which involves a perception of her which prioritises the importance of the fact that she is a woman, rather than one which is based on the attributes of what others perceive as her male qualities. When she talks of losing independence she clearly implies that both financial and emotional independence would work on a different level in an ideal partnership rooted in mutual interest. Romance comes along in the form of Fawcett, who unlike his friend Pillatt has taken risks with his inherited fortune, financing experiments in dyes. Fawcett holds a fascination for Kate, as he is not ruled by business hours, preferring walks on the Downs. He notices the rose on her desk, he prefers the sentimental and the picturesque to convenient time-keeping and business tasks. He tells Kate,

Whenever I'm in danger of giving too much up to work I always come and see Pillatt as a warning!<sup>56</sup>

Fawcett advises Kate that whoever the 'chap' is that Pillatt has persuaded to go into business with him, he will be 'swallowed up', and encourages Kate to take time away from her business and go hiking on the Downs. When Kate tells Maisie that she has fallen in love with this character who is so incongruous with

their world, Maisie suggests that she do all she can to create a partnership with Pillatt and see Fawcett in secret. Kate's response is a clear condemnation of the way in which her life has become directed by rules and contracts and by a certain perception of the way one needs to behave as a person in business:

KATE: Before I met him I was an automaton ...Everything I had was up for sale - my brains that helped to make my business, my good looks, even the way that I smiled and laughed - all arranged to bring in the best interest. Then at last I did the worst thing - I gave my soul - for a bargain, a mere clause in the contract. A woman can't give her body without giving her soul. Then - he - came and the very thing I had been ready to throw in as a mere item made the whole bargain impossible.<sup>57</sup>

Fawcett finally offers her the partnership she has wanted and with it, the support for her business, not financial, but emotional support based on a romantic partnership and friendship:

FAWCETT: It's you I want and to do what you wish. If you'd rather throw everything up and come off with me, we'll go tomorrow if you like. If you'd rather keep your little show here and fight old Pillatt, I'll stand in with you ...I'll be there, anywhere, when you want me. So long as you don't get swallowed up by it...<sup>58</sup>

Baker's play offers a critique of a certain view of life as much as it presents on stage the lives of a specific class of working women. Much like *Chains*,<sup>59</sup> an earlier play, the female protagonist is strong and independent, wanting more from life than a marriage of convenience. The independence goes beyond relationships with men, and the protagonist finds a vision of a possible world which to her social equals seems either illogical or simply crazed. Baker's heroines in these two plays both have aspirations which set them apart from those around them. In *Partnership* Kate finds an ideal in that she can put time thought and energy into both her work and her romantic life. The play as such then suggests that there is there is a false dichotomy between the manly and the womanly business woman, as much as it promotes what could be seen as a socialist ideology for the world of commerce, where life and business run in parallel, the importance of each being balanced by the requirements of the other.

Many of the other plays of the period in question, through choice of narrative focus, represent an attempt to somehow close the distance between the public and the private spheres. On one level, business or work, and romance or emotion, are presented as being successfully intertwined, albeit farcically as in *Love Goes To Press*, written by two women war correspondents, Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles. The play, originally produced at the Embassy in 1946,<sup>60</sup> has two women journalists as heroines whose mission to 'tell the public the truth' gets mixed up with their amorous adventures. On another level, there is what can only be seen as a conscious attempt to undermine the idea that women are not biologically or psychologically designed to work in the public world business, by using their femininity as the main reason for their success. This is certainly the case in Aimée and Philip Stuart's *Her Shop*<sup>61</sup> where Lady Torrent tells her husband that she intends to make 'pots of money' from her shop and when told that she is being ridiculous, she replies,

LADY TORRENT: ...You're afraid I'll succeed where you can't, anyway ...you've never made a penny piece in your life! You happen to have inherited money. That's luck.<sup>62</sup>

He proposes that they make a bet that she won't be successful and she tells him not to bother her, insisting, '...I don't intend to live at home while I run my shop'.<sup>63</sup> Lady Torrent buys a dressmaking business and proceeds to incur multiple debts, mainly because her friends don't pay their bills; she knows a great deal about dresses but nothing about running a business. Arguably however her so called feminine wiles help her win the day as she is cautious about transferring her shop to a different part of London when the suggestion is made by the two men who originally leased her the building.<sup>64</sup> Lady Torrent is then made an offer by a property firm and pays her debts, wins her bet with her husband and tells him to come and take her home.

Although the play is rather tame compared to many others written by women of the period, it is interesting for the way in which it to some extent demystifies the functionings of the world of business, as well as for the way in which it attempts to undermine the argument that women cannot function in the public world.

Another play by Aimée and Philip Stuart goes a great deal further; both to expose on the public stage the workings of an essentially woman's world of work, that of the dressmakers shop, and in the way it represents a woman's method of running a business. That is to say, in *Nine Till Six* Mrs. Pembroke handles her

business with a similar set of criteria and ethics to those which she uses within her family.

#### THE WOMAN'S WORLD OF WORK.

Aimée and Philip Stuart's *Nine Till Six* was originally produced at the Arts theatre in 1930, and then reproduced by Mrs. C.B. Cochran at the Apollo.<sup>65</sup> The critics had mixed opinions; some thought it, 'an attractive little play,'<sup>66</sup> others felt that it was essentially, 'less a play than a study of women at work'. It was arguably because of this that the same critic felt able to criticise it for the fact that,

As a view of unfamiliar life, nothing could be better. As a play, all that can be said of it is that it had the pathos and some of the sentimentality of melodrama without the plot and movement.<sup>67</sup>

It is interesting that the following letter to the *Sunday Times*, written by a woman who had herself written and had produced one-Act plays in the 1920s, depicts the play as having a far greater significance, both historically and theatrically:

Sir - *Nine Till Six* has nothing to complain of in the warm welcome accorded it alike by Press and public, but its importance as a sociological contribution has possibly been a little understressed. Surely no play in modern times has presented so searching and fair-minded an analysis of women's place in the world of industry? It sets out to give a faithful picture of a fashionable dressmaking establishment; there is not a trace of propaganda about it. Here is life humorously perceived as it is lived today. You see a girl from a Council school side by side with the daughter of a lord, each equally keen on her job as an apprentice with its salary and prospect of adventure. But while the girls from the working classes have some faint perception of loyalty to their employer, the Society girl has only a sense of good-natured camaraderie with her fellow-mannequins ...Miss Louise Hampton's unforgettable picture of the head, with her acutely modern daughter, played by Marjory Clark with all the outside hardness and hidden sympathy of to-day, show women's growing sense of responsibility. We see them overburdened by financial strain, their private happiness and peace inexorably set on one side in the immense strain of their business venture.

...Mr. James Agate prophesies a nine to six months' run for Aimée and Philip Stuart's play. There are those who say that this is a women's counterpart of *Journey's End*; its field of battle is the business world; its privations are the ruthless denials of ease and beauty; its sex problems, as incidental.<sup>68</sup>

In *Nine Till Six*, much of the discourse centres around both the nature of work and the lived experience of a working life, different class attitudes to work, and the relationships between employer and employee. Mrs. Pembroke, now fifty five years of age, has worked in the retail trade since she was twelve. She tells her staff that in her youth one was expected to work till midnight, or simply until the work was done. She refuses to allow her daughter to let her moods override her responsibility to the family business, pointing out that whether or not her daughter is 'one of the firm', they cannot afford to offend the customers, a life in work or business is hard whether you are the boss or the cleaner:

MRS. PEMBROKE: ...Have you any idea what our expenses are here?...We have four driving months; six when we just manage to jog along, and two when we're so slack that we think the world's come to an end. In the mean time the expenses go on. Do you know the rent of this shop?...We pay by the inch. The workrooms are extra. For the shop alone we pay a yearly rental of seven thousand five hundred pounds, with rates and taxes ...I only just manage to make both ends meet. With all my responsibility, I make very little more out of it than you do. I sometimes wonder if it's worth going on. It takes all our time to keep pace. Since the War we shopkeepers have had much to fight against. Everything hits back - weather, strikes, political situations ...cost of production, cost of a roof over our heads, and it gets worse and worse ...wages are not high enough - nothing like high enough! But they're too high for those that have to find them at the end of the week. The fault lies with conditions that cripple the employed and employer alike ...You're quite right to feel resentment against conditions that make the day's work seem a drudgery. I feel resentment against conditions that make me seem a tyrant.<sup>69</sup>

In such a way, when Mrs. Pembroke has to deal with two of the staff who have

'borrowed' some old stock, she treats them with the same leniency as she might her own daughter. In doing so she goes against her saleswoman, Miss Roberts, who somehow represents an 'old', less humane style of doing business, and gives both Freda, her senior employee, and Gracie, her junior employee, another chance, hoping that they've learnt their lesson. Although Pembroke believes it to be her duty to sack dishonest staff, she cannot do so after her daughter speaks up for one of the employees in question:

CLARE: I understand what it means to be your age and not to have had any life. You and I don't live. We just go on, day after day. So does Miss Roberts. But she doesn't care. She didn't expect anything anyway. It's lucky for her. You and I rebel against what we'll have to put up with. She's content just to be what she is.<sup>70</sup>

When Mrs. Pembroke realises that her own daughter, her own flesh and blood, could have behaved with the same dishonesty as her employee, she has the good sense and humanity to overlook the matter of the theft. She also persuades Gracie's mother to see reason when they learn that Gracie has been lying about where she's been going in the evenings, thus transgressing class boundaries and speaking up for the 'new' class of the younger generation, whose needs, expectations and aspirations she recognises as being different from women of her own generation.

The suggestion is that women employers, because of their gender, have a different way of overseeing their staff, one which is based on a maternal ethics. Mrs. Pembroke is also interesting for the way in which she consciously negotiates class issues within her business dealings. When her daughter wants her to give one of her friends an apprenticeship, Mrs. Pembroke is cautious:

CLARE: Her grandfather's the Earl of Glendarran

MRS. PEMBROKE: ...That's nice for her ...Lord's daughter or no, don't you give her credit unless you're sure she can pay...

CLARE: She wants to come on our staff.

MRS. PEMBROKE: That's absurd ...we're not in business for fun.

CLARE: Lots of girls of good family are learning to do something useful these days. Other firms take them on.

MRS. PEMBROKE: That's probably why so many other firms come to grief.

CLARE: ...Why shouldn't they be as capable as anyone else.

MRS. PEMBROKE: Because they don't HAVE to work.<sup>71</sup>

Mrs Pembroke states her regret at having sent her youngest daughter to an expensive public school, feeling that she might have learnt more about working life and ordinary people at an ordinary school. She herself was educated in a Council school, and is against the snobbery which her daughter has developed from being part of an upwardly mobile family. Clare's friend Bridgit wants the job because she's bored, sees no future in staying at home and basically needs 'something to do' whilst waiting for a wealthy man to come along and marry her:

BRIDGIT: ...There's no point in my staying at home. There's absolutely nothing for me to do. Daddie's trying to let Avonlaye. We can't hunt; we can't entertain. I'll probably have to earn my living pretty soon - so I might as well get down to it ...<sup>72</sup>

Much of the talk between the shop girls is based on discussions of work conditions, pay and prospects. The authors are very clear in the way in which they foreground class differences between the workers, and the way in which those class differences effect how the young women see themselves. For the young women who come from lower-middle or working class backgrounds work is a way of helping their families financially, and breaking the pattern of labour for women within the family unit.

One of the most interesting aspects of Dodie Smith's *Service*<sup>73</sup> is the way in which she represents two different classes of family having to cope with financial crisis and the way in which it affects their lives. Gabriel Service's family, faced with the possibility that their established firm will have to sell out, only rally round at the very last moment, worrying about the loss the buy out will cause them personally. His young wife even leaves him and becomes involved with a richer younger man. In contrast, the family of the sacked employee Timothy Benton spring into action. Mrs. Benton heads the household of a lower-middle class family, giving her char-lady extra hours because she's a widow managing a family on her own. The extra hours are withdrawn when Timothy Benton gets the sack as she says, '...It's no use thinking of her now - we've got to think of the home.'<sup>74</sup> By the first scene of the third Act, the Benton's front parlour has completely changed:

*Gone are the aspidistra in the bay window; in their place is a*



*makeshift stand for the display of confectionery, with small glass shelves ...Near the window are two small round tables and chairs - a very immature cafe. The large dinner table is still in the middle of the room ...on it are a few chocolate boxes and biscuit tins. The armchairs have disappeared and much of the bric-a-brac. The room is now a curious mongrel, half shop, half sitting room.*

Mrs. Benton has become a cook. Her young son sees himself as the business manager and is in awe of his mother's secret culinary talents:

WILLIE: What beats me is the way you've known all about this posh cooking for years and never let on.

MRS. BENTON: ...You always knew I was a baker's daughter.

WILLIE: Yes but what's a baker - just loaves and things. Tell you what you are, Mum - you're a speciality cook.<sup>75</sup>

Willie has aspirations to build the business up into a chain of stores, on a smaller scale to Service's, the business from which his father was dismissed. Mrs. Pembroke is quite clear however that; '...It's all very well getting these classy orders, but it's the regular trade that keeps us - the girls going to business and such.'<sup>76</sup> The Benton women are drawn in sharp contrast to the women of the Service family who don't join in the family workforce until the last moment, that is to say, for them the distance between wealth and poverty is far greater.

#### THE REPRESENTATION OF THE PRIVATE WORLD OF PUBLIC WORK

Many of the plays so far discussed were catering for an essentially West End audience who would rarely have been drawn from the working classes, and as such reproduced fairly stereotypical versions of working-class women. However many of the plays written by women which do focus on issues around working life, seem to be consciously presenting what was a private world of working women, on a public stage.

Governmental policy, especially during the inter-war years, did not favour the working woman. The Anomalies Act of 1931, for example, stated that a married woman had to prove that she had left insured employment for reasons other than marriage in order to gain any state benefit. Yet most employers would not employ married women, other than in domestic service, which was of course uninsured.<sup>77</sup> Although policy changed according to the needs of the economy after the Second World War, women's work was still seen as secondary to that of

the male bread-winner. Ideological bias against women working was also strong, especially during the inter-war years, and it is interesting to note that around this period, a great many plays are written by women, where the protagonists are working women, and the stage settings are the environments in which women work. Camillo Pellizzi saw the preponderance of plays which looked at the lives of lower-middle and middle-class working people as constituting a category of their own; naming them 'professional drama' or plays of 'professional realism'.<sup>78</sup>

Overall the 'professional realist' plays written by women promote an ironic mixture of conservatism and feminism. The conservative element is most pronounced in the class of women about which they chose to write. The 'feminism' comes out through the conscious portrayal of women working in the public sphere, whether through choice or necessity and in some cases through both. Although they do not re-present on stage the many women's strikes, or for example, the dilemmas of the married woman teacher of the inter-war period, many do write positive images of the woman at work, and centre narrative around a discourse which aims at presenting an argument for women's employment, sometimes despite and sometimes *because* of the fact that they are women.

During the years in question, it was almost impossible for a woman to be seen as a prospective employee without the fact of her gender or marital status being taken into account. Nevertheless, playwrights like Dodie Smith and Aimée and Philip Stuart turn the working woman into a signifier of *Britishness*, whether she is a shop girl or a business woman. The question of whether or not a woman works outside of the family, becomes theatricalised into a questioning of the method by which a woman may find personal fulfilment beyond marriage and motherhood.

George Herbert Mead's radical idea that women should train whilst parenting but that they should also have the employment opportunities to put that training into working practice, integrating work with motherhood, went against the ideas of a number of his female colleagues for whom an educated woman should have to choose between career or motherhood.<sup>79</sup> It was the middle-class woman who attempted and in some cases succeeded in breaking into the job market in Britain during the early and mid-twentieth century. Albeit rather conservatively, it is this fact and the dilemmas which surround it, which is often theatricalised by the playwrights in question. To some extent these plays represent a domestic dramatic culture, which, although not solely, is largely inhabited by women whose 'conservatism' and 'feminism' appealed to the theatre audiences of the day. In turn, the theatrical idea of the working woman appealed

greatly to the imaginations of both audiences and, especially, women playwrights of the time.

It is important to remember that in terms of feminism and the women's movement after the vote was gained, the issues were more diverse than those of the years of the Suffrage movement. Women were struggling to be seen as equal to men in terms of their importance of their roles within British culture, wanting to be seen as equally responsible within society and the economy, whether in the home or at work. The post-First World War feminist saw her political agenda as being different to that of her previous generation. This fact makes it possible perhaps, to argue that the writing of working woman as a theatrical sign was, consciously or not, part of an attempt to reposition both woman and the 'woman question' in a theatre world where power lay essentially in the hands of men.

- 1 Winifred Holtby, *Women in a Changing Civilisation* (London: John Lane, The  
Bodley Head, 1945), p. 82.
- 2 Alva Myrdal & Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles; home and work* (London: Routledge &  
Kegan Paul, 1956), p. 137.
- 3 Deidre Beddoe, *Back to Home and Duty* (London: Pandora Press, 1989), pp. 48 - 51.  
'... The shortage of domestic servants, labelled by the middle class the 'servant problem',  
had become acute: middle-class women, who had been prepared to put up with lack of  
help during the war, were no longer willing to do so. It was considered an outrage that  
unemployed women would be living it up on their donations whilst mistresses  
struggled servantless at home.' p. 51.
- 4 Sylvia Rayman, *Women of Twilight* (London: Evans Bros., 1951).
- 5 Fryn Tennyson Jesse & Harold Harwood, *The Pelican* (London: Benn, 1926).  
The play ran from October 1924 until May 1925, transferring from the Ambassadors to  
the Royalty in March 1925.
- 6 Ibid., pp. 28 - 29.
- 7 Ibid., pp. 42 - 43.
- 8 Ibid., pp. 46 - 47.
- 9 Stuart, A & P, 'Sixteen' in, *Famous Plays of 1933-1934*, (London: Gollancz, 1934).
- 10 Ibid., pp. 549 - 550.
- 11 Ibid., p. 483.
- 12 Mirra Komarovsky, 'Cultural Contradictions and Sex Roles', *American Journal of  
Sociology*, (Nov 1946), 184 - 189.
- 13 G.B. Stern, *The Man Who Pays The Piper* (London: French, 1931).
- 14 *The Matriarch* was produced in 1929 at the Royalty theatre and ran for 229  
performances. The most vehement criticism of the *Man Who Pays the Piper*, was  
that the play contained far too much conversation, and the implication is that the  
subject matter held less interest for the reviewer in question than the physical  
attributes of the leading actress.  
"She had built a dressmaker's business. Then she got married, and after a lot  
more yap, ventured to remark that the war had ruined women's careers as well  
as those of men ...This idea should have made a good play...After the first Act  
however, I lost complete interest - that is until Diana Wynyard came on and  
looked beautiful..." (*Daily Express*, 11 February 1931).
- 15 Stern, p. 9.
- 16 Ibid., pp. 9 - 10.
- 17 Ibid., p. 41.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 60 - 65.
- 19 Ibid., p. 70.
- 20 Ibid., p. 77.
- 21 Ibid., pp. 97 - 99.
- 22 Ibid., p. 110.
- 23 Muriel Spark, *Doctors of Philosophy* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1963).
- 24 *The Times*, 3 October 1962.
- 25 Spark, pp. 4 - 5.
- 26 Ibid., pp. 14 - 15.
- 27 Spark continues to use Leonora as a device whereby the audience is asked to accept the  
reality of their own position as *audience*. Leonora makes reference to being watched,  
and to feeling that she has an audience. At one point the characters are placed in  
chairs directly in front of the audience, relating to them directly, through the  
'invisible fourth wall' rather than being placed in proxemic relation to the scenery.  
Spark also has Charlie Brown, an outsider to the family unit, moving stage scenery  
and adjusting working pulleys, during the action of Act 2. sc.1, thus breaking away  
from a tradition of realism, subverting the 'invisibility' of the mechanics of  
staging.
- 28 Ibid., p. 61.
- 29 Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Half Way to Paradise; Women in Post-War Britain*

(London: Tavistock, 1980), p. 57.

30 Ibid., p. 21. The Fabian Group were amongst the first to make this suggestion in 1946.

31 During the late 1950s some employers took up the suggestion to introduce 'twilight shifts' for women, so that the working day began after the household 'duties' were done.

32 Jane Lewis, *Women in England: 1870-1950* (London: Wheatsheaf Books Ltd., 1984).

33 Ibid., p. 158.

34 Miriam Glucksman, 'In a class of their own? Women workers in the New Industries in inter-war Britain', in *Feminist Review* 24 (1986), 7 - 37 (p. 29).

35 Lewis, p. 155.

36 Beddoe, p. 51.

37 Glucksman, p. 7.

38 From *Time and Tide* the weekly journal founded and originally run by women in May 1920. Members of the original directorial board included Viscountess Rhondda and Elizabeth Robins. Reprinted in;

Dale Spender, *Time and Tide Wait for No Man* (London: Pandora Press, 1984), p. 203.

39 Lewis, p. 222.

40 Here, there are many parallels with the employment situation in which women found themselves after the First World War.

41 Marie Stopes, *Married Love* (London: A.C. Fifield, 1918).

42 June Rose, *Marie Stopes and The Sexual Revolution* (London: Faber & Faber, 1993).

43 *Our Ostriches*, originally ran at the Court theatre for 91 performances, and *Buckie's Bear*, a play for children which she wrote under the name of Erica Fay' ran in 1932, 1935 and 1936, during the Christmas seasons, each run was between 24 and 38 performances. *Vectia*, a play about marital relationships and sexual desires was banned in 1926 and so, although published, was not performed in front of a public audience.

44 Originally produced at the Arts Theatre in January, 1930, directed by Auriol Lee.

45 Aimeé & Philip Stuart, *Nine Till Six* (London: French, 1930), p. 11.

46 Kate O'Brien, *Distinguished Villa* (London: Benn, 1926).

The first London production at the Aldwych in May 1926, transferred to the Little in July 1926, where it ran for 64 performances.

47 O'Brien, p. 16.

48 Elizabeth Baker, *Partnership* (London: French, 1921).

49 For a more detailed analysis of Baker's earlier work see, Sheila Stowell, *A Stage of Their Own; Feminist Playwrights of the Suffrage Era* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 100 - 128.

50 Stowell, p. 103.

51 Elizabeth Baker, *Edith* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1927).

52 The play was first produced in London, in March 1917, at the Court Theatre, by Mr. A.E. Drinkwater.

53 Baker, (1921), p. 17.

54 Ibid., p. 27.

55 Ibid., pp. 26 - 29.

56 Ibid., p. 59.

57 Ibid., p. 105.

58 Ibid., p. 107.

59 Elizabeth Baker, 'Chains' in, *Plays of Today; First Volume* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1911). The play had its first London production in 1909, and was revived at the Duke of York's in 1910.

60 Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowles', *Love Goes To Press* which Gellhorn has called a 'dotty farce'(letter from the author April, 1994.) was originally produced at the Embassy in June 1946, and later transferred to the Duchess where it ran for 40 performances.

61 Aimée & Philip Stuart, *Her Shop* (London: Benn, 1929). The play ran for 99 performances at the Criterion in 1929.

62 Ibid., p. 39.

63 Ibid.

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- 64 The two business men are reversed comic stereotypes of 'good' business men, Mr Jacob.  
is a 'Lowland Scot', and Mr McDonald, 'A Jew'.
- 65 Aimée & Philip Stuart, *Nine Till Six* (London: French, 1930). The play transferred to  
the New and then to the Criterion running for a total of 259 performances.
- 66 *Sunday Times*, 29 January 1930.
- 67 *Daily Telegraph* 30 January 1930.
- 68 Letter from Constance Smedley, Lyceum Club W., to the editor of the *Sunday Times* ,  
2 March 1930.
- 68 Aimée & Philip Stuart, *Nine Till Six* pp. 75 - 76 .
- 69 Ibid., p. 78.
- 70 Ibid., p. 20.
- 71 Ibid., p. 23.
- 72 Ibid.
- 73 Dodie Smith, 'Service' in *Famous Plays of 1932-1933* (London: Gollancz, 1933). The  
play was produced by Basil Dean and ran at Wyndhams for 199 performances.
- 74 Smith, (1933), p. 273.
- 75 Ibid., p. 322.
- 76 Ibid., pp. 322 - 323.
- 77 Both Lewis and Beddoe stress the fact that although the Central Committee for  
women's employment was set up during World War 1, with the aim of providing re-  
training grants for various low grade work, by 1921 most of it's funds were tied up in  
domestic service re-training projects. 'Domestic service' was the only job for which a  
re-training scheme was offered to unemployed women during the inter-war period.
- 78 Camillo Pellizzi, *English Drama; the last great phase*. (London: Macmillan, 1935).  
pp. 284 - 285. Pellizzi cites Aimée and Philip Stuart's plays alongside those of Van  
Druten.
- 79 S.J. Diner, 'George Herbert Mead's Ideas on Women and Career: A Letter to His  
Daughter-in-Law, 1920', *Signs: Journal of Women and Culture and Society*, 4: 21, (1978),  
407 - 408.

## MOTHERHOOD AND THE FAMILY; FROM THE MATRIARCH TO THE SINGLE REFUSING MOTHER

GRETA: Rails, rules, laws, guides, promises, terms, guarantees, conventions, traditions: into the pot with the whole bloody lot. Birth! Birth! That's the thing! Oh, I shall have hundreds of children, millions of hundreds and hundreds of millions. <sup>1</sup>

But we have had the bottom of things knocked out completely, we have been sent reeling into chaos and it seems to us that none of your standards are either fixed or necessarily good because in the end they resulted in this smash up. We have to learn to try and make a world for ourselves, basing it as far as possible on love and awareness, mental and bodily, because it seems to us that all the repressions and formulae, all the cutting off of part of experience, which perhaps looked sensible and even right in those calm years, have not worked.<sup>2</sup>

As a stage character type, the mother is a dominant figure in many of the plays written by women during the period under examination. Women playwrights appear to have had an overriding interest in the relationships between women of different generations with differing status, both to each other and to the society in which they function. Thus the mother figure varies, both in terms of her position within the narrative, and in terms of the definition of her character. When representations of mothers and motherhood are examined *en masse* over the period it appears that women playwrights were taking on board and at times challenging the new perceived social, ideological and psychological ideals of motherhood and definitions of both the 'good' and 'bad' mother. The stage persona of the mother was often used as a means of positing and sometimes questioning a particular relationship of women to both public and private social structures. During the period in question, the stage mother often has the role of exposing, sometimes affirming, sometimes challenging, the relationship of motherhood to an idea or proposed ideal of femaleness, femininity and the family.

In terms of social-ideological and semi-scientific tracts, focus during the twentieth century has largely been on motherhood from the child's point of view. Thus some have talked of the twentieth century as being the 'century of the

child'.<sup>3</sup> The so-called 'search for truth' revealed many 'truths', with the emergent mother always under the pressure to catch up with the latest theories of mothering, both good and bad. The new middle-class mother of the 1920s was in a completely different position from her foremothers, as to some extent was the mother of the 1930s, 1940s and so on. Periodically it was her job, for example, to be protective without being too protective, directive without being too directive, permissive without being overly permissive, to breast feed and enjoy it, to not breast feed and enjoy it, to fulfil her own ambitions, but never to let them get in the way of the job of nurturing her child.

#### THE THEORIST AND THE MOTHER; HISTORY, ECONOMY AND IDEOLOGICAL CHANGE.

As numerous feminist theorists and historians have identified, there were fairly clear cultural and historical shifts which influenced the role of the mother from the industrial revolution onwards.<sup>4</sup> During the period with which we are concerned, new 'theories' on mothering arose in part as a backlash to those of the late-Victorian and Edwardian eras, and as a result of the changing requirements of the economy. Freudian and other psychoanalytic theories on the nature and the pathology of the mother, and in turn the 'nature of woman', also influenced the emergent social theories on mothering and motherhood, mainly from the 1930s onward. It is interesting to note that many of the theories of motherhood are frequently impossible to separate from the varying ideas on the *nature* of the female and so called prerequisites of femininity. The aim of the first section of this chapter is to focus on the changes in perception and expectations of the role of the mother herself, whilst examining the relationship between both theories of motherhood and feminine sexuality.

During the latter years of the industrial revolution, motherhood as a social and ideological concept, slowly became more dependent on so-called scientific theory. This affected all classes of women, although the target groups were largely amongst the literate middle-classes and bourgeoisie. The making of motherhood into a scientific proposition, was,

...according to the experts ...to bring the home into harmony with (contemporary) industrial conditions, ...mothers were supposed to seek their ideals as well as their methods in the laboratories and commercial centres of the 'outside world'.<sup>5</sup>



Methods of mothering became a public issue, the solution of which was to be found in so called scientific theorising.

By the mid-1920s middle-class family size was shrinking, the nuclear family as a smaller social-domestic unit was replacing the extended family. Equally the function of the family was becoming as much to consume as it was to produce, with more households relying on shop-bought foodstuffs and goods. As a result, some feminists have argued that motherhood and childrearing had, for the middle-classes, become perceived as being an end in itself, both emotionally and practically:

Child raising comes unhinged from any external goals, ...an end in itself which will invite women deeper and deeper into a shadow world of feelings and suspected feelings, guilt, self analysis, and every nuance of ambivalence.<sup>6</sup>

The observation made by Ehrenreich and English exposes an ideology which is reflected in the discourse of many of the plays examined. Although Ehrenreich and English were largely concerned with cultural shifts in the United States, there is clearly a similar pattern in Britain, certainly on a general level. By the late-1920s motherhood was seen a job, for which women were seen to be most 'naturally' suited. As a result women were becoming more and more isolated from the public world, and this is reflected in the plays through the predominance of the private domestic sphere as key stage environments. The 'shadow world of feelings and suspected feelings' is one which is dramatised particularly in plays of the late-1940s and 1950s where the mother is the protagonist.

The identification of motherhood as work ran in parallel with an economic situation where work in the public sphere was in short supply. The legal prohibitions against married women working, such as the Married Women's laws, coincided with a social backlash against the notion of independence for women. This was in line with the thinking that marriage was a forerunner to motherhood and so retirement from the public work force.<sup>7</sup> In terms of popular thinking, woman was seen as being characterised by her biology. She was naturally passive, irrational and nurturing, and it was taken for granted that,

...for her personal happiness, her social status and her economic prosperity, marriage was for woman an indispensable condition.<sup>8</sup>

The biological reduction of femininity to a defined series of characteristics inherent in the 'natural' woman, was used again and again as a means of persuading middle-class women to give up the work to which they had become accustomed during each of the two World Wars. Yet, the reduction of femininity to a series of biological determinants could arguably be seen as a reflection of economic strategies more than anything else.<sup>9</sup>

As the twentieth century progressed, the 'experts' on motherhood centred their attention more and more on the child's needs rather than those of the mother. Some of the theories espoused that a child could be observed within a laboratory situation and that these observations would be equally applicable within the home. Dr. Arnold Gesell,<sup>10</sup> was one of the many who proposed that motherhood should be treated as a job which involved the skills of both a scientist and an instinctual woman. For Gesell the emphasis was almost entirely on the needs of the child, and the role of the mother was that of a kind of 'household engineer', whose job it was to smooth the way for the development of a 'free and natural' child, and to 'eliminate any family conflict'.<sup>11</sup> Again, one could only live out these scientific specifications for mothering if one was 'at home'. Some have argued that by the mid-twentieth century the child became the 'field representative' of the scientist whose research interests lay in the home and patterns of parenting.<sup>12</sup> Certainly, the mother was supposed to respond to the demands of the child, and the demands and needs of the child were defined and analysed by the 'experts', whose opinions were often regarded as 'truth'. So, although motherhood has a new status for women in the early to mid-twentieth century, it is a status which depends on the manipulation of perceptions of the role by scientific experts, which in turn is dependent on social and more specifically, economic trends.

Alongside advice to future mothers which recommends the application of a strict, scientific methodology in child rearing, there were other theorists who recommended that children would define their own needs; that motherhood demanded little more than common sense and patience. Dr. Benjamin Spock is famous for his encouragement of a permissive attitude towards children,<sup>13</sup> and alongside other 'experts' such as D.W. Winnicott,<sup>14</sup> promoted the idea that motherhood was easy if one just relaxed and followed natural instinct. Of course if a woman found that being a mother, wife and 'household engineer' was not enough in terms of fulfilment of her ambition, then she was in danger of moving into the range of the abnormal, a rejecting mother. The grounds for defining and analysing the phenomena of the rejecting mother are based largely on developments in psychoanalytic theory during the first thirty or so years of

the twentieth century. Before moving on to examine psychoanalytic dictates on motherhood and mothering, which are in turn bound up with dictates on female sexuality, it is important to take note of E.A. Kaplan's observation that,

...There is no overnight, uniform change either in relations of production or in cultural/ideological discourse. What we are talking about is a change in institution and correspondingly, in discourse that can be seen only from some historical distance; the precise links between discursive and technological changes again may become visible from an historical perspective but most often remain unclear...mothering practices vary enormously ...(and) the details of these practices and relations are lost to us in their specificity on the level of the Real. An additional problem is that mother-representations in any one period are also contradictory, multiple and many-sided; a variety of images exists at the same time, and depending on how researchers look (with what questions in mind) they may find something very different.<sup>15</sup>

In the same way, each batch of new ideas on mothering and motherhood may have come initially as a relief to each new generation of mothers.

#### THEATRICAL CONTEXT FOR REPRESENTATION; DOMESTIC DRAMA AND MELODRAMA

The general form of the dramatic texts which are examined within this thesis is that of the well-made play; usually a three-Act drama with a recognisable and chronologically ordered beginning, middle and end. Most of the settings for representations of motherhood, with very few exceptions, are middle-class domestic environments; the domestic realm being a private world in which very often women have either direct or implicit control.<sup>16</sup> One of the most common criticisms of these playwrights, both by their own contemporary critics and too often by those of our own age, is that their plays were merely domestic comedies or melodramas which refused or neglected to take on the real, that is to say the public world with its political issues and social change. Before moving on to look at representations of the mother within these plays, it is useful to examine the possibilities of melodrama in a twentieth-century context, as a valid dramatic form, for social and theatrical discourse.

Christine Gledhill has argued that the early Hollywood film industry was heavily influenced by the European melodramatic tradition. The melodrama

was remoulded into a form which brought it from the Victorian age into the popular film culture of the early-twentieth century:

As regards television, soap opera is commonly only seen as the last resort of melodrama. But soap opera, like the woman's film, has an affiliation with women's culture, the elision of which with melodrama should not be assumed.<sup>17</sup>

Kaplan notes that the melodramatic film form made use of 'popular materials' which addressed a wide audience. In terms of theatre there are certain comparable points to be observed.

It was not until the late 1960s that melodrama began to attract more serious critical attention.<sup>18</sup> Peter Brooks saw the emergence of melodrama as being specifically linked to cultural change produced by a particular stage of industrialisation. Beyond the theatrical genre, melodrama can be seen as a generalised type of aesthetic experience which produced specific emotional affects in the spectator.<sup>19</sup> For Brooks, the growth in popularity of the melodramatic form was a response to the 'loss of tragic vision', itself a result of the new society which emerged after the industrial revolution, bringing with it a 'society without organic and hierarchical order'. Melodrama could thus be seen as a type of 'sense-making', with its characteristic 'extreme states of being, suspense, dark plots rewarding of good over evil',<sup>20</sup> and so on. In terms of the texts under examination in this thesis, the element of 'melodrama' is one which has been transformed, where the discrepancies between good and evil are less clear, where there are fewer 'dark plots' and where characterisation and plot lines arguably reveal, if not more complex readings of the human condition, then certainly ones which are more applicable to the twentieth-century experience than that of the nineteenth century. Many of the playwrights used a popular form which took account of the developments in bourgeois and social drama of the late nineteenth and early-twentieth century. The plays under examination were not just melodramas, they were also plays of ideas some of which were implicit rather than explicit, but which, I will argue, were readable to their audiences as more than simple domestic narratives. The domestic realm has a different significance for women, especially at this point in history.

Representations of the mother and the family are prevalent in the vast majority of the plays written by women during the period under discussion. The dramatic protagonist, usually a woman, is almost always either portrayed with some psychological or social reference to marriage, motherhood or the family.

When thematic emphasis is on the mother and family life, discourse on the fragmented experience of being both a mother and a woman is often present. Sometimes the discourse is thematically centralised, at other times it provides a strong point of reference in the contextual background. The psychoanalytical theories outlined so far, are rarely directly cited or specifically indicated. However, many of the ideas which Horney, Klein and Deutsch amongst others, were processing, were also, in a much simplified form, part of the social and popular discourse on 'the woman question', in newspapers and various other literature of the age. Often, women are portrayed as being dissatisfied with the supposed automatic link between femininity and the desire for an experience of motherhood. More often though there is a celebration of an expanded perception of motherhood. Here, a mother is shown as also having to work outside the home, or her role within the domestic sphere is shown to be not simply that of a nurturer but also the role of an overseer of emotions and group organisation, often protecting her family from the outside world, at the same time as creating a family which somehow represents a building block in an attempt to strengthen the nation.

Where the mother persona is created with seemingly more direct reference to emergent psychoanalytic theory, she is rarely condemned or presented as being 'abnormal'. Rather, there is often some social or historical rationale for her position presented within the narrative. This is not to suggest that the psychoanalytic theories on motherhood and femininity are directly reflected in the texts, but rather that some parallels could be, and in some cases are made.

#### PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORIES ON MOTHERHOOD, THE MOTHER AND MOTHERING

Many of the theories which focus on the psychoanalytic and psychological complex of the mother are based upon or bear direct relation to, Freud's writing on female sexuality.<sup>21</sup> As a reaction to this work, where the woman is identified in negative terms, that is to say through her lack of penis, a fact which she apparently internalises and is one of the roots of gender difference, comes the work of the object relations psychologists, who concentrate on child development and behaviour during the pre-Oedipal phase. The mother-child relationship during this phase is seen as,

...an interpersonal field of relationships internalised by the infant and therefore configurative in the adult personality.<sup>22</sup>

Within object relations theories feminists have identified that the interpersonal field works in different ways for different-sexed children, and that the 'mother projects upon her daughter her own ambivalence about being female in a male culture'.<sup>23</sup> Nancy Chodorow, in her much criticised *Reproduction of Mothering*,<sup>24</sup> proposes that one of the results of this differential in the functioning of the pre-Oedipal phase is that women continue their nurturing connected relationship through having children, thus reproducing the relationship that they themselves had with their own mother. For Dorothy Dinnerstein,<sup>25</sup>

...woman is the 'other' only because she is the 'mother', ... patriarchy itself is a reaction against female dominion in infancy. Maternal omnipotence is so great a threat that we are willing to acquiesce to male rule in adulthood: even to women, paternal authority looks like a reasonable refuge.<sup>26</sup>

One of the most pervasive criticisms of Chodorow's theory is that it relies too heavily on the reduction of mothering to biology and along with the theories of other contemporaries like Hélène Cixous and Luce Irigaray, who come from a different cultural tradition, that it relies too heavily on the body and on essentialist notions of 'woman'.<sup>27</sup> It appears, however, impossible to disassociate motherhood from its biological origins, although there is great variation in the perceived role of social construction in the making of a 'mother'.

It is interesting that Freudian Oedipal theory could be read as suggesting psychic origin for the polarisation of the mother/whore paradigm, and it is this paradigm which Kaplan sees Julia Kristeva as reworking,<sup>28</sup> whereby, for Kristeva,

...woman is particularly implicated in abjection by virtue of being the one against whom the child has to develop subjectivity. If woman is culturally defined as the one at the margin between culture and chaos, order and anarchy, reason and the abyss, then she typifies abjection ...Hence women are sometimes reviled as too close to chaos, as outside of culture; but may then be idealised and elevated as supreme defenders against the wilderness that would envelop man.<sup>29</sup>

In opposition to the biological origins of motherhood are the social and economic forces which shape the experience of mothering. The conflict in theories of

mothering identified through feminist analyses from the late 1960s to the present day, could be seen as representing a continuum of questions which have echoed through time since the work of the first analysts who proposed alternative theories of gender difference to those of Freud. These analysts provide theories which are more contemporary to the playwrights whose work is examined in this thesis.

#### FEMININE PSYCHOLOGY AND MOTHERHOOD: KAREN HORNEY AND MATERNAL CONFLICT, MELANIE KLEIN AND HELEN DEUTSCH

During the last 30 or 40 years there have been contrasting evaluations of the educational capacities innate in mothers. About 30 years ago the maternal instinct was considered an infallible guide in the upbringing of children. When this proved inadequate it was followed by an equally over-stressed belief in theoretical knowledge about education. Unfortunately, equipment with the tools of scientific educational theories proved to be no more perfect guarantee against failure than the maternal instinct had been. And now we are in the midst of a return to stressing the emotional side of the mother-child relationship. This time, however, not with a vague conception of instincts to be relied upon, but with one definite problem: What are the emotional factors that can disturb a desirable attitude and from what sources do they originate?<sup>30</sup>

The theories of Karen Horney, a mother, doctor and psychoanalyst by her mid-twenties, have often been framed by a description of her as a woman who was strongly family and home oriented.<sup>31</sup> Yet socially, she was surrounded by artists, and bohemians, and worked amongst many of the more notable first and second generation psychoanalysts in Germany. By the early 1940s she had emigrated to the United States, where she continued to develop her work on neurosis.<sup>32</sup> Horney was one of the first women to put herself into the theoretical battlefield with Freud over the issue of female psychology and sexual development. It is also interesting to note that she was greatly influenced by Georg Groddeck, the self professed 'wild-analyst', whose ideas on illness and psychological disturbance were radical for his time. For Groddeck, illness was a form of self-expression and,

...whereas Freud spoke of curing neurosis, Groddeck spoke of

liberation through self-knowledge. (for him) Disease as an entity did not exist except as the expression of man's total personality. Disease was a form of self-expression.<sup>33</sup>

Although she has been criticised by many feminists since, because of the emphasis placed on female biology in her theories, and despite the fact that her most developed work came after the early 1930s, when she was in America and was more concerned with a 'concept of basic anxiety and its relationship to the neurotic character structure',<sup>34</sup> Karen Horney was an important figure in the discussions around female sexuality which dominated much psychoanalytic discourse during the early decades of the twentieth century. Karen Horney's theory of feminine psychology 'provided a necessary corrective to the phallogentric metapsychology that dominated in the 1930s'.<sup>35</sup> As Weskott has pointed out, Horney was not directly concerned with feminist issues. However, her later work, where she created a theory of character development which took great account of the causal effects of cultural values and social relations on the development of personality, has resonances with her work of the 1920s and 1930s which was specifically concerned with female psychology.<sup>36</sup> Horney's departure from Freud is important because she questioned the nature of his male bias and the influence which this had on the formulation of his theories.

The general cultural environment in which Horney developed her ideas, was one whereby women were expected to become emotionally and socially fulfilled by marriage and, in turn, motherhood. One of the many criticisms against Horney is that in her attempt to rescue female psychology from Freud's idea that female psychology is based on lack, she tried to 'assert separate female instincts'.<sup>37</sup> Horney proposed that the identification of penis envy in women could be seen as a projection of male envy of the womb and of women's child-bearing potential. She saw no reason why if women were supposed to be jealous of men's visible genitalia, men would not be jealous of women's 'invisible' sexual organs.<sup>38</sup> Horney's ideas are significant in part because of the emphasis she placed on the sociological causes of sexual difference. Some would argue that she 'feminised' psychoanalysis:

If Freudian theory reflects the male stereotypes in its emphasis on instinct and the supremacy of the ego, Horney's reflects the female experience ...Freud's instinct theory...reflects the narcissism of the rebellious son and the triumph of the modern, detached managerial



man, Horney's sociological explanation reflects the wounding of the devalued daughter and the hope for a new woman. <sup>39</sup>

Melanie Klein, who emigrated to Britain in the mid-1920s, was also concerned with female sexuality. Her main focus was on the psychic developments of the child within the first few years of its life. For Klein, psychoanalysis of children was possible and in fact desirable.<sup>40</sup> She identified that both male and female children went through a feminine stage in their early development, and that what was feminine during the femininity phase 'was the desire for children'.<sup>41</sup> For Klein, both the female and male child's identification with the mother as the primary object, caused inevitable anxiety; her analytic thesis is full of associations of tyranny, castration and devouring for the child in relation to its parent. For Klein, the child could experience the 'good' breast, that of the ideal mother, or the bad breast, that of the phallic mother. She also suggested at times that the mother was likely to project her unfulfilled desires onto the child and so inhibit 'good' mothering.<sup>42</sup> Appignanesi and Forrester suggest that Klein's influence was widespread even amongst those who were not her followers. She basically founded the psychoanalytic school of object relations and,

...Klein's work pioneered a slow and subtle shift, one, perhaps that transformed psychoanalysis more than any other single factor: the reorientation of the understanding of the child's inner world around its relation to its mother. Mothers became models ...mothering provided descriptions of what psychoanalysts were supposed to be doing: via the mother, the normative life story was introduced ...mothering was being used to understand psychoanalysis. <sup>43</sup>

For Melanie Klein, the pre-Oedipal stage was of the utmost importance. It is during this stage that both the male and female child became attached to the primary figure, the mother. Her ideas were at odds with both Freud's and those of his daughter Anna, partly because of her emphasis on the pre-Oedipal stage as being central to the development of personality and partly because she disagreed with Freud over the dominant influence which formulates the super-ego. For Freud, the super-ego is a kind of 'policing force' shaped by parental influences, used as a mechanism to repress Oedipal desires. It develops after the Oedipal stage. Klein's clinical work with children led her to surmise,

...the super-ego is not formed from any identification with parents, but has its source in the child's own anxiety experience of weaning and its attendant aggressive and sadistic impulses.<sup>44</sup>

As a result, for Klein, the Oedipal stage related to all objects in terms of object-gratification, not just to the male reproductive organ. Although some would argue that Klein's work contributed only in small detail to the discourse on female psychology,<sup>45</sup> it is interesting to note that she was against Freud in his assertion of there being one primary sex, i.e. male, through her assertion that both male and female children experience a 'feminine' stage in development:

What is feminine about the femininity phase is the desire for children. Yet what the child would meet if it were to enter the womb to steal the children is the hostile penis of the father. Thus the femininity phase is characterised by anxiety relating to the womb and the father's penis, and this anxiety subjects the baby to the tyranny of a superego which devours, dismembers and castrates and is formed upon the image of the father and the mother alike.<sup>46</sup>

However, one of the problematics in Klein's work, as with Horney's, is the search for and assertion of an innate femininity. The supposed existence of an innate femininity was virtually accepted amongst many theorists at the time, it was the nature of that femininity which was questioned. For both, feminine psychology was inevitably bound by a desire for children and the different roles played in the reproductive process by men and women.

Helen Deutsch, a Viennese psychoanalyst,<sup>47</sup> was also involved in the discourse around the nature of female psychology which prevailed during the 1920s and 1930s. Although Deutsch's ideas followed Freud's more closely, there are certain cross-over points with those of Horney and Klein. Deutsch was interested in the differentials in roles of the male and female in reproduction and in the nature of the heterosexual 'sex act' itself. She made parallel connections between the mother and child which went beyond the Oedipal, connecting the birth process with the sexual act. For her, the sexual act between men and women reconnects the woman with her mother, the vagina is 're-discovered' through a masochistic submission, the male ejaculates sperm and the woman a baby. This of course is an over-simplified summary, but it does indicate a

pathway to her later work on female homosexuality, which she basically saw as some kind of regressive phase, that is to say, that a woman becomes an adult woman only through sexual penetration by a man. Unlike Horney and to a certain extent Klein, Deutsch re-emphasised the primacy of penis envy. For Deutsch feminine psychology was bound by a lack, a situation of loss, as a result of which women were formed on a basis of 'castration complex'. By the early 1930s, she outlined key character traits of female psychology as being those of masochism and passivity. In a re-working of a paper delivered in 1932, Deutsch while looking at cases of what she describes as female 'frigidity', stated that,

...frigidity, like impotence, also originates in the development of the castration complex and the Oedipus complex. Its most frequent cause is a protest against the assumption of the passive feminine role - in other words, the masculinity complex.<sup>48</sup>

Deutsch proposed that a sublimated fear of sex which for women was essentially a masochistic act, presented itself in the interjected image of a sexual woman as being a negative one. Therefore she opposed the possibility of motherhood and sexual gratification, implying that motherhood itself could be a form of sexual gratification. For Deutsch male sexual tendency and preference indicated that for men, women were either mothers or whores, nurturing or sexual. She saw this as being both reflected in and a reflection of, that which lies in the deep unconscious of women. The essential difference between the male and female experience of this phenomenon is that, for women, the ego replaces that which for men is the object. Therefore,

...The woman is herself 'mother' or 'prostitute', and the whole inner conflict represents the struggle between the two tendencies, which appear to be contrary, but which, ultimately, in this case too converge in the single idea of the unworthy mother.<sup>49</sup>

Thus for a woman to expect sexual happiness and a good mothering experience was problematic.

Deutsch also proposed that, once the female child realises that she will never have a penis, both her desire and disappointment become turned in on themselves. From this phase onwards the female child internalises passivity, this prepares her for her natural role as a woman in female life. The implications of Deutsch's theories, although simplified here, can be seen to be far reaching.

Primarily, although she became one of the vanguard in psychoanalytic discussions on female psychology, she has been criticised both by her contemporaries; for her lack of desire to deviate from Freud to any great extent, and by feminists; for her contribution to a dominant ideology that women are naturally passive and masochistic. Other critiques have been based on her emphasis on biology rather than cultural imperatives. Karen Horney found great faults with this, even though she herself was using biological factors as the basis for her own identification of feminine character traits:

When Helen Deutsch writes that the masculinity complex in women plays a much greater part than the femininity complex in man, she would seem to overlook the fact that the masculine envy is clearly capable of more successful sublimation than the penis envy of the girl, and that it certainly serves as one, if not as the essential, driving force in the setting up of cultural values.<sup>50</sup>

For Horney, cultural imperatives were integral to the development of personality. Nevertheless, although there are great differences between Horney, Deutsch and Klein it is important to note that their theories are arrived at from clinical practice which itself originated from Freudian methodology. Klein applied the same analytic methods to children, where play could replace talk, as those which were applied to adults. All were using psychoanalytic processes to identify the 'norm' through looking at what were considered to be abnormal or developmentally arrested female adults or children. All were susceptible to the influence of the cultural background of their time, much of which was designed to create, or at least had the effect of promoting and validating a notion of acceptable hierarchies of both gender and class.

Freud's main criticism of his dissenters on theories of female psychology, was that they constantly refused to distinguish between what was biological and what was psychic.<sup>51</sup> However,

...the key elements of Deutsch's reinterpretation of Freud ...became widely perceived as the Freudian orthodoxy after the Second World War: whereby femininity is now synonymous with passivity and masochism. The sexual life of the woman is dominated by the masochistic triad of castration, rape (coitus) and parturition, each linked in the mother-daughter cycle.<sup>52</sup>

Juliet Mitchell suggests that, although their theories were important as part of a particular discourse seated within a particular cultural context, Deutsch and Horney undermined the possible implications of their work because of their search for an 'essential' and therefore 'natural' woman.<sup>53</sup> This search was however acceptable in the intellectual climate within which they were working; one in which a search for the 'natural' and 'essential' dominated. In much of the work of women playwrights during a period of fifty or so years which encompass those years where the debate on femininity and motherhood raged fiercely, it is precisely the confused relationship between nurture and nature which appears to be consistently foregrounded in narratives which focus on mothers and the family, on the choice of social roles for woman and her relationship to both the private and public world.

## PART ONE; THE INTER-WAR YEARS

### THE IRON HAND IN A VELVET GLOVE; THE MATRIARCHS OF THE 1920S AND 1930S

G.B. Stern was a popular novelist who also worked as a journalist and film script writer.<sup>54</sup> Described by one critic in the mid-1930s as a 'pantechicon novelist (saga school)',<sup>55</sup> Stern found great success with her Rakonitz novels, of which *The Tents of Israel* was adapted for the stage in the form of *The Matriarch*.<sup>56</sup> The play provided one of the last British stage roles for Mrs. Patrick Campbell, as Anastasia Rakonitz, the matriarch of the title. The play provides an implicit investigation of motherhood as both a biological and culturally defined experience. The narrative documents three generations of the Rakonitz 'tribe', a wealthy Jewish family based in London with contacts and family members all over Europe. The economic basis of the family originates from their dealings in precious stones, which gained momentum after the Napoleonic wars. Anastasia is 'head' of the family, and, as such, controls the decision-making both within the business and within the extended family unit. The play opens with a prologue, set in 1902, in which Anastasia's daughter Sophie reveals to the audience that she has adopted the illegitimate child fathered by her soon-to-be estranged husband, Oliver Maitland, and mothered by a local barmaid, 'Plymouth Nell', (who coincidentally never appears in the play.) Sophie adopts the baby out of necessity rather than kindness, as she tells her husband,

SOPHIE: I've told you a hundred times, I must have a son to show Mamma! ...She'll never take any notice of me if I don't have a

son! I might as well never have been born - I might as well die, if I don't have a son. A daughter would have been no good.

OLIVER: No. Girls don't count for much in the tribe of Israel do they? <sup>57</sup>

Maitland disappears before the arrival of Anastasia, who brings her unmarried sister Wanda, treated as a servant, with her. Anastasia has already organised for her grandchild Danny to become part of the family business. She plans to take them all back to London, where her granddaughter Toni was born on the same day as Sophie's 'son':

ANASTASIA: ...For in London we will all be united. For the babies, they must be considered first.<sup>58</sup>

Act One takes us forward in time to 1921, to the drawing room of a Georgian house in Holland Terrace, in London, lavishly decorated with chandeliers, Eastern carpets, and with two portraits of the founders of the Rakonitz family, Simon and Babette hanging in a prominent position on the wall. The family are all waiting for Danny's imminent return from Vienna. Anastasia's brothers, 'the uncles', are waiting in the drawing room. Toni has asked Anastasia to order Danny back from Vienna, about which he is not pleased, and when she tells him that, because Sophie died when he was a baby, she will always back him up, as it must have been awful for him not to have had a mother, Danny points out that he has no such attachment to family:

Oh, Toni, you sentimental ass! ...I like being without a mother. I only wish I was without a grandmother, too. Without any relations at all. That would be perfect. Paradise... <sup>59</sup>

The two grandchildren are characterised as opposites: Toni the daughter of a non-Jewish woman, is the eldest child of Anastasia's eldest son. She has a romanticised vision of and deep attachment to family as an ideal, and to family roots in terms of her position within the Rakonitz tribe. Danny, on the other hand, has little affiliation with the family and wants to travel; his attachment is to Toni and to the financial support which the family provides. Although she understands the criticisms which are constantly aimed at Anastasia, Toni is protective of her, and understands that her role as the matriarch is defined by cultural necessity as much as biological fact.

Toni's cousin Val presents another opposition, this time female to female. Val is an artist who has been socialising outside of the family parameters, much like Danny. When he asks her what she's been occupying herself with in his absence she replies,

VAL: Everything I shouldn't. Bobbing my hair, smoking, drinking cocktails, using my solemn art on advertisement posters, loafing about in France without a chaperone.

TONI: Ineligible young men: daring clothes, debts, extravagances, *crime passionelles*, and cheeking Aunt Elsa - isn't that it, Val? I wonder you weren't afraid to come today.<sup>60</sup>

Used as one layer of a dramatic device which aims to represent the necessary differences between the two generations of matriarchs, namely, Anastasia and Toni, this opposition in characterisation is also re-focused in the different ways in which each of the three cousins take responsibility during the family crises of the play.

In the prologue, Anastasia Rakonitz is a woman of fifty who looks no older than a 'voluptuous forty', with an accentuated central European accent. She is an archetypal image of a 1920s 'Jewish mother' who continues to mother and control her children even when they have matured into adulthood. She covers up any cracks in the illusion of family respectability, justifying Oliver Maitland's disappearance as being almost an act of God, because he was not Jewish, therefore allaying any possibility of her daughter Sophie's loss of face at 'losing' her husband. When Anastasia's son Ludo steals a significant sum of money from the firm of a great family friend, Mr. Cohen, she insists that Ludo was borrowing the money, that no criminal act could have taken place within the boundaries of family and family friends. For the first Act, Anastasia's world is that of Vienna during the late-nineteenth century, a world which she has recreated for herself in London. According to her younger sister Elsa, Anastasia has taken all the best family possessions as her own, only loaning them out to family members, to recall them later when she herself has suffered financial losses. Other women in the family have little access to information about the financial state of the business, but Anastasia is fully informed:

MAXIMILLIAN: Anastasia! Oh yes, she is different, she is our field-Marshall. Her energy is stupendous.<sup>61</sup>

Equally, Anastasia Rakonitz has control over the daily lives of the other women in the play, especially her sister Wanda and her daughter-in-law Susan, who is Toni's mother.

Act Two takes place six months after an economic devastation has caused the collapse of family investments. The scene is more bare, gone are the lavish rugs and ornaments of the first Act. Anastasia is busy ordering everyone about, possessions have been sold and the family is on the move to a smaller house in Ealing. Toni has been working in a dressmaking establishment, and it is implied that her father committed suicide after their financial crash. Anastasia is concerned for Toni's health, complaining that her employers do not feed her regularly with chicken-soup, and do not let her rest every few hours. The main point however is that Anastasia cannot accept that Toni is working for a living, and the opening lines of the scene bring the difference between the two generations of matriarch into the foreground:

ANASTASIA: No Rakonitz woman has ever before earned money!  
No Rakonitz woman has ever worked before! (*Puts some linen in hamper down R. and goes behind table again, sorting linen*)

SUSAN: (*brusquely*). Work? Look at Wanda! They've worked like slaves, but not for money. That's the only difference, if you ask me!

ANASTASIA: ...It's not right for my granddaughter to be brought up without travel and languages, without conversation with brilliant people, who have influence, who have *savoir faire*, who can make her future for her! ...It is not likely that Toni will meet anyone either, with these Woolfs or at the evening school where she learns to draw the fashions, whom could she possibly marry!

SUSAN: Marry? At her age? She's a child!

ANASTASIA: When I was Toni's age I was already married three years!<sup>62</sup>

Anastasia wants to 'save' Toni by bringing her home and feeding her copious hot meals. Her character described by the reviewer for the 1950 radio production of the play is one of an 'indomitable' woman, who, 'storms, persuades, domineers and cajoles', and she is described by Danny as being 'like nine people'.<sup>63</sup> Yet this description of Anastasia is only applicable to the first two Acts of the play. By Act Three, where the action has again been moved, this time by five years, she has had a stroke and is an old lady in a wheel chair, still giving orders but with less effect and fewer results.



By the end of the third Act, Toni, who has been saving in order to pay back into Mr. Cohen's family business the money stolen by Ludo, is effectively running the family. She is living in a cottage studio in Chelsea with Val and wants to take over the fashion business from the Woolfs, who are about to retire, but lacks the capital. Toni felt it her duty to take on the family debt, and preserve the family honour. When the time comes for her to pay off the debt, she does not have enough money. She considers using the money which she has saved to buy the Woolf's business from them, but eventually prioritises the family reputation over her own ambition. When Danny's estranged father turns up unexpectedly and gives Danny £200, explaining that he is not a real member of the family by blood, Danny proposes marriage to Toni, emphasising the fact that they are not blood cousins, as were Anastasia and her husband. Toni's initial reaction is that she will marry him and have 'fun at last'. That is, until Danny asks her what she plans to do about paying the debt. At this point Toni makes what she sees as the only decision possible, that Danny's cheque should be used to pay the debt, and that they will get married but delay leaving the family fold until they can save enough money to make sure that everyone is 'safe' and taken care of. In her eyes the family has to come first. This is the point at which Danny accuses her of being a matriarch:

DANNY: (*as though he were just waking from a nightmare*) ...and I never saw it until now...it's been going on all the time, getting stronger! ...if I married you I'd never be free of the family...You're the Matriarch over again, you are exactly like her and know it, ...afraid to behave as she behaves. You try and think you're cool and logical and modern - but all that passes away, and you'll be more and more like the Matriarch as you grow older ...you'll be the bully of the family ...and yet they'll all come to you, as head of the family ...because you care about them most ...There'll always be a Matriarch in your family.<sup>64</sup>

Danny then leaves all connection with the family behind him, following in his father's footsteps. Toni is left alone, shocked that she should be thought of as being like her grandmother with whose personality she considers herself to have very little in common. When Mr. Cohen arrives to collect the debt money, he instead offers the sum as capital for Toni's business venture, and she then decides that she will buy a house so that she and her mother, brother, aunt and

grandmother can all live together. When she tells Val, the response is less vehement but on the same lines as Danny:

VAL: Well, I'm damned ...Toni you're the Matriarch all over again.

TONI: (*very simply*) Am I?<sup>65</sup>

To a certain extent the narrative of the play fits into the 'maternal sacrifice paradigm', based on Kaplan's perception of representations of motherhood in popular culture and melodrama, characterised by,

...dominant representations, even in forms that specifically address women, satisfy unconscious male desire more than any possible unconscious female ones, pleasure is gained through the fantasy of surrendering all for the phallus.<sup>66</sup>

If we substitute family for phallus, then there is an interesting dilemma. The particular family in this case is matriarchal in structure. Position within the power structure of the family, by the end of the play, has nothing to do with biological motherhood. *The Matriarch* is not so much a play about mothering as it is a play in which changes in the form and structure of a matriarchal family, are examined. Anastasia is the biological mother and head of the family. Toni is not a biological mother, and the implication is that she has traded possibilities of romance and marriage with Danny for what she sees as being her matriarchal 'role'. For Toni, the position of family matriarch has to be maintained and modernised. Her maternal sacrifice is to make it her job to provide for the needs of those around her, through work rather than through negotiation and favouritism like her grandmother. She finds romance in her role within the family. Originally described as being frail, Toni develops an ambition to run her own company almost as soon as she ventures out into the public world of work. This ambition is both the result of a desire to be 'successful' in the 'male' public business world and a fulfilment of the need to provide for the family.

There are very few male characters in the play. The old uncles disappear after the first Act, and Danny and his father, who are both written as having rather shallow personalities, have very little real action other than to provide the audience with further insight into the position of the women within the play. The abundance of mothers contrasts with the absence of fathers. Stern creates an historical distance between the matriarch of the nineteenth century and that of the twentieth. In doing so, the role of matriarch becomes far more of a cultural

and economic imperative than a biological one; Toni may be the eldest grandchild, but she is not fully of the 'tribe' in that her mother was not of the Jewish faith. Toni does see herself as having a duty to the 'tribe'; she is related by blood. Yet her choice is to remain within a powerful position in a 'female' world, rather than be married. Thus it is a choice between located in a position of power, or being married and relatively powerless. Married life is not as appealing when her potential husband Danny, makes such statements as,

...I think Tony needs to be bossed and bullied for a bit.<sup>67</sup>

Stern has written a complex play which, although on the surface promises to provide a biological imperative as the rationale for the dénouement, fails to do so. We should note, however, that at the same time as questioning and criticising the structure of this culture specific family unit, she affirms its necessity. This was not an uncommon strategy.

*Family Affairs*<sup>68</sup> by Gertrude Jennings and *Dear Octopus*<sup>69</sup> by Dodie Smith, are two plays particularly notable for the use to which the matriarch figure is put. Both plays are set in the private sphere of the home, both are concerned with the events in the internal family life of the upper middle-classes, and both were produced featuring actresses who were well known 'stars' of the mid-twentieth century West End theatre, as matriarch figures. The matriarch is the central figure around whose behaviour and emotional complexities the actions of the other characters revolve.

Gertrude Jennings was no stranger to the West End by the early 1930s. Nor was she unknown to audiences more concerned with non-commercial theatre.<sup>70</sup> Her One-Act play, *A Woman's Influence* was one of the most frequently performed in the early years of the Actresses Franchise League.<sup>71</sup> She wrote numerous One-Act plays, and although she is often mentioned for her popularity amongst amateurs, she achieved a number of successes with her West End plays during the inter-war years. Directed by Auriol Lee and starring Lillian Braithwaite as Lady Madehurst, the first Act of *Family Affairs* takes place in the drawing room at Lady Madehurst's house in Queen's Gate, London. Jennings uses what appears to have been a familiar format: the family gathering, revelations of superficial dilemmas, discovery, by the maternal figure, of the real family problems. The plot often includes the revelation of family secrets, followed by the reinstatement of both the matriarch's position as head of the family and the re-solidifying of family unity. *Family Affairs* is both about

'romantic' affairs and the affairs involved in the overseeing or managing of the complexities of family life.

We are introduced to Helena Warwick who, it turns out, is having an affair with Harvey Madehurst, one of Lady Madehurst's sons, the other two being Sydney and Herbert. Helena complains that Harvey is rarely on his own and always surrounded by 'such a barrage of family'.<sup>72</sup> Lady Madehurst's grandson Nevil has a wife, Rose, who is just about to sue him and run off with a hairdresser. Herbert's wife Julia is reprimanded by Lady Madehurst for not paying enough attention to family matters:

LADY MADEHURST: My mother, dear Julia, lived for her home and her children, as I did for mine! She never thought us one too many!<sup>73</sup>

The family secret revealed at the end of Act one is that the estranged son Sydney is back from Jamaica and needs money to support himself. When he turns up in the second Act, his brother Harvey tells him that he'll find the money if Sydney promises to disappear again. Act two continues with Lady Madehurst's admission that she knows all about Rose and is trying to bribe the amorous hairdresser to vanish. She also tells Harvey that instead of marrying Helena, who by now has come up with plans to divorce her husband which will leave her with a large income, he should marry his secretary, who is a 'nice dear girl'. Helena, an outsider, has few romantic notions either about family life or about Lady Madehurst; she tells Harvey that when they get married she wants to move and wants him to sell the family home:

HELENA: ...No house, however large, would hold your mother and me. The British Museum wouldn't do it. I've gone all 1870 to please her. I've listened to all her tales ...entirely on your account, and now I've done with the lot of it ...Put the house in the agent's hands as soon as ever you can, won't you?<sup>74</sup>

Lady Madehurst works out that she will put Helena off marrying Harvey by 'befriending' her; she fantasises with her about how they will spend their evenings together once she becomes her daughter-in-law. The realisation that Harvey is inescapably entwined with the family discourages Helena from continuing the relationship. In Act Three Lady Madehurst discovers that the reason Sydney disappeared in the first place was because he had been

embezzling money. Rather than spurn him, she helps him, saying that she will find the money to pay back what was stolen, she tells him to forget everything and reminds him that after all she is his mother, and then she helps him to go into hiding from the police. When she is sure that Harvey will marry Margaret, the secretary, she offers to move in with her daughter let him sell the house.

The matriarch in *Family Affairs* is considered as the head of the family, even though she is financially supported by her children, who humour her and yet desire her approval. Lady Madehurst is opinionated, romanticises the value of the family, and always, in the end, always seems to know best. The maintenance of family bonds is of the utmost importance, and morality is not shaped by the outside world, but rather by what is required to keep the family together. A mother's love for her children means that she will do anything for them, even break the law, but in return, they must obey her and must also prioritise, not themselves, but the needs of the family unit.

Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus* provides a contrast of character in the matriarchal figure of Dora Randolph, the mother of an upper-middle class family who have come to celebrate their parents' golden wedding anniversary. Dora believes that women should not be independent and certainly should not be business women. She disapproves of the fact that her daughter Hilda is a business woman and when her grandson tells her that her daughter is,

...quite a big pot really Granny. I read an article on her the other day in a Pioneer Woman series ...She's an estate agent. She's put through one or two pretty big deals in house property.

Dora rather scathingly replies,

It's a surprise to me that Hilda knows the back of a house from the front.<sup>75</sup>

Dora Randolph does not however show any real disapproval of her daughter Cynthia, who is living in Paris with a married man. Much like the relationship between Lady Madehurst and Sydney in the Jennings' play, Dora's relationship with Cynthia is bound by blood and as far as she is concerned, it is more important for Cynthia to be a part of the family than to be judged and outcast because of the choices she has made in her personal life. Smith makes some attempt to show Dora outside of her connection to the matriarchal role, through her relationship with her husband's ex-fiancé Belle, who has been

invited to the golden wedding celebrations. Belle is bright and garish but full of character and individuality, and through their relationship the 'younger' Dora is revealed as jealous and highly competitive with other women.

The play is interesting because it provides an extremely idealised picture of upper-middle-class family life and of Englishness, and contains innate statements about the necessity of the family unit and its indestructibility. The 'dear octopus' of the title symbolises the family, a treasured but feared institution. In the closing scene of the play, the speech made in honour of the celebrating couple is both coercive and patriotic:

NICHOLAS: The family isn't what it was. And there ...lies its strength. It is, like nearly every British institution, adaptable. It bends, it stretches - but it never breaks ...To the family - that dear octopus from whose tentacles we never quite escape, nor, in our in most hearts, ever quite wish to.<sup>76</sup>

Upper-middle-class matriarchal figures can be found again and again especially in plays written by women during the 1930s. These grand old dames were either feared or despised by their families such as in *Moonlight is Silver*<sup>77</sup> where Dame Agnes Ronsard almost breaks up her son's marriage because of her desire to keep him in the family home. Stage representations of the all-powerful and fearsome matriarch such as Rose Franken's Mrs Hallam in *Another Language*;<sup>78</sup> or Mildred Surrege, with her 'thin face, restless face and ...discontented mouth', in Dorothy Massingham's *The Lake*,<sup>79</sup> abound. They are sometimes humoured but more commonly they are revered. Here Franken describes Mrs. Hallam as follows:

Outwardly she presents the picture of a sweet and appealing old lady, but one gradually becomes aware of the incessant functioning of an alert mind, a quick discernment and an indomitable will.<sup>80</sup>

These plays are more concerned with the institution and historical foundations of motherhood and the psychology of a particular generation of mothers than with the conditions of or issues which surround motherhood. There were in fact a stream of plays about families and family life during the last decade of the inter-war years, including Gertrude Jennings' *Our Own Lives*<sup>81</sup> and Dodie Smith's *Call It A Day*.<sup>82</sup> Contemporary critics were quick to see these

plays as being 'of strong feminine interest',<sup>83</sup> as 'dramas of the home' and as being vehicles for the 'stage grandmother' who,

...is a distinct species with two principal varieties - the wisely tender (with lace and bugles), the shrewdly dictatorial (with ebony stick). ...for, though not real, she has on stage a reality of her own ...and is often an endearing and even a persuasive creature.<sup>84</sup>

The matriarchal maternal figures represent mothers as the resolvers of family conflict, and the maintainers of order within the family. They are the 'household engineers', serving what they perceive as being the needs of their children, controlling access to family information and indeed the structure and activities of the family unit itself. The matriarchs are often shown to be in conflict with the next generation of women, especially those who come from outside of the family unit and marry their sons. The plays provide dominant representations of this figure, which during the 1930s was given wide circulation, especially in the commercially oriented West End. It is rare to find any dissension of this family figure except from younger generations of women in particular, who object to the control which the matriarch figures wield over their lives.

During the 1930s, there appear to have been two prevalent representations of motherhood in plays by women which to some extent are polarised in terms of generations. On the one hand, where motherhood is thematically linked with work and the public sphere, the mothers are younger and the plays are more about the relationship between work, family responsibility and 'womanhood' or motherhood.<sup>85</sup> These are plays where the lives of 'modern' mothers are foregrounded rather than being entwined with narratives that are more concerned with theatrically visible generational differences between mothers of one era and mothers of another. This is not to say that the two polarities are mutually exclusive, but where two generations are in opposition one often finds what Kaplan has identified as a resisting text, whereby,

...it is a matter of distinguishing some texts that at least recognise certain discursively constituted female positions as oppressive as against those that simply validate the structure.<sup>86</sup>

Certainly, if we substitute child with family and mother with matriarch, then the paradigm is such that the private family unit as presented in these plays, is at

times an idealised and extended version of a perceived socially ideal relationship between mother and child, whereby the mothers' needs as an individual are fulfilled through her relationship to the child. In turn the possibility of an ideal relationship is often questioned

#### PHALLIC MOTHERS AND REFUSING MOTHERS

The phallic mother as propounded by psychoanalytic discourse is basically a controlling and forceful woman whose 'natural' femininity has somehow been overcome by what were seen as being essentially male desires for control and dominance. As such she 'refuses' to be a subservient mother, and becomes manipulative and overpowering, often projecting her own desires into the way she nurtures her child. Although there are a number of 'refusing mothers' in plays before the 1950s, they are few and far between. Kaplan returns to Melanie Klein for theoretical discourse on the mother in the unconscious in her quest to find an psychoanalytic basis for the 'phallic' mother. Klein,

...stressed the child's unconscious fantasies of being devoured by the mother. Klein's work is important since she theorised the centrality of symbol formation in ego-development; this enabled her to make a clear distinction between the mother in the unconscious and the real or historical mother ...Klein also theorised that early on the child has two internalised unconscious mothers which emerge from its experience in relation to the breast ... (according to whether the breast is present and providing milk, or absent and leaving the child in need, which are transferred to the whole body of the mother once the child reaches that level of cognition. It is easy to see how these two unconscious mothers later become the alternate 'ideal' nurturing and evil 'phallic', denying mothers. It is also clear that, from this psychoanalytic perspective, the mother in the social cannot hope to satisfy the infant, no matter what she does or how nurturing she is.<sup>87</sup>

Kaplan also points to the fact that Freud did very little work on the mother/daughter and mother/child relationship during this pre-Oedipal phase. For him it was a period which only the woman could have experiential access to and data on. During the 1920s, Deutsch was concerned with the way in which women who she effectively classed as abnormal developed traits which she saw as being masculine, that is to say non-passive. But it was Horney who, even



though she collapsed the psychic and the social, suggested that women were given negative images of womanhood from birth. As a result women may develop negative feelings about being a woman and so develop characteristics which are considered as being masculine, this of course may result in a woman having the desire to be domineering. What is interesting about these ideas when we apply them to the matriarch figure, is that she has to be domineering in order to fulfil her feminine role. It may be possible therefore to see the maternal matriarch texts as providing at one and the same time very conservative female constructs who, through being represented in the context of their 'power domain' provide a social rationale for existence rather an innate biological one. If the social role of the mother is to instinctively maintain and protect the family, the required behaviour may be more 'masculine' identified than 'feminine'. As such the 'maternal' mothers of the previous section are to some extent also 'phallic' mothers, by necessity.

Joan Morgan's *This Was A Woman*<sup>88</sup> had its first try-out at Beatrice and Jack de Leon's Q Theatre and then transferred to the Comedy Theatre in 1944. Morgan was described by Beverley Baxter as,

...one of those light skinned, fair-haired girls who rush all over the tennis court on Saturday afternoons and whose healthy vivacity at tea would turn any potential lover into a pal. For sheer wind-swept normality and British girlhood let me commend Miss Morgan as she appeared to us on the stage.<sup>89</sup>

The description of the erstwhile child film star and West End actress is in complete contrast to a narrative breakdown of her play, in which we find lust, murder, frustration and a son who has just taken a course in psychoanalytic analysis, as key elements. Morgan was criticised for not re-writing a Hedda Gabler or Regina Hubbard with more depth,<sup>90</sup> yet, although Olivia Russell bears some resemblance to the 'anti' heroines of both Ibsen's and Hellman's plays, Morgan could only ever be accused of a vague re-working of similar archetypes within a completely different social and cultural context.

The narrative focuses on the transformation of Olivia Russell from the rather wistful and bored wife of Arthur Russell, shipping clerk and keen bird watcher, into a power-hungry murderess whose devious actions are discovered by her medically-trained son Terry, in the final Act of the play. The play is set in suburbia, and Olivia, with her tumbling curls and artistic taste, is middle-aged and middle-class; 'her voice is as complex as her appearance'.<sup>91</sup> We first meet her

in the Turret Room of her Gothic house, talking to the housekeeper who intends to leave the household and join her husband in his new business:

OLIVIA: I think you're sacrificing yourself to a man's whim ...I only hope you won't regret it. <sup>92</sup>

Olivia questions her own husband's lack of ambition and social status and is concerned that her son will just marry on a whim, rather than find someone whom she considers to be suitable; she is ambitious both for herself and for her son. Olivia also projects her own feelings about men and marriage onto her daughter, Fenella:

Oh why must I feel like this, as if the whole horror were my own to be gone through all over again? Why must my children be so close to me, part of me that I feel everything that happens to them as though it were my own tragedy ...(men) ...you wouldn't understand...beasts they are all beasts.<sup>93</sup>

After giving her new housekeeper *Lady Chatterley's Lover* to read, Olivia encourages her to flirt with Fenella's fiancé and future husband. When Austen Penrose, family friend and old friend of Mr. Russell, comes to pay a visit, the audience are shown a man who has the status and ambition which Olivia would like to find in her own husband. Her open admiration for Penrose instigates a tense conversation where he assures her that she has the perfect family 'set-up', and asks her what more a person could possibly want from life:

OLIVIA: Power. (*the word drops like a stone into a still pool ...there is a long silence* )

PENROSE: Power is an unknown quantity ...according to how it is used. No ...no, on balance I wouldn't say that power was a desirable factor in life.

OLIVIA: (*holding his eyes*) No one realises the *full* of a thing unless they've had it. A loaf only has meaning for a starving man ...(Terry watches his mother intently) ...Authority is power. I envy you that. I envy you. I'd have enjoyed power ...(there is a curiously tense atmosphere) ...

OLIVIA: (*presses her fingers to her brow*) This sense of frustration ... mediocrity...knowing one's potentialities. Knowing one might have been ...accomplished ...with the right man...<sup>94</sup>

The third Act takes us to a point six months later. Olivia's husband has been taken ill. Austen has been helping Olivia to look after him and now perceives Olivia as a self-sacrificing nurturing woman. When the children return from a working cruise, they are full of apprehension and find their mother with dishevelled hair, '*her mouth a gash in her livid mask like face. She moves as though walking in her sleep*'. <sup>95</sup> In the last scene of the play, Olivia tells Austen that she is in love with him, and entreats him to acknowledge her innate power:

OLIVIA: ...I know my power ...a woman's power. How many of the women who've destroyed men, cost them their thrones, how many of them have been beautiful? The great courtesans of France ...they had the same power at fifty that they possessed in their youth. The eternal mystery of woman. Our power is beyond analysis ...Myself? What do you know of the sleeping dark potential that is a woman's soul?<sup>96</sup>

Penrose has no romantic intentions towards Olivia whose son turns on when she reveals that she has been slowly poisoning her husband. Terry describes her as, 'interesting subject matter ...a study in ultimate egotism', and when they are left alone together, analyses her behaviour as being that of,

...The animated waxwork of a devoted wife and mother, the kind mistress, the sympathetic friend ...Then the undercurrent, the brilliant woman stifled by mediocre surroundings ...frustrated, seeking sublimation or outlet. The suburban Aspasia ...The-power-behind-the-throne ...stronger than her environment in will, in personality ...in intellect. <sup>97</sup>

Olivia's rapid and pleading response is that he was her sublimation, that no great man can exist without a woman, that 'women have the seed of greatness within them', that whilst poisoning her husband she experienced what it is like to have power, with his life in her hands. Her son's penultimate speech is conclusive:

TERRY: I know you're not mad. You're evil. There is evil in everyone ...You're a conventional woman ...busy with your role of devoted wife...If you'd been born into a different world you'd have got your power easily. You weren't, you were middle class, so you had to build up your ego on cruelties. <sup>98</sup>

The play ends dramatically. As she says to her son,

I am too strong for you! I've beaten you all. I've won, I've won!

Olivia gives a wild cry and jumps from the balcony to her death as the curtain falls.

Played to great acclaim by Sonya Dresdel, Olivia Russell is constructed by Morgan to be performed as a 'complex woman'. In the opening moments of the play one of the servants observes,

Many's the time I've come in and found her standing out on the balcony looking out. She once said, "...space ...space Mrs. Holmes. Have you ever thought how stifled we all are" ...that's her all over though, unexpected.<sup>99</sup>

Morgan is very clear to distinguish Olivia's mannerisms from those around her; she repeatedly fingers her brow and seeks prolonged eye contact with others and so on. Her behaviour is set as being different to that of the other characters in the play. Olivia makes constant references throughout to the fact that she feels she has wasted her life through devoting herself to one man. We are encouraged to think of her as an exception, as somehow an outsider, yet, at the end of the play, her son, a trained analyst, assures her that she is a 'conventional woman'. Her suicide provides the dramatic, fatalistic ending to the play. Yet, we should note that she commits suicide in order to avoid the legal consequences of her previous actions, and in this way she has taken control of the situation in the only way open to her.

Certainly Olivia Russell is founded on a notion of a neurotic and masculine woman, and Morgan makes great use of psychoanalytic terminology and concepts especially in the relationship between mother and children. Yet, Morgan also makes it clear that her anti-heroine has no means of expression inside her social setting other than through her familial role. Although perhaps not presenting us with the most positive of images of woman, Morgan shows a

recognition of character and context rather than transformation and in this she is not alone amongst the women playwrights of the era under discussion. The only way in which Olivia can step outside of the 'suburban Aspasia' is to destroy herself. The entire play has an atmosphere of containment, of suppressed desires and rigid social roles; Olivia is the only character who provides any challenge to this situation. When commenting on her hospitality, Penrose's lines,

You've given me my first glimpse of English home life.  
Charming ...really charming.<sup>100</sup>

strike rather an ironic note, if we take into account the constant mood of dissatisfaction and suspicion which simmers just below the surface of the play.

Amongst the key signifying characteristics of the 'phallic mother' are manipulation, resentment and over-attachment to offspring. As previously noted, these characteristics are similar to those found in representations of the matriarch in plays of the 1920s and 1930s. Although a sense of having sacrificed one's own life and ambitions for the sake of the family could also be seen to be part of the same model of motherhood, there are few other examples of an interpretation of the 'phallic mother' as strong as Morgan's. Here, Olivia's personal ambition works against her role as mother and she perceives her as having been the cause of her own downfall. For those in her family she has rightly had to sacrifice her personal ambition for the sake of a family.

The sacrificing mother is more readily identifiable in those plays where an ideal mother is being foregrounded. Where the previous matriarchs constantly sacrificed their needs to those of the family, sacrifice was integral to the role of the good matriarch. However, in Margaret Kennedy's *Autumn*, produced in 1937 at the St Martin's theatre,<sup>101</sup> the element of sacrifice normally associated with the ideal is the key element of a non-conforming mother in the shape of Lady Brooke, played by Flora Robson.

Again the setting for the play is an English upper-middle-class family based in London. The play is far more grounded in the English domestic drawing room drama tradition than Kennedy's two earlier plays *The Constant Nymph* and *Escape me Never*, and focuses on the Brooke family. Monica Brooke is a young eager student, (played by Victoria Hopper) who has communist friends, and 'new' ideas about women:

NANNY: ...Women as you might say are born to suffer

MONICA: That's a very old fashioned idea ...Women have more sense nowadays. They refuse to put up with suffering.<sup>102</sup>

Lady Catherine Brooke has been nursing her ailing husband, Brian, to whom she has been married for ten years. We discover that until his illness they have not really spent all that much time together, as he has been devoted to his work. Someone sends an anonymous letter to say that Catherine has been having an affair with Mark Seeley (played by Jack Hawkins). Catherine twists the facts and tells her husband that actually it's their daughter who has caught this young man's attentions. Monica however, has no time for Mark; she sees him as being insincere, with 'one eye on God and the other on the main chance'.<sup>103</sup> Catherine manipulates the situation and of course Monica begins to see Mark in a completely new light, as a result of which she gives up all her notions of female independence,

MONICA: What you do...What you are that will be me. Everything I used to believe in ...oh, I suppose I believe it still ...but it just doesn't matter any more.<sup>104</sup>

By the end of Act Two Monica has found out about her mother's affiliations with Mark and runs away to stay with her communist friends. Catherine confesses to Brian that she is jealous of Mark and Monica. By doing so she keeps the marriage together and then manages to stabilise her relationship with her daughter, also ensuring possibilities of continued contact with her ex-lover. The play ends happily as husband and wife are re-united and the family is kept intact. Catherine Brooke breaks out of her mothering role in search of fulfilment, but the family and her role as wife to a busy but sick man overcome her.

In Lesley Storm's *Black Chiffon*,<sup>105</sup> the mother, played again by Flora Robson, makes the ultimate maternal sacrifice of choosing to go to prison rather than have family secrets used as a defence in a court case. When arrested for shop lifting a few days before her son's marriage, the lawyer proposes that they use her close relationship with her son and her fear of his impending marriage and flight from the home as her defence. Both the lawyer and the husband use a psychoanalytic framework to question the nature of her relationship with her son. Yet, for Alicia Christie, to love and protect one's son in a home environment which is made hostile because of her husband's jealousy of her son, is only natural. By going to prison for her crime, she disrupts the smooth running and

respectability of the family, but maintains the sanctity of the relationship between mother and child. Storm's implication here is that the family is a complex and unhappy environment and that when the children leave, the dysfunctions of the family are revealed. Thus, Alicia's refusal to plead not guilty is an implicit as well as an explicit means of disruption as well as maintenance of family bonds.

## PART TWO

### THE FALLEN WOMAN AS A SINGLE MOTHER

Virtually all of the plays so far examined focus on motherhood and the family without great reference to the social and economic structure. Although there is an emphasis on the psychological effect of proscribed motherhood roles, there is very little examination of the social construction of motherhood and mothering outside of the family unit. With the exception of Kennedy's *Escape Me Never*, there are very few unmarried stage mothers up until the early 1950s, and so the social problematics of motherhood are rarely examined.

In Sylvia Rayman's first play, *Women of Twilight*<sup>106</sup> written while she was working in a London snack bar, motherhood as a role for women is explored on a social-economic rather than a social-psychological level. Here, there is a deliberate subverting of the image of 'charming English home life' so beautifully portrayed in plays like *Dear Octopus*. Rayman is interested in moving from emergence and recognition, to exposure and critique. Originally staged at The Embassy in 1951, transferring to the Vaudeville, the play was later made into a film.<sup>107</sup> It is a tragic but socially observant tale of the life of single mothers living on the margins of society, in the twilight zone. The action of the play takes place in a semi-basement living room of a large house near London, in a room characterised by neglect, untidiness and squalor. Helen Allistair is a widowed middle-class woman who at first glance appears to be a well-meaning philanthropist, providing shelter and child care for women who cannot find homes because they are single mothers.

During the first act we are introduced to the women who live in the house, for example, Laura who proudly presents herself as an unmarried mother:

LAURA: ...I don't want no man tied to me...all I wants is my baby.<sup>108</sup>

and Rosie, an eighteen year old factory girl. Sal is the ex-maid who now looks after the children, she is old and rather slow, hardly featuring in the play until her dramatic revelations in the final Act. Vivianne is expecting a child by a man who is on trial for manslaughter, and Christina has just arrived at the house with her very young son. The women are unsettled and unhappy; and although they are from a variety of social classes they are all caught in the poverty trap. Their wages only just cover the rent and child-care fees; few of them manage to save any money and the only escape is provided by the hope of either the return of the estranged fathers of their children, or through finding another man to marry. It is not long before Vivianne reveals the true nature of Mrs. Allistair's supposed altruism:

VIVIANNE: ...I didn't want this baby ...nine out of ten are like Rosie and they're better game for Allistair than the wiser ones. She takes every penny they've got and lets them live in squalor and talks to them like the salvation army ...all her saccharine talk about taking the homeless in off the street and giving them shelter; shelters just about all at three guineas a week with a quid on top if you want her to look after the kid.<sup>109</sup>

The first Act draws to a close when one of the lodgers, Rosie, comes in from a day out with her boyfriend to reveal that she has been told that her child has malnutrition, Helen Allistair's response is,

HELEN: ...He may be weak and sickly, but that's the result of generations of squalor and ignorance and unwholesome stock ...some mothers were not in a condition to produce model babies ...healthy trees produce healthy fruit.<sup>110</sup>

The second Act ends when Christina comes back from a week away to find her child on the brink of death; the implications of this build to a crescendo in Act three where Vivianne has a conversation with the old maid who tells her,

SAL: ...one day Nellie (Allistair) 'it 'im with a stick and 'e just lay there on the carpet. I wanted to put 'im to bed but Nellie said it weren't no use, 'cos he was dead ...she says girls like me didn't ought to have babies and if they found out they'd put me in prison.<sup>111</sup>



Vivianne's suspicions are reaffirmed when Sal tells her that , 'Nellie used to take in babies the nice ladies who 'adn't any babies of their own would take them away'. She says,

VIVIANNE: A lot of things go on that the public don't want to know. So they look the other way - the same as the Welfare people do when they come down here. They're not really fooled by the show you put on for them, but its easier not to look too closely. I've seen so much dirt I'm not squeamish anymore.<sup>112</sup>

One attempted murder later, we come to the last scene of the play. The whole of the basement has changed; it is now bright and clean. Christina returns to the house to be told by Allistair that Vivianne has had her child and is unable to see anyone as she is so close to death. Finally, Helen Allistair's evil intent is revealed and her final words are spoken centre stage, just before her arrest:

HELEN: (*centre stage* ) ...sluts all of you with your rotten little bastards. I took you off the streets, when decent people wouldn't look at you. God when I think what I've done for you; slaved morning and night. What have I kept for myself since my husband died. I gave up my house to you, and this is how you repay me. You've no gratitude, no loyalty ...how dare you speak to me you sanctimonious little bitch.<sup>113</sup>

In her preface to the play, producer Rona Laurie pointed out how the play 'challenges the social conscience of the audience'.<sup>114</sup> It condemns, through Helen, a bourgeois and Victorian attitude toward the poor and in particularly toward single, unmarried mothers. The physical stage space is interior and claustrophobic. It is important to note that Laurie suggests that a small cramped stage can only enhance the mood of the play. Helen Allistair is a product of her own greed and socio-political beliefs, left over from the days of the Empire. Her bitterness is largely the cause of her exploitation of others, usually women of a lower social class, but the bitterness is disguised as philanthropy. What Rayman is clearly expressing in her play is the complete contradiction in women's inherent social roles as mothers, in a society that cannot cater ideologically or economically for the requirements of its so called moral culture.

Rayman's play received mixed reviews. One reviewer claimed the title was nothing but a euphemism for 'unmarried mothers' and that as such it was a play about a 'sad sisterhood' awash with unrelieved femininity, neurosis and hysteria.<sup>115</sup> The reviewer for the *Sunday Times* felt the production to be,

...as great an advance on the Embassy's recent offerings as Neanderthal man was on the anthropoid ape. It is no doubt founded on fact, and yet seems splendidly improbable.<sup>116</sup>

It is interesting to note that the play was not at all well received in America as in Britain, and that in the film version, the narrative has been re-worked so that the relationship between Vivianne and her imprisoned lover is foregrounded. This of course means that what was originally an all female cast has become mixed. It is also arguable that because of the direct and overt social critique within the play, emphasising romance made the narrative more 'acceptable' to a film company and perhaps a wider film audience.

#### REFUSING MOTHERS AND SINGLE MOTHERS

*Women of Twilight* in many ways marked a new direction for the investigation and writing out of experiences of motherhood in plays written by women for the London stage. From this point onwards there are more plays where mothers 'refuse' to carry out their mothering role according to the prerequisites of a dominant ideology. After the 1950's, one could argue that a number of texts provide images of dissenting mothers where the normality of the mental state of the mother is not necessarily put into question. Rather, motherhood is presented as far more of a social than a 'natural' role for women.

One of the earliest texts which unashamedly features the refusing mother is Susan Glaspell's *The Verge*. Written and produced almost three decades before *Women of Twilight* brought to bear the social and economic context for the refusing mother, Glaspell's play is important because it makes a primary connection between the desire to create and the lack of desire to mother. For J. Ellen Gainor, the conflict presented in *The Verge*, 'evolves' from the heroine Claire's,

...feelings of confinement - - her desire to break away from the conventions and constraints of "inside": society, her family, and their definition of her, to move "out" to a new form and identity without barriers. Her horticultural experiments, first with the

"Edge Vine" and then with the flower "Breath of Life," mirror her own struggle to control her life and break free from convention.<sup>117</sup>

For Claire the cultivating of new hybrids is more important than rearing her own child Elizabeth who has spent the greater part of her youth being brought up by her Aunt Adelaide, Claire's sister who is 'fitted to rear children'.<sup>118</sup> Claire's energy goes into her work, the creative products of which are more her own than is her child. When Elizabeth arrives home at the end of the first Act, she is met with a chilly disregard by her mother:

ELIZABETH: Mother! It's been so long - (*she tries to overcome the difficulties and embrace her mother*)

CLAIRE: (*protecting the box she has*) Careful, Elizabeth. We mustn't upset the lice.

ELIZABETH: (*retreating*) Lice? ...Oh yes. You take it - them - off plants, don't you?

CLAIRE: I'm putting them on certain plants.

ELIZABETH: (*weakly*) Oh, I thought you took them off.<sup>119</sup>

Claire and her daughter have very little in common, she disapproves of her daughter's good manners and education, finding it very difficult to be maternal or even mildly friendly towards her. Elizabeth on the other hand finds it hard to understand why her mother's horticultural ambition does not stretch to improving plant life but is rather focused simply on the creative act itself. This provides another insurmountable divide between mother and daughter, and one which highlights not only their ideological differences but those between Claire and the society in which she lives:

ELIZABETH: You know something tells me that this is wrong

CLAIRE: The hymn singing ancestors are turning up.

ELIZABETH: I don't know what you mean by that, mother but -... well of course you can make fun of me, but something does tell me that this is wrong. To do what - what -

DICK: What God did?

ELIZABETH: Well - yes. Unless you do it to make them better - to do it just to do it - that doesn't seem right to me.

CLAIRE: (*roughly*) 'Right to you!' And that's all you know of adventure - and of anguish. Do you know it is you - world of

which you're so true a flower - makes me have to leave? You're there to hold the door shut! Because you're young and of a gayer world, you think I can't see them - those old men? Do you know why you are so sure of yourself? Because you can't *feel*. Can't feel - the limitless - out there - a sea just over the hill. I will not stay with you! (*buries her hands in the earth around the Edge Vine. But suddenly steps back from it as she had from Elizabeth*) And I will not stay with you (*grasps it as we grasp what we would kill, is trying to pull it up. They all step forward in horror*) ... (*pointing to Elizabeth - and the words come from mighty roots*) To think that object ever moved in my belly and suck my breast! (*Elizabeth hides her face as if struck*)<sup>120</sup>

Gainor points out that Claire had maternal feelings toward her baby boy who died at a young age, and uses a Freudian interpretation to explain the significance of the relationship between a mother and her absent son, that is to say, through the mother/son relationship a woman will be able to 'transfer to her son all of the ambition which she has been obliged to suppress in herself'; as the son has died, Claire has no child onto which she can transfer her ambition.<sup>121</sup> The relationship with the daughter is different, as Elizabeth has come to represent a 'social ideal' of womanhood which frames her in opposition to Claire.

To a great extent within the confines of an early twentieth expressionist text, Claire is written as a 'hysterical' female, although Gainor suggests that she is a very much a 'feminist' within what Gainor sees as the locus of a patriarchal culture which relegates women to motherhood as the only creative outlet. When Adelaide is critical of the way in which Claire treats her child, Claire's response however is both clear and logical:

ADELAIDE: A mother cannot cast off her own child simply because she does not interest her!

CLAIRE: ...Why can't she?

ADELAIDE: Because it would be monstrous!

CLAIRE: And why can't she be monstrous - if she has to be?

ADELAIDE: ...You are really a particularly intelligent, competent person, and it's time for you to call a halt to this nonsense and be the woman you were meant to be!

CLAIRE: ...Well isn't it about time somebody got loose from that? What I came from made you, so -...

ADELAIDE: ...But if you would just get out of yourself and enter into other people's lives -

CLAIRE: ...Then I would be just like you. And we should all be just alike in order to reassure each other that we're all just right. But since you and Harry and Elizabeth and ten million other people bolster each other up, why do you especially need me?<sup>122</sup>

Thus, despite the fact that Claire is rather a tragic heroine, and has many of the clinical characteristics of the so called hysterical woman, her logic puts into question the logic of those, especially the women, around her. She has a clear goal, the process and product of which goes against the beliefs for example of her daughter and her sister. Claire's behaviour is considered by the other women to be contrary to that expected of a feminine woman, and this is their rationale for critique. Similar to the criticism aimed at Stella in Rose Franken's *Another Language*,<sup>123</sup> for Claire to want something outside of family and marriage, the fact that she wants something either for herself, or to do something that will give her life meaning other than motherhood, is for her to be an 'outsider' and an 'unnatural' woman.

Motherhood is not the main narrative focus in *The Verge*, but Claire's relationship to her role as a mother is used as a device to shape both her character and the central theme of the play. She is both a creator and a destroyer. *The Verge* was both radical and experimental for its day, yet Glaspell was using popular perceptions of the role of mother as a means of creating a central character whose life choices place her outside of the popular and socially acceptable. The strength and intellectual basis of refusal in terms of motherhood was rare in its lack of subtlety, and is not an image of motherhood which is often directly used by women playwrights until the 1950s in Britain. Certainly there are critical exposés of the assumption that women have a either a natural desire to mother or a disposition which makes them 'natural' mothers, *Women of Twilight* being a good example. There were also a number of plays such as the extraordinary *Men Should Weep*,<sup>124</sup> where the realities of motherhood as a never ending battle against poverty and exhaustion, were dramatised. Yet it would appear that it is not until the 1950s, where there is far more experiment in the dramatic form of playwrighting, that the 'natural' mother and the symbolism of motherhood itself are questioned centre stage.

Anne Jellicoe, one of the few women playwrights to be championed by the new Royal Court in the 1950s, has in common with many of the other women playwrights of the pre-Second World War period, the fact that she originally

trained as an actress. Thus she came to playwrighting from a practical theatre experience rather than a literary background. As Taylor notes, this unquestionably has a significant affect on the form of her writing.<sup>125</sup> *The Sport of My Mad Mother*<sup>126</sup> possibly Jellicoe's most interesting, although by no means her most successful play, is an investigation of amongst other things the symbolism of motherhood. Seen by one critic as a 'ballet in words about a crazy world'<sup>127</sup> it is a highly experimental piece which uses non-linear narratives relying heavily on word and image association, rhythm, music and ritual to carry the plot. Kenneth Tynan saw the play as belonging to 'that part of the century which produced jazz, rebels without causes, Melanie Klein's post Freudian discoveries, duels with switch knives and the H-bomb' and the 'mother' of the title Greta, as the,

...gang's symbolic mother ... she destroys while she creates, punishes while she rewards: and she can provoke in those from whom she withholds sympathy the same envious destructiveness that Melanie Klein has observed in children from whom the breast has at some crucial moment been withheld.<sup>128</sup>

Greta is, in fact, as much of a Warrior Woman as she is a mother and this is vital to an understanding of her as a mother archetype in the piece. There is a sinister build up to her entrance, and when she arrives on stage she does so in disguise. Her hair is 'long, straight and red, falling from her brow like a Japanese lion wig', her face is 'heavily made up and almost dead white'.<sup>129</sup> Greta is both powerful and humorous, and is juxtaposed to Dean, a 'social researching American, ...who represents discipline, science and the male principle'.<sup>130</sup> He tells her that he lives 'off cans and gum', while Greta states that she was 'reared in a cave by a female wallaby Until ...seven I ran about on all fours and barked.'<sup>131</sup> The two represent polarised ideologies: Dean preaches love and care, Greta war and survival. Yet Greta is the gang leader, who gives birth on stage, whilst one of her accomplices brings on a book entitled *How to Deliver a Baby*, and another tells her that to give birth in public is 'not nice, not customary, not legal'.<sup>132</sup>

Taylor's critique of the confused or contradictory quality of the primacy of the mother in another of Jellicoe's plays, *The Rising Generation*,<sup>133</sup> has a resonance for *The Sport of My Mad Mother*. Greta is both violent and nurturing which brings her in line with the 'phallic' mother a dominant figure in many of the earlier plays discussed. Yet she is also far more directly in a state of refusal, if not towards motherhood itself, then certainly in terms of the level to which she is

prepared to accept the 'rules and regulations' of mothering as propounded by the representative of the dominant ideology, Dean. Taylor also makes the point that Jellicoe 'defines motherhood problematically as both destructive and prolific'<sup>134</sup> It is possible to argue, however, that many of the definitions of motherhood as signified through dramatic texts by women present it as problematic. Where Jellicoe differs is in her direct return to a 'primitive' context, and the experimental form of her play. She has, whether consciously or not, made use of the Kleinian assertion of the dysfunctional mother, and in many ways, because of this and the fact that she has used the 'primitive' as a context, the strength of Greta's refusing personality is seemingly undermined.

Both Lessing and Delaney created mothers as being first and foremost women, for whom motherhood is only a part of life's choices. Lessing's Myra Bolton in *Each His Own Wilderness*<sup>135</sup> sells her house in order to change her life and provide her son with the opportunity to travel and see the world, as he refuses to finish his studies. Whilst she sees her life as being only half over, that is to say, there is life beyond childrearing and housekeeping, her son Tony, wants to settle down, with a roof over his head, to live in the family home and have a steady job. Myra is concerned with social issues, world politics and the H-bomb, Tony is embroiled in the fantasy of comfy domesticity. Myra is both a mother and a sexual woman she is politically and intellectually mature and has a need to develop her life beyond mothering and marriage. The fifty year old woman who leaves the stage at the end of the play is a far cry from the lace and bespectacled matriarchs of the earlier plays discussed. Once Myra has finally managed to persuade Tony of the fact that she has sold their home she 'makes a movement as if expanding, or about to take flight' and says,

MYRA: It occurs to me that for the first time in my life I'm free ...for the last twenty two years my life has been governed by ...your needs ... my whole life has been governed by your needs. And what for ...- a little monster of egotism ...petty ...spiteful little egotist ... There are a lot of things I've wanted to do for a long time, and I haven't done them ... Perhaps I'll take the money and go off ...with my needs in a small suitcase ...I don't have to shelter under a heap of old bricks like a frightened mouse. I'm going ...I've never wanted safety and the walls of respectability - you damned little petty-bourgeois. My God, the irony of it - that we should have given birth to a generation of little office boys ...who count their pensions before they're out of school ...<sup>136</sup>

Delaney's *A Taste Of Honey*<sup>137</sup> similarly presents a mother who, although from a different class, chooses to 'enjoy life and go about it in her own way.'<sup>138</sup> Wandor points out that a mother who herself states 'Have I ever laid claim to being a proper mother?',<sup>139</sup> breaks yet another taboo in a play which dramatises events in the life of a young woman who is pregnant by a 'coloured naval rating' and whose close friend is a young, gay male. Yet the breaking of taboos is part and parcel of a play which deals with working-class life in a theatre world which was still predominantly frequented by the middle classes.

Jo's mother Helen remarries because the man in question has got 'a wallet full of reasons',<sup>140</sup> and she leaves Jo to look after herself while she goes off on her honeymoon. The marriage is over very quickly and Helen returns to help Jo with her soon-to-be-born baby. Helen returns to the familiar surroundings and the familiar role of the mother, not through guilt or a sense of duty, but merely because it is the best option from a limited series of choices.

## CONCLUSION

The 1950s saw an emergence of refusing mothers whose social situations are presented as offering very few choices. Although only a couple of the plays mentioned in this last section had particularly long runs on the London stage, they are interesting because of the way in which the mother as a stage persona, moves away from the 'natural' into the social. That the refusing mother should be created as an 'outsider' is not particularly surprising, but what is interesting in these cases is the seeming lack of authorial judgement. By the 1950s the mother has been moved away from the extended family unit, and as in the Lessing play, there are positive if limited choices outside of life in the family unit to be made. The grand matriarch figure which predominates in the 1930s finds resonance in other plays of the 1950s such as Bagnold's *The Chalk Garden*,<sup>141</sup> but even so, the normality of the family as a traditional living unit is questioned or at least challenged. Even plays with a more traditional flavour of the middle-class drawing-room drama begin to undermine the sanity and function of the English family and the mother's role within it. Lesley Storm's *Black Chiffon* is a case in point. Here the family unit is shown to be dysfunctional and the mother rather than the child is shown to be at a greater risk in terms of her psychological stability.

A number of the playwrights of the period under examination make direct and explicit use of psychoanalytic theory in their work, albeit in its popularised form. Certainly much of the discourse of theory is reflected in or correlates with



the narrative dynamics of many of the plays. It would appear that the influence of theories on motherhood and mothers is strong in the plays examined, whether they are affirmed or questioned. Equally, it is possible to assert that the social and economic factors which affect the lived experience of motherhood directly influence the way in which the family and in turn the 'stage mother' is framed. Whether the mother is seen as being a coercive force in the re-enforcement of the dominant ideology of the time, or whether she is presented as a figure who goes against expectations, she is a dominant character in many of the plays written by women between the wars and into the early 1960s. Where the mother is an overbearing, power crazy, controlling force, the context for her behaviour is often presented and examined. Where she uses her position as mother as a means to gain more power within the family unit, again her motives are examined. Arguably the predominance of the 'mother' in plays of the period, is connected to the fact that for women it is one of the primary social and 'natural' roles expected of them, and it is often the dynamics and complexity of this expectation which is discoursed albeit within the parameters of the well-made middle-class play.

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- 1 Ann Jellicoe, *The Sport of My Mad Mother* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985), p. 168.
- 2 Joanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 222.
- 3 Barbara Ehrenreich & Deidre English, *For Her Own Good* (London: Pluto Press, 1988).
- 4 Ibid. See also E. Ann Kaplan, *Motherhood and Representation* (London: Routledge, 1993), and Marianne Hirsch, *The Mother and Daughter Plot* (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989). These authors give very clear and precise information and analysis of the social and psychoanalytic theories which affected the practice or at least the prescribed practice of mothering in America and Britain over the past one hundred and fifty years. In terms of cultural / artistic output, the novel and the film are used to show narrative parallels and subversions of the new prescriptions for the role of 'mother'.
- 5 Ehrenreich and English, p. 211.
- 6 Ibid.
- 7 Jane Lewis, *Women in England 1870-1950* (London: Wheatsheaf Books, 1984). Lewis points out that Acts such as the Anomalies Act (1931), aligned marriage with 'retirement' from the public work force, as it assumed that the male partner would support the wife after marriage, therefore there was no 'need' (defined in economic terms only) for the woman to work.
- 8 Viola Klein, *The Feminine Character* (London: Routledge, 1983), p. 10.
- 9 Working-class women were also encouraged and in some cases, given no choice but, to give up their work as part of the 'public' work force and return into domestic service, i.e. into the private service industries. This was particularly the case after the First World War and to an extent the Second World War, see, Beddoe, D, *Back to Home and Duty* (London: Pandora Press, 1989), and Elizabeth Wilson, *Only Half Way To Paradise*. (London: Tavistock, 1980).
- 10 Ehrenreich and English, pp. 55 - 57.
- 11 Ibid., pp. 215 - 218.
- 12 Ibid., p. 218.
- 13 See Benjamin Spock, *Problems of Parents* (New York: Crest/Fawcett Publications, 1955).
- 14 See D.W. Winnicott, *Mother and Child; A Primer of First Relationships* (New York: Basic Books, 1957).
- 15 Kaplan, pp. 17 - 19.
- 16 Although the domestic realm is a 'sub-unit' of the larger patriarchal macrocosm, it would seem, especially through a reading of the texts in question, to hold possibilities for either 'real' or implied 'power' for women. It is the environment in which, on a day to day basis, they are 'in control'.
- 17 *Home is Where the Heart Is*, ed. by Christine Gledhill, (London: B.F.I. Publishing, 1987), p. 2.
- 18 Before this point melodrama had been seen as a form somewhere between comedy and tragedy characterised by its surmised innate appeal to a female audience. As such it was scorned because of its popularity and seen as a largely inferior category of dramatic textual form.
- 19 Kaplan, p. 62 - 63.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 See Sigmund Freud, 'The Psychology of Women', in *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* ed by, Ernest Jones, (London: Hogarth Press, 1937), and Sigmund Freud, *On Sexuality; Three essays on the Theory of Sexuality and Other Works.*, (London: The Penguin Freud Library, 1977).
- 22 Marianne Hirsch, 'Review; Mothers and Daughters', *Signs; Journal of Women and Culture*, 7:1. (1981), 200 - 222, (p. 207).
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering; Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (California: University of California Press, 1978).

25 Dorothy Dinnerstein, *The Mermaid and The Minotaur; Sexual Arrangements and the Human Malaise* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), used by Hirsch as an example of work on mother daughter relationships and on the woman as 'other'.

26 Hirsch, (1981), p. 207.

27 Kaplan gives a very clear and more contemporary analysis and comparison of theories on motherhood. She cites Parveen Adams as pointing out the fault in essentialist theories such as those of Chodorow, as being caused by a confusing of the social and the psychic. Her main criticism of Chodorow is that image of the 'good' mother is too close to the essentially patriarchal image proposed by D.W. Winnicott.

28 Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay in Abjection*, trans. L.S. Roudiez (U.S.A: Columbia University Press, 1982).

29 Kaplan, pp. 42 - 3.

30 Karen Horney, 'Maternal Conflicts', a paper originally presented at the 1933 meeting of The American Orthopsychiatric Assoc., in *Feminine Psychology*, ed. by H. Kelman, (New York & London: W.W. Norton & Co. Ltd., 1967), p. 175.

31 J. L Rubins, *Karen Horney: Gentle Rebel Of Psychoanalysis* (New York & London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1979), pp. 45 - 46.

32 *Karen Horney: Final Lectures*, ed. by D.H. Ingram, (New York & London: W.W.Norton, 1991), p. 124. In the USA, along with various colleagues, she founded the Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis and the American Institute for Psychoanalysis in 1941, both in New York.

33 Rubins, p. 75. (Quoting from, Lawrence Durrell, *Studies in Genius: Groddeck*, (New York, 1948).

34 Dee Garrison, 'Karen Horney and Feminism, *Signs; Journal of Women and Culture*, 6: 4. (1981), 672 - 691, (p. 687).

35 Ingram, p. 9.

36 Marcia Weskott, *The Feminist Legacy of Karen Horney* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), pp. 1 - 10.

37 Ibid., pp. 54 - 55.

38 Horney, K, 'On The Genesis of The Castration Complex in Women', in Kelman, (1967).

39 Weskott, pp. 64 - 5.

40 Lisa Appignanesi, and John Forrester, *Freud's Women* (London: Virago, 1993). Appignanesi and Forrester give a very succinct synopsis of the basis arguments with Freud over the 'question of woman', the nature of Klein's theories and how she differed from Freud in her assertions. See especially Ch. 15, 'The Dispute Over Woman', pp. 430 - 454.

41 Ibid., p. 452.

42 Kaplan, p. 107.

43 Appignanesi, and Forrester, pp. 453 - 454.

44 Ibid., pp. 288 - 289.

45 Juliet Mitchell, *Psychoanalysis and Feminism* (London: Pelican, 1983), p. 29. 'At this stage (Ernest) Jones used Klein's theory of a very early Oedipus complex as evidence on his side of the debate. Klein ...was concerned with the first months of life and the fixation points there, in the paranoid-schizoid position, as she termed it, of the psychoses. Commensurately, her work made her focus us on the mother-child relationship and this has inspired a great many studies on the subject. Interestingly this preoccupation has avoided contributing anything really new or specific to the understanding of feminine psychology'.

46 Appignanesi and Forrester, p. 452.

47 Deutsch had been in analysis with one of Freud's former colleagues and founders of the Viennese Psychoanalytic Society, Karl Abraham.

48 Helene Deutsch, 'Motherhood and Sexuality', in *Sex Differences: Cultural and Developmental Dimensions*, ed. by Patrick Lee & Robert Stewart, (New York: Urizen Books, 1965), pp. 91 -104, (p. 92). (The article is taken from a course of lectures on the 'Psychic Development of Women', delivered at the Vienna Psychoanalytic

- Institute, Summer 1932. *Neurosis and Character Types* (U.S.A.: International University Press, 1965), pp. 190-202.).
- 49 Ibid., p. 93.
- 50 Karen Horney, 'The Flight from Womanhood' in Kelman, p. 61.
- 51 Mitchell, p. 130.
- 52 Appignanesi and Forrester, pp. 440 - 441.  
 "(Although) ...it is this characteristic emphasis on the subordination of femininity to the rigours of reproduction, with their inevitable link to the essential passivity and masochism of femininity that is the distinctive feature of Deutsch's work.'
- 53 Mitchell, p. 128.
- 54 Stern was on the payroll of Metro Goldwyn Mayer British Pictures, London, along with Evelyn Waugh, Graham Greene and Richard Dimbleby for a short time from the early 1940s until 1946.
- 55 *Evening Standard*, 16 November 1935. G.B. Stern, born in London in 1880 originally trained as an actress at R.A.D.A, and was close friends with both Sheila-Kaye Smith and Rebecca West.
- 56 G.B.Stern, *The Matriarch* (London: French, 1931). The play opened in London at the Royalty theatre in May 1929 and ran for 229 performances.
- 57 Stern, p. 7.
- 58 Ibid., p. 15.
- 59 Ibid., p. 20.
- 60 Ibid., p. 21.
- 61 Ibid., p. 36.
- 62 Ibid., pp.40 - 41.
- 63 E. Jones, 'The Matriarch : Saturday Night Theatre', *Radio Times*, 17 November 1950.
- 64 Stern, pp. 74 - 75.
- 65 Ibid., p. 79.
- 66 Kaplan, p. 106.
- 67 Stern, p. 62.
- 68 Gertrude Jennings, 'Family Affairs' in *Famous Plays of 1934* (London: Gollancz 1934). The play opened at the Ambassadors theatre in August 1934, and ran for a total of 331 performances.
- 69 Dodie Smith, 'Dear Octopus' in *Plays of the Thirties*, Vol. 1 (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1966). The play opened at the Queen's theatre in September 1938 and ran for 376 performances. Co-produced by Glen Byam Shaw and Dodie Smith the production starred Marie Tempest as Dora Randolph and John Gielgud as her son Nicholas.
- 70 Born in 1877, Jennings was the daughter of I.L. Jennings, one time editor of the New York Times, later MP. for Stockport, and Madeleine Henriques, an American actress known for her work at Wallack's Theatre in New York. Her professional career as an actress began with work touring with Ben Greet's company, also working in New York as Gertrude Henriques.
- 71 Vivian Gardner, *Sketches from The Actresses Franchise League* (Nottingham: University of Nottingham, 1985).
- 72 Jennings, p. 584.
- 73 Ibid., p. 600.
- 74 Ibid., p. 638.
- 75 Smith, pp. 292 - 293.
- 76 Ibid., p. 379.
- 77 Clemence Dane, *Moonlight is Silver* (London: Heinemann, 1934). The play opened at the Queen's theatre in September of 1934 and ran for 85 performances.
- 78 Rose Franken, *Another Language* (London: Rich and Cowan Ltd, 1933). The London production opened at the Lyric in Jan 1932 and ran for 77 performances.
- 79 Dorothy Massingham, *The Lake* (London: Rich & Cowan Ltd, 1933), p. 10. The play was first produced at the Arts theatre in March of 1933 where it ran for six performances.

- 80 Franken, p. 11.
- 81 Produced at the Ambassadors theatre in November 1935, and ran for 67 performances.
- 82 Dodie Smith, D, 'Call it a Day' in *Famous Plays of 1935-1936* (London: Gollancz Ltd., 1936.) The play opened at the Globe theatre in October of 1935, and ran for 509 performances.
- 83 *Daily Mail* 23 August 1934.
- 84 *The Times* 23 August 1934.
- 85 These plays are examined in more detail in the chapter 3.
- 86 Kalpan, p. 125.
- 87 Ibid., pp. 207 - 208.
- 88 Joan Morgan, *This Was A Woman* (London: The Fortune Press, 1946). The West End Production which opened at The Comedy Theatre in March 1944, ran for 380 performances.
- 89 Beverley Baxter, 'Hedda Gabler's Daughter', in *Evening Standard* March 1944, (from programme notes to the 1944 production)
- 90 James Agate, 'Hedda Hubbard', in *Sunday Times* 19 March 1944.
- 91 Morgan, p. 6.
- 92 Ibid., p. 7.
- 93 Ibid., pp. 18 - 19.
- 94 Ibid., p. 40.
- 95 Ibid., p. 50.
- 96 Ibid., p. 60.
- 97 Ibid., pp. 61 - 63.
- 98 Ibid., pp. 63 - 64.
- 99 Ibid., p. 6.
- 100 Ibid., p. 33.
- 101 Margaret Kennedy, and Geroge Ratoff, 'Autumn', in *Five Plays of Our Time*, ed. by S. Box, (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1939).
- 102 Kennedy and Ratoff, pp. 111 - 112.
- 103 Ibid., p. 132.
- 104 Ibid., p. 164.
- 105 Lesley Storm, 'Black Chiffon', in *The Years Between*, ed. by Fidelis Morgan (London: Virago, 1994). The play was first produced at the Westminster Theatre in May 1949 and ran for 416 performances. (Morgan)
- 106 Sylvia Rayman, *Women of Twilight* (London: Evans Brothers, 1951).
- 107 The film, *Women of Twilight* was produced by Daniel Angel Films in 1952, directed by Gordon Parry with a screenplay by Anatole de Grunwald.
- 108 Rayman, p. 14.
- 109 Ibid., p. 23.
- 110 Ibid., p. 34.
- 111 Ibid., p. 78.
- 112 Ibid., p. 81.
- 113 Ibid., p. 91.
- 114 Ibid., pp. 5 - 7.
- 115 *Daily Telegraph*, 16 October 1951.
- 116 *The Sunday Times*, 21 October 1951.
- 117 J. Ellen Gainor, 'A Stage of Her Own: Susan Glaspell's *The Verge* and Women's Dramaturgy', in *Journal of American Drama and Theatre*, Spring (1989), 79 - 99, (p. 83).
- 118 Susan Glaspell, 'The Verge', in *Plays By Susan Glaspell*, ed. by C.W.E. Bigsby, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p 74.
- 119 Ibid.
- 120 Ibid., pp. 78 - 79.
- 121 Gainor, p. 91. We can see a possible similarity in the way in which Joan Morgan creates her mother/son narrative in *This Was A Woman*.
- 122 Glaspell, pp. 79 - 80.

- 123 Rose Franken, *Another Language* (London: Rich & Cowan Ltd., 1933). The play ran at the Lyric from December 1932 for 77 performances.
- 124 Ena Lamont Stewart, *Men Should Weep*, (Scotland: 7: 84 Publications, 1983). The play was written for Glasgow Unity in 1947 and centres on Maggie Morrison's life as mother of an extended family living in Glasgow during the Depression of the 1930s.
- 125 Lib Taylor, 'Early Stages: Women Dramatists 1958 - 1968', in *British and Irish Women Dramatists Since 1958*, ed. by Trevor Griffiths & Margaret Llewellyn-Jones (London: Open University Press, 1993), pp. 9 - 25, (p. 21).
- 126 'The Sport of My Mad Mother', in *The Knack and The Sport of My Mad Mother* (London: Faber & Faber, 1985). The play was produced at the Royal Court theatre in February 1958 and ran for 14 performances.
- 127 *Daily Telegraph*, 26 February 1958.
- 128 *Observer*, 2 March 58.
- 129 Jellicoe, p. 143.
- 130 Philip Hope-Wallace, *Manchester Guardian*, 27 February 1958.
- 131 Jellicoe, p. 157.
- 132 *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- 133 Ann Jellicoe, *The Rising Generation* (London: Hutchinson Educational Ltd., 1973).
- 134 Taylor, p. 22.
- 135 Doris Lessing, 'Each His Own Wilderness' in *New English Dramatists* (London: Penguin Plays, 1959).
- 136 *Ibid.*, pp. 93 - 94.
- 137 Shelagh Delaney, *A Taste Of Honey* (London: Methuen, 1989).
- 138 *Ibid.*, xii.
- 139 Michelene Wandor, *Look Back In Gender; Sexuality and Gender in Post -War British Drama* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 40.
- 140 Delaney, p. 34.
- 141 Enid Bagnold, *The Chalk Garden* (London: Heinemann, 1956). The play was originally produced in New York. The London production opened at the Haymarket in April 1956 and ran for 658 performances.

## DRAMATISING HISTORY; THE SEARCH FOR NATIONAL HEROINES.

The writing of modern history has resulted in a viewpoint that is nothing short of a stag party. The history of women is ignored, hushed up, censored in the most literal sense of the term. This method of eliminating the social and political destiny of half of humanity is the most effective form of supremacy. For a long time the lower class, the poorest social strata - ...also had little place in history. Still, it was not possible to write history without going into class differences; they have led to enormous conflicts. However the history of women is different. Their resistance can be silenced, snuffed out as if it had never existed, because the battle of the sexes is considered as a basic act of nature. <sup>1</sup>

From the late 1910s through to the early 1930s, the retelling or representation of history became a popular subject for the British playwright. According to Short,<sup>2</sup> the post-First World War 'trend' is seen by most to have begun with John Drinkwater's *Abraham Lincoln* in 1919, although history had been the subject of many dramas beforehand. The history or chronicle play is at the simplest level, a dramatised chronological record of historical events, where history is used as a framework around which a plot can be structured. As a dramatic form it was popular with both male and female writers, and usually involved the 'reconstruction of a central character',<sup>3</sup> Drinkwater for example followed *Abraham Lincoln*, with *Mary Stuart* (1921), *Oliver Cromwell* (1922) and *Robert E. Lee* (1923). It was often the case, certainly by the late 1920s and into the early 1930s, that the central figure was female, in plays by both men and women. For example, Nurse Cavell, Florence Nightingale, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, The Brontë sisters, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Stuart, Emma Hamilton, Elizabeth of Austria and the pirate Mary Read were all used as central figures in chronicle plays of the inter-war years.

That many of the historical 'facts' were often distorted in order to fit in with the overall through line of narrative intention caused many critics to make disparaging remarks about the choice of 'history' as a framework for drama. One of the common criticisms was that authors not only showed little concern for the accuracy of facts but that they took great authorial liberties in interpreting any facts they did choose to note; this was a particular criticism of, for example, Morna Stuart's *Traitor's Gate*.<sup>4</sup> If a play showed 'an intelligent writing out of conjecture', then it was considered to be a worthy drama. So for example, the

same critic who states his concern for 'theatrical value' forgives the 'liberties' taken by the author in her interpretation of historical facts, because her play shows that:

Here is a mind at work. And though the theatre is not a very good thinking-shop and perhaps not essentially concerned with thought at all (emotion being its chief business), it is a great treat to the theatre-goer to encounter intelligence on occasion.<sup>5</sup>

For many critics the attempt to dramatise the biography of an historical character necessitated the problem of over burdening a dramatic text with fact and plot. Gwen John's *Gloriana*, a chronicle of the life of Elizabeth I, was criticised for the fact that the author was 'too determined to leave nothing without at least a passing reference', and so she was accused of creating nothing more than an episodic summary of a reign.<sup>6</sup> Many critics shared the essence of Camillo Pellizzi's opinion, that history was not a good starting point for dramatic writing as there were too many problems involved; for Pellizzi:

History, when it supplies speculative and imaginative *subjects*, and not simply opportunities for dramatic representation ...leads to the ...impurity of art... (history plays are) prevailingly non-dramatic (although they) have dramatic elements. 7

Other critics shared Pellizzi's concern that using history as anything more than an inspiration for dramatic writing produced unnecessarily complicated results. So Gordon Daviot's *Queen of Scots* was seen by one critic as,

...a muddled and puzzling, intricate story ...a series of elliptical hints which are rather bewildering ...It would be allowable for these episodes to tell us little history if, in return, they established character and created personalities.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever the critical response in terms of the level to which history or chronicle plays were considered to be 'art', they appear to have been popular with both male and female audiences and dramatists alike.

#### WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS AND THE CHRONICLE PLAY

Using representations of key historical women as a strategy for re-placing



women into positions of status within the cultural consciousness was not specific to the inter-war female playwrights.<sup>9</sup> Although many of the chronicle plays written by women during the inter-war period fail in some ways 'to challenge conventions of stage stereotyping of women',<sup>10</sup> by comparison to post-1968 feminist playwrights who have used history as a framework for their plays, I would argue that these two generations of women share similar intentions when choosing to use history as a framework for plot. The earlier chronicle plays written by women during the inter-war period used women from royalty or nobility as central figures, although some later used the context of war, a 'key' moment in history, as a specific framework for representing women's lives in the dramatic form. In this way certain parallels can be drawn between the significance to the female playwrights of the period in question, of women in history, and the significance of history to feminist historians of the post-1968 years.

Women's history has come to mean history about women and usually done by women. It began with the necessary task of resurrecting women's hidden experience by focusing on great women in history ...This tendency has ...been criticised as being élitist. In response another type of women's history has arisen: revealing ordinary women's lives as part of history. <sup>11</sup>

#### RE-PRESENTING 'HEROINES'; THE 'WOMAN BEHIND THE MAN'.

One of the most pressing concerns for middle-class women after the initial franchise had been granted was the feeling that, as a whole, women had not taken real advantage of their new voting power, that the 'popular' images of women as passive and frivolous had been assimilated by women as representing some kind of 'real' and tenable identity. There appears to have been an active effort to undermine the primacy of this image, certainly by those women who continued with the struggle for women's equality after the First World War and it is possible to argue that some female dramatists partly had this aim in mind when choosing to use the chronicle play as a dramatic form.

Clemence Dane, one of the most prolific playwrights of the inter-war period<sup>12</sup> and after, wrote in her social text *The Women's Side*, of how there were women who still evaded 'responsibilities of citizenship by declaring that, "women's sphere is in the home" '. Her complaint was that if these women took no interest and active part in national affairs, then they ran 'the risk of having their private house-keeping threatened by forces - outside of their control'.<sup>13</sup> For

Dane, women needed to leave the required social mores of their foremothers behind them and be prepared to function on as equal a par with men as possible.

A woman who cannot drive a car, deal with a drunken man , speak in public and run a business and a home is getting to be as much of a rarity as fifty years ago a woman who could not faint when she was proposed to.<sup>14</sup>

It certainly appears to have been the case that many women in socially visible positions were encouraging women generally to realise that what had once been 'unfashionable virtues' in a woman were now a necessary part of being a 'modern woman'.

Dane's portrayal of Elizabeth I in *Will Shakespeare* appears to have been a conscious attempt to present an image of woman as determined, courageous, and selfless; one critic felt it to be 'one of the most plausible portraits of Elizabeth, who has frequently been just a "Tudor in a Tantrum" behaving like Alice's Red Queen'<sup>15</sup>. The play offers a 'fantasy' portrayal of Shakespeare, and it is the women in the play around whom most of his actions revolve. For Elizabeth, her duty to England is of the utmost importance she manipulates her courtiers and subjects only to serve this end. She is both intelligent and rational. The Queen gives advice to the men who surround her and when Will informs her that he can no longer write because he has lost the love of Mary Fitton, (Dane's 'Dark Lady') Elizabeth stresses that inspiration comes from one's desire to fulfil one's duty to the nation:

ELIZABETH: ...I send my ships where never ships have sailed, to break the barriers and make wide the ways to the after world. Send your ships to the hidden lands of the soul. To break barriers and make plain the ways between Man and Man. Why else were we two born?<sup>16</sup>

Elizabeth is able to work with abstract concepts and ideas. For her, Shakespeare's duty is to write successfully enough to ensure a good return on her own and, therefore, the nation's investment in Henslowe's theatre company. She encourages Mary Fitton to welcome 'romantic advances' from Shakespeare and, when Fitton's relationship with Marlowe has disastrous results, she banishes her:

Here is a man upon your lap that England needed ...Go

blunted tool.<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth is an all-powerful matriarch figure, she is neither vain nor fickle and takes full responsibility for her position within society. Her psychology in conjunction with her social position is used by Dane to contrast with that of Shakespeare, who is portrayed as rather an inept character. Thus, although the title suggests that Shakespeare might be the prime mover in this piece, it is Elizabeth along with the other women who are shown to be the motivating forces in his life and possibly behind his work. As she later suggests in *The Women's Side* of the Dark Lady, for example, 'Lions don't mate with rabbits. Some equal power, something, not mere beauty, there must have been in her and her kind...that gave them their place beside their great men.'<sup>18</sup> *Will Shakespeare*, a play written in verse, received mixed reviews, although it has been suggested that this was not the only reason for its relatively short run.<sup>19</sup> Dane used an archaic form of language to represent a 'great' woman from history. In turn it is possible to argue that she used this historical figure as a means of promoting a contemporary proposition of a new direction for womanhood. Gordon Daviot created a very different queen in *Richard of Bordeaux*.<sup>20</sup> Here, Anne is very clearly written as almost a prototype for a 'woman of the 1930s', she is intelligent, kind, intuitive and loyal. The achievement of her duty to the nation is sublimated in her relationship with her husband.

The relationship between Anne and Richard in *Richard of Bordeaux* resembles what would have been a fashionable ideal of marital partnership amongst the upper-middle classes at the time of writing. Anne is not English and has been brought up in a country where 'women do not wait to be spoken to before they speak'.<sup>21</sup> She is also fashionable to the extent that she 'gives the clergy something to preach about'.<sup>22</sup> Thus, Anne lives up to expectations of beauty but is also active and critical with her own perceptive ideas on politics and the power of the Church:

ANNE: ...It is only that I think the Church has become too rich, and forgotten its mission. I think that something should be done to make it simpler and kinder.<sup>23</sup>

Daviot's queen persuades her husband to remain true to his ideals she encourages him to learn to laugh and 'play the game', providing rational and constructive advice when all his official advisors fail him. The suggestion, it would seem, is that Richard's public life and decision making are shaped and

nurtured by what goes on in his private life, that this 'great' man worked as part of a male/female, husband/wife team. When Anne dies and the team is no longer his basis of support, he fails.

Daviot draws a sharp contrast to Anne in her characterisation of Mary Bohun, who is overly domestic and unwilling or perhaps unable to partake in an active public life; like the middle-class woman of the late Victorian period, she sees her duty as being confined almost entirely to the private sphere, and for her the most important contribution she can make to the health of the nation is to leave her 'personal touch' visible around the home. The two women represent polarised propositions for womanhood; it would seem that Daviot is suggesting, whether consciously or not, that Anne as a model is more relevant and necessary in a society which is working towards re-constructing the national identity simultaneous to promoting a maintenance of peace and stability.

Elsie Shauffler's *Parnell*,<sup>24</sup> which because of the implications of its political content took some time to achieve the approval of the Lord Chamberlain, carries a similar perception of the role of a wife to a great man, although there is a twist in that Katie's 'great' man is not the man she originally married. Although some critics felt it to be a 'pedestrian chronicle play', the majority praised the author's ability to create a drama which, although it used history as a framework, contained contemporary characters and a plot line which because of the romantic emphasis would appeal to contemporary audiences. More than anything it was seen as a 'love story':

How far a great love story may survive contemporary events and the passing years is shown by this triumphant play. Sticklers for the dead bones of accuracy may quibble here and there, but the human heart outlives all else.<sup>25</sup>

Katie O'Shea marries a man with whom she soon discovers she has very little in common. They live apart and he comes to her when he needs money. For him it is a convenient arrangement, but she wants more from a marriage:

KATIE: ...I'm tired of ...getting up, going to bed, dressing ...hearing the clock tick ...why does anyone marry anyone ...life is blowing by outside and it doesn't touch me.<sup>26</sup>

When Willie O'Shea is elected as member of parliament for County Clare, Katie is obliged to organised social entertainments for him. She now has to lure the

leader of the Irish party, Parnell, to one of their social events. Parnell, who finds all the social pretence of parliamentary work tedious, agrees to come, whereupon he falls immediately in love with Katie as he puts it:

...A man sees a woman for a moment - and he loves her. Is there any more to be said? <sup>27</sup>

The play differs little from many others of its kind, where love is idealised and the language used by lovers is contemporised. Nevertheless, Katie, who of course reciprocates the love of this 'great' man, now has a means of escaping the confines of a marriage to a man whom she despises. She puts all her energy into helping Parnell with *his* career and work. Willie invites Parnell to work in his home, and when Katie decides to sue O'Shea for divorce on the grounds of adultery (he has been having numerous extra-marital liaisons) O'Shea uses it as a means of gaining political support. Although neither popular with party nor voter, O'Shea tries to get sympathy by saying that his wife and the leader of his party have wronged him; that he has been cuckolded by his boss. O'Shea is even prepared to cause public scandal for his own mistress Bridgit, in order to save himself. In turn she points out to him that his accusations are ridiculous and that he should back down or he will completely ruin his own political career.

BRIDGIT: Willie for once forget about yourself ...You never dreamed Kate would talk back. You think now you can manage her because you always have. You're wrong.<sup>28</sup>

Parnell will not defend himself, which Katie realises is political 'suicide'. In the end, neither Gladstone nor Parnell's own followers will support him. Many of his colleagues turn against him, using his unfortunate circumstances as a means of furthering their own political careers. The Anti-Irish English Members of Parliament also use the scandal as an excuse to outlaw the parliamentary acceptance of Home Rule. The strain of all the adverse publicity and pain of seeing his former friends turning against him causes his early death, but Parnell and Katie's love for each other remains strong until the end. When Katie, in a state of mourning, tells one of his faithful friends that she feels as though she has caused his death, he points out, 'No more than all of us'.<sup>29</sup>

Critics clearly saw the play as being specifically a biography of Katie O'Shea rather than of Parnell. For the vast majority this was largely due to the acting of Margaret Rawlings who played the lead: ' Her rich, warm personality,

her deep, thrilling voice and her power of emotional intensity make her acting of Mrs O'Shea one of the most exciting experiences that the London theatre has seen this year'.<sup>30</sup> The play was written from the point of view of the female protagonist who in most other contexts would have been perceived as a philanderer. Yet in *Parnell* the implication is that we should not condemn the woman who has deserted her husband and sought divorce, as she has done so firstly for 'real' love, and secondly in order that she might use her skills and intelligence to help her new partner achieve his aims. These aims could be seen as personal but in actual fact Parnell clearly has a national rather than a personal mission. As such he is set up in contrast to Willie O'Shea for whom personal interests are of the utmost importance. And therefore Katie is 'forgiven', because ultimately she chooses the national over the personal. It is interesting to note that although officially news of King Edward VIII's affair with Mrs Wallace Simpson did not break until a month or two after the opening of this play, rumours were already spreading about the monarch's relationship with a divorced woman.

#### HEROINES WITH A MISSION

The idea of women 'working for the nation' runs through the narratives, often subtextually, of many of the chronicle plays by women of the inter-war period. When romance goes hand in hand with the journey to fulfilment of duty, then the heroines are fulfilled. If not, as in the case of Mary in Daviot's *Queen of Scots*,<sup>31</sup> then the relationship between romance and duty is contrasted, with one being shown as detrimental to the achievement of the other.

Mary Stuart had been a popular subject for dramatisation, although from almost all perspectives she was seen as a woman vulnerable to the need for romance and primarily male approval. One reviewer of *Queen of Scots* suggested that,

...To Mr. Drinkwater she was an idealist in love who got the wrong sort of lover every time; in *The Borderer*, the romantic drama which Fred Terry and Miss Julia Nielson made and kept familiar, she was an even sweeter idealist; and in the present play she is a woman too weak or rather too much at the mercy of capriciously feminine nature to cope with the perpetual plots and treasons of jealous and uncouth lords.<sup>32</sup>

Here however, Daviot presents the history as a battle not only of the sexes but of

a 'male' set of knowledge and rules against those which could be considered to be 'female'. Mary's aim is to find a way of taking what she considers to be rightfully hers, that is to say, the throne. Both beautiful and vain, she is also determined and wily. Her fatal flaw is that although she knows what she wants, she is ignorant of the rules and mores which line the pathway to the fulfilment of her goals. Mary, when battling to possess the throne in what is effectively a country of strangers, is unaware of the ambition which drives her own courtiers, an ambition which runs counter to her own. One of her advisors informs her that 'cuteness' as opposed to brain power, will get her what she wants. Her beauty is no weapon in this 'battle', it proves to be a hindrance. For her courtiers the priority is to find her a husband as soon as possible:

MORTON: Then perhaps we'd have a King and Queen who were really King ...and Queen.<sup>33</sup>

Yet for Mary, romance comes second to her desire for the throne as she says,

Oh Love! Some thing to pass a summer's afternoon. With kingdoms to play with what should a queen do with love?<sup>34</sup>

Mary grants Bothwell a pardon in order to secure his support, but when she discovers that he has been plotting against her she sends him to France. Beforehand she has also delayed her coronation in order to right the mistake which she has made in marrying Darnley. All of this is carried out contrary to the wishes of her advisers. For Mary, the struggle for the throne is as much a struggle with the men around her as it is with Elizabeth I. Her brother's hold on her is broken only to send her into the clutches of her ambitious self-interested courtiers. Ultimately Mary's failing is her naiveté and inability to understand the rules of the political arena in which she is manoeuvring. Daviot paints her as a tragic figure who, but for her own sometimes overt vanity and lack of guile, fails to attain her goal.

Daviot constantly juxtaposes Mary's beauty with her intelligence but also with her naiveté. Helen Jerome's *Charlotte Corday*,<sup>35</sup> set immediately before and after the murder of Jean-Paul Marat, could not have been drawn in greater contrast. Romance cannot intercede in the fate of this character who has without doubt been written as a 'pure' heroine, one whose 'duty' comes before all else. Rather like Elizabeth in *Will Shakespeare*, romance is not allowed to get in the way of duty to 'nation'. Jerome's lesser characters make constant references to

information about the heroine's upbringing, personality and motives. Charlotte is drawn as very self-reflective, constantly repositioning herself in a way which makes her aim easier to achieve. Just as with Kate O'Shea, she has a constant companion at home in her aunt, Madame de Bretteville, who acts as a confidante. Madame de Bretteville worries that Charlotte has a handicap because she is too bright, well-read and determined.

...Voltaire! Plutarch! Corneille ...Rousseau (*shakes her head dubiously*) Always pouring over such stuff! A fine way to get a husband ...What's more important for a woman ...a young gallant round the corner ...That's the only thing that makes a woman happy.<sup>36</sup>

For her aunt, intelligence is detrimental to an achievement of *femininity*. In such a way Charlotte's obsessional hatred for Marat is also seen by her aunt as being 'un-natural' in a woman. One of Charlotte's friends describes the way in which one of their school masters felt that Charlotte was 'pre-destined'. Thus the author juxtaposes descriptions of Charlotte's beauty with those which praise her intelligence and point to the rarity of such determination in a woman.

For Charlotte, Marat is 'the germ that must be destroyed'<sup>37</sup> she has no accomplices and takes orders from no-one. During the final court scene, not even the most pessimistic of accusers can believe her single-minded courage. Jerome ironically detracts from the power of this character by portraying her as some kind of myth inspired woman who lives in a 'secret world'; Charlotte sees herself as an instrument of some greater meta-human power. However, the subtext is based upon promoting an ideology which suggests that the personal is subservient to the greater needs of the nation, arguably pre-empting the narrative line of Charles Morgan's *The Flashing Stream*, where heroism is purely altruistic, characters are compelled by fate to serve their country rather than their own needs as Morgan suggests:

This singleness of mind ...resembles, in the confused landscape of experience, a 'flashing stream', fierce and unswerving as the zeal of saints, to which the few who see it commit themselves absolutely. They are called fanatics.<sup>38</sup>

Although Corday never actually describes herself as a fanatic she speaks as one, and certainly matches Marat in her determination. When asked why she killed



Marat she replies simply and with a sense of great calm:

CHARLOTTE: To prevent civil war ...I killed one man to save a hundred thousand...the resolution to put private interests aside and to sacrifice myself for my country ...One would have to feel such a thing oneself (*smiles*) ...I see that you are reluctant to offer a mere woman the shade of the great Marat. Nevertheless, I ...alone ...conceived and executed the plan (*murmurs of reluctant admiration*)<sup>39</sup>

Her determination of character and clarity of both goal and action are matched only by Marat:

MARAT: ...You can't expect obedience from the weak unless you show them a master! ...My ferocity is necessary ...I have been crucified, let *them* be. The race must agonise to be regenerated ...mass extermination, before we can clean up France ...Extinguish the public debt by paying the creditors with national bonds.<sup>40</sup>

It is interesting to note the similarity of ideology between Marat and Hitler's National Socialist party who at the time of writing had a stronghold in Germany, and whose actions and political ideology would not have been unfamiliar to theatre audiences of the day. This is not to suggest that the play foregrounds politics over personality as it clearly does not, rather, that Jerome chose her historical subject, a national heroine, with an acute recognition, perhaps, of the growth in the direction of a section of European ideology towards fascism. The play appears in some way to validate the possibility of the existence of an active heroine, who can achieve her aim, or perhaps more romantically achieve her destiny on equal terms with her male counterpart. Equally it would appear that the intention behind the play was to re-formulate in the public mind some kind of knowledge of the role of a woman at a particular key point in history. Gordon Daviot's *The Laughing Woman* seems to encompass a similar intention.

#### HISTORY AND THE CREATIVE WOMAN

In the final scene of Daviot's *The Laughing Woman*,<sup>41</sup> a play based loosely on the relationship between the sculptor Gaudier and the philosopher Sophie Brzeska,<sup>42</sup> the female protagonist Frik (Brzeska) is seen by the audience, although

barely recognisable, sheltering from the weather in a museum. As a party of school girls passes her by, one of them notices a sculpture by the now dead artist, René (Gaudier) of 'The Laughing Woman'. The sculpture is of Frik as a younger woman, and as the school girls stares at it she says thoughtfully, 'I wish they had said who *she* was'.<sup>43</sup> After the early death of her sculptor companion<sup>44</sup> Frik is unable to continue with her work, and sees her life as no longer worth living. René's art survives him, but her creative work is incomplete. To the outside world the statue of a nameless woman is all that remains of Frik's youth, she leaves no great creative work to posterity.

The play is as much concerned with the relationship between creativity and gender as it is with a romantic history. Frik is written in contrast to Hazel, who has fewer choices and is tied to the carrying out of domestic duties for her father. A writer, with a veritable working knowledge of art history, Hazel is usually only introduced in relation to her more famous father. With no income of her own she has to oversee her father's domestic affairs, which means that she does not have enough time to devote to writing and thus cannot earn a living from it. Hazel is caught in a vicious circle of middle-class domestic servitude to her father. Frik, by comparison, has numerous choices; she has an income of her own which means that she can live both comfortably and with enough time to write her book on philosophy. Yet, she actively chooses to live with René, whose desire for a bohemian lifestyle goes against her bourgeois love for home comforts. The two are not lovers, as René says,

...To the others you are a woman ...but to me you are a person  
...another person like myself.<sup>45</sup>

Frik some years his senior, an intelligent woman fluent in five languages, chooses to put his needs before her own, despite her companion's advise to the contrary. Towards the end of the play he even suggests that she might have written her book had it not been for the time and energy which she invested in his work. While he rises to fame with the help of a rich patroness, of whom Frik has become visibly jealous, Frik moves more and more into the supportive role. They move to London under the pretence of being brother and sister, yet her role is much more that of a mother. The *Evening Star* reviewer saw the play as being a study of genius,<sup>46</sup> whilst others saw it as a 'presentation of the modern temperament'.<sup>47</sup> Again, to the modern eye, it is arguably more a study of the relationship between the sexes, and specifically, the psychology of a particular generation of women. Daviot stresses the difference in the power relationship

between men and women as much as she points to the difference in the way in which men and women see themselves as artists. Frik actively chooses to sacrifice her work for that of a man, who feels himself perfectly able to look after his own domestic needs. As such Frik's need for a domestic role and for what boils down to male approval is the biggest hindrance between herself and the goals which she claims she wants to achieve.

Clemence Dane's *Wild Decembers* to some extent uses a similar perspective in the dramatising of the life of Charlotte Brontë. Originally commissioned by Katherine Cornell and entitled *How Clear She Shines*, the play opened in London in at the Apollo in May of 1933, running for fifty performances. The Brontës were for some reason fashionable subject matter for dramatists at this particular point, as Trewin put it, '... the Brontës took London this year',<sup>48</sup> and Dane's play, 'second in the field' to Alfred Sangster's *The Brontës*, was soon followed by John Davison's, *The Brontës of Howarth Parsonage*.

The three Brontë sisters are characterised as extremely hard working, intelligent and humble women, their dedication to work is contrasted with their brother's lack of dedication. Dane accentuates the dichotomy between Charlotte as a romantic heroine and Charlotte as a writer and business woman, who fights for the opportunity to write and to educate herself. When she returns to Belgium as a teacher rather than a pupil, her former tutor no longer finds himself able to pursue a scholarly friendship with her; in his eyes she is now an adult woman and as such should spend her spare time amongst the other women for whom he admits to having no intellectual respect. For Charlotte, having to associate herself with 'manly' rationality during working hours, and with 'feminine' activities during her free time, is hypocrisy. The idea that Charlotte may have been in love with her former tutor is later suggested, but the emphasis is put upon the fact that her aim was to maintain and nurture what she had considered to be a deep and intellectual friendship, with someone who just happened to be a man.

...Does the beggar love the hand that feeds it? ...I do not ask the full banquet, beauty and love ...but a crust, a crumb of friendship.<sup>49</sup>

For Dane, romance is only present in Heger's imagination. When in later years he writes to Charlotte asking her to write to him at his university address, as his wife disapproves of the fact that she and he correspond with each other, Charlotte quickly writes back stating that she had no idea that there was anything to be disapproving of and that she would certainly not wish to write to

him behind his wife's back; she then states that she will therefore no longer communicate with him.

Dane foregrounds the ideological context in which the Brontës wrote; that they actively worked against a cultural ideal of femininity by writing for the public at all. She is also very careful to contrast them with their brother who, although far better educated, is incompetent and lacks determination. Arguably the author's intention in *Wild Decembers* is not simply to re-tell the history of Charlotte and her sisters, rather, she makes a conscious effort to use history as a means of questioning the cultural position of women in her own time.

Many other theatrical images of creative women from history found their way onto the London stage during the inter-war years a number of these were portrayals of actresses such as the London Repertory Co.'s *Nell Gwynne* (sic.) at the Regent Theatre in 1927 and Naomi Royde-Smith's *Mrs Siddons*, with Sybil Thorndike in the lead at the Apollo Theatre in 1933. The latter had a very short run; some critics felt it to be written in such a way as to be only of interest to those working in theatre. The reviewer for *The Times* commented that all the author had achieved was to 'impress upon the audience that not only did Mrs. Siddons obtrude, her private affairs upon the public ear... (but also)...relentlessly ...obtruded her theatrical life upon the family ear.'<sup>50</sup> The play focuses almost entirely on the turgid domestic details of Mrs. Siddons' life and the inter-relationship between the public actress and the private woman. Despite her insistence that she would like to 'leave it all - be no more Sarah Siddons the actress, but just the wife and mother I am never allowed to be for more than a few days at a time,<sup>51</sup> she spends most of her time concerned with learning her lines and managing her career. The private plot centres around her relationship with Thomas Lawrence, a painter and suitor to both her daughters, who, eventually reveals his secret and unbending love for Sarah herself. Ultimately, *Mrs. Siddons* as a play is simply a re-vamping of history, albeit the history of 'a blinded woman of great genius, warm affection and pardonable vanity; at times an august, at others a richly comic creature, but, at the end, sincere and with a true and dignified pathos.'<sup>52</sup>

Susan Glaspell's Pulitzer prize winning play *Alison's House*<sup>53</sup> was a rather more complex play which also dealt with relationship between the private and public working life of a female artist. Based on the life of Emily Dickinson, (who Paglia has recently described as being 'a virtuoso of sadomasochistic surrealism ...she finds metaphors among the mechanical and domestic arts - blacksmithing, carpentry, cooking and sewing...')<sup>54</sup> the play is set at the dawn of the new century. Alison Stanhope (Emily Dickinson) has been dead for eighteen years,

and so never appears, a fact which a number of the critics found difficult to accept. Pellizzi states that one of the most important things about Glaspell was the fact that she helped Eugene O'Neill to gain recognition, and he provides a rather peculiar commentary on *Alison's House*: '...comedies such as *Alison's House*. ...which portray familiar surroundings and psychological problems with certain penetration...'.<sup>55</sup> It is difficult to understand why Pellizzi should perceive the play as a comedy, nor is the play any more dependent on psychological analysis than it is on an analysis of social or ideological factors. Glaspell does not reveal a poet such as the one which Paglia describes, rather she slowly reveals the rather repressed personality of the dead poetess through the perceptions and memories of Alison Stanhope's relatives.

Alison's house is a kind of bell jar out of which only John Stanhope's youngest daughter Elsa has managed to escape. Elsa followed her emotions and disgraced the family by eloping with an older, married man, risking social isolation and disapproval for the sake of love. This is by way of contrast to her Aunt Alison, who years before sacrificed her feelings for a man in order to maintain the family reputation. The context of the play is that all the family have been brought together for the occasion of selling Alison's house. At the close of the play Alison's secret love poems are found, the quality of which Elsa for one recognises. John Stanhope wants to protect the memory of his long-lost sister and so refuses to let the poems be published:

...she does not have to show her heart to the world. My sister who loved to the utmost and denied because it was right.<sup>56</sup>

For John there is confusion between the desire to keep the memory of Alison alive through her work, and protect an idealised image of the family. Elsa however, understands the significance of the poems, and in turn the sacrifice which her aunt made, but which she herself was unable to make; for Elsa it is vital that the poems are made available to the public, because of the passion and honesty which they contain:

...The story she never told, she has written it ...the love that never died, the loneliness, the anguish and beauty of her love ...looking into her heart ...It was death for her ...but she made it into life eternal.<sup>57</sup>

Despite the protestations of Stanhope's niece Louise, who is prim and

moralistic and has never forgiven Elsa for eloping into such a socially unacceptable alliance, the decision is made to publish the poems. Alison's life has materialised for the audience through the thoughts and actions of the other characters, and there are echoes of her sorrow and joy throughout the play. It is almost as if the women do for Alison that which she could not do for herself. The two 'family' women, Elsa and Stanhope's secretary Ann, choose freedom, one from the ties of moralism and family secretiveness and the other, Ann, from her long-lived entanglement with the Stanhope family itself. The implication is that they have been inspired by the memory of Alison to break with the binds of a family structure in which their needs are subservient to the rules which bind and the moral code which the idealised notion of 'family' imposes on its members.

Joan Temple's *Charles and Mary* shares the same frameworking of the family in terms of the confinement which it entails for women. The first signs the audience has of Mary's 'madness' in Act One are clearly seen to be caused by the fact that although she is working at home to keep the family coffers in order, she also has to service the needs of her invalided parents. The demands which they constantly make on her as she tries to do her work cause her temper to rise as she realises that her assistant can't follow out simple orders. Mary's mother gives her no sympathy and the family demands drive Mary to the point where she lets out: '(jumping to her feet and stamping her foot, as she regards them all like an animal at bay): Give me a little peace! I - I insist that you give me a little peace!' <sup>58</sup>

The prerogative of duty to family runs as a current through many of the history or chronicle plays written by women during the inter-war years. Whether 'family' is represented by 'nation' as in *Will Shakespeare*, or arguably 'nation' is represented by some idea of genius, a woman's duty is to serve the genius' needs and therefore the betterment of the nation and the 'family of nation'. Where the 'genius' of woman herself is the subject, then the position of fragmentation caused by a need to fulfil both a 'female' role and a traditionally 'male' role is placed at the centre of the narrative. The idea that genius and, at times, the creative act itself is associated with maleness, was accepted within the cultural context in which many of these women were writing.<sup>59</sup> In *The Women's Side* Dane acknowledges the argument that traditionally a notion of 'genius' has been associated with a 'male' trait. However, she posits that 'genius in women is not absent, but working with different tools, expressing itself in a totally different medium'; <sup>60</sup> absence is merely framed by the process and method by which presence is defined. On some levels this adumbrates the position taken later by feminist theorists like Linda Nochlin, who posit that rather than attempt to

answer the question, 'why have there been no great women artists?', we should look at the underlying assumption behind the question itself.<sup>61</sup> Dane suggests that we should look at those who surround the 'artist' and investigating the relationship between not only the artist and model, but also the artist and she (sic.) who provides and nurtures the working environment.

It is possible to argue that at this point in the history of women playwrights, the choosing of these historical subjects was a deliberate strategy aimed at either re-inventing or reinstating women as an important component of cultural development. In order to do so, a merging of two contrary projections of woman, take place. The 'new woman', who is active, intelligent and patriotic, has her own ambitions and a 'modern' perception of her role in the world is transposed onto elements of a late nineteenth century popular image of the feminine woman; supportive, nurturing altruistic and so on. Women of this post-Suffrage generation had to search for acceptable role models in a cultural context where, firstly, the whole question of what it meant to be a woman was prevalent, and, secondly, the economic climate caused women's work-roles to change rapidly from decade to decade. The theatre for which these women playwrights were writing was largely middle and upper-class, and this is, to an extent, reflected in the chronicle subjects which they chose. Although, as Bassnett points out, the choosing of a central figure for stage representation from the ruling classes is not the stuff of radical theatre,<sup>62</sup> at the time women playwrights in the main it would seem, were not concerned with the structure of theatre and the class which it served, but more that they should feature more positively and actively within it. The trend for chronicle plays served them twofold, firstly, 'the woman question' was very much on people's mind, and, secondly, the form of the chronicle play lent itself to possibilities of repositioning women in cultural history.

*Herstory* is literally that, *her* story - woman's version of events of the past both factual and mythological, a version in which what *women* did, and their perspectives on the past, dominate. The determination of our perception of his/herstory through an acculturation of all individuals of both sexes into *history* has been of concern for women for some time; in 1928 Virginia Woolf, in *A Room of One's Own* described looking around in the British Museum Library 'for books that were not there', books on women in *herstory*. Woolf ended up suggesting 'to the students of those famous colleges (Oxbridge) that they should re-write history ...To

create a herstory has, ...'a dual goal: to restore women to history and to restore our history to women', ... in other words, to reveal women's role in history and to give women a sense of a tradition of which they were and are a part. <sup>63</sup>

#### WHAT DID YOU DO DURING THE WAR ...MOTHER?

##### IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE GREAT WAR.

The use of the First World War as a setting for drama in the London commercial theatres was uncommon, certainly R.C. Sherriff was amongst the first to do so in *Journey's End*,<sup>64</sup> produced in 1928. However, for a number of the early women playwrights of the immediate post-First World War period, the effects of war on the family, home, and in turn on the way in which women's identity had been shaped, was an important component of a number of plays. The Second World War was different, somehow less taboo as a subject, and a number of women dramatists took advantage of the war and post-war environment as a context for dramatic plot. It could be argued, as most of the plots centre on women's domestic, professional and emotional experiences during wartime, these plays have the affect of positioning women's experience within key historical moments. As such they are not history plays, but rather plays which either directly or indirectly examine a moment in history, through examining the way in which the events of that moment influences women's everyday lives.

Fryn Tennyson-Jesse and Harold Harwood's *Billeted*,<sup>65</sup> described as 'a war play that has only just enough to do with war to make it amusing and not enough to make it serious',<sup>66</sup> uses war as a setting for a reconciliation of marriage and the blooming of romance. The protagonists are two women living in a country manor house in which two army officers have been billeted. The war has somehow matured Betty Tarradine's estranged husband whom she pretends not to recognise for most of the play. She has to economise because of the war, and is under constant threat of losing her cook to the 'mewntions everyone's talking about'.<sup>67</sup> Although the context of war is important, the play is essentially a comedy of manners, without any real critique of war as such. It is however a clear attempt to appeal to an audience which would have been predominantly female by dramatising changes which the war enforced on the lives of upper-middle-class women.

*Mrs Fischer's War*,<sup>68</sup> adapted from Henrietta Leslie's novel by herself and Joan Temple takes a much more serious look at the consequences of war for one woman in particular. The female protagonist of the title is married to a German who has lived in England for many years, never bothering to get naturalised. On



who has lived in England for many years, never bothering to get naturalised. On a family holiday in Germany his previously repressed feelings of loyalty to his country of birth inspire him to leave his family and volunteer to fight in the German army. His son, on returning home, joins the British army. Mrs Fischer is bereft not only of her husband and son, but as a 'German' by marriage, she becomes a social outcast in England. She tries to reconcile husband and son, and spends a great deal of time powerless to change her own social position. Mrs Fischer's attempts to reunite son and husband finally reach fruition, although both have been embittered and wounded by war. Ivor Brown's view of the play was that it was 'unequal in execution, but above the normal in ambition, and its production is a courageous assertion of faith in the existence of an audience who will face the less glamorous aspects of battle, the war behind the war, where spite and loneliness are doing the work of spiritual attrition'.<sup>69</sup>

There were a number of plays such as *The Man Who Pays The Piper*, and Clemence Dane's first play *A Bill Of Divorcement*,<sup>70</sup> where the war is significant in that it is seen as the event which creates a fatherless family where a young generation of women have to take control of family affairs; their mothers are of the pre-war generation and as such unused to managing money and so on. There were very few plays which actually used women's war work as a central subject, just as plays by men which presented the realism of the experience of the First World War did not begin to circulate in the London theatres until the late 1920s. Before this point, although there were novels and other literary forms on the subject available to the public, it would seem that the experience of war was too close for it to be acceptably reconstructed live on stage.

Muriel Box's *Angels of War*,<sup>71</sup> written in 1935, unashamedly exposes the hardship experienced by women working in the Army Auxiliary Corps in France at the close of the First World War. Here, Edna Clarke, the new arrival to the headquarters (an old cottage behind British lines), tells her new colleagues that her mother was thrilled when the order came through for her to go to France to join the Corps. Their descriptions of life behind the lines soon whip Edna, or 'Nobby' as they have renamed her, into a patriotic fury:

SALOME: Britain's brave daughters!

MOANER: Brave! And I'm sick with fear every time I take out my bus!

VIC: I know. Terrified at every pot-hole in case you shake up some poor devil inside with his legs half off.

COCKY: Ploughing through blinding snow -

SALOME: Or a bombing raid on a moonlight night -

SKINNY: Noble work!

JO: Cleaning lavatories!

MOANER: Swilling out your ambulance - blood and filth, till you vomit at the sight of the muck.

VIC: Britain's brave and beautiful daughters...

SALOME: Doing their bits, bless 'em.

COCKY: Keep the old flag flying!

*[Nobby, who has been standing in a strained attitude, suddenly bursts out ]*

NOBBY: Stop it! Stop it!

*[They are all suddenly silent, surprised at her outburst.]*

NOBBY: ...You don't really feel like that - you couldn't. I suppose you think it funny to say these things in front of me just to make me scared ...It won't have any effect. I'm proud of being British - I'm proud to do my bit ...If you don't like being here, why don't you go home?

MOANER: I'll tell you. Because we're afraid of being pointed at and told we showed the white feather and ran away. We don't go on because we like it. We'd go home to-morrow if we could - but it would only be more misery than this. There's a nice position for you - afraid to stay and afraid to go home. That's war! <sup>72</sup>

The women are as brutal to each other as their commander is to them. The atmosphere of loyalty and friendship is fragile, broken frequently by loss of temper and patience which itself is caused by sleep and nutritional deprivation. The author undermines any possibility that an audience could go away after having seen the play with a romanticised ideal of life in the W.A.A.C. *Angels of War* shows women who are at one and the same time infantilized; having to live under archaic and authoritarian regulations which are imposed at the will of the officers, and yet idealised as 'Britain's beautiful daughters'. By the end of the play 'Nobby' is no longer naive and gushing with patriotic enthusiasm. Those women who have survived ('Cocky' is killed on the road the night before the cease-fire is announced), feel that they have made a great sacrifice in giving up 'all they wanted out of life' to win the war. The play ends with a number of the women stating that they have 'fought' in a 'war to end all wars', that they have ruined their chances of marriage, but that the next generation will look after their needs, otherwise they will have 'been through it all for nothing'.<sup>73</sup> Box shares

the clarity of analysis as expressed by Fryn Tennyson-Jesse in her final descriptions of her impressions of the W.A.A.C. women, where she says,

...I saw them not as unthinking "sporting" young things, who were having a great adventure, but as girls who were steadily sticking to their jobs, often without enjoyment save that of the knowledge of good work well done ...Even if they did not marry all would be well, because they would have had their adventure...<sup>74</sup>

With the hindsight of some seventeen years of history, and the potential of the dramatic form within which to create an image of the experiences of these women at work, Box's play however foregrounds the severe and exhausting conditions in which these women worked with far more impact. The play might also be seen as a warning against the potentiality of the forthcoming war. In *Angels of War* the women are not 'Roses of No Man's Land', as in the popular image which became an efficient aspect of wartime propaganda,<sup>75</sup> rather, they suffer from fear, hunger and exhaustion, which makes their behaviour rude and rather unfeminine in a traditional sense of the word.

#### DOMESTIC LIFE DURING THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In Mary Hayley Bell's *Men In Shadow*<sup>76</sup> the action of which takes place in a barn loft behind enemy lines in France there is only one female character. Chérie, a tall 'large-boned French woman' of about sixty, speaks very little and only in French. She brings the fugitive British soldiers food and nurses them back to health before they find return routes home. *Men In Shadow* is essentially a play about a world in which men live and fight. Chérie is a constant reference to an idealised role for women, the provider and loyal nurturer, yet she is no romantic heroine, but rather a member of the resistance forces. It is unusual for any of the plays of this period not to have a 'romantic' element as a stereotyped role for a woman.

The plot of Esther McCracken's *No Medals*,<sup>77</sup> which ran in the West End from 1944 for 740 performances, moves gradually toward a romantic denouement, and as such the protagonist Martha Dacre could be considered to be a 'romantic heroine'. Described rather discerningly by one reviewer as a play which throws light on the everyday life of 'a good housewife gallantly struggling with the all too familiar shortages and emergencies of wartime',<sup>78</sup> the setting is purely domestic. Martha, played to great acclaim by Fay Compton, has two strange men billeted in her home and takes care of their requirements as well as

a tremendous energy, the stage constantly fills and then empties of bodies, only to be filled again as soon as the heroine tries to take a rest. When she does decide that she's had enough of housekeeping:

MARTHA: ...I've suddenly grown sick of being an unpaid nanny, messenger-boy, house-keeper, and general servant. (*she turns back to the ironing board.* ) I realised it the other day as I was persuading myself and my family for the five hundredth time that potatoes were both delicious and nourishing, while an egg was no longer either of those things.<sup>79</sup>

The rhythm and requirements of the everyday domestic comings and goings soon make her return with relentlessness to her 'duties'. Martha wants something more useful and fulfilling to do for the war effort she tells her sister that if she gets called up she will go, even if it means her family going into digs. When her sister, who has few family responsibilities, asks her why she didn't sign up for a 'proper' job when the war broke out, Martha replies that her conscience told her not to go, though her inclination was to leave the family duties behind her, as she says earlier on to Geoffrey,

MARTHA: It's deadly! Oh, you can't think how I long ...to sweep through the seas protecting the convoys, or to sweep through the skies protecting England ...and all I can do is sweep through the flues once a week ...I'm a - a frustrated heroine, that's what I am ...have you never thought that with all the big, exciting things that are going on all around me, it's pretty soul destroying to have the achieving of a couple of indifferent oranges the big moment of the year? There are times when I could weep.<sup>80</sup>

She points out that her sister Harriet's work in a war office administrative unit 'isn't a hundred jobs in one and all of them dull'<sup>81</sup> and that at least Harriet doesn't work alone, but rather, has all her 'underlings' to order about. Martha is under no illusion about the validity of her own work she yearns for something which would provide some kind of public recognition of her worth yet she laughs at Geoffrey when he lovingly says; 'Someday someone will write a real appreciation of mothers in wartime'.<sup>82</sup> By the end of the play, Geoffrey has proposed, and she is glad to know the luxury of being comforted for once instead of always having to do the comforting ...<sup>83</sup>

Critics were scathing about both the subject and context of the play, largely finding it 'comfortable' and 'trivial', and the fact that it was a 'domestic comedy' did nothing to gain praise for the author. Yet the play represents a serious attempt to entice audiences, albeit middle and upper-class audiences, again through using a mixed context of war and a vision of women's experience within it.

One of the central thematic manoeuvres in many of the plays aforementioned is the transposition of what would have been considered traditional female roles into what might have been considered as traditionally a 'male' context, that is to say war. The war is thus fought on home ground, with the women in a situation where everyday life is somehow accentuated, because it becomes a part of the war effort. Bringing 'romance' into the scenario somehow normalises the tragedy of war, creating a world in which although life is full of hardship, everyone must battle on and do their best to make sure that all, family and nation, will survive the trauma. In *The Same Sky*,<sup>84</sup> written by the actress Yvonne Mitchell and first produced in 1951, the setting is the East End of London in the early 1940s. The protagonist, Esther, is in love with a soldier by whom she later conceives a child. She is from an orthodox Jewish family, he is not. When she insists on continuing their relationship, her father refuses to talk to her; to let his daughter marry a gentile would be to sanction her withdrawal from God. Her mother negotiates between father and daughter. 'Momma' tries to persuade her daughter that Sammy would be a better match, but Esther insists, and so the tension of the war between her and her father grows. Mitchell exposes the racial hatred both from Jewry to gentile and visa versa, and somehow the context of the war both accentuates the differences of the races and yet ultimately brings them together. The family all draw around to support her when her fiancé is killed on active service, and she is left bearing his child. Her mother talks frantically to Esther who is in a state of near suicide:

MOMMA: ...Not any more for my sake I ask you to live, but for you own sake and for the baby. Live how you will Esther; let the baby be what you will, teach him to be like his father. Yes ...I will understand: only live, mine little one. Momma wants you to live for your life not for her ...Jeff too will want you to live. To give life to his baby. Part of him will live too in his child. We will love the baby Esther. We will love too the part that is his father ...Give momma a chance to love the baby Esther. Forgive.<sup>85</sup>

Even her father rallies around when he sees what pain his daughter is in, suggesting that they talk to Jeff's mother about what should be done. The war has separated and eventually united both family and races.

#### WOMEN AND WAR - OUTSIDE THE HOME

Bridget Boland was one of the few women playwrights making use of the form of the 'well-made play', who experimented with theatrical space. For *The Cockpit*<sup>86</sup> she makes use of the environment beyond the stage and the whole theatre auditorium becomes a 'provincial theatre in Germany in May, 1945.' The play is a treatment of the fate of a group of 'Displaced Persons left crawling about the cockpit of Europe after Hitler's defeat ...and what they felt and thought about each other and the British way of handling them and their problems.'<sup>87</sup> The *dramatis personae* run the gamut, in terms of the female characters, from Rebecca, a Polish Jewess, to a Russian housewife, to a French Communist resistance fighter who was a pianist in the pre-war years. As a piece of theatre it is vibrant and energetic, and, although there is much action, the piece is without a single protagonist. Women are shown to pitch in, both mothers and the single women; they are as aggressive as the male characters, who are no less prone to fear than the women. The suggestion, it could be argued, is that the effects of war do not differentiate between the sexes.

Both *The Same Sky* and *The Cockpit* met with some success amongst the London audiences, even though they were plays where the audience were asked to look back in time to a war which many were already trying to forget. The portrayal of war in Martha Gellhorn and Virginia Cowle's *Love Goes To Press*, a romantic farce set in a press camp on the Italian front, met with consternation and disapproval when the play transferred to America. The American critics felt that the authors had displayed 'strange human ethics' and 'incredible human callousness'.<sup>88</sup> London audiences and critics reacted differently, enjoying the comic irreverence which the authors applied to the depiction of life in a foreign press camp during the war as one reviewer wrote, '...Out of the turmoil of life in a press camp where battle is as bitter as anything at the front, they have fashioned a comedy of tremendous pace.'<sup>89</sup>

The play centres around two American women war correspondents, Jane Mason and Annabelle Jones, who have come to the camp as part of their work detail. They are very 'feminine' in the traditional sense, but there is no doubt that work comes before all else, and we are immediately struck with the speed and efficiency with which they get their work done, by comparison to the male

correspondents, who fight over the use of the typewriter and bicker with each other. Hank describes the women:

HANK: Let me warn you, Leonard. Don't be deceived by Miss Mason. She and her pal Miss Jones sail around looking like *Vogue* illustrations and they get all the stories before you've even heard of them. Some of our colleagues have a low opinion of those girls just because of that little trait.<sup>90</sup>

For Jane and Annabelle, the battle is not so much with the enemy forces, as it is with the false chivalry of their camp commanders and fellow male journalists. Both women are aware that they are treated differently because of their gender but they deal with it with insight and humour.

ANNABELLE: If I'm told once more I can't do something because I'm a woman ...

JANE: (*Reciting*) What if you got wounded, Miss Jones? All the forces on land, sea and air would stop fighting the war and take care of you. Not good for the war effort.

ANNABELLE: And considering the number of times we couldn't even get out of a car when a shelling started because the men pinned us down with their elbows while they stepped over us. It makes me sick with rage. Darling, your hair's wonderful cut short like that.

JANE: Do you like it? It started in the desert, about Alamein it must have been. I couldn't get any water to wash it ...<sup>91</sup>

At any given opportunity, the authors make use of Jane and Annabelle's femininity by juxtaposing it with the risk taking nature of their work, and, 'because their womanhood is something that they have never been allowed to forget, they have great fun flaunting it'.<sup>92</sup> Both women manage to override orders by making use of friendships with officers of higher rank, but we are asked to view this in the context of Annabelle's estranged husband Roger, who happens to be at the camp. Roger had got into a nasty habit of finding ways of 'scooping' stories before his wife could get to them, usually by putting obstacles in her way thus if the women live on an 'every man for himself' basis, it is because they have learnt the habit from their men.

Gellhorn has stated that she and Cowles, both experienced war

correspondents, wrote the play as a joke and as a way of making money; that it bears no resemblance to the reality of camp life.<sup>93</sup> What is interesting about the play, however, is that war is used as a background for another war, the 'battle of the sexes'. The women are not only up against the way in which they are viewed as individuals, but also the way in which women in general are perceived. Jane eventually passes up the offer of marriage to Philip because of his description of his mother and sister living in quiet domestic bliss in Yorkshire the idea of a life of fishing, shooting and horse riding with a few village teas thrown in, does not excite her. Instead she goes off with Annabelle to Burma, to the 'forgotten army' and '...Leeches, jungle sores, heat, fever, terrible casualties'.<sup>94</sup> Even though at the very close of the play Philip receives orders to go to Burma himself, Jane has already left. The women create a woman's world inside that of men we follow their perspective throughout a play in which women are shown to be often torn between the conflicts of the personal and the professional.

## CONCLUSION

The women playwrights who wrote using the chronicle format during the inter-war years did not do so in a vacuum. They were writing at a point in the history of the women's movement where the momentum and shape of pressure for political change in terms of gender changed and fragmented. These women seemingly tuned into a social and cultural interest in debates around 'the woman question', which in turn had been influenced by women's experiences during the First World War. Secondly, the playwrights were influenced by the filtering into popular culture of 'new psychology', which in itself often centralised women and both the complexities and the defining of femininity. The chronicle play contained a workable theatrical formula used by both male and female playwrights, and provided an opportunity to re-view history in a way which had relevance and appeal to the largely middle and upper-class theatre audiences of the time. Alison Light's theory of a re-newed conservatism in women's writing after the 1914-1918 war has relevance to examinations of the earlier plays looked at in this chapter:

...something happened to middle-class femininity after the Great War which sees it taking on what had formerly been regarded as distinctly masculine qualities: in particular the ethics of a code of self-control and a language of reticence whose many tones can be picked out in the writing and also in the construction of writing selves in the period ...The concept of British nationality can be seen



as pre-eminently masculine before the First World War ...and while Englishwomen could be the Guardians of their race, their Englishness as primarily wives and mothers, derived from the men in their lives ...their work during the First World War ...and their acquisition of citizenship ...suggests a new level of State recognition and of national inclusion...<sup>95</sup>

For women this situation ultimately meant that they were being assimilated into an essentially imperialist identity of nation, and this is reflected in many of the chronicle plays by women of the time. However, there are very few plays where ideals of nation are not entwined with questions about the nature of femininity and women's role within the family. Many of the reviewers saw the writing of plays about historical women as vehicles for actresses. I would posit that it is vital to look at the significance of this in terms of a history of women's involvement in the development of theatre. Whilst many of the female protagonists promote an ideal of duty to the nation, they also create a discourse around women's roles and women's experience as written by women for a public arena, that is, the theatre. It would be interesting to compare portrayals of women/heroines in chronicle plays by women with those of men at the time. I would suggest that there may be a marked difference in relation to the significance of discourse around femininity.

In plays where female playwrights use war as a significant moment in history as a setting the idea of 'working for the nation' often appears as a central theme. Again, the priority seems to have been to focus on women's lives during times of war, with the battle-field often being on the home front. In the later plays which use the Second World War as a context, 'nation' is less confused with family. There is far more confusion between which roles to prioritise, that of head of family or joining the public work force. Ideals of masculinity and femininity are also less confused, although often, as in *Love Goes to Press*, the battle of the sexes becomes the lens through which war is seen. Yet, women are often still shown to be torn between the personal and the political, and the private and the professional.

As a whole the plays reveal a sense that history and war have a different significance for men and women, even though their popularity exposes a certain convergence of audience 'needs' or aesthetic 'leanings' in terms of the function of theatre and dramatic narrative focus at the time.

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- 1 Marielouise Janssen-Jurret, *Sexism, the Male Monopoly on History and Thought* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 15.
- 2 Ernest Short, *Theatrical Cavalcade* (London: Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1942), p. 113.
- 3 Camillo Pellizzi, *English Drama; the Last Great Phase* (London: Macmillan, 1935), p. 198.
- 4 *Traitor's Gate* was produced at the Duke of York's theatre in November 1938 and ran for 54 performances.
- 5 W.A. Darlington, *Daily Telegraph*, 18 November 1938.
- 6 *The Times*, 9 December 1925. *Gloriana* was produced at the Little Theatre 8.12.1925 and ran for 19 performances.
- 7 Pellizzi, p. 191.
- 8 *Evening News*, 9 June 1934.
- 9 Vivian Gardner, *Sketches From the Actresses Franchise League* (Nottingham: Nottingham Drama Texts, 1985), especially Cicely Hamilton's, *A Pageant of Great Women*.
- 10 Susan Bassnett-McGuire, 'Towards a Theory of Women's Theatre', in Herta Schmidt & Aloysius Van Kesteren, *Semiotics of Drama and Theatre* (Amsterdam: Benjamin Co., 1984), p. 453.
- 11 London Feminist History Group, *The Sexual Dynamics of History* (London: Pluto Press, 1982), p. 3.
- 12 See J.C. Trewin, *The Turbulent Thirties* (London: MacDonald, 1960). Trewin points out that of the playwrights who had established themselves by the mid-1920s 'only Shaw, Coward and Clemence Dane' kept going through the 1930s. p. 19.
- 13 Clemence Dane, *The Women's Side* (London: Jenkins, 1926), (Foreword)
- 14 Clemence Dane, 'Are Women Pluckier Than Men?' *Daily Express*, 15 October 1926.
- 15 J. C. Trewin, *The Gay Twenties* (London: Macdonald, 1958), pp. 25 - 29.
- 16 Clemence Dane, 'Will Shakespeare', in *Recapture; A Clemence Dane Omnibus* (London: Heinemann, 1961). The play was originally produced by Basil Dean at the Shaftesbury Theatre in November 1921, and ran for 62 performances.
- 17 *Ibid.*, pp. 130 - 131.
- 18 Dane, p. 138.
- 19 *The Years Between; plays by women on the London stage 1900-1950*, ed. by Fidelis Morgan (London: Virago, 1994). Morgan suggests one of the possible factors which kept audiences away and therefore why the play had only a ten week run, was because the opening coincided with the famous the influenza epidemic which swept Europe after the First World War. (Other sources cite the epidemic as having affect more immediately after the war.) It seems appropriate to note here that the play was expensive to produce and as audience figures were slow to build, the production was losing money each time it was performed. In fact the audience figures built and the production which was rumoured to be closing after only a week or so, was continued. Low attendance may have had much to do with the fact that reviews were very mixed and as the play was written in verse it would not have attracted the same audiences which made her play *A Bill Of Divorcement* such a success earlier in the same year.
- 20 Produced by John Gielgud, the play had its main West End opening at the New Theatre in February of 1933 and ran for 463 performances.
- 21 Gordon Daviot, 'Richard of Bordeaux' in *Plays of the Thirties* (London: Pan Books Ltd, 1966), p. 36.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 34.
- 23 *Ibid.*, p. 37.
- 24 Produced at the New Theatre in November 1936.
- 25 *The Times*, 4 November 1936.
- 26 Elsie Shauffler, (trans. by Margaret Rawlings) 'Parnell' in *Famous Plays of 1936* (London: Gollancz Ltd, 1936), p. 128.
- 27 *Ibid.*, p. 167.

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28 Ibid., p. 197.  
29 Ibid., p. 238.  
30 W.A. Darlington, *Daily Telegraph*, 5 November 1936.  
31 *Queen of Scots* ran for 106 performances at the New Theatre from 8.6.1934.  
32 *The Times*, 9 June 1934.  
33 Gordon Daviot, 'Queen of Scots' in *Famous Plays of 1934* (London: Gollancz Ltd, 1934), p. 417.  
34 Ibid., p. 381.  
35 Helen Jerome, 'Charlotte Corday', in *Five Plays of 1937* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1937). I have been unable to find any records of a professional performance of this play in the West End. This does not necessarily mean that it was not performed by a professional or semi-professional company. Jerome adapted both *Pride and Prejudice* which ran at the St James' for 317 performances from Feb. 1936, and *Jane Eyre*, which opened at the Queens theatre, Oct. 1936 and transferred to the Aldwych, running altogether for 299 performances. I have included *Charlotte Corday* here as it is germane to the argument that the use of the chronicle form was for women a deliberate strategy to find or re-find ideals of 'national heroines' from history.  
36 Ibid., p. 2 - 3.  
37 Ibid., p. 24.  
38 Charles Morgan, *The Flashing Stream* (London: Macmillan, 1938), p. 7.  
39 Jerome, p. 114 - 115.  
40 Ibid., pp. 75 - 79.  
41 *The Laughing Woman* opened at the New Theatre in April 1934 and ran for 41 performances.  
42 In turn the plot borrows very heavily from H.S. Ede, *Savage Messiah* (London: Abacus, 1972), first published in 1931.  
43 Gordon Daviot, 'The Laughing Woman', in *Famous Plays of 1934-35* (London: Gollancz, 1935), p. 470  
44 Gaudier was amongst the first to die during the First World War.  
45 Daviot, (1935), p. 468.  
46 *Evening Star*, 9 April 1934.  
47 *Manchester Post*, 9 April 1934.  
48 J.C. Trewin, *The Turbulent Thirties* (London: MacDonald, 1960), p. 55.  
49 Clemence Dane, 'Wild Decembers', in *The Collected Plays of Clemence Dane*, (London: Heinemann, 1961), p. 228.  
50 *The Times*, 29 November 1933.  
51 Naomi Royde-Smith, *Mrs. Siddons* (London: Gollancz, 1931).  
52 Ibid., p. 5.  
53 'Alison's House' was produced at the Little Theatre in October of 1932 and ran for 23 performances. Few of her plays had long West End runs and even though a number of critics rated her work alongside that of Eugene O'Neill in terms of merit, the fact that she was often considered 'highbrow' worked against her. In terms of the commercial theatre She was however popular with smaller arts theatres and semi-professional groups, seen as an experimental writer who could 'say in one Act what a lesser playwright could not say in three. (*Daily Express*, 30 June 1932.)  
54 Camille Paglia, *Sexual Personae; Art and Decadence from Nefertiti to Emily Dickinson*, (London: Penguin, 1992), p. 264.  
55 Pellizzi, p. 252.  
56 Susan Glaspell, 'Alison's House' in *Six Plays* (London: Gollancz, 1930), pp. 664 - 667.  
57 Ibid., pp. 662 - 663.  
58 Joan Temple, *Charles and Mary*, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1930), p. 24. The play produced by Malcolm Morley, opened originally at the Everyman in Feb. 1930 and transferred to the Globe in the same month. It ran for 58 performances in total.  
59 See Christine Battersby, *Gender and Genius: Towards a Feminist Aesthetics*, (London: The Women's Press, 1989), especially pp. 35 - 60, where Battersby details Anais Nin's perception of creativity as an aggressive 'male' act, and the felt

contradictions of wanting to be both 'feminine' and creative.

60 Dane , (1926), pp. 135 - 136.

61 Linda Nochlin, 'Why Have There Been No Great Women Artists?' in *Women, Art, and Power and Other Essays* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1994), p. 148.

62 Bassnett-McGuire, S, (1984), p. 453.

63 *Herstory; Vol. 1.*, ed. by Gabrielle Griffin & Elaine Aston (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1991).

64 R.C. Sherriff, *Journey's End* (London: Gollancz Ltd., 1929). The play was produced at the Apollo in December 1928.

65 Fryn Tennyson-Jesse, & Harold Harwood, *Billeted* (London: French , 1918). The play opened at the Royalty theatre in August 1917 and ran for 240 performances.

66 *Tatler*, 5 September 1917, p. 310.

67 Tennyson Jesse & Harwood, p. 50.

68 Produced at the Ambassadors theatre in July 1931, the play ran for only four performances. Critics were unanimous in their animosity toward the fact that the play was an adaptation of an already successful novel, and therefore did not make 'good theatre'.

69 *Observer*, 11 July 1931.

70 *A Bill of Divorcement* ran at St Martin's theatre from March 1921 for 402 performances.

71 Muriel Box, 'Angels of War' in *Five New Full Length Plays for All-Women Casts*, (London: Lovat Dickson & Thompson Ltd., 1935). (I have been unable to find any records of a professional performance of this play in the West End although this does not necessarily mean that it was not performed by a professional or semi-professional company.)

72 *Ibid.*, pp. 25 - 26.

73 *Ibid.*, p. 74.

74 Fryn Tennyson-Jesse, *The Sword of Deborah: First Hand Impressions of the British Women's Army in France* (London: Clay & Sons Ltd., 1918), pp. 94 - 96.

75 Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 10.

76 Mary Hayley Bell, *Men In Shadow* (London: Samuel French, 1943). The play was produced in London in September 1942 and ran for 390 performances.

77 Esther McCracken, *No Medals* (London: French Ltd., 1947). The play was made into a film directed by Roy Baker in 1948, and re-titled *The Weaker Sex*.

78 *The Times*, 5 October 1944.

79 McCracken, p. 36.

80 *Ibid.*, pp. 43 - 44.

81 *Ibid.*, p. 53.

82 *Ibid.*, p. 87.

83 *Ibid.*, p. 95.

84 Yvonne Mitchell, 'The Same Sky', in *Plays of the Year Vol. 6.* ed. by J.C. Trewin, (London & New York: Elek, 1951). André Van Gyseghem produced the first production at the Nottingham playhouse in February 1951. The play opened it's commercial run, produced by Rye, at the Lyric in January 1952 later transferring to the Duke of York's, and ran for 80 performances.

85 *Ibid.*, p. 304.

86 Bridget Boland, 'The Cockpit', in *Plays of The Year 1948-49* (London & New York: Elek, 1949). The play ran for 58 performances at the Playhouse, from February 1948.

87 Review, The Theatre Museum First Night File, London Feb. 19.1948.

88 Rosamund Gilder, 'Rainbow over Broadway,' *Theatre Arts*, March 1947, p. 18. Quote taken from editorial afterword of Gellhorn, M and Cowles, V, *Love Goes to Press*, edited by Sandra Spanier (Lincoln & London: The University of Nebraska Press, 1995 (forthcoming)). In London, the play opened at the Embassy in June 1946 with a West End run at the Duchess running for 40 performances from July 1946.

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- 89 *Daily Mail* , 18 June 1946.  
90 Gellhorn & Cowles, p. 15.  
91 Ibid., p. 27.  
92 Ibid., p. 157. Sandra Spanier, in her editorial post-script also likens the play to a prototype for *Thelma and Louise*, as a kind of war time "'new women's' road /buddy play".  
93 Ibid., p. i.  
94 Ibid., p. 142.  
95 Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism Between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 1991), pp. 210 - 211.

## WIDOWS & SPINSTERS; WOMEN WITHOUT MEN

The economic slump, the revolt against reason, the resurgence of military values, the cult of the cradle and ...the preoccupation with physical modesty - these are the chief forces which cause the pendulum of emancipation to swing backwards ...reaction follows progress.<sup>1</sup>

The levels of social antagonism towards single women and especially 'spinsters' which had already begun to rise before the 1914-1918 war carried on doing so through the war into the 1920s and 1930s. Pre-First World War sentiment that the spinster was, 'a barren sister ...shamefaced, bloodless and boneless ...seen as converting her desperate disappointment and frustration at being cheated of a man and motherhood after being reared to expect such things',<sup>2</sup> were not dissimilar to sentiments espoused after the war. There were some changes in attitude, whereby the affects of the war in the limitation of the numbers of available unmarried men had to be taken into account. Thus, rather than being identified with the radical 'new woman' of the pre-war period whose activities might include library research, theatre visits and child minding, the post-war spinster was more likely to be castigated for her moral standards, her 'prudery' or old-fashioned perceptions of the world and her role within it. After the 1914-1918 war the spinster was more ridiculed than seen as a threat, although where a spinster was seen as a 'man-hater', who disapproved of male behaviour, she was seen as a moralist whose ideological stance represented a threat to the development of the nation. The 'feminine ideal' was a woman who sought marriage and home making, not one who actively chose to stay single or have sexual relations outside of marriage.

Holtby analysed the social position of her female contemporaries both in relation to their pioneering foremothers and in relation to the social and political issues contemporary to her own age; she was concerned that the scapegoating popular image of the spinster had very little to do with the lived experience of single women. The social code of the late-1920s and early-1930s, with its emphasis on childrearing and marriage, meant that women who either chose not to get married or chose marriage after a career, were not provided for socially or economically. Holtby was concerned with the problems which arose merely from the use of the term or label of 'spinster' (previously the term had always been associated with virginity). Clearly 'spinster' as a social label did not account for the fact that many women were choosing to have sexual relations with men

outside of marriage, nor did it account for the rising numbers of women widowed by the war, or women who had children outside of marriage. Holtby stressed that as the supposedly 'ideal' feminine woman was married, with children and with a healthy sexual life within her marriage, certain political voices felt justified in decrying single women as a 'distressing type', yet no such attitude was applied to single men. Later critics, such as Beauman, state that during the 1930s attitudes to single women were 'somewhat kinder',<sup>3</sup> but this pays little regard to the affects of what Holtby amongst others saw as a direct correlation between the rising tide of fascism with its accompanying ideology, and the belief that the 'manless thirties' were causing a social problem. In the popular press the spinster and the single woman were seen as economic problems, despite the fact that most of them supported themselves financially. The perception, generally speaking, was that for a single woman to support herself through work, a possible place of employment for a man was being taken by a woman. Clearly, for Holtby 'the legend of the frustrated spinster (was) one of the most formidable social influences of the modern world.'<sup>4</sup> In addition, at a point in history where fecundity was 'revered as a patriotic virtue,'<sup>5</sup> Holtby was very clear that the position of single women, whatever their sexual orientation or marital history, was precarious in a fluctuating economy where the position of women generally was dependent on frequent changes in 'popular' perceptions of what a woman's 'proper' role should be.

In terms of the women playwrights creating roles for women at this time, the general attitude toward single women is reflected. In plays where 'family' as a social unit is emphasised, the single woman is often set up in juxtaposition to the married woman. During the 1920s and 1930s widowed women are often the focus of a play, albeit that the play worked toward the eventual re-marriage of the woman in question. Here, the social reality of war widows is used as a plot device, such as in *Billeted* or Joan Temple's *The Widow's Cruise*,<sup>6</sup> where Francesca is re-acquainted with her husband who had disappeared during the First World War. Certainly, the playwrights appear to have categorised single women into types, the least 'thought out' being the spinster. In plays of the period, the spinster was often although not always, virginal, naive or simply judgmental, thus becoming a comic or ideological device.

## THE SPINSTER

The spinster as a stage character made frequent appearances in many of the plays examined in this thesis. Here though a few examples are given as a means of indicating the typical, or most frequent context in which she

appeared. Spinsters often appeared in the form of sharp-minded business women, typically dressed in pince-nez or tweeds, such as Miss Mutchison in *Her Shop*, or Miss Leith in Rosamund Lehmann's *No More Music*.<sup>7</sup> In some plays the spinster is cold and disapproving of the moral of the younger generation as in Kennedy's *Escape Me Never*,<sup>8</sup> where she is given no name other than one which represents her marital status. Here the spinsters have their limited appearance whilst trying to ascertain who is the mysterious father of Gemma's child:

SECOND SPINSTER: How is the wee baby?

SPINSTER: We just couldn't work out, my sister and I, which was the lucky man. But now (*archly*) I think I can guess.

GEMMA: The lucky man?

SPINSTER: Your husband ...the baby's father ...

GEMMA: (*Taking Caryl's hand as well as Sebastian's*) They are both my husband. But they are not the father of my child (*The Spinster is speechless. She escapes into the hotel*)<sup>9</sup>

However, the spinster can just as likely be a 'barrel of fun', ready to try any new adventure and admiring the new ways of the young, such as Miss Mayne in Smith's *Autumn Crocus*<sup>10</sup> played in the original production by Muriel Aked, a popular comedy actress of the time.

Another common usage of the spinster as a character 'type' was as a confidante to the female protagonist, but here she was more likely to be a 'maiden' or widowed aunt of some close relative as in *Sixteen*, or Mme de Bretteville in *Charlotte Corday*. Again, the role of confidante could work just as easily against the wishes of the main characters as it did in their favour. For example in Dane's *Bill of Divorcement*<sup>11</sup> Miss Fairfield is a remnant from a bygone age. She is disillusioned by the fact that her nephew's wife Margaret should seek divorce on any grounds, and even less happy about the fact that she is considering remarriage. For Miss Fairfield, Margaret's liaison with Gray Meredith is immoral as is the way in which she has raised her daughter, Sydney. Sydney, as far as her great aunt is concerned, is strong-minded and determined. Sydney's desire for a career is, in Miss Fairfield's eyes, a signifier of the typical selfishness of young women which has brought about the downfall of the nation.

Thus, what connects these various spinster characters is the fact that they are often used as 'fill in' to the main plot for moments of comic relief or



as a means of opposing one ideology with another. They share with many representations of single, working women, a defined series of characteristics, but are rarely the centre of narrative focus.

#### SINGLE WOMEN AT WORK; THE SECRETARY.

In Britain, especially during the inter-war period, where areas of employment were limited for women, the vocation of secretary was at one at the same time sought and reviled. Pay was low and prospects were limited, but for single women it was a respectable job. In plays of the period, the secretary is often a hovering background presence in the middle-class professional family. Devoted to her work with very little life outside of the work environment, she is often naive and lonely and almost always has romantic intentions toward her employer. Elsie, in Dodie Smith's *Call it a Day*,<sup>12</sup> is a good example.

Elsie the devoted secretary of Hilton, a London accountant, who is waiting for his last client of the day to arrive, suggests that if they were to work late as she 'loves her work', he will 'feel clear' the next day, to which he replies:

HILTON: All right. We'll give ourselves until seven and then I'll run you home in my car. It's on my way.

Hilton then gets caught up with his client who, much to Elsie's consternation has taken it upon herself to rearrange the office flowers. The time spent with the client serves to undermine Elsie's perceived closeness with Mr Hilton, who, as he is running late, withdraws his offer of a lift home and tells Elsie to take a taxi with money from petty cash instead. Her response is a pastiche of the forlorn and rejected woman:

*(Elsie looks after him, disconsolate ...For a moment she looks at the ravished bowl of scillas. Suddenly she gives a little gulp of tears and takes out her handkerchief. She goes out of the room, repressing her tears with a sniff)*<sup>13</sup>

Miss Trimmerback and Miss Watts, two secretaries in Booth's *The Women*, appear in the Second Act, where they are sent by Mr Haines to his home in order to sort out final divorce arrangements:

MISS TRIMMERBACK: Is he going to marry her?

MISS WATTS: I don't butt into his private affairs...

MISS TRIMMERBACK: ...She's lucky ...I wish I could get a man to

foot my bills ...a lot of independence you have on a woman's wages. I'd chuck it like that for a decent or an indecent home.

MISS WATTS: The office. That's my home

MISS TRIMMERBACK: ...I see. The office wife?

MISS WATTS: (*defiantly*) He could get along better without Mrs Haines or Allen than he could without me ...I relieve him of a thousand foolish details. I remind him of ...his good opinion of himself. I never cry and I don't nag. I guess I am the office-wife. ...He'll never divorce me!

MISS TRIMMERBACK: Why you're in love with him...

MISS WATTS: What if I am? I'd rather work for him than marry the kind of dumb cluck I could get (*almost tearful*) - just because he's a man.<sup>14</sup>

They get a cold reception from his wife who, against the advice of her friends, has forced her husband into admitting his adulterous behaviour with Crystal Allen and is suing him for divorce. Despite her sad realisation that her love for her boss will never be reciprocated, Miss Watts carries out her duties with flourish, pointing out to Mrs Haines that '...there are always tag ends to a divorce ...you know how Mr Haines hates to be bothered with inconsequential details.'<sup>15</sup>

These two secretaries are caricatures in a play which is full of exaggerated stereotypes of women. Booth was writing about people she knew, the upper-class women of New York in the late 1930s. As such, *The Women* is a fairly thinly disguised attack on the moral values and social behaviour of both these women and the world in which they lived; a world of women whose lives are controlled by their obsession with pleasing men and reaching some unattainable level of femininity. The two secretaries are amongst the few working women in the play and the social message behind their words has a resonance with the social reality of their age.

In both *Dear Octopus* and *Family Affairs* the family secretary is used as a means of opposing the 'bad' woman with the virtuous woman. Both Fenny in the former and Margaret in the later play are devotees to the family unit, both are outsiders who through work have been integrated into the family. In *Family Affairs* Lady Madehurst encourages her son to see Margaret as a potential wife who is loyal and kind. More than this, she is a preferable alternative to his girlfriend who has already been married and wants to take Harvey away from the family enclave. Margaret is the innocent, who ultimately shares the same values and beliefs around the sanctity of the family as Lady Madehurst.

In Dodie Smith's *Dear Octopus* the family secretary Grace Fenning is 'a slender woman of twenty nine, unobtrusively pretty with a pleasant, unaffected manner. She wears old tweeds...',<sup>16</sup> and has virtually become an honorary family member. Fenny (Fenning) is loved by all; she helps the domestic servants and plays with the children as well as coping admirably with all her secretarial duties. When others complain about the amount of work they are expected to do, Fenny is unremittingly loyal to her employers. She is central to the plot, and eventually comes to represent the future of the family unit. When the eldest son Nicholas, a witty and charming director of an advertising firm, finds himself sitting chatting with her at the grand family celebration around which the play is centred, he tells her that she is 'a very sweet person ...you look about fourteen', and then puts her hand against his cheek, and remarks, '...that poor little hand - just like a little nutmeg grater'.<sup>17</sup> After the party his sister reprimands him for 'leading Fenny on', and during their next encounter, Nicholas criticises Fenny for the way in which she behaved at the party. Later, when he discovers that Fenny is considering a marriage proposal by a local chicken farmer, Nicholas becomes angry and tells her that she is 'cheap'. In true Dodie Smith style, the play has a happy ending when Nicholas realises that his anger was caused by nothing other than jealousy and that in truth, he is madly in love with Fenny. He proposes to her and she reveals her feelings towards him by refusing:

FENNY: (*recoiling*) No! Oh, how could you? I can't help loving you. I'm not ashamed of it. It's been my secret happiness for years. But to say that to me when...it's meaningless ...pity can be very humiliating ...

NICHOLAS: ...men don't propose out of pity ...I really love you Fenny ...all that matters now is if you'll take me on.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, Fenny who has the same love and loyalty for the family, the 'dear octopus' of the title, is an outsider who is absorbed by the upper-middle-class family in a play popular with West End audiences, at a point in British history when life as the upper-middle-classes once knew it was once again on the edge of change. Thus, the outsider provides future security for a traditionally closed social unit, the foundations of which are beginning to crumble.

In Elizabeth Baker's *Miss Robinson*<sup>19</sup> the respectability of an upper-middle-class English family is shown to be a facade through the actions of the honest and morally up-right family secretary. Here, we find an unusual focus upon the secretary as a stage character, whereby she is the nucleus of the narrative.

Angela Robinson, a 'charming young person, quick in movement, bright in manner, well but quietly dressed', is loyal secretary to Walter Vintage MP. She is dedicated to her work and in awe of the class of family for which she works. Angela is shy of letting her employers know of her affections for Arden, a man from her own class. He has fewer delusions about the grandeur of the upper-middle classes and tells her to make sure that she does not allow herself to be exploited by them:

ARDEN: ...But look here, Angy, take a tip from a - a pal.  
Don't make yourself cheap with these people. Don't be a slave to them. You women spoil the people you work for. Don't you do it.<sup>20</sup>

Walter Vintage is concerned that his valuable secretary should not become sexually exploited by his overly amorous son:

VINTAGE: What has he been doing?

MRS VINTAGE: He? Well I don't suppose he was entirely to blame -

VINTAGE: On the contrary, I dare say he was..

MRS VINTAGE: I came into the room unexpectedly today and saw them standing very close together - they were obviously very intimate - ...Of course they jumped apart -

VINTAGE: You mean Horace did?

MRS VINTAGE: ...I dare say she has encouraged him a little. Of course she is a nice, respectable girl -

VINTAGE: A fact of which Horace must be made aware -

MRS VINTAGE: But I think she's flattered, and very naturally, by Horace's attentions. That's why I want you to speak to him. I don't want her to have her head turned. She comes of decent, quiet people -

VINTAGE: Poor but honest ...But I don't see that Miss Robinson's family concerns us. It's the girl herself ...I should have thought that Horace would have got used to her good looks - the confounded little ass!

VINTAGE: (*sighing*) Young men are so difficult.<sup>21</sup>

Angela Robinson witnesses the revelation of a family scandal, and quietly leaves the room in an attempt to be tactful and remain unnoticed. Walter Vintage, we

discover, was married to a woman previously; the original wife, we are told by a dying servant, is still alive and is legally still Vintage's wife. When the family rally around Vintage to discuss what they can do to alleviate any possibility of his bigamy being discovered, it is Miss Robinson who holds the key to maintaining the family secret. She is trusted, but there are implications that, because she is not from the Vintage's social class, she will have no real loyalty to the family over such a grave matter. Vintage's solution is that Horace should ask Miss Robinson to marry him. Lister, the elder brother, is shocked at such a suggestion, his concern being purely for his own social position: '...And what will Sir Eustace and Lady Agatha say when they know brother has married the typewriter?' <sup>22</sup>

References to class origins increase as the plot develops. For the Vintage family, there is no question but that a young woman, with a family from Kennington and a father who is a clerk, should be delighted to marry into the upper-middle classes. For Horace, Miss Robinson is an 'obedient little girl'; for Ivy, Miss Robinson's sister, the Vintage family are very tolerant:

IVY: ...I think they're awfully decent. Most people in their position, if anybody in the family wanted to marry the typist, would cut up frightfully.<sup>23</sup>

Miss Robinson dresses up for dinner so that she looks the part, but somehow she suspects that something strange is going on; Mrs Vintage and her friends give her discerning looks and she somehow doesn't feel right. When Miss Robinson tells her mother that the Vintages don't seem to show their feelings, Mrs Robinson points out that, '...it's just something in their manner, ...they're different from us.'<sup>24</sup> Eventually Miss Robinson finds out that the real reason Horace proposed to her was in order that she keep the family secret quiet. When in turn she tells Horace that she can no longer consider marrying him, the family cannot believe their ears. They were convinced that she must have known all along that they would never let their son marry into a lower class, unless there had been a very good reason. Miss Robinson cannot believe that she has been so stupid and ultimately sees her unhappiness as being her punishment for putting the knowledge of Vintage's previous marriage out of her mind, as she says to them:

MISS R: Why didn't you trust me - ? ...I knew all along that I was wrong to come into your life ...when there was this wicked thing in it - but I was so proud to think you wished it ...I never imagined

you were doing it to - bribe - me ...And I was so pleased to think that I might live among such people and ...have all you have.<sup>25</sup>

Miss Robinson's admiration for the Vintages and their class is effectively destroyed. She says to her friend Arden that it was pride which made her want to be 'one of them'.

In *Miss Robinson* Baker highlights the integration of the unmarried secretary from the suburban lower-middle class with the upper-middle-class. The implication is primarily that the classes don't mix, that each have different moral codes and standards. Rather than marriage to Miss Robinson representing some exchange of property, it represents an affirmation of the moral code and values of the upper-middle class by the (new) suburban class. Simultaneous to accentuating class differences Baker posits the question of whether or not it may be better to stay single (although it is Arden who takes Miss Robinson away from the Vintage home) and respect the validity of your own position than become absorbed into a class which changes the moral code according to its own needs. Within the Vintage household, Miss Robinson is consciously identified with the *outside*, and it is only her position as secretary which brings her recognition within the family. Yet, family honour is too important to risk revelation by an *outsider*. By the end of the play the first wife has died and so, when Miss Robinson leaves, there are few regrets for the Vintages who take no responsibility for the way in which they have maltreated her. For Vintage: '...It is all most satisfactory - except that I want a new secretary'; the implication being that life goes on, and that there are plenty more available secretaries, just like Miss Robinson. Baker is critical not so much of the new suburban class as she is of the moral hypocrisy of the upper-middle-classes, a 'vintage' class represented by the Vintage family. If she is critical of the suburban class, it is because of their adherence to a false consciousness, which becomes apparent in the awe with which Miss Robinson and her family initially hold the upper-middle class Vintage family.

#### SINGLE WOMEN AND SEXUALITY

There are a few plays where the fact that a woman has chosen to remain unmarried is placed positively within a context where marriage is part and parcel of an unchallenging or unadventurous middle-class or suburban life.<sup>26</sup> Here the heroine is shown to want from life something other than conventional marriage. Occasionally, the implication is that her desire to be independent is evidence of her naiveté, more often though this desire is shown to signify her

lack of adherence to what was considered as 'normal' female sexuality. Rosamund Lehmann's Hilda, in *No More Music*,<sup>27</sup> is a case in point. Here, the virginal Hilda, taking a vacation with her aunt on a holiday island, takes time out from her academic studies in order to make a real life study of Jan and Miriam. The young couple have caused a stir as no-one is really sure of their marital status. By all accounts they are 'bohemians', and the fact that Jan seems able to do whatever he likes with his time holds a fascination for Hilda, who spends a great deal of her time with her head 'stuck in a book'. Hilda feels that Jan can do whatever he likes because he is male, whereas she sees herself as neither male nor female. Lehmann deliberately contrasts Hilda with Miriam, who is in many respects an 'ideal' of femininity, even though Miriam and Jan are not married:

HILDA: ...I like sort of concentrating on something. A ...sort of problem.

MIRIAM: Do you? I hate it. Puzzles and acrostics and things make me feel faint. Once Jan tried to teach me chess and I really felt faint. We had to stop.

HILDA: (laughing) Did you honestly? I used to play chess with my father. I loved it ...Of course I really like reading best ...

MIRIAM: ...what I really like best is doing nothing.<sup>28</sup>

Miriam loves cooking and socialising, while Hilda prefers the social isolation integral to a life of study. To her aunt's dismay, Hilda prefers to teach herself German than concentrate on searching for a husband. Hilda's fascination with Jan turns into a melancholic love. The fact that he sees her as amusing in her capacity as a 'terribly earnest English virgin' serves to build up her feelings of rejection and ultimately, she commits suicide. Lehmann's juxtaposition of Miriam's so-called femininity with Hilda's supposed lack of traditionally feminine qualities is clearly used as a means of positioning Hilda in a world where she cannot find a satisfactory locus as an adult woman. The result is that Hilda is a single woman and an outsider, even amongst people who are themselves essentially outsiders.

In Glaspell's *Bernice* <sup>29</sup> the unmarried woman is again the outsider, who because of the close nature of her friendship with the deceased heroine, is able to make perceptive comments about the relationship between the deceased woman and her philandering husband. Glaspell uses Margaret to comment on the existence and nature of gender inequalities within marriage. Bernice's father calls

existence and nature of gender inequalities within marriage. Bernice's father calls for Margaret, who has some involvement with both unions and business, when Bernice dies in mysterious circumstances. Bernice's husband Craig, a writer who has spent much of his time away from the marital home, arrives only to be confronted by Margaret, who has always despised Craig for his adulterous and selfish behaviour toward her closest friend:

CRAIG: ...did you ever feel that you didn't really get *to* Bernice?

MARGARET: ...So far as I had power. She never held me back. Life broke through her - a life deeper than anything that could happen to her.

CRAIG: ...something you couldn't destroy. A life in her deeper than anything that could be done to her. That - makes a difference ...I never *had* Bernice.

MARGARET: ..Beneath what you 'had' was a life too full, too rich to be had? I should think that would flow over your life and give it beauty.

CRAIG: I suppose a man's feeling is different ...he has to feel that he has the power to reshape.<sup>30</sup>

Margaret discovers that Bernice committed suicide, and although at first she finds this 'unnatural' death hard to understand, she finally comes to understand that this was the only way her friend could find of avenging herself against her husband. To confront him with his behaviour would have been to 'give in' to his desire to 'possess' her. Here the author appears to be condoning the close nature of women's friendship as a means of survival in a world controlled by men; Bernice's final words were a call to her friend, she whispered '...Margaret...' with her dying breath. The fact that Margaret is self-defined, active in her work and single is presented as positive in the context of this play.

In Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*<sup>31</sup> the friendship between two women services the realisation of both their ambitions to found and run their own school. Martha Dobie and Karen Wright have invested their energy, time, financial security and emotions in the running of their small school. Martha's aunt, Lily Mortar, an out of work actress who has no income of her own, is employed as a teacher. When Martha discovers that her aunt has no real interest in or competence at her job, she decides to use the last of her savings to send the aunt on a trip around the world. Her gesture is met with anger and an argument ensues where the aunt accuses her of being ungrateful and casts aspersions about



the 'unnatural' closeness of Martha's friendship with Karen. She accuses Martha of being jealous of Karen's relationship with her fiancé Joe:

MRS MORTAR: I should have known by this time that the wise thing is to stay out of your way when he's in the house ...Every time that man comes into the house you have a fit ...you're jealous ...it's unnatural ...you'd better get a beau of your own - a woman of your age ...<sup>32</sup>

Mary, one of the school children, hears the argument and uses the information as ammunition in order to get out of being disciplined for her bad behaviour. Events then snowball, the effect of which is that parents withdraw their children from the school, the aunt disappears and Martha and Karen present a libel suit to clear their names of the accusation of illicit lesbianism and, the reputation of their school. Act Three shows the two women depressed and penniless after their libel suit has failed. When confronted, Joe tells Karen that their relationship can never be the same; he has never been comfortable about the close nature of her relationship with Martha. Thus, the man who originally supported their work and was proud of the way in which these two women had founded and run their school, withdraws his respect and falls in line with the 'outside' social Puritanism which has brought their downfall. In the closing scenes of the play Martha commits suicide after having told Karen that she has felt 'more' for her than was perhaps 'acceptable' and Mary admits to her treacherous dishonesty.

Hellman has been criticised by recent feminists for the negative portrayal of lesbianism in *The Children's Hour*. However, this is not a polemic for or against lesbianism. Hellman is dealing with false morality, using the framework of a friendship between two single women. Martha's state of spinsterhood works directly against her in a social structure which is determined to maintain fixed criteria for the way in which women should live their lives. With the exclusion of Karen, those females who succeed or at least survive by the dénouement are essentially passive, and use immoral behaviour as a way of promoting morality. As Mary Broe has pointed out:

Just as meta-theatrics permits moral disguise ...so too does it become a metaphor for other forms of playing in *The Children's Hour*. Even structurally the play proves deceptive ...the truth-revealing scenes are interrupted so that the continuous action of dramatic unravelling and revelations are missing from the play. By

such sleight of structure, Hellman shifts the focus from blackmail, extortion, and lesbianism (more dramatic subjects) to the quiet business of redefining a moral capacity ...Hellman suggests complex new moral possibilities for passivity by giving a dramatically central role to the indirect revelations of Lily Mortar. At the same time she mocks the theatrics of social passivity by linking it with moral disguise.<sup>33</sup>

Both Karen and Martha choose to be part of an institutionalised family, that is, the school, rather than be married. They prioritise career over family and marriage; Joe is however clear that Karen will spend less time and energy on the school once they are married. To some extent the issue of lesbianism is used as a device to indicate a social attitude to women who make the choice to remain independent. Banned in Britain a year before the banning of *The Children's Hour*, Aimée and Philip Stuart's *Love of Women*,<sup>34</sup> is a play with a similar theme. In a number of the reviews the play was heralded as dealing with an 'old conflict in a new play'.<sup>35</sup>

In *Love of Women*, Vere and Brigit have fled the city and *men*, to write plays together. After five years of hard work in their Sussex cottage, they produce a hit which brings them into the public eye. The younger of the two, Brigit, becomes engaged to a young Harley Street doctor, and is criticised by Vere who thinks that her time would be spent more fruitfully in the writing of plays than producing a family with John. Their Sussex neighbours also begin to gossip about the nature of the relationship between Vere and Brigit because they are now in the public eye. Brigit's mother informs her that she can gain just as many 'important triumphs' on the amateur tennis court as she can otherwise in a career as a playwright. Vere and John have a vehement argument in the final Act where he suggests that 'by cutting out sex Vere will render sterile not merely her life but that of her muse also'.<sup>36</sup> One critic saw the third Act as centring on the 'case for marriage versus artistic celibacy'.<sup>37</sup> The main debate is thus as much about spinsterhood and creativity as it is about the need to be celibate if one is a woman artist. For Vere, to write plays is to serve the nation artistically, whereas for those around her, to be a mother is the right way for a woman to serve her nation. The thematic focus of the play reflects the social reality of the way in which single women who chose not to get married and therefore came under the category of spinster, were viewed. Clearly during the 1920s and 1930s spinsterhood was associated with sterility both sexually and creatively, (note the way in which John connects the Muse with sexuality).

the inter-war period. For many social theorists and sexologists during the inter-war period, the fact that a woman was intentionally single and desired economic and personal independence indicated that there was indeed something 'wrong' with her, that in fact she wasn't a 'natural' woman:

I would even say that after twenty five, the woman who has neither husband nor lover and is not un-vitalised and sexually deficient, is suffering mentally and bodily - often without knowing why she suffers: nervous, irritated, anaemic, always tired, or ruthlessly fussing over trifles: or else she has other consolations, which make her so called chastity a pernicious sham.<sup>38</sup>

#### THE GREAT BRITISH WIDOW; THE RHYTHM OF DOMESTIC LIFE.

The locus for the vast majority of plays examined in this thesis is that of the domestic environment, where women are in control of the action and of the organisation and administration of life. In terms of plays by women the widow is a key character; during the 1920s and 1930s she was more likely to be a business woman, the honourable breadwinner in a family made fatherless by the war. During the 1940s theatrical widows were more likely to be situated within the home, where their devotion to domestic life is a signifier of 'Britishness': they are presented as being more than a burden to the nation, and at times, as the foundation upon which the nation is built. One of the main lines of argument in Naomi Mitcheson's *The Home*,<sup>39</sup> a social tract comparing historical and modern perceptions of 'the home', is that in Britain no other social institution had changed so speedily as the home during the early twentieth century. For her, the factors which made the English home a 'secure' disappeared after the 1914 - 1918 war:

The man owns the family income but the woman spends it. This is a very curious form of the late patriarchy and appears to be the most unstable and psychologically the least satisfying of all ...our contemporary picture is of a patriarchal home disintegrating ...<sup>40</sup>

It is the widows in plays by women of the 1940s and 1950s who finance and manage the family home, and the style and rhythm of their systems of management are often at the core of the text. In Enid Bagnold's *Lottie Dundass*,<sup>41</sup> Mrs Dundass is a 'square, middle-aged calm woman' who, having mothered seven children, is effectively widowed as her husband is serving a life sentence in

Broadmoor Asylum. She tells her daughter, who wants to have a career in theatre but can't because of her unstable medical condition, that she must be brave:

Where's your courage? *I've had courage, I've got it, where's yours? How'd you think I've brought you all up after what happened to me?*<sup>42</sup>

Lottie, Mrs Dundass tells us, wears her out with her idleness. It is the mother who continually balances childcare with taking on extra work to make the housekeeping last the week and patiently looks after Lottie, when she has her 'attacks'. The whole play moves to the rhythm of domestic life with short moments of calm punctuating the constant doing of domestic duties. Similarly in McCracken's *No Medals*, the energy of domestic life is what sets the pace of the play. There are constant references to domestic activity; the play opens with one of the younger daughters re-laying the fire while her sister brings in the dinner-wagon full of cutlery and dishes and lays the table for the many characters who are living in Martha Dacre's home. At one point, one of the lodgers is Hoovering with a loaf of bread under his arm and continues to chat with the potential home help, Mrs Gaye, with the Hoover still running. This is a home run by a widow during wartime mealtimes are staggered to deal with the different working hours of those who form Martha's household.

On almost every occasion when Martha is in conversation with other characters, she is simultaneously carrying out some household duty. Every few sentences are accompanied by domestic actions:

*(She starts clearing the large plates, knives, etc. from the table to the trolley) (...Putting all the serviettes to the end of the table) (...clearing the small plates and pieces of toast) (...she puts the cups on the bottom end of the trolley) (...packs the milk jug, basin, hot water jug and bread knife on the top end of the trolley) (...Martha has now put the butter and marmalade dishes on the sideboard, and now takes the teapot below the table to the end of the trolley) (...picking up a plate from the table and holding it as she talks) (...During the above line Martha takes the sauce bottle to the sideboard...)*<sup>43</sup>

As soon as Martha has finished making sandwiches, sewing, preserving plums or tomatoes, she switches on the iron, still in conversation, usually with someone

who wants her to do them a favour of some sort. When Harriet suggests that she take a rest, Martha points out that running the home is a twenty four hour job; with little if any help, her domestic lifestyle does not allow for breaks.

HARRIET: You're letting things get on top of you. What are you doing today?

MARTHA: I'm going to make marmalade - when I finished these and washed up - out of two orange skins, some lemon essence, some damp sugar that's gone into a hard lump, and a great deal of faith ...After that I'm going to queue up hopefully for plums. And when I come back I'm doing my Penny - a -Week Red Cross Fund, and in between times preparing an evening meal of two sorts - for my family of five, not to mention lunch for myself and Paul - besides dusting and sweeping and making all the male beds, booking your hair appointment and collecting Monica's chop from the butcher's.<sup>44</sup>

The pace of domestic life is the foundation rhythm of the play, and the only thing which alters the pace for Martha is news about the family's safety or the possibility of change promised by the offer of marriage made by Geoffrey. Equally, the action of domestic life is centre stage and accompanies most of the unravelling of plot and of the action of the play. The heroine is effectively a champion of housework and the running of the home. Whether or not the play provides a positive portrayal of women's lives, the author's attempt to validate domestic action is clear.

The making public, via theatricalisation, of the machinations of domestic life was not new to the London stage by the 1940s, and it would appear that it had come to be expected of plays written by women. Yet the centring of action around domestic action and domestic life appears to have been very specific to the early 1940s. *No Medals* clearly appealed to audiences because of its direct connection with women's experience of home life during wartime, and for the fact that the narrative provides a proposition that somehow war can be 'romantic' or at least romance can be found during times of war. In Aimée Stuart's *Jeannie*,<sup>45</sup> which opens in a spotless but small kitchen-cum-living room, scullery and wash-house in a grey village in Scotland, romance and domesticity are brought together during the final scenes where Jeannie is offered relief from drudgery by the introduction of domestic appliances into her life.

## WIDOWS AND WOMEN WITHOUT HUSBANDS; ECONOMIC CHOICES

Jeannie's life is one of relative hardship and poverty, her list of domestic duties for an old father who refuses to allow her to go out to the cinema and is too mean to let her take their dirty linen to the laundry, seems inexhaustible. One of Jeannie's friends calls her father a 'mean old skunk', and tells her that she is treated as little more than a servant:

JEANNIE: (*shocked*) A servant, me?

MRS WHITELAW: It's what you are now. Only you don't get paid for it. You could get a pound a week and an evening off and every second Sunday and a whole day a month. *And* you could refuse the sheets.

JEANNIE: It sounds like Paradise

MRS WHITELAW: I don't know about Paradise. But it'd be a darn sight better than this.<sup>46</sup>

When her father dies, after some deliberation Jeannie decides to go on holiday with the £200 pounds he has left her. On her way to Vienna she meets Stanley, a widowed father of two sons, who is on his way to the Vienna exhibitions with his new domestic appliance inventions. They spend a little time together and he tells her where he is staying in Vienna in case she should need assistance. Later they meet in the hotel and she tells him a little of her history:

JEANNIE: I never got going out and about. First I was my mother's companion. I liked that fine. While she was alive I never needed anyone else. She needed me, too. She'd a thin time with Father. When I think of him having all that money put by and her having to scrape and save! She never had anything. He never even gave her a civil word.<sup>47</sup>

Jeannie and Stanley part company and she then meets the Count, on whom she lavishes money when he takes her out for the evening. They then become engaged! By the end of Act Two, he tells her that they must live on her fortune until his 'rents come through'. When she tells him that her 'fortunes' total £200 which has now been spent, he slinks off and in Act three we find her housekeeping in a private flat in Glasgow. There is nothing here which resembles 'Paradise', her wages amount to ten shillings a week and her employer has no intention of wasting money by sending laundry 'out'. Miraculously,

Stanley comes to visit her and although he feels that being a servant is a 'more natural job for a girl than a shop or an office', they chat for a while and he eventually persuades her to marry him, promising her that he will 'throw in a washing machine and ...a fool-proof oven as well'.<sup>48</sup>

Seen as 'a Cinderella play'<sup>49</sup> by a number of critics Stuart's *Jeannie* is pure domestic comedy. Stuart does however, appear to stress the limitations of Jeannie's choices as a single woman, with no family money and little education. The romance of spending an evening with a Viennese Count who then proposes is, of course, depleted by the fact that he has no money and cannot promise her a better life than she already has. Her fantasy of being a paid housekeeper is destroyed when in practice she realises that her employer, a lower-middle class woman with delusions of grandeur is as much of a spendthrift as her father was. Stanley, although he is kind and well meaning, offers her a continuation of domestic life, and although he is not as romantic a proposition as the Count may have been, at least he can provide for her, is not 'after her money' and offers her the bonus of domestic appliances which will make her domestic married life less treacherous.

In Dane's *Cousin Muriel*,<sup>50</sup> the economic choices for Muriel Meilhac are limited once her husband has died. Played to great acclaim by Edith Evans, Muriel is housekeeper for her relative, a distinguished surgeon, Sir Hubert Sylvester. She has organised his household and brought up his daughter Dinah, who has fallen in love with her son Richard. When Richard comes home from America to join up for the impending war, he and Dinah decide to get married. Sylvester will not allow the liaison because he is certain that Richard has been borrowing money via loans Sylvester has made to Muriel. We then discover that Muriel has been forging Sylvester's cheques at the bank so, for example, each time her writes a housekeeping cheque for eight pounds, she cashes a cheque for eighty.

Muriel's husband was fond of spending money and her own need for spending contributed to his final downfall. She is from the upper-middle class and, although widowhood left her with few economic choices, she housekept for various rich families in order to keep herself and her son financially secure over the years. Muriel had always felt that, for the quality of work she produced for Sylvester, she ought to have be paid more, and used the housekeeping money to buy herself the clothing which she considered suitable for a woman of her class. When eventually confronted by Sylvester she tells him everything but without any sense of remorse or feeling that she would do things differently given another chance.

another chance.

MURIEL *rises, shuts the piano, takes up the bag, puts the money into it, shakes herself together like a bird preening, and comes across to the centre of the room, takes a cigarette and silently asks him for a light. He fumbles for his lighter, then with an inarticulate gesture of beating her away, turns, and marches to the window. On which she lights her own cigarette, then settles herself in the easy chair.*

MURIEL: So you've found me out at last! I used to wish sometimes that you'd be more suspicious. But that was after I fell out of love with you ...You shouldn't get as agitated as all this, ...your S.O.S. with the black borders came, just at the moment I'd got in an awful mess at the Lemmings. So I swore I'd make a good show of - *(She looks round her.)* - all this. And I have. You've a lovely home - as Alice would say. Dinah's my doing, too. She was impossible when I came. I've done a lot for you ...*(furiously)* You're a baby, Hubert! You and your knighthood - when you just gathered up the house and everything in it and dumped it on my lap - well, I was touched. Any woman would be ...A shabby run to seed establishment, with your servants ruling the roost and your patients dropping off - that was in 1933. And by 1937 - the honours list ...Well, then I began to look round, and I saw that I'd wasted a lot of time ...I suddenly discovered that I enjoyed spending money on myself ...money is the only thing that never lets you down. I began to think about my old age: ...I wanted to save and I wanted to spend ...It was exhausting, this ever present need for money, this ever present need to spend it. So I did all sorts of things, - ...I used to take a premium when I got a girl a good position ...I bought my first shares for a rise ...anyway, if you take off what you ought to have paid me in salary, you're only down about five hundred ...I get so bored. At least the war will give me something better to do than waste my good brains on the lot of you ...I'm not clumsy. I'm quick, and clever, and strong. So why shouldn't I take what I want? You can do it if you're a millionaire: you can do it if you're a nation; then why shouldn't I do it? ...I'm *too* sane ...completely logical. <sup>51</sup>

The ending of the original production was changed so that Muriel's recent thieving episode from a London department store is squared with the



America. Audiences were, it would seem, unhappy with an ending which left the narrative 'hanging in the air', in a play which is full of radio interjections which give constant narrative references to the impending war.

Muriel makes choices within a limited range of options, and her calm rationale for her behaviour does not invite negative judgement of those choices. As one critic pointed out, the frequent radio announcement of progress in the path toward war make her actions seem harmless.<sup>52</sup> As a widow, Muriel justifies her dishonesty by pointing out that she can only maintain the standard of living to which she had become accustomed within marriage, though dishonest behaviour outside of marriage.

Muriel has developed sense of survival and behaves accordingly. The single minded precision of her survival technique has resonance with the behaviour of other single and widowed women in plays by women of the era. Often these stage characters are written in the context of the domestic comedy, but this should not detract from the serious nature of the narrative subtext. This is not to say that the women playwrights were necessarily consciously attempting to reflect the economic and social problems which faced single and widowed women. It is possible, however, to argue that the frequency with which these women arise as characters in the drama, is a reflection of the fact that they had become problematised as a social phenomenon, the subject of which must have held interest for many contemporary theatre audiences and so made an appealing theatrical discourse.

#### POSTSCRIPT

During the 1950s there were a number of plays where the lives of single working-class women and mothers were foregrounded. These were, however, few and far between. The West End was still largely occupied by plays which were dominated by the concerns of the middle and ruling classes. Shelagh Delaney was one of the few playwrights who brought the experiences of a new generation and a new class to the stage. In *A Taste of Honey* Helen's life as a single mother living by the rules of survival, is echoed in the events which affect her daughter Jo. By the end of the play Jo is pregnant by a black man and has befriended a gay man, with whom she has developed a platonic and nurturing relationship. Even though Delaney expresses very clearly the fact that the generations to which Helen and Jo belong are very different, she is clear that as single women, their lives are susceptible to the same social judgement and economic constraints. The ideal family unit, so promoted by the middle classes, is for Delaney an imagined ideal which bears little relation to the lived

experience of working-class women who have no supported family unit from which to operate. In *A Taste of Honey* 'family' denotes a fragmented and ever changing series of relationships between people who are not necessarily related by blood. Gone are the matriarchal figures, ever supportive and altruistic; gone are the easy solutions to financial or emotional problems which held the middle-class family, especially in plays written by women during the inter-war years, together. For Delaney, the working-class family lives in an entirely different world, with different emotional bonds and laws of survival.

In *The Lion in Love*<sup>53</sup> Kit is an alcoholic mother still living with Frank, her husband who has had numerous affairs with other women. Kit has no emotional support from her husband, nor does she have any illusions about her role as mother:

KIT: Is it worth it, I often wonder. You suffer bringing kids into the world, you wear yourself out keeping one end full and the other end dry, and as soon as they're able they're off and away. Out of sight, out of mind.<sup>54</sup>

Kit stays with her husband for lack of inspiration or means to leave him. As a result of this and of the insistent poverty which Frank's vocation as a street-corner salesman maintains, Kit spends her life on an angry pathway from one drink to the next. Nell is a prostitute who continues to 'work' for Kit's son Andy. Andy promises Nell that one day he will be able to stop being her pimp when he gets a few good gigs for his stage act, in which she will partner him. By the end of the play, Nell has discovered that Andy is not the showbiz star she imagined him to be. She stops speaking to him, but the implication is that she will continue to work as his prostitute, as Andy's grandfather points out to him:

JESSE: She'll start talking soon enough ...Some women will have any sort of man rather than no man at all.<sup>55</sup>

Nora has been having a long-lived affair with Frank. She has a little money of her own and offers to help him leave Kit; her plan is that they will buy a small business in the country. But Frank can't make a decision, and when he does he hasn't the courage to follow it through. Again, there is no implication that Nora will not go on waiting for him.

Kit's daughter Peg asks her mother what she would say if Peg told her that she was going to follow her boyfriend to London.

PEG: What would you say if I went with him?

KIT: It's your life. You ruin it your own way.

PEG: All right. Ta'ra.<sup>56</sup>

Here, the maternal concern so dominant in other plays examined in this thesis, has no place. Peg's decision is not based on any real process of consideration, either by herself or by her family as far as they are concerned, she can do what she likes. There appears to be an acceptance of the inconsistency of aspirations and lived experience. The rules of family life are not set in this world each person lives according to their own needs the family is not a closed unit: Nora is as much a part of the family as is Kit; Banner emigrates to Australia in hope of finding a new and better life; Peg leaves home with a man she hardly knows, and Kit ends the play with the line, ' Ah! ... it's a bugger of a life, by Jesus'.<sup>57</sup>

*The Lion In Love*, less liked by critics than *A Taste of Honey*, heralds a new class of woman playwright, although it could be said that Delaney borrowed from the form of the domestic comedy exploited by the women playwrights who preceded her.

Miss Delaney has a wonderful ear and she can really create out of cliché and the small coin of kitchen comedy and Northern Music Hall exchanges, a pathos of bathos which it is not absurd to call Chekhovian, because to a Russian audience much of the charm of Chekhov consists exactly in the overtones given to strings of banalities of the order of " It never rains but it pours".<sup>58</sup>

This is not a play so much about the female condition as it is about the human condition, although interestingly, it is the women, in the main, who take action, who desire a 'different' kind of life to the one which is on offer. Along with Jellicoe, Delaney was one of the few women playwrights of the period in question, to experiment with form. Although a number of critics saw the play as 'reproducing the naturalism of everyday life',<sup>59</sup>the style, form and content has very little common with the three Act well-made play much used by the earlier women playwrights of the period which has been examined here.

In some ways Delaney opened out the field for women playwrights, and certainly her work has more in common with women playwrights of the 1970s and 1980s than it does with playwrights like Dane or McCracken. However, there are narrative threads in her work which relate to the work of earlier women

playwrights, if only by the fact that she subverts them. Certainly, in *A Taste of Honey*, the social and economic conditions under which women make choices about their lives are foregrounded. Similar to many of the other women playwrights of the period which has been examined in this thesis, Delaney focuses on the way in which women create a means of survival in a culture which does not provide for those women who fall outside of a definition of the 'ideal' feminine woman.

- 1 Winifred Holtby, *Women; in a changing civilisation* (London: Lane & The Bodley Head, 1934).
- 2 Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies; feminism and sexuality 1880 - 1930* (London: Pandora Press, 1985), p. 95.
- 3 Nicola Beauman, *A Very Great Profession; the woman's novel 1914 -1939* (London: Virago, 1983), p. 62.
- 4 Holtby p. 125.
- 5 Ibid., p. 166.
- 6 Joan Temple, *The Widow's Cruise* (London: Benn Ltd., 1926).  
The play was produced in London at the Ambassadors in March of 1926 where it ran for 81 performances.
- 7 Rosamund Lehmann, *No More Music* (London: Collins, 1939).  
Performed for three nights at the Duke of York's theatre in February 1938, as part of the first season of the London International Theatre (a stage company directed by Lady Playfair, Mary Hinton and Roma June which was set up to replace the Stage Society)
- 8 Margaret Kennedy, *Escape Me Never* (London: Heinemann Ltd., 1934).  
The play ran at the St Martin's from December 1933 for 232 performances.
- 9 Ibid., p. 44.
- 10 Dodie Smith, 'Autumn Crocus', in *Plays of the Thirties Vol. 2* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1967).  
The play opened at the Lyric in February of 1932 and ran for 371 performances.
- 11 Clemence Dane, 'Bill of Divorcement', in *The Collected Plays of Clemence Dane*, (London: Heinemann, 1961).  
The play ran at the St Martin's from March 1921 for 402 performances.
- 12 Dodie Smith, 'Call It A Day', in *Famous Plays of 1935-1936* (London: Gollancz Ltd, 1936).  
The play ran at the Globe from October 1935 for 509 performances.
- 13 Ibid., pp. 249 - 250.
- 14 Clare Booth-Luce, 'The Women', in *Famous Plays of 1937* (London: Gollancz, 1937). p. 602.
- 15 Ibid., p. 604.
- 16 Dodie Smith, 'Dear Octopus', in *Plays of the Thirties; Vol. 1* (London: Pan Books Ltd., 1966), p. 283.
- 17 Ibid., p. 316.
- 18 Ibid., pp. 380 - 382.
- 19 Elizabeth Baker, *Miss Robinson* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd., 1920).  
The play was first produced at the Birmingham Repertory Theatre in November 1918. Dorothy Massingham played the role of Angela Robinson.
- 20 Ibid., p. 20.
- 21 Ibid., p. 31.
- 22 Ibid., p. 60.
- 23 Ibid., p. 80.
- 24 Ibid., p. 89.
- 25 Ibid., p. 111.
- 26 This is certainly the case in an earlier play by Elizabeth Baker, 'Chains', in *Plays of To-Day: First Volume* (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, Ltd., 1911), first performed at the Court Theatre in London, 1909. Here Maggie refuses to marry a man she doesn't love. For her, the financial security of marriage is no substitute for the search for 'a better life', outside of the claustrophobic environment of lower-middle class marriage.
- 27 Rosamund Lehmann, *No More Music* (London: Collins, 1939).
- 28 Ibid., p. 37.
- 29 Susan Glaspell, *Bernice* (London: Benn, 1924). The original London production opened the season at the new Gate Theatre in 1925.

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- 30 Ibid., p. 10.
- 31 Lillian Hellman, 'The Children's Hour', in *The Collected Plays* (London: Macmillan, 1971). The play was banned by the Lord Chamberlain on the grounds of the way in which a child's imaginings around lesbianism were portrayed. The play was however performed to great acclaim at the Gate, under the direction of Norman Marshall in 1936.
- 32 Ibid., p. 17 - 18.
- 33 Mary Broe, 'Bohemia Bumps into Calvin; The deception of passivity in Lillian Hellman's Drama', *Southern Quarterly*, Vol. 19, (1981), 24 - 41, (p. 31).
- 34 The play was given three performances at the Phoenix, by the London Repertory Players. After the first performance cuts and changes had to be made in the text because of the censorship imposed by the Lord Chamberlain's office.
- 35 W.A. Darlington, *Daily Telegraph* 2 June 1935.
- 36 Ibid.
- 37 *Observer* 9 June 1935.
- 38 Sheila Rowbotham, *A New World for Women: Stella Browne, Socialist Feminist*, (London: Pluto Press, 1977). p. 101.
- 39 Naomi Mitchison, *The Home; and a Changing Civilisation* (London: Lane & The Bodley Head Ltd., 1934).
- 40 Ibid., pp. 99 - 102.
- 41 Enid Bagnold, *Lottie Dundass* (London: French, 1944).  
The play was directed by Irene Hentschel and produced in London, at the Vaudeville in July 1942, transferring to the Cambridge in October of the same year. *Lottie Dundass* ran for 147 performances; Mrs Dundass was played by Sybil Thorndike, and Ann Todd played Lottie.
- 42 Ibid., p. 17.
- 43 Esther McCracken, *No Medals* (London: French, 1947). pp. 25 - 26.
- 44 Ibid., p. 36.
- 45 Aimée Stuart, *Jeannie* (London: Hamilton, 1940). Originally produced under George Cooper and directed by Irene Hentschel at the Torch theatre in February 1940, the play transferred to the Wyndham's theatre in April where it ran for 100 performances.
- 46 Ibid., p. 18.
- 47 Ibid., p. 71.
- 48 Ibid., p. 156 - 157.
- 49 *Sunday Times* 6 February 1940 and the *Daily Telegraph* 4 April 1940.
- 50 Clemence Dane, *Cousin Muriel* (London: Heinemann, 1940).  
The play ran for 75 performances at the Globe from March 1940.
- 51 Ibid., pp. 99 - 101.
- 52 *Manchester Guardian* 9 March 1940.
- 53 Shelagh Delaney, *The Lion in Love* (London: Methuen, 1961). The play began its London run in 1960, at the Royal Court.
- 54 Ibid., p. 19.
- 55 Ibid., p. 101.
- 56 Ibid., p. 97.
- 57 Ibid., p. 104.
- 58 P. Hope-Wallace, *Guardian* 30 December 1960.
- 59 Stuart Hall, 'Beyond Naturalism Pure', in *New Theatre Voices of The Fifties and Sixties*, ed. by Charles Marowitz and others (London: Methuen, 1981), pp. 212 - 220, (p. 214).

## VALIDATING THE SEEMINGLY INVISIBLE; RE-EVALUATION AND APPRAISAL

As yet, the canon of works and panoply of notable figures inherited from traditional history have not yet been substantially revised, so work like Nancy Cotton's on women playwrights of fifteenth-to eighteenth-century England, which is exceptional in its attention to minor and overlooked figures, is commendable but not the final word ...the feminist historian's task is to address the censoring impulse, to validate the experience, and to connect the woman with the work and the work with the world at large.<sup>1</sup>

Although this feminist re-charting of an historical canon of plays by women constitutes a useful and necessary part of challenging the male bias of the 'canon', it does not engage in a more radical re-thinking of what constitutes theatre history.<sup>2</sup>

I began this research under the impression that there were a few women writing plays for the theatre during period 1918-1962, but not many. I saw my task as being that of documentation, description and analysis; my intention was to ask who the playwrights were, and whether what they wrote reflected their lives and experiences of what it meant to be a woman within the changing culture of the time. The sheer number of plays and playwrights involved made what I initially saw as my task, an impossible one. I wandered into a desert, and found a rich and varied forest.

The impact and variety of the wealth of plays is only indicated here. This thesis represents the beginnings of research which, firstly, needs to be carried out by a number of researchers, and secondly, from a number of ideological positions. My own position of analysis was influenced by a desire to transgress the boundaries of research on women's playwrighting which were already in position. The formation of these boundaries itself reflects the many assumptions which have been made by some feminist theatre historians who have been eager to 'challenge the canon'. Although I saw the limitations of the male-dominated canon as integral to the research, what also concerned me was the danger of re-marginalising women's playwrighting through an attempt to

insert it into a purely feminist framework.

Both Bassnett and Aston have suggested that the re-charting of the work of women playwrights does not necessitate a 'radical re thinking of what constitutes theatre history'<sup>3</sup>. Bassnett, in particular, stresses that to concentrate on text alone, invites a re-historicising of already dominant forms of theatre.<sup>4</sup> This is certainly a danger if research into women's playwrighting is framed as constituting a statement about all women's work in all theatre. The purpose here, however, has been to examine the way in which women, as a social and cultural 'out-group', infiltrated and integrated with a dominant form of theatre. Similarly, it is possible to argue that investigation of 'out-group'<sup>5</sup> contributions to legitimate or dominant forms of theatre will reveal information about less visible, less legitimate theatre activity. Certainly, the results of this research will, I hope, encourage a questioning of the way in which histories of playwrighting for the London stage have thus far been constructed. As Davis implies above, one study of a particular playwright's work, or a particular period when women playwrights were visible in theatre, should not be seen as the 'final word'. Re-charting the work of women playwrights is not only a 'useful and necessary part of challenging the male canon', it is also a continuing process, the results of which need constant expansion and analysis. It is inadvisable to increase the rather falsified split between theory, history and practice by closing off one type of research process in order to accommodate another. Rather, all processes and positions of research, certainly in terms of re-constructing a history of women working in theatre, can co-exist and feed into one other. Perhaps it is time to expand research so that the field of 'women in theatre' has a plurality of meanings and approaches.

#### WHAT'S ON IN THE THEATRE?

What has also become clear through the process of this research is that socio-theatrical histories of playwrighting in the twentieth-century have been shaped by the (usually) aesthetic interests of the authors. There are very few critical works on theatre in London during the first half of the century which inform the reader as to what was actually being produced in the theatres, and in turn, what were the criteria for the term 'success'. This work still needs to be carried out. The absence of detail presents a situation whereby the lines between what is and is not considered to be either 'legitimate' or successful are blurred. In terms of the dramatic text, realism was the dominant form during the period under examination here. Yet it would seem that the nature and context of that realism, (which reality was being fictionalised and re-constructed



on the stage, to whom did it belong?) has had a significant influence upon the way in which the plays were received by critics, and the ways in which they have, in turn, been historicised.

From a contemporary standpoint, the general assumption is that most of the plays written for the London stage during the years which span 1918-1962, re-affirmed already existent class barriers and re-presented the lives of the middle and upper-middle classes; the dramatic text serviced the dominant classes. To an extent this may be true although I would seriously question an assertion that the dramatic texts of our generation do much more than this. Equally, there would appear to be a presumption that using realism as a dominant genre, does nothing to challenge the status quo. If the women playwrights as a group, chose in the main to utilise a dominant form which was, for them, a relatively new means of expression, this fact does not necessitate a negation of the content or nature of their work:

In offering audiences a 'seamless illusion', it is argued, realism precludes interrogation, portraying an arbitrary but self serving orthodoxy as both neutral and inevitable. As such, realism becomes tainted and counterproductive, of use only to those who would endorse a bourgeois hegemony with its consequent enshrinement of domus, family and patriarch. This position raises a number of problems, beginning with its assumption of a simple and direct relationship between reproduction and reinforcement. While genres or style - may not be politically neutral, they are surely capable of presenting a range of ideological positions ...The point ...is that while dramatic and theatrical styles may be developed or adopted to neutralise or challenge particular positions, dramatic forms are not in themselves narrowly partisan. They may be inhabited from within a variety of ideologies.<sup>6</sup>

The vast majority of the plays examined in this thesis are written within the boundaries of realism, in this they differ little from the majority of plays produced at the time in general. What has fuelled the lines of discussion in this thesis, however, is that there appears to have been a direct correlation between the authors' choice of subject and theme and their position as women in a culture where women's roles and social status were undergoing a process of change and negotiation.

## THE ACTRESS AS PLAYWRIGHT

The vast majority of the earlier playwrights whose work has been examined here, began their careers as actresses, either training in the relatively new drama school establishments, or through their connections with already established 'theatre families', that is to say, 'on the road'. Many of them continued to perform as well as write and/or direct or manage productions or theatre companies. Thus, we have a new generation of playwrights, trained as actresses, with significant experience of performance in professional theatre, who used playwrighting as a vehicle for expression. Perhaps as a result of this move into the position of woman writer as opposed to female performer, the majority of plays centre narrative and plot on women's lives, either within the domestic, work or historical context. Thus, in a market economy where her position as actress set her in competition with other out-of-work actresses all looking for employment in productions in which male characters predominated, the move from actress to playwright was it would seem, a wise one. That many of the women playwrights had begun their professional lives as actresses, may also have been a contributing factor to the predominance of female characters in their plays. Kruger has pointed out that,

...the theatre institution can absorb individual female successes without any threat to the legitimacy of the masculinist and capitalist definition of that success. Adding "significant *stage* roles" ... for women, may well reinforce existing relations of production in the theatre and thus participation in the institution, since it neither challenges the traditional roles of women in the theatre (sexually on display as actresses or serviceably out of sight as clerical workers) nor provides the means for women to run the show themselves.<sup>6</sup>

In Kruger's terms, it would appear that women working in theatre have a duty to somehow challenge the whole theatre system itself. This may be so in the context of a contemporary theatre where feminist ideology and practice have been of significant and necessary importance and impact. Yet, in mainstream theatre it is less of a reality than it is an ideal. Equally this contemporary political/ideological context was not, however, the one in which the women playwrights in question here were writing. Surely, what appears to have been almost a mass migration from enactor of text to creator of text, represents some

kind of challenge, whether intentional or not, by women, either individually, or as a group, to existing traditionally acceptable roles for women in the process of making theatre.

Kruger also stresses that plays by women can be turned by theatre as an institution, into the 'trademarks of a new commodity'.<sup>7</sup> Therefore theatre as an institution, once it accepts a new idea, will turn the idea to its own use. Firstly, this is arguably the way in which all institutions and dominant ideologies work, the majority position is defined in relation to its ideological other which, in turn, defines itself in terms of its difference to the majority position new commodities become normalised and so on. Secondly, the theatre for which the women playwrights in this study wrote was gradually but unquestionably becoming an industry, the continuance of which was based on economics rather than aesthetics. In this context, the actresses turned playwrights found an alternative and in some case lucrative means of earning a wage, from a theatre institution largely owned and run by men.

#### VITAL STATISTICS

Kruger sets the level of contemporary plays by women staged professionally in Britain at seven percent; another more recent article sets the level higher,<sup>8</sup> neither author is clear about the origins of their statistics. To compare percentages from one period with another is not the intention of this thesis, although such a comparison would be extremely interesting, and will perhaps, in future studies, become necessary. In the next section, I will however, examine percentage figures for the period which has been examined in this thesis.

As will have become clear by this point, this thesis by no means represents a study of the work of all of the plays by all of the playwrights whose work was performed on the London stage between 1918 and 1962. There is a sense in which this fact needs to be repeated because under no circumstances should what have turned out to be such an enormous number of 'forgotten' plays be analysed within the framework of such a relatively small study. Neither have I attempted to compare representations of women, the female and femininity, in plays written by women with those in plays written by their male counterparts. This would make an interesting study, but for fear of undermining the importance of the women's plays which have not hitherto received any serious treatment by academics, an early decision was made to undergo research exclusively into plays of the period written by women. The following table does however provide a number of insights into comparative

figures of lengths of production runs and numbers of plays written by men, with those written by women or male/female teams.

YEAR	Average total of plays per year	Average % by MALE per year	Average % by FEMALE or M/F team. per year	% M 51+ perfs. per year	% F 51+ perfs. per year	% M 101+ perfs. per year	% F 101+ perfs. per year
1918-1923	128.2	83.7	16.1	35.25	25.5	20.6	16.6
1924-1929	222	81.4	17.6	21.5	20.1	11.6	9.75
1930-1935	254.6	87.4	12.6	16.9	20.8	10.4	11.9
1936-1941	117	83.9	16.1	25.6	36.6	13.4	22.4
1942-1947	67.6	83.7	16.3	38.9	50.6	27.7	41.2
1948-1953	97	83.05	16.95	31.4	32.9	20.25	19.9
1954-1959	81.6	82.9	17.1	38.2	31.8	28.5	23.6
Averages PER YEAR OVER 42 YEARS	138.3	86.2	13.8	29.7	31.2	18.9	20.8

Table 1. Numbers of new plays produced on the London stage, 1918 -1959; percentage by men, women, and male/female teams. Comparative figures of length of production runs. Collated from information in J.P. Wearing's *The London Stage*, in the volumes which cover 1910 -1959.

There are a number of discrepancies with the figures in Wearing's volumes of *The London Stage*,<sup>10</sup> in that they are not always consistent with other publications which also give run lengths.<sup>11</sup> His is, however, the most comprehensive and detailed account of productions of plays in London during the period covered in this research, (unfortunately, his figures run currently only up until 1959) thus I have opted to assume a consistency on his part. Wearing does not generally detail productions in the non-commercial club and subscription theatres. Although he provides lists in his appendices, they are not as detailed as those in the main text, which mainly document productions in the West End. The tables I have placed in Appendix 1., again taken from the same source, detail individual productions of plays by women or male/female teams, and the tables in Appendix 2., provide figures and percentages for each of the

forty two years represented above in table 1. In the male figures are included adaptations of novels written by women. In the female figures, are included male/female co-authored plays. This last fact may have a significant affect on the numbers of plays in the female category, but the choice to include them was based on the knowledge that many of the women in the male/female teams continued to write plays after the 1920s and early-1930s, as sole authors. Male/female team authors were more prevalent in the early decades of the forty two years for which figures are available. These figures do not include musicals, ballets or revues nor do they include revivals of pre-twentieth century plays. A revival of a twentieth-century play is tabulated as a new production.

There was an almost explosive increase in the numbers of plays produced on the London stage during the early decades of the period in question. Over the period as a whole there is a considerable variation, but the maximum (1930 -1935) is at least three and a half times the minimum. Although this may be clear from the averages shown below, it is enhanced by the figures for single years in Appendix 2. When averaged out into six year blocks, it is interesting that the average percentage of production of plays (almost exclusively) by women is at its lowest point during a period where the average number of plays produced generally is at its highest. If the figures for 1930-1935 were removed, the average percentage of plays by women or male/female teams over the whole forty two year period would be 16.7% as opposed to 13.8%. Even so, for the average percentage of new plays by women or male/female teams to be as high as nearly 14% over a forty two year period is perhaps surprising.

In terms of length of production run, it is difficult to ascertain a figure which marks the boundary between success or non-success. In her study of women playwrights on Broadway, Olauson analyses plays on the 'basis of apparent success with audiences or critics: that is, all the plays (which) ...sustained a continuous run of at least thirty performances on or off-Broadway stage'.<sup>12</sup> Here however, I have taken a run of 51 or more performances. This figure is not particularly high, but not all productions had high costs and it is quite feasible that a production would have at least paid for itself by the end of fifty performances,<sup>13</sup> and that, depending on the size of the theatre, the production would have by this point reached a fairly large audience. It should also be pointed out that success with the critics did not necessarily produce long runs, and also, that long runs were not a sign of a positive initial reception by the critics, a point which I take up later.

Table 1., indicates that during the period 1930-1935, even though the

production percentage of plays written by women was lower than in any of the six year blocks, the productions on average ran for longer. In fact, between 1930 and 1947, on average, the percentage of plays by women which ran for 51 and performances or more, is significantly higher than in the case of male authored productions.

My initial thinking was that in the years leading up until, during and immediately following the Second World War, there would have been more plays by women in production. This does not however, appear to have been the case; the average percentage of plays by women in production during the war years is only slightly higher than the average percentage for the period as a whole. What is significant here, however, is the fact that there is a marked increase in the average percentage of productions of plays by women likely to run for 51 or more performances. The increase in figures for runs during 1936 - 1947 affects the average percentage for the period 1918-1959 as a whole, but it would still appear to be the case that, on average, a play by a woman or a male/female team, was more likely to have a longer run. I also assumed that, during the 1950s, figures for the percentage of plays by women would have decreased. They are in reality, slightly higher than the average, although the productions run less long than those productions of plays by men.

The implications of these figures are many. I would suggest that they prove that the period under examination was a particularly fruitful one for the woman playwright, not only in terms of number of plays, but also in terms of the length of run. The other implication which is particularly important here is that, during the Second World War, plays by women did not dominate the theatres but they were more popular. If one can assume that there were fewer men around leading up to and during the war, perhaps it is possible to assume that the women left behind who went to the theatre were more inclined to go and see plays by women.

#### AUDIENCES - 'THE FLAPPER ELEMENT'

Thus, women have understood that an alternative to society-as-it-is can be displayed and experienced through the fantasy world of the theatre.<sup>13</sup>

The old saw, about the drama's laws the drama' patrons give, had insistent relevance in the War-time theatre, and the ruler of the roost was the half-baked, over-heated flapper. Damn her ...

flappers in the stalls wanted to see flappers on the stage. No heroine need apply for the suffrages of the flappers if she looked a day older than twenty-one...<sup>15</sup>

During the years which immediately followed the First World War, a number of critics showed concern that the theatre was being ruined by what they called the 'flapper element'. Vernon was troubled by the fact that what he termed the 'flapper drama', through which he felt war-time theatre had been 'butchered',<sup>16</sup> still prevailed after the war. In Vernon's opinion, the flapper, (and here, one can assume the term to signify little more than a young, unmarried woman with an income of some sort) had, along with war-time theatre speculators, ruined not only the drama, but the 'shape' of theatre itself. Short, writing in 1942, also saw these 'flapper' audiences as having had an affect on the 'shape' of theatre during the first half of the century:

Among the repercussions due to the flapper element in post-war audiences, were the plays which showed that young women were in no mood to limit their choice of men friends to those whom parents judged as desirable home-makers ...this environment provided space for Gentlewomen to shoulder their way into theatrical careers with men ...with full assurance and success.<sup>17</sup>

Audiences will invariably influence the reaction of the critic to a production. Levels of influence will obviously vary, but the reactions of first night audiences will in most cases, be taken into account by the average critic. In a 1935 interview with Margaret Rowland, James Bulloch stated that, although first-night audiences were still as enthusiastic and critical as ever, as a group, they had undergone 'one great change'. Bulloch commented on how the 'masculine element' in theatre had been for some time, in decline; there no longer appeared to be a breed of enthusiastic theatre-going men, who would, without fail, scramble for a seat at a first-night performance. In his opinion, the average 'first-nighter' was now either a man taking his fiancé out for the night, or a woman alone or with her female companions:

...the steady increase in the feminine element is altering everything in the theatre: the first-nighter has changed, the play has changed, the acting has changed ...the dawn of the feminine influx and influence that's now filling the theatre, with such comfits as

'Sweet Aloes' and 'Our Own Lives' These things are written to please. To please whom? The feminine first-nighters of course.<sup>17</sup>

Critics often alluded to the belief that theatre was somehow being transformed by a visible increase in the number of women in the audience. I have already mentioned in a previous chapter, that there appeared to be a fear amongst critics, that the theatre was becoming somehow 'feminised'. Certainly, from the figures shown in table 1., it is possible to speculate that this may have been the case, during certain periods at least. I would propose that this fear of 'feminisation' was caused by a combination of the fact that, during the period under examination, on average somewhere between one seventh and one sixth of new plays in production were by women or male/female teams, and the fact of a visible increase in the numbers of women in the audience. Similarly, John Carey has pointed out that concern about numbers of women in the audience may have had as much to do with a snobbery about their class origin as it had to do with their gender. These women were seen as originating from the suburbs, a place considered by a number of intellectuals, to be the site of 'specifically female triviality'. Carey quotes Louis MacNeice:

...of people - mainly women - who use theatre as an uncritical escape from their daily lives. Suburb-dwellers, spinsters, schoolteachers, women secretaries, proprietresses of teashops, all these, whether bored with jobs or idleness, go to the theatre for their regular dream-hour off. The same instinct leads them which makes many hospital nurses spend all their savings on cosmetics, cigarettes and expensive underclothes.<sup>18</sup>

Whatever the cause of these varied tirades about how theatre was being taken over by women, there was, it would appear, an influx of women and an increase in the level of women's participation in theatre, on both sides of the curtain; this fact arguably calls for a re-evaluative study in itself.

#### CRITICAL RECEPTION: WOMEN PLAYWRIGHTS AS PART-TIME PROFESSIONALS

Performances of plays by women during the period under examination here, were often received by critics in terms of the gender of the author, as much as the quality of the text. References to the authors' private lives, or their roles as mothers and housewives, assertions that playwrighting was really a side-line to their acting careers, were not infrequent. The proposal that a number of



these playwrights were gifted amateurs, rather than professionals working with a craft, was not uncommon.

She mostly wrote, she told me, sitting on a pouffe with a pad of paper on her knee while family life boiled about her and her attention was constantly called upon for the solution of its problems.

To produce work of the quality she achieved in such circumstances was a miracle; but do I malign her by saying that playwrighting was for her a hobby rather than a vocation.<sup>19</sup>

The notion that these playwrights were not professionals, merely dilettantes, provides an undercurrent to the way in which their plays were critiqued. Thus, for example, it was quite common for a critic to talk about the rarity of a woman writing more than one successful play. On occasions the women themselves supported this view. One article on Dodie Smith, written after the opening of her play *Service* in 1932, opened with the statement, "'C.L. Anthony' thinks out plays - in her bath'. The article goes on to quote Smith's view on women and playwrighting; for Smith it was important to show that a woman could write more than one successful play in her view, there had never been a 'really successful woman dramatist'.<sup>20</sup> This view appears to have been shared by a number of critics. It is interesting that Smith was almost always critically framed as a *woman* dramatist, a fact which she used to her advantage, as a means of setting herself apart from other dramatists both female and male. This could be seen as a manipulation of publicity for at the time of making her statement a number of women playwrights had in fact experienced significant successes with their plays in London and elsewhere. All this boils down to the way in which success is defined and by whom.

Smith had a sequence of West End hits in the 1930s, but had fewer London productions of her plays than a number of other female playwrights of the time. Taking into consideration the female and female/male to male ratio of productions, women actually fared proportionately rather well in a theatre system where there was an influx of new plays by new playwrights. Over the period 1918-1959, three or more of the plays by Bridget Boland, Clemence Dane, Rose Franken, Gertrude Jennings, Margaret Kennedy, Esther McCracken, Aimée Stuart, Lesley Storm, Dodie Smith, Fryn Tennyson-Jesse and Joan Temple, ran for 51 and in many cases, more performances. Many of their plays were made into films or later, television dramas. The critical reception of their work did not

always correlate with its success.

One of the methods of critical misrepresentation was, it would appear, to reaffirm the playwrights as a group, even though in many cases there were significant differences in their approach to the dramatic medium. If the critics and historians saw the women playwrights as some kind of 'breed', it was also assumed that they served the interests of a certain type of audience, with a certain type of play:

The play-going public suddenly ...picked on a new type of comedy ...characteristically English. Like the tortoise-shell cat, it is also predominantly female. It is completely undramatic ...ran interminably ...About? The ditherings of ordinary people seen through the magnifying glass of an observant sentimental humour. It is the vindication of the women playwright, for it is usually written by a woman ...the delight of mainly feminine audiences. It is with us still in 1945.<sup>22</sup>

The woman playwright was critically framed by her sentimentality, the domestic nature of her plots, the humour with which she treated the machinations of middle-class life and the seeming lack of social critique and wealth of romance in her plays. O'Casey, in the process of critiquing the critics themselves, complained that the realism of which critics were so fond, had taken 'all the life out of the drama'.<sup>23</sup> Here, and O'Casey is not talking in particular about women playwrights, (although Dodie Smith comes in for some fairly vitriolic commentary) O'Casey outlined one side of the critical argument between which the many women playwrights were caught. On the one hand they were grouped largely as creators of the domestic comedy, a supposedly frivolous form of drama, which put on stage the lives of 'ordinary' people, usually women, going about their everyday business. On the other hand, a number of the women playwrights were criticised for being too experimental, like Glaspell, or for pandering an intellectual but 'feminine', need for discussion, such as G.B. Stern and, at times, Clemence Dane.

O'Casey highlighted the discrepancies between theatre as an art form and theatre as an industry. The fact that women's playwrighting could fall in either camp was largely ignored. Through my research I have come to the conclusion that it may be possible to argue, for example, that the domestic comedy, rarely defined in any critical detail, has been denigrated both by critics and historians then and now, because firstly, it affirmed fears about the growing

fact of theatre becoming an industry based on profit, and secondly, because it was seen as a form utilised mainly by women. Traces of this form can be seen in modern day 'soap opera', which again is commercial, and presents what were often appear as fantastical and idealised versions of 'real life'. Similarly, I would propose that women playwrights, who showed perhaps more consciously 'artistic' leanings in their plays, were identified as a whole and therefore marginalised, because the social and ideological basis of their artistic expression was derived from their experience and position as women.

Thus women playwrights of the period 1918 -1962 have to a great extent, been manoeuvred out of history. In terms of the construction of history, it is interesting, that Ernest Short's respectable 1942 volume had a chapter entitled "Women in The British Theatre: the Women Dramatists", which closed with his praise for the fact that a 'second sex' was taking the theatre with, 'due seriousness and contributing its special experiences in order that British drama may fully represent British life'.<sup>23</sup> Yet, when he published a reworked and larger volume, the same chapter was integrated into a chapter headed "Theatre Women, Jazz and the Dance Craze". This chapter begins and ends with statements about the domination of theatre by 'feminine audiences', and the peculiar suggestion that men usually now go to the theatre because 'women tend to dictate the entertainment.'<sup>24</sup>

Censorship was the issue on which Marie Stopes wrote the following statement about the banning of her play *Vectia*, and although there was a specific context in which she made the statement, it has a relevance to the generally conditions under which plays by women were often judged:

...women have things to say which men have not the ears to hear. Women who think are often like wireless waves without a receiver. Hence women who want a hearing so often try to model their creative work on men's standards -and the result is then they are "but lesser men" - naturally. At women as "lesser men", the critics jibe ...What is the woman dramatist up against today? Men managers, men producers, men theatre owners, men newspaper proprietors, men critics, men censors ...<sup>25</sup>

Nevertheless, Olauson has showed that in America, female critics were as likely to adhere to current trends of critical thought as were men. The point here is that although there is a relevance to Stopes' complaint, women playwrights held their own on the London stage, and appeared to have carved a niche, which

expanded from the mid-1920s on, for themselves. Looking at the figures in table 1., it could be argued that proportionately, to produce a play by a woman playwright would have been a reasonably risk-free option for a production management to take. Perhaps Kruger's point about the possibilities of absorption of 'other' as a viable commodity is right, but it does not detract from the fact of the evidence numbers of plays, nor from the fact that a number of the playwrights discoursed rather than conformed to, dominant views on gender.

## CONTENT

The manner in which many of the playwrights chose to discourse current debates on women's roles within culture and society was of primary interest during the process of this research. The emergent theories on mothering, femininity, the nature of woman and so on, are not directly reflected in the texts, but there are clear correlations. On a level of social and psychological discourse, the problems of identity caused for women and at times, both men and women, which were derived from living in a society where women were being shifted from one role to another, are clearly inscribed within the texts. Many of the plays dramatise and question the fact of women's economic dependence on men, many question the assumptions about women's roles within the family and within society as a whole. A number of the plays discourse within the narrative, the fact of the 'rebellious woman', and present the limitation of her choices.<sup>26</sup> This discourse takes place more often within the boundaries of a realist as opposed to an experimental dramatic form, but nevertheless, is clear.

For the sake of convenience here, I treated the women playwrights as a 'group', but stressed that the 'group' is characterised by gender rather than wholly through some kind of artistic approach or aesthetic expression in their work. I have looked for common threads in their work, the findings for which have been outlined in the thesis. It is, I hope, clear that many of the playwrights in question presented the world as they saw it, from their position as *women*. One particular case in mind is the way in which F. Tennyson-Jesse in *The Pelican*, written with her husband, took a real court case, that of the famous Russell Baby Case of 1921, and adapted it, giving it a central narrative position within a play about the transformation of a woman's life. In the original court case, (a paternity suit between the Hon John Russell and his wife Christabel)<sup>27</sup> the judge legitimised the son, but the husband was still granted a divorce. In the sophisticated 1990s divorce is a common thing, but in the 1920s it was neither a common, nor a pleasant experience for any woman involved. The play however, views society through the eyes of the ex-wife, the rejected woman.

Another play relevant here, is Margot Neville's extraordinarily witty, *Heroes Don't Care*<sup>28</sup> where Connie Crawford, played in the original by Coral Browne, strides around the stage, and endures the sarcasm and neurosis of those around her, in order to gain herself a place on Sir Edward Pakenham's expedition to the North Pole:

CONNIE: ...I am not a newspaper woman, I'm Connie Crawford.

EDWARD: Mrs Connie Crawford?

CONNIE: Yes, yes, ...Look here Sir Edward, I've come up here to join your expedition ...I want to go to the Pole with you ...I know some woman's going to do this stint sooner or later and ...I mean to be the first.

EDWARD: ...It's an undertaking completely beyond the endurance of any woman.

CONNIE: Yes, yes, I've heard all that before. They said a woman couldn't fly alone over Tibet, I did it ... I'm simply asking you to let me join your expedition in any capacity you name ...think of the publicity ...other men have planted flags on the pole, but you'd be the first to plant a woman.<sup>29</sup>

Connie proves herself to be devious, single-minded, ruthless and extremely competent in her pursuit, 'just like a man'. She is the opposite of Pakenham's wife who, perceiving Connie as a woman, rather than an explorer, worries that Connie will run off with her husband. But Connie has a husband of her own, although he never appears in the play, and is alluded to only through the fact that she is called *Mrs Crawford*. The woman aviator wants to be judged on her merits, and has to behave 'just like a man', before this can happen. Neville's play could be seen as a metaphor for the life choices of the then 'modern woman', as Connie herself says:

...If a woman competes with a man nowadays she's got everything to gain and nothing to lose ...you want to get it right out of your head that women have to be treated as fatstock ... or kept under glass cases, they don't.<sup>30</sup>

These two plays presented the audience with heroines who were having to make active choices about the way in which they lived their lives. Similar to many of the other plays discussed in the thesis, neither the form or the content

appears as radical to us now. Nevertheless, as the thesis and the statistics indicate, it is vital that we examine the work in a greater detail and within the social and cultural context in which it was created. History is not something which is fixed, it is constantly changing according to its documentors and interpreters. This thesis has been an attempt to start the ball rolling, working against assumptions such as 'she wrote numerous plays ...with intriguing titles ...but silly plots'.<sup>31</sup> Such ridiculous statements undermine the enormity and variety of the work of women playwrights, re-positioning it within the margins, and disconnecting contemporary women playwrights from a historical line of women writing successfully for the theatre. The women playwrights writing for the London stage between 1918, the point at which some women were granted the vote, and 1962, the year which saw the publication of Lessing's *The Golden Notebook*,<sup>32</sup> which many feel paved away for a renewed radicalism within the womens' movement, have made a contribution to the British theatre which should no longer be ignored.

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- 5 Viola Klein, *The Feminine Character; History of an Ideology* (London: Routledge, 1989),  
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- 15 Frank Vernon, *The Twentieth Century Theatre* (London: Harrap & Company Ltd.,  
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## APPENDIX 1.

TABLE OF PLAYS BY WOMEN ON THE LONDON STAGE 1917 - 1959.

PLAY (1917-1918)	AUTHOR	THEATRE	DATES	NO. OF PERFS.
Sheila	G. Sowerby	St. James'	7.6.17/28.6.17.	19
Their Mothers	Evelyn Glover	Globe	26.6.17	1
Billeted	F. Tennyson-Jesse & H.M. Harwood	Royalty	21.8.17/23.3.18.	240
Wild Heather	Dorothy Brandon	Strand	25.10.17/5.1.18.	79
Yvette's Dilemma	Juliette Mylo	Court	7.2.18.	1
Pauv'Yvette	Juliette Mylo	Court	7.2.18.	1
Paulina	Marion McCarthy	Court	7.2.18.	1
Signs of The Times	Mrs D.F.C. Harding	Court	7.2.18.	1
Rosmary	Elsie Fogerty	Court	11.3.18/14.3.18.	4mp
Mrs Riggles Makes A Match	Elsie Fogerty	Court	15.3.18.	1mp
Betty At Bay	Jessie Porter	Strand	9.4.18/18.5.18	53
The Last Match	Georgina Hamilton	Wyndham's	2.4.18.	1
Dawkins	Mrs Greenaway	Shaftesbury	19.4.18.	1mp
Princess Suri Sama	Erica Beale	Shaftesbury	19.4.18.	1mp
Lot 79	Rida J. Young	Queen's	20.4.18 4.5.18	17
Soldier Boy	Rida J. Young & Edgar Wallace	Apollo	26.6.18 22.3.19	374
The Chinese Puzzle	Marian Bower	New	11.7.18/11.7.19.	415
The Great Moment	Gwen Lally	St James'	3.12.18	1
Time to Wake Up	Evelyn Glover	New	11.4.19	2
The Honourable Gertrude	"Henry Seton" Vera Beringer	Court	13.5.19	1
The Altar of Liberty	Marion Bower & Leon M. Lion	New	13.5.19	1
The Storm	Odette Tcherning	Ambassadors	5.6.19 12.6.19	2 mp

1919 - 1920				
His Little Widows	Rida J. Young	Wyndham's Garrick	16.6.19/21.8.19. 4.8.19./1.11.19	172
Riding for a Fall	Mrs Hardy	Court	14.7.19	1 mp
Dr James Barry	Oldga Racter & Jessica Grove	St James'	22.7.19	1 mp
Little Women (adp)	Marion de Forest	New	10.11.19 13.12.19	35
The Young Person in Pink	Gertrude Jennings	Prince of Wales' Haymarket	10.2.20 29.3.20/17.4.30	1 mp 208
The Young Visitors (adp. from Daisy Ashford 1919)	Mrs George Norman & Margaret Mackenzie	Court	24.2.20	104
The Magnet	"Gaston Gervex" Mrs Montague Fowler	Ambassadors	24.4.20	1 mp
According to the Evidence	Mrs D. F. C. Harding & Bibsie Leveux	Ambassadors	20.2.20	1 mp
The Polar Post	Hon Mary Augusta Pakington	Ambassadors	26.3.20	1 mp
The Higher Court	Margaret M. Young	Strand	24.2.20	1 mp
Husbands For All	Gertrude Jennings	Little	11.4.20	1
Why Marry ?	Jesse Lynch Williams	Comedy	6.5.20/22.5.20	18
For Husbands Only	G.B. Stern & Mrs D.F.C. Harding	Ambassadors	12.5.20/5.6.20	29
The Moon Went Behind a Cloud	Ursula Keene	Ambassadors	4.6.20	1 mp
The Advocate	Beatrice Heron-Maxwell	Criterion	4.6.20	1 mp
The Lonely Wife	Nita Faydon	Comedy	7.6.20	1 mp
The Lonely Lady	Nita Faydon	Duke of York's	5.7.20	1 mp
			24.1.21	16

1920-1921				
Brown Sugar	Lady Arthur Lever	Duke of York's	7.7.20/9.10.20	265
Daughters of Eve	'Rita' (Mrs D. Humphreys)	St James	13.7.20	1 mp
Precilla & The Profligate	Laura Wildig	Duke of York's	13.10.20 14.12.20	64
The Fair & The Brave	Cicely Hamilton	Kingsway	29.10.20	1 mp
Love Tokens	May Aldington	Queen's	29.10.20	1 mp
Adoption	Xenia Lowinsky	Ambassadors	16.12.20	1 mp
For Her Sake	Marion Crofton	Ambassadors	16.12.20	1 mp
Where The Rainbow Ends	Mrs Clifford Mills	Apollo	23.12.20/22.1.21 22.12.21/28.1.22	26 mp 36
Daniel	Sybil Harris	St James'	15.1.21/26.2.21	45
The Five Wishes	Laura Leycester	Ambassadors	27.1.21	1 mp
No Winkles	Olive Grenaway	Savoy	11.2.21	1 mp
Kynaston's Wife	Winifred Dolan	Shaftesbury	28.2.21	1 mp
Bill of Divorcement	Clemence Dane	St Martin's	14.3.21/4.3.22	402
Nightie Night	Martha Stanley Adelaide Mathews	Queen's	22.3.21/23.4.21	73
The Chemist	Blanche Weiner	Little	20.3.21/25.6.21	104
Love Among the Paintpots	Gertrude Jennings	Aldwych	30.4.21/2.7.21	73
Reggie Reforms	Irene Bubna & Edgar Camille	Everyman	2.5.21/7.5.21	7
The Blast	Irene Bubna & Edgar Camille	Everyman	25.21/7.5.21	7
The Goat	Dorothy Massingham	Kingsway	27.5.21	1mp
Tipperary	Honor M. Pulley	Kingsway	27.5.21	1 mp

1921 - 1922				
Mother of Pearl	Gertrude Jennings	Winter Garden	30.5.21	1 mp
Rising of the Moon	Lady Gregory	Court	10.6.21	1 mp
The Cinema Lady	Nancy & Jean Rioux	Royalty	14.6.21/16.6.21	4
Reggie Reforms	Irene Bubna & Edgar Camille	Everyman	2.5.21./7.5.21.	7
The Toast	Irene Bubna & Edgar Camille	Everyman	2.5.21./7.5.21.	7
Who Pays	Margaret Pedler	Comedy	26.6.21	1p
The Doctor of Dreams (Freudian c 3a)	"Michael Orme" Alix Augusta Grein	Prince of Wales'	13.7.21	1 mp
The Legion of Honour	Baroness Emmusea Orczy	Aldwych	24.8.21/10.9.21	21
The Hotel Mouse	Fryn Tennyson-Jesse & Harold Harwood	Queen's	6.10.21 5.11.21	36
The Child in Flanders	Cicely Hamilton	Lyric	7.11.21	1 mp
Wolf! Wolf!	Mrs Leo Myers	Palace	15.11.21	1
Virginia ) shared	Mrs Clifford Mills	Palace	15.11.21	1
Pierrot's Wellcome ) cast	Constance Smedley (Mrs Armfield)	Palace	15.11.21	1
Will Shakespeare	Clemence Dane	St Martin's	17.11.21./7.1.22.	62
Clothes & The Woman	"George Pabton" Emily Morse Symonds	Ambassadors	7.12.21/28.1.22	66
Me and My Diary	Gertrude Jennings	Strand	19.1.22./18.2.22.	77
Money Doesn't Matter	"George Pabton" Emily Morse Symonds	Aldwych	21.1.22 11.3.22	46
Lady Larcombe's Lapse	Mrs Jessie Porter	Kingsway	15.2.22	1
Some Detective	Harvey J. Higgins & Harriet Ford	Empire	16.7.21 6.8.21	25

1921 - 1922				
The Cone of Beyond	Kay Horniman & Ruby Miller	Garrick	9.8.21/14.1.22	192
Araminta Arrives	K Smith & Dorothy Brandon	Comedy	11.10.21/12.11.21	39
Enter Madam	Gilda Varesi & Dolly Bynre	Royalty	15.2.22/1.4.22	53
The Rise of Silas Lapham	Lillian Keal Sabine	Lyric	20.2.22/24.2.22	2
Me & My Diary	Gertrude Jennings	Aldwych	22.2.22/11.3.22	22
In Nelson's Days	Mrs Clifford Mills	Shaftesbury	11.3.22/14.3.22	3
Elegant Edward	Gertrude Jennings & C. Boulton	Palace	17.3.22	1 mat
Hyacinth Halvey	Lady Augusta Gregory	Ambassadors Aldwych	18.3.22 (2) 7.4.22	24
Nightie Night	M. M. Stanley & Adelaide Matthews	Shaftesbury	18.3.22/1.4.22	17
When Eyes Are Opened	Mrs St. Clair Stobart	Kingsway	24.3.22	1 Mat
Slings & Arrows	Betty Bower	Kingsway	24.3.22	1 Mat
Pride & Prejudice	Eileen H. A. Squire & J. C. Squire	Palace	24.3.22	1 Mat
Washed Ashore	Dorothy Massingham	Kingsway	2.4.22	1 Mat
The Girl & The City	Beatrice Mayor	Kingsway	2.4.22	1 Mat
Thirty Minutes in a Street	Beatrice Mayor	Kingsway	2.4.22	1 Mat
The Bat	Mary Roberts Rinehart & Avery Hopwood	St James'	21.1.22 4.11.22	327

1922 - 1923				
Lass O'Laughter	Edith Carter & Nan Marriott-Watson	Queen's	29.4.22 12.8.22	121
Life's A Game	"Michael Orme"	Kingsway	18.5.22 26.5.22	6 mp
The Green Cord	Marion Bower & A. L. Ellis	Royalty	2.6.22/16.9.22	122
Quarantine	F. Tennyson-Jesse	Comedy	6.6.22/2.9.22	102
The Stop-Gap	Florence N. M. Atack	Aldwych	7.6.22	1
Elegant Edward	Gertrude Jennings & C Boulton	Daly's	9.6.22	1 M
The Way of an Eagle	Ethel M. Dell	Adelphi	20.6.22/30.9.22	150
Concerning Mary Dewhurst	Florence Marriott-Watson & Grace Edwin	Savoy	28.6.22	1 Mat
Suppressed Desires	George Cram Cook & Susan Glaspell	Everyman	17.7.22 / 22.2.22	7
Secrets	May Edgington & Rudolf Besier	Comedy	7.9.22/28.7.23	373
The Scandal (Adpt of M. Bataille, 'Le Scandale' 1909)	Lady Bell (Mrs Hugh Bell)	New	19.9.22 25.11.27	77
Little Lovers	Esmé Wynne-Tyson	Aldwych	22.10.22	1
Biffy	Vera Beringer ("Henry Seton") & William Ray	Garrick	28.11.22 3.2.23	91
When Knights Were Bold	Harriet Jay ("Charles Marlow")	Court	26.12.22 27.1.23	31
Via Crucis (Adpt Hugo V. Hofmannstal, 'Jedermann' 1911)	Hon Sybil Amherst & Dr C. E. Wheeler	Garrick	5.2.23/22.2.23	21

1923 - 1924					
Good Gracious! Annabelle	Claire Beecher Kummer	Duke of York's	14.2.23/27.2.23	15	
Lavender Ladies	Daisy Fisher	Strand	25.2.23	1	
The Alternative	Lucy Wilson & Adrian Alington	Everyman	12.3.23 24.3.23	14	
The Inevitable	Isabel Jay	St James'	21.3.23/16.6.23	101	
Beltane Night	Vera Beringer "Henry Seton"	Aldwych	23.3.23.	1	
Isabel, Edward and Anne	Gertrude Jennings	Haymarket	31.3.23/16.6.23.	101	
The First Stile	Elsie Hayes	Kingsway	24.4.23	1	
The Voice Outside	Gertrude Jennings	Globe	28.4.23/16.6.23	58	
South Wind	Isabel C. Tippett & N. Douglas	Kingsway	29.4.23/30.4.23	2	
The Outsider	Dorothy Brandon	St James	31.5.23/1.9.23	107	
The Proof	Phyllis Birkett	Vaudeville	21.5.23	1 Mat	
Come Through a Cranford Door	Irene Ross & Frank Lind	New	10.7.23	1 Mat	
The Young Person in Pink	Gertrude Jennings	Adelphi	13.7.23/25.8.23	98	
Tancred (from Disraeli's novel of 1847)	Edith Millbank	Kingsway	16.7.23/28.7.23	14	
Trust Emily	May Edington	Criterion	10.10.23/27.10.23	21	
Fledglings	Marguerite Rea	St Martin's	1.11.23/14.11.23	6 Mat	
Our Ostriches	Dr Marie Stopes	Court	14.11.23/2.2.24	91	
The Morals of Vanda	Hazel May Marshall	Everyman	29.11.23/15.12.23	18	
The Rising Generation	Wyn Weaver & Laura Leycester	Shaftesbury	3.12.23.5.4.24	235	
When Knights were Bold (f3a)	Harriet Jay ("Charles Marlow")	Criterion	17.12.23/16.2.24	105	
The Painted Lady	Vera Beringer	Everyman	12.1.24 19.1.24	8	
Outcasts	May Creagh-Henry	Strand	13.1.24	1 mp	
The Stepmother	Githa Sowerby	New	13.1.24	1	



1924						
The Immortal Hour	Fiona Macleod & Rutland Broughton	Regent	28.1.24 17.5.24	127		
The Way Things Happen	Clemence Dane	Ambassadors	2.2.24/29.3.27	65		
Not In Our Stars (Adpt M. Maurice's Nov 1923)	Dorothy Massingham	Wyndham's	4.2.24/5.4.24	72		
The Fairy Tale	May Edgington	Apollo	6.2.24/1.3.24	28		
Monsieur Beaucaire	Booth Tarkington & Mrs E. G. Sutherland	Strand	23.2.24/22.3.24	101		
Her Market Price	Frances Nordstrom	Lyceum	17.4.24./24.5.24	51		
By Chance	Lady Violet Greville	Daly's	5.5.24	1 mp		
Before Sunset	Nan Marriott-Watson	Aldwych	20.5.24	1 mp		
Two Women & A Telephone	Rica Bromley-Taylor	Aldwych	25.5.24	1		
Wife to A Famous Man (Adpt G M Sierra's "La Muier Del Herde")	Mr & Mrs H. Granville-Barker	Aldwych	25.5.24	1		
In The Next Room	Eleanor Robson & Harriet Ford	St Martin's	6.6.24./29.1.24.	202		
The Rat: The Story of An Apache	("David L'Estrange") Constance Collier & Ivor Novello	Prince of Wales'	9.6.24 13.9.24	282		
Punchinello	Laura Wildig	Court	22.6.24	1		
Tiger Cats	Mrs J. T. Grein ("Michael Orme")	Savoy	26.6.24 17.7.24	7 mp		
The Pleasure Garden,	Beatrice Mayor	Regent	29.6.24/30.6.24	2mp		
Waiting for the Bus	Gertrude Jennings	St Martin's	10.7.24.	1 mp		
A Surplus Man	Sylvia Earl	Court	21.7.24	1 mp		
Tiger Cats	Mrs J.T. Grein	Garrick	11.8.24/13.9.24	116		
The Claimant	Mrs M. F. Watts	Queen's	11.9.24/18.10.24	44		
It Happened in Ardoran	Ann Stephenson & A. MacBeth	Court	19.10.24	1		
The Pelican	F Tennyson-Jesse & H. Harwood	Ambassadors	20.10.24/7.3.25	243		
Bartons Folly	Gladys Parrish	Court	14.12.24	1		

1924 - 1925						
When Knights Were Bold	Harriet Jay "C. Marlow"	Forture	15.12.24/31.1.25	79		
Just Married	Adelaide Matthews & Anne Nichols	Comedy	15.12.24 7.3.25	423		
Pollyanna (adp. Eleanor Porters Nov 1913)	Catherine Chisholm Cushing	St James'	18.12.24 3.1.25	24		
The Outsider	Dorothy Brandon	Regent	22.12.24/24.1.25	7		
The Fairway (Adpt of Jacques Deva's "Une Fiable Femme")	Noel Scott & Auriol Lee	New	4.1.25	1		
The Fairway	Auriol Lee	New	4.1.25	1		
Meddlers	Agnes Platt & Normal Pugh	St James'	6.1.25/10.1.25	6		
Camilla States Her Case	Mrs R. Golding Bright "George Egerton"	Globe	7.1.25 14.2.25	45		
Me & My Diary	Gertrude Jennings	Garrick	12.1.25/17.1.25	45		
Cats Claws	Gertrude Jennings	New	20.1.25	1 mp		
It Happened in Ardoran	Ann Stephenson & A. Macbeth	Everyman	24.12.25/7.3.25	13		
Anyhouse	F. Tennyson Jesse	Ambassadors	12.3.25/28.3.25	20		
Perservering Pat	Lynne Doyle	Little	13.3.25/4.4.25	27		
The Painted Swan	Elizabeth Bibesco	Everyman	16.3.25/4.4.25	21		
The Verge	Susan Glaspell	Regent	29.3.25/7.4.25	3		
The Sign in the Sun	Vere Sullivan	Regent	3.5.25	1		
Sun-Up	Lula Vollmer	Vaudeville	4.5.25/22.8.25	233		
The Swallow	Viola Tree	Everyman	6.5.25/9.5.25	5		
Educating a Husband	Edith Carter	Regent	11.5.25/16.5.25	8		
Five Birds In a Cage	Gertrude Jennings	Haymarket	21.5.25/6.6.36	21		
Nerves	Ann Stephenson	Court	15.6.25	1 mp		
Dear Ann	Elizabeth Fagan	Aldwych	23.6.25	1 mp		
Lavender Ladies	Daisy Fisher	Comedy	29.7.25/21.11.25	156		

1925 - 1926				
The Man From Hong-Kong	Mrs Clifford Mills	Queen's	3.6.25/22.8.25	24
Fires Divine	Rosaline Rossomer	Scala	15.9.25/3.10.25	7
The Moon & Sixpence (from Maugham's Novel, 1919 )	Edith Ellis	New	24.8.25 28.11.25	75
That Which Counts	"Shirland Quin" Enid Gest	Duke of York's	4.10.25	1
The Rising of the Moon	Lady Augusta Gregory	Royalty	17.10.25/17.11.25	26
The Old Adam	Cicely Hamilton	Kingsway	17.11.25/16.1.26	67
Gloriana	Gwen John	Little	8.12.25/23.12.25	19
The Godless	Karen Bramson	Wyndham's	15.12.25/17.12.25	2 mp
The Child in Flanders	Cicely Hamilton	Old Vic	21.12.25/8.1.26	6
Baby Mine	Margaret Mayo	Apollo	23.12.25/7.1.26	1 mp
Inheritors	Susan Glaspell	Everyman	28.12.25/10.1.26	21
The Man Who Was Thursday	Mrs C.Chesterton & R. Neale	Everyman	20.1.26/30.1.26	12
Blind Alley	Dorothy Brandon	Playhouse	27.1.26/6.2.26	13
The Widow's Cruise	Joan Temple	Ambassadors	3.3.26/8.5.26	81
Ashes	Vera, Countess Cathcart	Prince of Wales'	15.3.26/20.3.26	9
The Rescue Party	Phyllis Morris	Regent	28.3.26	1
Enchantress	K Bramson & A. Augusta Grein	Garrick	7.4.26/24.4.26	21
The Cat's Cradle	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Criterion	8.4.26/21.8.26	156
Temptation	Gladys Hastings Walton	New Oxford	19.4.26/24.4.26	13
The Rescue Party	Phyllis Morris	Comedy	26.4.26/12.6.26	56
The Great Lover	L. Ditrichstein, Fanny & F. Hatton	Shaftesbury	30.04.26/5.6.26.	42

1926 - 1927				
Distinguished Villa	Kate O'Brien	Aldwych	2.5.26	1
The Song	Adela Maddison	Court	3.5.26	1 mp
Intimate Enemies	Zenia Lowinsky & N. McKinnel	Savoy	17.5.26/29.5.26	15
As We Are...	Gertrude & M.J. Landa	Scala	27.5.26	1
Billeted	F. Tennyson-Jesse & H Harwood	Royalty	31.5.26/26.6.26	32
Granite	Clemence Dane	Ambassadors	15.6.25/7.8.26	82
Down Hill	(Constance Collier & Ivor Novello) "David L'Estrange"	Queen's	16.6.26 24.7.26	94
Jiggs in Clover	Margaret Coulan	Regent	21.6.26	1
The Twin	Vere Sullivan & G. Brenchley	Everyman	29.6.26/10.7.26	4
Cock o' the Roost	Rida Johnson Young	Garrick	2.7.26/17.7.26	18
Distinguished Villa	Kate O'Brien	Little	12.7.26/4.9.26	12
A Balcony	Naomi Royde-Smith	Everyman	25.8.26/4.9.26	12
Virginia's Husband	Florence Kilpartrick	Comedy	6.9.26/2.10.26	31
The Whole Town's Talking	Anita Loos & John Emerson	Strand	7.9.26/18.12.26	118
The Constant Nymph	Margaret Kennedy	New	14.8.26/13.8.27	387
The Edge O' Beyond	Ruby Miller & Roy Horman	Regent	23.10.26/29.10.26	12
Shavings	Pauline Phelps & Marion Shorts	Apollo	1.11.26/20.11.26	24
Yellow Sands	Eden & Adelaide Philpotts	Haymarket	3.11.26/25.2.28	612
It Is Expedient	Lady Kathleen Curzon-Herrick	Royalty	14.11.26	1
Aspidistras	Joan Temple	Strand	5.12.26	1
Christmas Eve	Rose Fyleman	Old Vic	20.12.26/1.1.27	9

1927						
When Knights Were Bold	Harriet Jay "Charles Marlow"	Scala	22.12.26/15.1.27	42		
Daddy Long Legs	Jean Webster	Regent	27.12.26/7.1.27	22		
Nobody's Daughter	George Paston "E. M. Symonds"	Regent	8.1.27/14.1.27	12		
The Square Peg	Mildred Hodson	Everyman	18.1.27/5.2.27	20		
The Bat	Mary R Rinehart & A Hopwood	Regent	29.1.27/4.2.27	12		
En Pension	Mrs Cyril Scott	Globe	30.1.27	1		
The Rat	David L'Estrange (Constance Collier & I. Novello)	Prince of Wales'	12.2.27/26.3.27	49		
No Gentleman	Aimée & Philipp Stuart	St Martin's	8.3.27/23.4.27	58		
Angela	Lady Florence Evelyn Bell	Prince's	14.3.27	1		
A Hen Upon A Steeple	Joan Temple	Globe	23.3.27/23.4.27	37		
Bert's Girl	Elizabeth Baker	Court	30.3.27/16.4.27	20		
Abie's Irish Rose	Anne Nichols	Apollo	11.4.27/30.7.27	128		
Lolotte	Betha N. Graham	New	6.5.27	1 mp		
Ishmael	Elizabeth Southwart	Strand	15.5.27	1		
The Bridge	Kate O'Brien	Arts	31.5.27	1		
Meet The Wife	Lynn Starling	St Martin's	1.6.27/10.9.27	117		
Wild-Cat Hetty	Florence A. Kilpatrick	Savoy	20.6.27/16.7.27	31		
Nevertheless	Sylvia Blennerhasseti	Arts	5.7.27/8.7.27	4		
Streaks of Light	Grace Frank	Arts	10.7.27/12.7.27	3		
Samson & Delilah	"Michael Orme"	Arts	17.7.27/18.7.27	2		
The Village	Vere Sullivan	Globe	18.7.27/6.8.27	24		
The Cage	Joan Temple	Savoy	22.7.27/20.8.27	34		
Cautious Campbell	Brenda Girvan & Monica Cosens	Royalty	26.7.27/13.8.27	22		
Billeted	F. Tennyson-Jesse & H Harwood	Regent	3.9.27/11.9.27	12		
I'll Give You A Ring	Audrey & G. Carten	Globe	25.9.27.	1		
Scrapped	Alma Brosnan	Arts	23.9.27/27.9.27.	5		
A Wife in the House	Inglis Allen	Globe	25.9.27	1		

1927 - 1928				
The Lady-in-Law-	Bertha Murrey	Wyndham's	29.9.27/12.11.27	54
The Outsider	Dorothy Brandon	Regent	15.10.27/21.10.27	6?
At Number Fifteen	Alma Brosnan	Garrick	16.10.27	1
The King Decrees	Constance Smedley	Kingsway	21.10.27	1 Mat
The Seventh Devil	Constance Smedley & Max Armfield	Kingsway	21.10.27	1 mp
The Kingdom of God (Adpt of G M Sierra's 'El Reino de Dios' 1916)	Mr & Mrs H. Granville-Baker	Strand	26.10.27/3.12.27	47
Woman's Honour	Susan Glaspell	Arts	27.10.27/28.10.27	2
Nipper	Susannah Nicholson	Regent	4.11.27/11.11.27	13
The Peaceful Thief	Audrey Lucas	Arts	6.11.27/7.11.27	2
He Who Gets Slapped	Gertrude Schurhoff & B Jackson	Everyman	8.11.27/10.12.27	34
His Grace	Maie B Bacon	Globe	27.11.27	1
A Wife in the House	Inglis Allen	His Majesty's	12.12.27	1
The Caveman	Daisy Fisher & Harold Simpson	Savoy	12.12.27/17.12.27	8
Out Flat	Mrs H. Musgrave	Regent	17.12.27/23.12.27	6
Whispering Wires	Kate L. McLaurin	Apollo	19.12.27/14.1.27	37
Caged	Mrs Henry Germaine Mainwaring	Arts	21.12.27	1 mp
The Young Visitors	Margaret Mackenzie & Mrs George Norman	Strand	10.1.28	1
Discounted Peter	Marguerite Groswald	Arts	14.1.28/18.1.28	4
Jordan	Margaret Kennedy	Strand	22.1.28	1
Sauce for the Gander	Norma Mitchell & R. Medcraft	Lyric	30.1.29/21.3.29	72
London Pride	Gladys Unger & A. Neil Lyons	Drury Lane	8.3.28	1 mp
Tinker, Tailor...	Phyllis Morriss	Royalty	8.3.28/10.3.28	4

1928		Constance Malleson	Arts	25.3.28 / 26.3.28	2
The Way					
Gentleman Prefer Blonds	Anit Loos (Nou) & John Emerson	Prince of Wales'	2.4.28 12.5.28	48	
The Trail of You	Vere Bennet	Queen's	15.4.28	1	
Come With Me	Margaret Kennedy & Basil Dean	New	19.4.28/23.6.29	76	
For Better, For Worse	May Edgington	Arts	5.5.28/8.5.28	4	
After Death	Virginia & Frank Vernon	Little	14.5.28/2.6.28	23	
The Many They Buried	Karen Bramson	Ambassadors	6.6.28/16.6.28	12	
Holding Out The Apple	Betty Wynne-Bower	Globe	16.6.28/30.6.28	17	
Prejudice	Mercedes of Acosta	Arts	17.6.28/19.6.28	3	
Chance	Mary Fox-Davies	Strand	17.6.28	1	
The Comic Arts	Susan Glaspell & N. Matson	Strand	24.6.28	1	
Samson & the Phillistines	"Michael Orme"	Little	26.6.28	22	
My Lady's Mill	Eden & Adelaide Phillpotts	Lyric	2.7.28/14.7.28	16	
The Chinese Puzzle	Marian Bower & Leon M. Lion	Regent	7.7.28/13.7.28	12	
Contraband	Marion W. Fawcett & N. Doon	Prince's	27.7.28/18.7.28	26	
Her Cardboard Lover	Valerie Wyngate & P.G. Wodehouse	Lyric	21.8.28 19.1.29	173	
Yellowsands	Eden & Adelaide Phillpotts	Court	10.9.28/28.9.28	24	
The Constant Nymph	M. Kennedy & Basil Dean	Garrick	27.9.28./10.11.28	58	
Deadlock	May Edgington	Comedy	8.10.28/20.10.28	15	
The 100th Chance (adp of Her Nov 1917)	Ethel M. Dell	Regent	20.10.28/26.10.28	12	
The Workhouse Ward	Lady Augusta Gregory	Arts	25.10.28/28.10.28	4	
Richmond Park	Gertrude Jennings	Arts	5.11.28	1 mp	
Clara Gibbings	Aimée & Phillip Stuart	Vaudeville	19.11.28/21.1.29	64	

1928 - 1929				
The Pelican	F.Tennyson Jesse & H. Harwood	Regent	1.12.28/7.12.28.	12
Adam's Opera	Clemence Dane	Old Vic	3.12.28/5.1.29	20
Out She Goes	Lillian Trimble-Bradley	Criterion	11.12.28/2.2.29	62
These Pretty Things	Gertude Jennings	Garrick	14.12.28	Imp
Ag and Bert	Mabel Constanduros & Michael Hogan	Arts	16-18.12.28	3
The Wallflower	Audrey Scott	Arts	28.12.28/30.12.28	3
The Chinese Bungalow	Marion Osmond & James Corbet	Duke of York's	9.1.29/13.4.29	109
Byron	Alicia Ramsey	Lyric	22.1.29/2.2.29	14
Her Shop	Aimée & Phillip Stuart	Criterion	7.2.29/4.5.29	99
Fame	Audrey Carten & W. Carten	St James'	20.2.29/25.5.29	108
Maftro, Darling	Naomi Royde-Smith	Queen's	25.2.29/2.3.29	8
Red Rust	Virginia & Frank Vernon	Little	28.2.29/16.2.29	20
The Borderer	Madge Howard & L.Gordon	Strand	28.2.29/23.3.29	28
The Pleasure Garden	Beatrice Mayor	Everyman	8.3.29/23.3.29	17
The Iron Law	Aimee Scott	Court	10.3.29	1
The Mayor	Adelaide Philpotts	Royalty	11.3.29/23.3.29	16
Porgy	Dorothy & D. Heyward	His Majesty's	10.4.29/1.6.29	61
The Way of an Eagle	Ethel M Dell	Regent	13.4.29/19.4.29	12
Daniel Deronda	Lily Tobias & Lydia Lewisohn	Palace	14.4.29	1
Requital	Molly Kerr	Everyman	23.4.29/4.5.29	15
Mariners	Clemence Dane	Wyndham's	29.4.29/25.5.29	32
The Matriarch	G. B. Stern	Royalty	8.5.29/23.11.29	229
The Black Ace	Dorothy Brandon & N. Farso	Globe	9.5.29/18.5.29	
Notoriety	Mrs Martha Myers & E. Page	Garrick	12.5.29	1
Why Drag in Marriage?	Audrey Scott	Strand	31.5.29/22.6.29	26



1929 - 1930						
Lets Leave it at That	Jeanne De Casalis & Colin Clive	Queen's	10.6.29/15.6.29	8		
In the Next Room	Eleanor Robson & Harriet Ford	Regent	15.6.29/21.6.29	12		
Tower of Babel	Karen Branson	Strand	7.7.29	1		
Bill of Divorcement	Clemence Dane	St Martin's	9.7.29/7.9.29	70		
The Tower	Mary Pakington	Everyman	15.7.29/20.7.29	7		
These Pretty Things	Gertrude Jennings	Arts	21.7.29 /22.7.29.	2		
		Garrick	6.8.29/28.9.29	62		
Sun-up	Lula Vollmer	Little	1.3.8.29/7.9.29	30		
Scraps	Gertrude Jennings	Garrick	31.8.29/28.9.29	33		
Yesterday's Harvest	Gladys St John Coe	Apollo	11.9.29/5.10.29	29		
The Constant Nymph	Margaret Kennedy	Regent	14.9.29/20.9.29	12		
Secrets	B Bessier & May Edgington	Comedy	16.9.29/23.11.29	79		
Happy Families	Audrey Carten & Waveney Carten & J. Ross	Garrick	1.10.29/26.10.29	30		
The Mother	Olive Lethbridge	Globe	29.11.29	1 mp		
The Helping Hand	Gertrude Jennings	Prince of Wales'	3.12.29	1 mp		
The Workhouse Ward	Lady Augusta Gregory	Haymarket	4.12.29/21.12.29	22		
The Love Game	Mrs C A Chesterton & Ralph Neale	Regent	14.2.29/21.12.29	14		
A Warm Corner	Arthur Wimperis Lauri Wylie	Prince's	24.12.29/19.7.30	238		
Nine Till Six	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Arts	22.1.30/26.1.30	259		
Charles and Mary	Joan Temple	Everyman Globe	4.2.30/22.2.20 28.2.20	58		
Frankenstein	Peggy Webbling	Little	10.2.30/12.4.30	72		
Oxford Preserved	Helen Simpson	Haymarket	25.2.30	1 mp		
At The Gate	Susan Richmond	Court	11.3.20	1mp		
Bill of Divorcement	Clemence Dane	Regent	29.3.20/4.4.30	12		
Fourth Floor Heaven	Kathleen Hewitt	Everyman	7.4.30/12.4.30	8		

1930 - 1931					
The Door	Ruth Landa	Daly's	8.4.30	1mp	
Debonair	G.B. Stern & Frank Vosper	Lyric	23.4.30/24.5.30	37	
Our Ostriches	Marie C Stopes	Royalty	7.5.30/31.4.30	29	
The Ugly Duchess	Vera Beringer	Arts	15.5.30/25.5.30	15	
How to Be Healthy Though Married	F.Tennyson-Jesse & H. Harwood	Strand	25.5.30	1	
The Last Chapter	Edith & Ed Ellis	New	27.5.30/28.6.30	38	
The Searcher	Velona Pilcher	Grafton	29.5.30/14.5.30	19	
Moloch anti war play	John & Winifred Carter	Strand	29.5.30/7.6.30	12	
Let Us Be Gay	Rachel Crothers	Lyric	18.8.30/13.12.30	136	
The Bond	Muriel Stuart	Everyman	19.8.30/30.8.30	13	
Her First Affair	Merrill Rogers & F. Jackson	Kingsway	11.9.30/14.10.30	160	
The Outsider	Dorothy Brandon	Apollo	30.10.30/29.11.31	66	
Cheri	Una Lady Troubridge	Prince of Wales'	26.10.30/27.10.30	2	
The Quaker	Mary L. Pendred	Royalty	10.11.30	1mp	
Wooden Shoe	Beatrix Thomson	Kingsway	13.11.30/13.12.30	36	
Getting George Married	Florence Kilpatrick	Everyman	26.11.30/6.12.30	12	
Southeast & Southwest	Vera Beringer	Hippodrome	18.12.30	1mp	
To See Ourselves	E. M. Delafield	Ambassadors	11.12.30/25.4.31	154	
The Borrowed Life	Gladys Parrish	Prince of Wales'	14.12.30/15.12.30	2	
The Pelican	F.Tennyson-Jesse & H. Harwood	Playhouse	7.2.31/10.4.31	72	
Supply & Demand	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Haymarket	9.2.31/28.2.31	23	
The Man Who Pays The Piper	G. B. Stern	St Martin's	10.2.31/14.2.31	6	
Sentence of Death	Gladys St John Loe	Strand	22.2.31	1	
The Widower	June Boland	Everyman	27.2.31/6.3.31	2	

1931				
The Gaol Gate	Lady Augusta Gregory	Arts	15.3.31	1
Love At First Sight	Una O'Connor	Arts	15.3.31	1
Strange Adventure of a Maiden Lady	Rosalind Wade	Arts	15.3.31	1
Autumn Crocus	"C L Anthony" Dodie Smith	Lyric Savoy	6.4.31/23.1.32 1.2.32/2.7.32	371
Black Coffee	Agatha Christie	St Martin's Little	9.4.31/2.5.31 11.5.31/13.6.31	67
Fowl Play	Nancy Price & John Thirlwell	Fortune	12.4.31/19.4.31	3
The Quarrel	Dorothea Moore	Fortune	12.4.31/19.4.31	2
Nine Till Six	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Regent	2.5.31/8.5.31	12
Don't Tell Engl&	Mary Dunn	Arts	3.5.31	1
Zipp	Mary Dunn	Arts	3.5.31	1
Tiger Cats	"Michael Orme"	Royalty	27.5.31/13.6.31	22
I Want	Constance Holme	Grafton	11.6.31/27.6.31	20
Episode	Rosalind Wade	Everyman	21.6.31	1
Sea Fever	Auriol Lee & J. Van Druuten	New	30.6.31	1
(adp M Pagnol Marius 1929)				
The Love Game	Mrs C Chesterton & Ralph Neale	Prince of Wales'	6.7.31/29.8.31	64
Mrs Fisher's War	Joan Temple & Henrietta Leslie	Ambassadors	9.7.31/11.7.31	4
The Life Machine	Sophie Treadwell	Arts	15.7.31/19.7.31	6
Apron Strings	Dorrance Davis	Vaudeville	17.7.31/12.9.31	65
Black Magic	Nester Sawyer	Royalty	17.8.31/26.9.31	48
Take Two From One	Mr & Mrs H. Granville Braker	Haymarket	16.9.31/21.11.31	77
Jane Eyre	Phillis Birkett	Kingsway	24.9.31/31.10.31	20
Forty Love	Esmé Wynne-Tyson	Grafton	12.10.31./13.10.31	2
The Dyer's Hand	Gwen John	Everyman	29.10.31	1
Make Up Your Mind	Xenia Lowinsky	Criterion	5.11.31/14.11.31	12

1931 - 1932				
Miss Rose's Girl	Lillian Trimble Bradley	Garrick	8.11.31	1
A Hunting We Will Go	Phyllis Morris	Savoy	8.11.31	1
Other Gates	Bertha Graham	Grafton	15.11.31/16.11.31	2
Little Catherine	Virginia & Frank Vernon	Phoenix	18.11.31/12.12.31	29
The Home Front	Diana & Bruce Hamilton	Graft	29.11.31/30.11.31	2
Britannia of Billingsgate	Christine Jope-Slade & Sewell Stokes	St Martin's	30.11.31/12.12.31	34
The Wolves of Tanner's Close of the Crimes of Burke & Hare	Gladys Hastings Walton	New	17.12.31/16.1.32	20
Her Shop	Aimée & Phillip Stuart	Regent	19.12.31/24.12.31	10
The Rising Generation	Wyn Weaver & Laura Leicester	Regent	21.1.32/7.1.32	12
The Life Machine	Sophie Treadwell	Regent	9.1.32/15.1.32	12
Trifles	Susan Glaspell	Duchess	25.1.32/6.2.32	18
Fire	Ernita Lascelles	Fortune	2.3.32/12.3.12	12
Security	Esmé Wynne-Tyson	Savoy	13.3.32	1
Caravan	Cicely Hamilton	Queen's	6.4.32/9.4.32	5
Yellow Sands	Eden & Adelaide Phillpotts	Regent	16.4.32/22.4.32	12
The Kingdom of God	Mr & Mrs H. Granville Barker	Westminster	1.6.32/2.7.32	2
Richard of Bordeaux	Gordon Daviot	New	26.6.32/3.7.32	2
The Matriarch	G. B. Stern	Regent	3.9.32/9.9.32	12
Many Women	Florida Pier	Arts	28.9.32/2.10.32	5
Behind The Scenes	Billie Hill	Shaftesbury	2.10.32	1
Please Don't Be Nervous	Anne Stephenson	Shaftesbury	2.10.32	1
Children in Uniform (adp by Barbara Burnham )	Christa Winslow	Duchess	7.10.32/27.5.33	263
Alison's House	Susan Glaspell	Little	11.10.32/29.10.32	23
Service	Dodie Smith.	Wyndham's	12.10.32/18.3.33	199
Quartette or Quartet	Lucy Leven	Everyman	24.10.32/12.11.32	18
Once A Husband	Margot Neville	Haymarket	26.10.32/3.12.32	45

1932 - 1933				
Money For Jam	Madge & Alwyn Bolton	Shaftesbury	30.10.32	1
Tonight or Never	Frederic & Fanny Hatton	Duke of York's	10.11.32/26.11.32	20
The Romantic Young Lady	Mr & Mrs Granville Barker	Fortune	25.11.32/29.11.32	2 mp
Poet's Licence	Christine Hahlo	Grafton	27.11.32	1
Tomorrow Never Comes	Angela Green & Nora Nicholson	St Martin's	29.11.32	1
Another Language	Rose Franken	Lyric	1.12.32/4.2.33	77
Earthquake in Surrey	Lilian Arnold	Phoenix	4.12.32	1
Silver Wedding	Ruby M. Ayres	Arts	14.12.32	6
Fool's Music	Winifred Howe	Grafton	18.12.32	1
Buckie's Bears	Erica Fay (Marie Stopes)	Garrick	19.12.32/14.1.33	24
Alice Thomas & Jane (adp from E. Bagnold)	Vera Beringer	Westminster	20.12.32/21.1.33	29 mp
Alice in Wonderland	Nancy Price	Little	21.12.32/28.1.33	62
Suppressed Desires	Glaspell	Arts	8.1.33	1
Dinner at Eight	G Kaufman & Edna Ferber	Palace	6.1.33/15.7.33	216
Richard of Bordeaux	Gordon Daviot	New	2.2.33/24.3.34	463
Steel Harvest	Ruth Landa	Cambridge	5.2.33	1
The Lake	Dorothy Massingham	Arts	1.3-5.3.33	6
		Westminster	15.3.33/27.5.33	213
		Piccadilly	29.5.33/16.9.33	
The Lonely Road	Mrs J. T. Grein ("Michael Orme")	Arts	21.3.33	1
The Soldier & the Gentleman	Dorothy Massingham	Vaudeville	19.4.33/29.4.33	13
When Ladies Meet	Rachel Crothers	Lyric	26.4.33/29.7.33	108
The Blue Gate	Vera Gordon	Graft	20.4.33	1
Clear All Wires	Bella & Sam Spewak	Piccadilly	30.4.33	1
The Day I Forgot	Elsie Schaffler	Globe	12.5.33/13.5.33	3

1933 - 1934				
Love for Sale	Beatrix Thamon	St Martin's	14.5.33	1
Whether Pigs Have Wings	Marjory Whyte	Grafton	21.5.33/23.5.33	2
The Poet's Secret	Virginia & Frank Vernon	Ambassadors	25.5.33/1.6.33	12
Wild Decembers	Clemence Dane	Apollo	26.5.33/8.7.33	50
The Mask	F. Tennyson-Jesse & H Harwood	Everyman	1.6.33/5.6.33	6
What Happened Then	Lillian Trimble Bradley	Fortune	11.9.33/16.9.33	59
The House of Jealousy	Betty Wynne Bower	Fortune	18.9.33/29.9.33	7
Jewish Madonna	Vera Gordon	Comedy	24.9.33	1
Disharmony	Nora De Worms & Stanley Ford	Fortune	25.9.33/30.9.33	7
Singing Gold	Clare Richards	Grafton	8.10.33	1
So Good! So Kind!	Nesta Sawyer	Playhouse	9.10.33/21.10.33	16
The Lady From Alfaceque	Mr and Mrs H Granville Barker	Westminster	8.11.33/9.12.33	37
Unnatural Scene	Kathleen Davey	Grafton	12.11.33	1
The Tudor Wench	Elswyth Thane	Alhambra	16.11.33/16.12.33	36
Mrs Siddons	Naomi Royde Smith	Apollo	28.11.33	1mp
Escape Me Never	Margaret Kennedy	Apollo	8.12.33/12.4.34	232
What Happened to George	Vera Berringer	Wyndham's	21.12.33/20.1.34	40
Daddy Long Legs	Jean Webster	Victoria Palace	26.12.33/20.1.34	
The Queen Who Kept Her Head	Winifred Carter	Kingsway	20.2.34/10.3.34	22
Private Room	Naomi Royde Smith	Westminster	23.2.34/29.4.34	67
Fog Over Dybern	Esther Frenen	Grafton	4.3.34/5.3.34	2
Jane & Genius	Elizabeth Drew	Royalty	6.3.34/10.3.34	7
The Emergency	Bertha N. Graham	Grafton	11.3.34/12.3.34	2
Poor Old Bill	Nella Nagra	Grafton	11.3.34/12.3.34	2
Double Door	E. McFadden	Globe Strand	23.4.34/12.4.34 21.3.34/21.4.34	60

1934 - 1935				
Flowerly Walk	Joan Temple	Piccadilly	25.3.34	1
Sixteen	Aimée & Phillip Stuart	Criterion	4.4.34/15.9.34	188
The Laughing Woman	Gordon Daviot	New	7.4.34/12.5.34	41
The Eagle's Nest	Mabel Greenwood	Comedy	29.4.34	1
The Lawyer & The Roses	Ruth Collin Allen	Arts	6.5.34/7.5.34	2
Touchwood	Dodie Smith	Haymarket	16.5.34/17.11.34	213
The Pursuit of Happiness	L. Langern & Armina Marshall	Vaudeville	30.5.34/14.7.34	52
Get Out Of Your Cage	Mary Plowman	St Martin's	3.6.34	1
Jane Wogan	Florence Howell	St Martin's	3.5.34	1
Ariel	Grace Carlton	Scala	5.6.34	1mp
Queen of Scots	Gordon Daviot	New	8.6.45/8.9.34	106
Meeting at Night	Marjory Sharp	Globe	14.6.34/30.6.34	19
The Nightingale Sings	Nella Nagra	Ambassadors	24.6.34/25.6.34	2
Family Affairs	Gertrude Jennings	Ambassadors Phoenix	22.8.34/16.3.35 10.6.35/22.6.35 18.3.35/25.5.35	331
Moonlight is Silver	Clemence Dane	Queen's	19.9.34/1.12.34	85
Theatre Royal	Edna & George Ferber	Lyric	23.10.34/23.3.35	174
The Wise Woman	Lesley Storm	Criterion	1.12.34	12
Young Mr Disraeli	Elswyth Thane	Kingsway	12.11.34/1.12.34	61
The Greeks Had a Word For It	Zoe Akins	Duke of York's	22.11.34/19.1.35	193
Three Cornered Moon	Gertrude Tonkonogy	Westminster	26.11.34/15.12.34	24
The Luck of the Navy	Mrs Clifford Mills	Playhouse	24.12.34/5.1.35	22
Three For Luck	Mabel Constanduros	Westminster	26.12.34/5.1.35	16
Tarakin	Martha Steinitz	Kingsway	13.1.35	1
A Boy For the Surgeons	Ada Heather Bigg	Kingsway	20.1.35	1

1935 - 1936				
Susanna	Margaret Haythorne	Kingsway	20.1.35	1
The Box	Dorothy Hewlett	Kingsway	3.2.35	1
The Convict	L. Openshaw & Ethel Dickens	Westminster	4.2.35/16.2.35	16
The Rising of The Moon	Lady Gregory	Kingsway	10.2.35	1
The Two Shepherds	Mr & Mrs H Granville Barker	Old Vic	11.2.35/2.3.35	21
The Wise Woman	S. L. Bensusan	Fortune	24.2.35/25.2.35	2
Summer's Lease	Winifred Howe	Vaudeville	25.2.35/16.3.35	24
Someone At The Door	Dorothy & Cambell Christie	Aldwych New Comedy	3.3.35 29.5.35/8.6.35 17.6.35./29.2.36	1/305
Happy & Glorious	Winifred Walter	Westminster	4.3.35/9.3.35	8
Family Group	Dorothy & Cambell Christie	Phoenix	31.3.35	1
The Travelling Man	Lady Gregory	Little	7.4.35/9.4.35	3
The Workhouse Ward	Lady Gregory	Little	7.4.35/9.4.35	3
the King of Rome	Madge Pemberton	Royalty	14.5.35/17.5.35	2
Hervey House	Jane Cowle & R. Lawrence	His Majesty's	17.5.33/22.6.33	42
The Abbe Provost	Helen Waddell	Arts	19.5.35/20.5.35	3
Golden Arrow	Sylvia Thompson & V. Cunnard	Whitehall	30.5.35/15.6.35	19
Love of Women	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Phoenix	2.6.35	1/3
Ruth Draper	Ruth Draper	Haymarket	10.6.35/29.6.35	24
The Partnership	Bertha N. Graham	Fortune	18.6.35	1
Green of the Spring	Muriel Sheehan-Dare	Arts	28.7.36	1
Pirate Mallory	Mary Pakington	Arts	6.10.36/13.10.35	3
The Pleasure Garden	Beatrice Mayor	Grafton	7.10/9.10.35	14
Two Share a Dwelling	Alice Campbell	St James'	8.10.35/26.10.35	22
Cul De Sac	Elsa Malik	Arts	18.10.35/22.10.35	3
Call It A Day	Dodie Smith	Globe	30.10.35/9.1.37	509



1935 - 1936				
Legend Yesterday	Ruth Howe	Aldwych	3.11.35	1
Our Own Lives	Gertrude Jennings	Ambassadors	27.11.35/25.1.36	67
Grand Hotel	Vicki Baum	Vaudeville	1.12.35.	1
Alice Through The Looking Glass	Nancy Price	Little	23.12.38/18.1.36	23 mp
Buckie's Bears	"Erica Fay" (Marie Stopes)	Garrick	26.12.35/11.1.36	30 mp
Bitter Harvest	Catherine Turvey	Arts	29.1.36/30.3.36 12.5.36/6.6.36.	10 30
Bright Star	Dorothy Hewlitt	Arts	16.2.36/17.2.36	3
The Mask	F. Tennyson-Jesse & H Harwood	Vaudeville	23.2.36	1
Pride & Prejudice	Helen Jerome	St James'	27.2.35/21.11.36	317
Cold Comfort Farm	Mabel Constanduros	Arts	1.3.36/9.3.36	3
Children, To Bless You	G Sheila Donisthorpe	Ambassadors Duke of York's	3.3.36/21.3.36 23.3.36/6.6.36	109
Sonata	Evelyn Millard	Ambassadors Cambridge	7.3.36 23.5.36/30.5.36	1 mp/13
Her Last Adventure	Mrs Belloc Lowndes	Ambassadors	30.3.36/4.4.36	7
The Happy Hypocrite	Clemence Dane	His Majesty's	8.4.35/6.6.36	68
The Greeks Had a Word For It	Zoe Akins	Victoria Palace	11.4.35/18.4.36	12
Indian Summer (The Unquiet Heart)	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Arts	19.4.36/26.5.36	3
Belmont Revisited	Nora Nicholson	Palace	26.4.36	1
Boy Meets Girl	Bella & Sam Spewack	Shaftesbury	27.5.36/15.8.36	92
The King's Leisure	Edith Savile & John Carlton	Dalys	29.5.36/4.7.36	44
The Emperor Of Make Believe	Madge Pemberton & Maureen Morley	Westminster	3.6.36/20.6.36	21
When The Bough Breaks	Henrietta Leslie & Laurier Lister	Arts	7.6.35/11.6.36	3
Heroes Don't Care	Margot Neville	St Martin's	10.6.36/17.10.36	149

1936 - 1937				
Rain Before Seven	Joyce Dennys	Arts	14.6.36/16.6.36	2
Lucretia	Ernita Lascelles	Arts	21.6.36/22.6.36	2
The Insect Play (adp Kapak)	Nancy Price	Little	23.6.36/22.8.36	127
The Lady of La Paz	Edith Ellis	Criterion	2.7.36/31.10.36	139
The Two Bouquets	Eleanor & H. Farjeon	Ambassadors Garrick	13.8.36/30.1.37 2.2.37/1.5.37	300
The Ante-Room	Kate O'Brien	Queen's	14.8.36/22.8.36	10
What Really Happened	Mrs Belloc Lowndes	Duke of York's	13.9.36	1
Mademoiselle	Audrey & Wavenby Carten	Wyndham's	15.9.36/14.1.37	147
Girl Unknown	Margaret Webster	New	16.9.36/26.9.36	12
Do You Remembered	Edith Savile & John Carlton	Vaudeville	22.9.36/5.12.36	86
Follow Your Saint	Leslie Storm	Queen's	24.9.35	11
Jane Eyre	Helen Jerome	Queen's Aldwych	13.10.36/16.1.37 19.1.37/26.6.37	299
Parnell	Elsie Schaufler	New	4.11.36/6.2.37	108
Poor Man's Castle	Mandy Whitehouse & Barbara Blackburn	Arts	7.11.36 11.11.36	6
The Dogs of War	Marjorie R. Watson	Vaudeville	8.11.36	1
The Machine	Anna Thompson Cook	Vaudeville	8.11.36	1
Her Affairs In Order	Mada Gage Bolton	Vaudeville	8.11.36	1
Twenty Shadows	Dorothy Mande	Arts	15.11.36/16.11.36	2
Honor Thy Father	Diana Hamilton	Arts	6.12.36/14.12.36	3
Busman's Holiday	D.L. Sayers	Comedy Victoria Palace	16.12.36/25.9.37 27.9.37/11.12.39 15.1.39	431
Crooked Cross	Sally Carson	Westminster	13.1.37/30.1.37	21
Because We Must	Ingaret Giffard	Wyndham's	15.2.37/20.2.37	18

1937							
The Cup of Trembling	Grace Carlton	Aldwych	7.2.37	1			
Wuthering height	May Pakington & Olive Walter	Strand	7.2.37/1.2.37	2			
Come Out To Play	John Sand & Fanny Jocelyn	Arts	9.2.37/14.2.37	6.10			
First Night	G Sheila Donisthorpe	Arts	21-28.2.37	3			
Retreat From Folly	A. K Gould & E. Russell	Queen	24.2.37/10.4.37	47			
The Heavenly Passion	Olga Racster & Jessica Grove	Arts	7.3.37/8.3.37	2			
Bats in the Belfry	Diana Morgan & R. McDermot	Ambassadors Winter Garden	11.3.37/14.8.37 30.8.37/11.9.37	196			
The Case of Constance Kent	Shirley Bax	Savoy	4.4.37	1			
The Good Fairy	Jane Hint	Royalty	14.5.37/22.5.37	10			
A Ship Comes Home	Daisy Fisher	St Martin's	15.5.37/5.6.37	25			
The Bridge	Cecile Adair	Arts	17.6.37/18.6.37	2			
The Man Who Meant Well	Kathleen Hewitt	Arts	20.6.37/27.6.37	3			
In the Best Families	Anita Hart & M Bradell	Arts	30.6.37/2.7.37	3			
But Not Your Heart	"Francis (Charlotte) Frances" Mrs John Longden	Arts	4.3.37 5.7.37	2			
The Phantom Light	Evadne Price	Haymarket	7.9.37/12.2.38	182			
Bonnet Over The Windmill	Dodie Smith	New	9\8.9.37/4.12.37	10			
Rich Martha	Bertha N. Graham	Grafton	4.10.37	1-2 wks			
Youth's The Season	Mary Manning	Westminster	5.10.37/16.10.37	15			
The Dead Hand	Cicelly Fraser & E.G. Hemmerde	Whitehall	7.10.37/16.10.37	11			
Autumn	Margaret Kennedy & G.Ratoff	St Martin's	15.10.37/5.3.38	161			
Anything But The Truth	Christine Longford	Westminster	18.10.37/30.10.37	16			
Madame Fears The Dark	Margaret Irwin	Playhouse	1.11.37/2.11.37	3			
Triumph	Dorothea Flower	Little	5.11.37	1			
Hands Never Lie	Olive Temple	Grafton	15.11.37	1			
Flying Blind	Pamela Kellino & James Mason	Arts	21.11.37/22.11.37	2			
Identity Unknown	Alice Wagstaffe	Duke of York's	5.12-19.12.37	3			

1937 - 1938				
The King's Breakfast	Rita Weiman & M. Mars	Savoy	12.12.37	1
The End Of A Fairy Tale	Violet Rutter	Fortune	13.12.37	1
Roses & Rue	Winifred Fraser	Fortune	12.13.37	1
When Knights Were Bold	"Charles Marlow"	Fortune	27.12.37/15.1.38	36
Beloved	Valerie Wyngate	Arts	16.1.38.17	2
Gentleman's Agreement	Elsa De Szasz & Owen Rutter	Duke of York's	16-30.1.38	3
Mary Goes To See	Rosemary Casey & B I Payne	Haymarket	16.2./26.3.38	45
No More Music	Rosamund Lehmann	Duke of York's	27.2.39/1.3.38	3
Zeal of Thy House	D.L. Sayers	Westminster Garrick Duke of York's	2.9.38/30.4.38 10.5.38/11.6.38 14.6.38/27.3.38	102
April Clouds	Peggy Barwell & M. Malleson	Royalty	20.4.38/7.5.38	21
Murder Without Tears	Florence A Kilpatrick	Arts	24.4.38/25.4.39	2
High Dever	Winifred Carter	Arts	1/2.5.38	2
Melodrama	Aimée Stuart	Aldwych	22.5.38	1
Storm	Elizabeth Goudge	Cambridge	22.5.39	1
This, My Life..	Daphne Lennard & J. Plowden	Phoenix	29.5.38	1
Spring Meeting	M J Farrell & John Perry	Ambassadors	31.5.38/4.3.39	310
Trumpeter Play	Vere Sullivan	Garrick	13..6.38/25.6.38	16
Nanny	V Beringer	Fort	24.6.38	1 mp
Little Stranger	Katherine Hillier & H.H. Caldwell (trans N. Hunter)	Royalty	13.7.38 23.7.38	12
She Was Too Young	Hilda Vaughan & Laurier Lister	Wyndham's New	16.8.38/8.10.38 10.10.38/19.11.38	110
Dear Octopus	Dodie Smith	Queen's	14.9.38/2.9.38	376
Behind The Blinds	Vivian Tidmarsh	Winter Garden	10.10.38/29.10.38	24

1939				
Quiet Wedding	Esther McCracken	Wyndham's Piccadilly Colliseum	8.5.39/29.4.39 8.5.39/1.7.39 28.8.39/2.9.39	291 12
Dearly Beloved Wife	Jeanne De Casalis	Vaudeville	30.10.38/31.10.38	2
Elizabeth of Austria	Katriona & Elizabeth Sprigge	Garrick	3.11.38/28.1.39	94
The Lady of Glamys	Margaret Snowdon	Strand	6.1.38	1
Traitors Gate	Morna Stuart	Duke of York's	17.11.38/14.1.39	54
Funeral Flowers For The Bride	Bev du Bose Hamer	Duchess	27.11.38	1
Hamlet Wears Homespun	Nora Ratcliff	Duchess	27.11.38	1
The Ladies of Edinburgh	Constance Smedley	Duchess	27.11.38	1
Lucy, Bless Her	Ann Stephenson	Kingsway	27.11.39/28.11.38	2
The Love of Ming -Y	Mary Basil Hall	Phoenix	27.11.38	1
The Crooked Circle	Ann Casson	Vaudeville	4.12.38	1
Tony Draws a Horse	Lesley Storm	Criterion Strand Comedy	26.1.39/11.3.39 13.3.39/3.6.39 5.6.39/6.1.40	363
Hundreds of Thousands	Sara B. Tapping & Leon M. Lion	Garrick	31.1.39/4.2.39	7
Father Christmas	Diana Morgan	Vaudeville	12.3.39	1
The Courageous Sex	Mary D Sheridan	Globe	19.2.39/26.2.39	2
The Gate Review	Diana Morgan & Mr Ritchie	Ambassadors	9.3.39/29.8.39	450
Mrs Van Kleek	Elinor Mordaunt	Playhouse	17.3.39/15.4.39	31
Sons of Adam	Beatrice Thomson	Arts	26.3.39/27.3.39	2
Ring In The Moon	Evelyn P. Medd & R.H. Casson	Arts	19.4.39/25.4.39	8
The Women	Claire Boothe	Lyric	20.4.39/2.9.39	8
Uneasy Living	Florence Kilpatrick	Kingsway	18.5.39/17.6.39	24
The Jews Of York	Nesta Pain	Duchess	4.6.39	2

1939 - 1943					
Spring Meeting	M. J. Farrell	Piccadilly	3.7.39/5.8.39	40	
Cousin Muriel	Clemence Dane	Coliseum	4.12.39/9.12.39	13	
Jeannie	Aimée Stuart	Globe	7.3.40/11.5.40	75	
A House in The Square	Diana Morgan	Wyndham's	3.4.40/22.6.40	100	
Rebecca	Daphne Du Maurier	St Martin's	4.4.40/25.5.40	67	
The Women	Clare Booth	Queen's	5.4.40/7.9.40	180	
Dear Octopus	Dodie Smith	Strand	23.4.40/4.5.40	16	
Margin For Error	Clare Booth	Adelphi	27.7.40/31.8.40	42	
Under One Roof	Kim Peacock	Apollo	1.8.40/20.8.40	45	
Quiet Week End	Esther McCracken	St Martin's	24.4.41/13.5.41	24	
Other People's Houses	Lynne Dexter	Wyndham's	22.7.41/29.1.44	1059	
Ducks & Drakes	M J Farrell	Ambassadors	30.10.41/14.3.42	172	
Little Women	Marian De Forest	Apollo	25.11.41/13.12.41	23	
Other People's Houses	Lynne Dexter	Westminster	22.12.41/7.2.42	56	
Watch on the Rhine	Lillian Hellman	Phoenix	19.3.42/9.5.42	131	
Rebecca	Daphne Du Maurier	Whitehall	11.5.42/27.6.42	672	
		Aldwych	22.4.42/4.12.43		
		Strand	21.5.42/5.9.42		
		Lyric	12.9.42/24.10.42	176	
		Ambassadors	26.12.42/9.1.43		
		Scala	26.4.42/22.5.42		
Baby Mine	Margaret Mayo	Westminster	9.6.42/27.6.42	390	
Claudia	Rose Franken	St Martin's	17.9.42/15.1.44	559	
The Little Foxes	Lillian Hellman	Piccadilly	21.10.42/21.11.42	37	
Mothers Are Waiting	Audrey Lucas	Adelphi	9.5.42	1mp	
Case 27, VC	Maud Flannery & T. Browne	Comedy	2.6.43/26.5.43	30	
Living Room	Esther McCracken	Garrick	9.6.43/9.10.43	142	

1943 - 1945						
Lottie Dundass	Enid Bagnold	Vaudeville Cambridge	21.7.43/9.10.43 12.10.43/20.11.43	147		
Landslide	Dorothy Alvertyn & David Peel	Westminster	5.10.42/6.11.42	38		
Alana Avenue	Mabel & Denis Constanduros	Vaudeville	14.10.42/15.4.44	231		
Ten Little Niggers	Agatha Christie	St James' Cambridge St James'	17.11.42/24.2.44 29.2.44/6.5.44 9.5.44/1.7.44	261		
Alice In Wonderland	Clemence Dane	Scala Palace	24.12.42/12.2.44 26.12.44/27.1.45	86		
Where The Rainbow Ends	Mrs Clifford Mills & JRR.Quilter	Winter Garden	27.12.43/29.1.44.	46 mp		
Donabel Wrote A Tragedy	H & H Granville Barker	Arts	13.1.44/6.2.44	30		
This Was A Woman	Joan Morgan	Comedy	15.3.44/30.12.44	380		
Quiet Weekend	Esther McCracken	Wyndham's	25.4.44/2.9.44	137		
The Last Of Summer	Kate O'Brien	Phoenix	7.6.44/1.7.44	29		
Three's A Family	Phoebe & Henry Ephron	Saville Winter Garden	21.9.44 /12.5.45 15.5.45/23.6.45	317		
No Medals	Esther McCracken	Vaudeville	4.10.44/20.7.46	740		
Scandal At Barchester	Vera Wheatley	Lyric Wyndham's	5.10.44/9.12.44 12.12.44/6.1.45	109		
Daughter Janie	J Bentham & H Williams	Apollo	18.10.44/28.10.44	14		
Quiet Weekend	Esther McCracken	Playhouse	9.11.44/3.2.45	101		
The Years Between	Daphne Du Maurier	Wyndham's	10.1.45/22.6.46	618		
Laura	Vera Caspary & George Sklar	St Martin's	14.2.45/7.4.45	67		
Great Day	Lesley Storm	Playhouse	14.3.45/7.4.45	29		
Yellow Sands	Eden & Adelaide Philpotts	Westminster	29.3.45/23.6.45	103		
Appointment With Death	Agatha Christie	Piccadilly	31.3.45/5.5.45	42		
Lady From Edinburgh	Aimée Stuart & L. Arthur Rose	Playhouse	10.4.45/10.8.46	560		
Maid Marion	Joan Brampton	His Majesty's	15.4.45	1mp		
Duet For Two Hands	Mary Hayley Bell	Lyric	27.6.45/11.5.46	364		

1945 - 1948					
The Shouting Dies	Ronda Keane	Lyric	5.10.45/3.11.45	37	
Fit For Heroes	H Brooke & Kay Bannerman	Whitehall	19.12.45/29.12.45	11	
Stage Door	Edna Ferber & George Kaufman	Saville	21.2.46/30.3.46	44	
And No Birds Sing	Jenny Laird & John Fernald	Comedy Aldwych	18.3.46 14.11.25/25.1.47	1 84	
Murder On the Nile	Agatha Christie	Ambassadors	19.3.46/2.4.46	46	
No Room At The Inn	Joan Temple	Winter Garden	3.5.46/24.5.47	427	
The Kingmaker	Margaret Luce	St James'	14.5.46/20.8.46	97	
Grand National Night	Dorothy & Campbell Christie	Apollo	12.6.46/1.2.48	268	
Green Laughter	Rose Simon Kohn	Comedy	13.6.46/8.7.46	29	
The Man From the Ministry	Madeleine Bingham	Whitehall Comedy	7.7.46 24.12.46/5.7.47	1 220	
Love Goes To Press	M. Gelhorn & Virginia Cowles	Duchess	22.7.46/24.8.46	40	
Pick Up Girl	Elsa Shelley	Prince Of Wales' Casino	23.7.46/5.10.46 14.10.46/14.12.46	170	
Fear No More	Diana Hamilton & C Aiken	Lyric	5.8.46/31.8.46	33	
Soldiers Wife	Rose Franken	Duchess	27.8.46/19.10.46	62	
Mother Of Men	Ada G Abbott	Comedy	12.9.46/19.10.46	49	
Literally Speaking	Madeline & Cyric Campion	Aldwych	6.10.46	1	
Call Home The Heart	Clemence Dane	St James	10.4.47/17.5.47	44	
Angel	Mary Hayley Bell	Strand	6.6.47/14.6.47	10	
The Conqueror's Gate	Dorothy Lang	Savil	5.10.47	1	
Still She Wished For Company	Margaret Irwin & J R Monsell	Whitehall	12.10.47	1	
Rebecca	Daphne Du Maurier	Theatre Royal E15	10.11.47/22.11.47	16	
The Little Dry Thorn	Gordon Daviot	Lyric	11.11.47/6.12.47	30	
Daddy Long Legs	Jean Webster	Comedy	23.12.47/17.1.48	19 mp	
Diamond Lil	Mae West	Prince of Wales'	24.1.48/8.5.48	180	
The Lady From Edinburgh	Aimée Stuart & L. Arthur Rose	Theatre Royal E15	9.2.48/21.2.48	16	



1948 - 1949						
Family Portrait	Lenore Coffee & W. J. Cowen	Strand	17.2.48/20.3.48	38		
Cockpit	Bridget Boland	Playhouse	19.2.48/10.4.48	58		
Castle Arne	Elizabeth Bowen & John Perry	Lyric	24.2.49/20.3.48	30		
Dark Eyes	Glena Miranova	Strand	24.3.48/29.5.48	76		
Happy with Either	Margaret Kennedy	St James	22.4.48/22.5.48	35		
Royal Circle	Romily Cavan	Wyndham's	27.4.48/29.5.48	38		
Top Floor	Rita Anderson	Whitehall	13.6.48	1		
Someone At The Door	Dorothy & Campbell Christie	Theatre Royal E15	12.7.48/24.7.48	16		
A Man Must Die	Felicity Douglas	St Martin's	4.8.48/28.8.48	29		
Sixteen	Aimée & Philip Stuart	Theatre Royal E15	9.8.48/21.8.48	16		
Valerious	Gordon Daviot	Saville	3.10.48	1		
September Tide	Daphne Du Maurier	Aldwych	15.12.48/6.8.49	267		
Where The Rainbow Ends	Mrs Cliff Mills	Cambridge	22.12.49/22.1.49	27 mp		
Harvey	Mary Chase	Prince of Wales' Piccadilly	5.1.49/11.3.50 14.3.50/1.7.50	610		
Quaint Honour	Barbara Gregory	Wyndham's	9.1.49	1		
Sweethearts & Wives	G & M Hackforth Jones	Wyndham's	22.2.49/12.3.49	23		
The Foolish Gentlewoman	Margery Sharp	Duchess	23.3.49/30.1.49	180		
Love's A Funny Thing	Jane Hinton	Ambassadors	10.3.49/12.3.49	4		
Acacia Avenue	D & Mabel Constanduros	Theatre Royal E15	21.3.49/26.3.49	8		
A Woman's Place	Wendy Grimwood	Vaudeville	24.3.49/21.5.49	67		
The Years Between	Daphne Du Maurier	Theatre Royal E15	11.4.49/16.4.49	7		
Royal Highness	Margaret Webster	Lyric	13.4.49/14.5.49	35		
Rebecca	Daphne Du Maurier	Scala	13.6.49/19.6.49	8		
No Room At The Inn	Joan Temple	Theatre Royal E15	20.6.49/25.6.49	7		
Western Wind	Charlotte Frances	Theatre Royal E15 Piccadilly	4.7.49/9.7.49 9.9.49/1.10.49	27		
Treasure Hunt	M. J. Farrell & John Perry	Apollo St Martin's	14.9.49/10.6.50 12.6.50/22.7.40	358		

1949 - 1951				
John Keats Lived Here	Diana Raymond	Wynndham's	25.9.49	1
Love's A Funny Thing	Jane Hinton	Adelphi	30.10.49	1
Bonaventure	Charlotte Hastings	Vaudeville	6.12.49/15.4.50	149
Murder At the Vicarage (9adp)	Moie Charles & Barbara Toy	Playhouse	14.12.49/1.4.50	126
The Silver Curlew	Eleanor Farjeon	Arts	22.12.49/22.1.50	40
Tomorrow's Pride	Lydia Ragosin	Lyric	12.2.50	1
The Platinum Set	Reg Denham & Marry Orr	Saville	30.3.50/8.4.50	11
The Man With The Umbrella	Roma June	Duchess	5.4.50/29.4.50	29
Cry Liberty	Esther McCracken	Vaudeville	21.4.50/12.5.50	26
The Gates of Brass	Sheila Hodgson	Apollo	14.5.50	1
His Excellency	Dorothy & C Campbell	Princes Piccadilly	23.5.50/29.10.50 31.10.50/23.6.51	452
If This Be Error	Rachel Grieve	Lyric	24.5.50/24.6.60	37
Always Afternoon (adp)	Dido Milroy	Garrick	25.7.50/26.8.50	38
The Little Hut (adp from A. Roussin)	Nancy Mitford	Lyric	23.8.50/5.9.53	1261
Spring Song	Bella & Sam Spewack	Saville	4.9.50/30.9.50	31
Sing Cuckoo	Judy Campbell	Whitehall	10.12.50	1
Lace On Her Petticoat	Aimée Stuart	Ambassadors	14.12.50/26.5.51	188
The Silver Curlew	Eleanor Farjeon & Clifton Parkes	Fortune	22.12.50/20.1.51	50
Spring at Marino	Constance Cox	Arts	13.2.51/18.3.51	40
Temple Folly	Bridget Boland	Whitehall	25.2.51	1
The Seventh Veil	Muriel & Sydney Box	Princes	14.3.51/12.5.51	68
The Martin's Nest	Joan Morgan	Westminster	12.4.51/12.5.51	35
The Hollow	Agatha Christie	Fortune Ambassadors	7.6.51/6.10.51 8.10.51/2.5.52	376
Come Live With Me	Dorothy & C. Christie	Vaudeville	21.6.51/14.7.51	28
Poor Judas	Enid Bagnold	Arts	18.7.51/5.8.51	23
The Enchanted Garden	Madge Pemberton	Saville	14.10.51	1

1951 - 1953				
Women of Twilight	Sylvia Rayman	Vaudeville Victoria Palace	7.11.51/19.4.52 18.6.52/1.11.52	235
The Young Elizabeth	Jeanette Dowling & F. Letton	Cambridge	9.12.51	1
The Day's Mischief	Lesley Storm	Duke of York's	11.12.51/2.2.52	60
Where The Rainbow Ends	Mrs Clifford Mills	Winter Garden Princes Stoll	24.12.51/10.1.52 20.12.52/17.1.53 26.12.53/16.1.54	31 33 38
The Same Sky	Yvonne Mitchell	Lyric Duke of York's	31.1.52/1.3.52 18.3.52/26.10.52	80
To See Ourselves	E.M. Delafield	Arts	26.2.52/23.3.52	32
The Young Elizabeth	Jeanette Dowling & F. Letton	New Criterion	2.4.52/21.6.52 30.6.52/20.6.52	504
The Valley and The Peak	Joan Morgan	Whitehall	6.4.42	1
Monserrat	Lillian Hellman	Lyric	8.4.52/10.5.52	38
Lords of Creation	Edward Percy & Lilian Denham	Vaudeville	24.4.52/10.5.52	4
After My Fashion	Diana Morgan	Ambassadors	8.5.52/9.8.52	107
The Step Forward	Anne Trego	Strand	30.7.52/6.9.52	48
Two Loves I Have	Dorothy & Howard Bauer	Arts	24.9.52/19.10.52	31
Husbands Don't Count	Patricia Hollender	Winter Garden	1.10.52/29.11.52	62
Lord Arthurs Saville's Crime	Constance Cox	Court	7.10.52/25.10.52	21
Letter From Paris	Dodie Smith	Aldwych	10.10.52/1.11.52	27
Murder Mistaken	Janet Green	Ambassadors Vaudeville	4.11.52/22.11.52 24.11.52/28.3.53	156
The Blue Lamp	Ted Willis & Jan Read	Hippodrome	19.11.52/6.12.52	32
The Mousetrap	Agatha Christie	Ambassadors	2.11.52	15,500 +
Sweet peril	Mary Orr & Reg Denham	St James'	3.12.52/10.1.53	44
The Man	Mel Dinell	Her Majesty's St Martin's	30.12.52/7.2.53 16.2.53/28.3.53	95
The Gift	Mary Lumsden	St Martin's	22.1.53/14.2.53	28
Red-Headed Blond	Val Guest	Vaudeville	1.4.53/11.7.53	116

1953 - 1954						
Here We Are	Dorothy Parker	Adelphi	26.4.53	1		
They Owe It All To Us	John Hurst & Priscilla Malcolm	Adelphi	26.4.53	1		
The Uninvited Guest	Mary Hayley Bell	St James	27.5.53/13.6.53	21		
The Man With Expensive Tastes	Ed Percy & Lilian Denham	Vaudeville	23.7.53/15.8.53	21		
Carrington V C	D & C Campbell	West	28.7.53/29.8.53	205		
Age Of Consent	Charlotte Haldane	Princes	22.8.53/29.8.53	9		
The Secret Tent	Elizabeth Addyman	Strand	4.10.53	1		
Witness For the Prosecution	Agatha Christie	Winter Garden	28.10.53/29.1.55	458		
The Return	Bridget Boland	Duchess	9.11.53/16.1.54	29		
A Christmas Carol	Joan Littlewood	Theatre Royal E15	9.12.53/19.12.53 16.12.58/17.1.59	13 45		
A London Actress	Emma Litchfield	Arts	16.12.53/10.1.54	32		
Treasure Island	Joan Littlewood	Theatre Royal E15 Theatre Royal E15	26.12.53/16.1.54 26.12.56/12.1.57	36 31		
Alice Through Looking Glass	Felicity Douglas	Princes	9.2.54/20.3.54	37		
The Fifth Season	Sylvia Reagan	Cambridge	24.2.54/22.5.54	107		
I Capture The Castle	Dodie Smith	Aldwych	4.3.54/24.4.54	58		
The White Countess	J B Priestley & Jacquetta Hawkes	Saville	24.3.54/28.3.54	5		
The Prisoner	Bridget Boland	Globe	14.4.54/5.6.54	60		
The Sun Room	Romill Cavan	Arts	29.4.54/23.5.54	30		
Three Weeks Ahead	Laurie Wylie	Princes	2.5.54	1		
Its Never Too Late	Felicity Douglas	Westminster Strand	3.6.54/26.6.54 28.6.54/20.11.54	196		
All For Mary	H. Brooks & Kay Bannerman	Duke of York's	9.4.54/11.6.54	312		
The Cruel Daughters (Balzac: Le Pere Goriot)	Joan Littlewood	Theatre Royal E15	19.10.54/6.11.54	19		
The Immoralist	Ruth & Augustus Goetz	Arts	3.11.54/5.12.54	39		
The Chimes (adp)	Joan Littlewood	Theatre Royal E15	30.11.45/18.12.54	23		
Spider's Web	Agatha Christie	Savoy	14.12.54/3.1.56	774		

1954 - 1956						
The Prince & The Pauper	Joan Littlewood & E. MacColl	Theatre Royal E15	27.12.54/15.1.55	32		
The Yellow Curtains	Joyce Denny	Adelphi	9.1.55	1		
Its Different For Men	M.Pertwee & Brenda & Monica Danischesky	Duchess	11.4.55/14.5.55	40		
The Lovers	Marcelle Maurette	Winter Garden	6.5.55/21.5.55	19		
The Mimosa Man	Elizabeth Milne	Strand	9.5.55	1		
My Three Angels adp	Sam & Bella Spewack	Lyric	12.5.55/26.11.55	228		
The Lost Generation	Patricia Hollender	Garrick	1.6.55/2.7.55	32		
Home & Away	Heather McIntyre	Garrick	19.7.55/13.8.55	30		
The Bandit's Hat	Eve Morganti	Strand	9.10.55	1		
The Famous Five	Enid Blyton	Princes Hippodrome	23.12.55/21.1.56 20.12.56/19.1.57	26 36 mp		
Darling Child	W. S. Merwin & Dido Milroy	Arts	21.7.56/19.2.56	29		
Doctor Jo	Joan Morgan	Aldwych	15.2.56/17.3.56	37		
Tabitha	Arnold Ridley & Mary Cathcart	Duchess	8.3.56	43		
Tolka Row	Maura Laverty	Wyndham's	8.4.56	1		
The Chalk Garden	Enid Bagnold	Haymarket	11.4.56/9.11.57	658		
Day After Tomorrow	Anne Walters	Strand	6.5.65	1		
Gigi	Anita Loos	New	23.3.56/1.4.56	117		
Love Affair	Dulcie Gray	Lyric	1.6.56/16.6.56	19		
The Long Echo	Leslie Storm	St James'	1.8.56/1.9.56	37		
The Young & The Beautiful (adp)	Sally Benson	Arts	15.8.56/30.11.57	39		
Towards Zero	Agatha Christie	St James'	4.9.56/2.3.57	205		
The Children's Hour	Lillian Hellman	Arts	19.9.56/28.10.56	47		
Plaintiff In A Pretty Hat	Hugh & Margaret Williams	Duchess St Martin's	12.10.56/15.12.56 18.12.56/13.7.54	311		
Mr Parker - From Paris	Tanya Teronova	Whitehall	21.10.56	1		

1956 - 1958						
Cold Water Flat	Nancy Hamilton	Adelphi	28.10.56	1		
The Touch of Fear	Dorothy & C Christie	Aldwych	5.12.56/16.2.57	84		
Never Say Die	Diana Marr Johnson	Strand	13.1.57	1		
Light Falling	Teresa Deevy	Lyric	14.1.57/16.2.57	40		
The Member Of The Wedding	Carson McCullers	Court	5.2.57/9.3.57	38		
Dom Kobiet (The House of Women)	Zofia Nalkowska	Scala	7.6.57	1		
Time To Speak	Sylvia Rayman	Arts	11.6.57/23.6.57	16		
The Waiting Of Lester Abbs	Kathleen Sully	Court	30.6.57	1		
Roar Like a Dove	Lesley Storm	Phoenix	26.9.57/5.3.50	1007		
The Queen & The Welshman	Rosemary Anne Sisson	Lyric	7.11.57/23.11.59	20		
Paddle Your Own Canoe	Lucienne Hill	Criterion	4.12.59/29.3.58	132		
Be My Guest	Mary Jukes	Winter Garden	11.12.51/4.1.58	28		
The Happy Man	Hugh & Margaret Williams	Westminster	13.12.57/1.2.58	55		
Love From Margaret	Evelyn Ford	Court	16.2.58	1		
The Sport of My Mad Mother	Ann Jellicoe	Court	25.2.58/8.3.58	14		
Each His Own Wilderness	Doris Lessing	Court	23.3.58	1		
The Quiet Room	Jean Dalrymple	Wyndham's	30.3.58	1		
Verdict	Agatha Christie	Strand	22.5.58/21.6.58	35		
A Taste of Honey	Shelagh Delaney	Theatre Royal E15	27.5.59/28.6.58	27		
		Theatre Royal E15	21.1.59/7.2.59			
		Criterion	8.6.59/12.12.59	368		
		Wyndham's	10.2.59/6.6.59			
The Party	Jane Arden	New	28.5.58/22.11.58	205		
Speaking Of Murder	Audrey & William Roos	St Martin's	4.6.58/1.11.58	173		
Noon Has No Shadows	Patricia Joudry	Arts	18.7.58/17.8.58	37		
Dear Augustine	Alison MaclLeod	Court	28.7.58/2.8.58	8		

1958 -1959				
The Unexpected Guest	Agatha Christie	Duchess	12.8.58/30.1.60	612
The Grass Is Greener	Hugh & Margaret Williams	St Martin's	2.12.58/6.2.50	492
Eighty In The Shade	Clemence Dane	Globe	8.1.59/13.6.59	179
The Hidden River (adp from Storm Jameson)	Ruth & Augustus Goetz	Cambridge	13.4.59/25.4.59	16
Dark Halo	Sylvia Leigh	Arts	14.4.59/10.5.59	32
The Pleasure Of His Company	S. Taylor & Cornelia O. Skinner	Haymarket	24.4.59/9.4.60	403
Natural Causes	Vera Colebrook	Arts	12.5.59/17.5.59	8
Ulysses In Nigh town adp	Marjorie Barkenton adp	Arts	21.5.59/5.7.59	54
Beware Of Angels	Audrey E Lyndor & D. Leslie	Westminster	26.5.69/6.7.59	6
Detour After Dark adp	Lucia Victor	Fortune	8.6.59/13.6.59	8
A Raisin In the Sun	Lorraine Hansberry	Adelphi	4.8.59/10.10.59	78
Rollo	Felicity Douglas	Strand	27.10.59/30.1.60	
		Duchess	1.2.60/20.2.60	133
Wear A Green Willow	Casha Hunter	Strand	13.12.59	1

## APPENDIX 2.

TABLES OF COMPARATIVE PERCENTAGES; NUMBERS OF  
PRODUCTIONS AND LENGTHS OF PRODUCTION RUNS OF PLAYS  
BY MALE AND FEMALE AUTHORS.



YEAR	TOTAL	MALE	RUN 50+	Of which RUN 101+	FEMALE	RUN 50+	Of which RUN 101+
1918	66	54	20	12	12	3	2
1919	74	66	33	22	8	1	1
1920	133	112	36	22	21	5	5
1921	195	167	48	32	28	7	3
1922	176	143	42	17	33	9	6
1923	125	102	35	18	23	9	5
1924	178	148	30	15	30	12	7
1925	212	178	32	18	34	5	2
1926	195	157	43	25	38	9	4
1927	229	180	41	23	49	4	2
1928	257	217	43	24	40	6	1
1929	261	219	45	22	42	8	4
1930	258	230	37	23	28	8	5
1931	307	269	51	24	38	7	2
1932	277	247	32	22	30	4	2
1933	254	222	35	20	32	6	5
1934	219	189	33	22	30	11	6
1935	213	180	44	25	33	3	2
1936	181	144	40	21	37	13	10
1937	177	144	32	20	33	3	3
1938	146	117	26	15	29	8	6
1939	103	90	25	10	13	4	2
1940	51	44	8	1	7	4	2
1941	44	39	14	10	5	3	2
1942	44	37	17	10	7	5	5
1943	52	43	17	14	9	5	4
1944	60	51	18	15	9	6	6
1945	45	35	16	10	10	6	4
1946	84	68	22	17	16	8	4
1947	121	113	39	27	8	0	0
1948	122	106	31	17	16	5	2
1949	118	100	30	22	18	6	4
1950	84	70	26	18	14	3	3
1951	81	68	22	9	13	6	2
1952	92	74	22	15	18	7	4
1953	85	70	21	17	15	4	3
1954	84	69	29	22	15	6	4
1955	64	53	25	20	11	1	1
1956	81	62	28	19	19	5	4
1957	70	59	20	17	11	3	2
1958	100	87	27	14	13	4	4
1959	91	77	23	20	14	8	6

1. Numbers of productions of new plays, numbers of production runs of 51+, and 101+.

YEAR	TOTAL	% M	% F M/F	% M 51+	% F 51+	%M 101+	% F 101+
1918	66	81.8	18.2	37	25	22.2	12.5
1919	74	89.2	10.8	50	12.5	33.3	12.5
1920	133	84.2	15.8	32.1	23.9	19.6	23.9
1921	195	85.6	14.4	28.7	25	19.2	10.7
1922	176	81.2	18.8	29.4	27.3	11.9	18.2
1923	125	81.6	18.4	34.3	39.1	17.6	21.7
1924	178	83.2	16.8	20.3	40	10.1	23.3
1925	212	83.9	16.1	18	14.7	10.1	5.9
1926	195	80.5	19.5	27.4	23.7	15.9	10.5
1927	229	78.6	21.4	22.8	8.2	12.8	4.1
1928	257	84.4	15.6	19.8	15	11.1	2.5
1929	261	83.9	16.1	20.5	19	10	9.5
1930	258	89.1	10.9	16.1	28.6	10	17.9
1931	307	87.6	12.4	18.9	18.4	8.9	5.3
1932	277	89.2	10.8	9.2	13.3	8.9	6.6
1933	254	87.4	12.6	15.8	18.7	9	15.6
1934	219	86.3	13.7	17.5	36.7	11.6	20
1935	213	84.5	15.5	24.4	9.1	13.9	6.1
1936	181	79.6	20.4	27.8	35.1	14.6	27
1937	177	81.4	18.6	22.2	9.1	13.9	9.1
1938	146	80.1	19.9	22.2	27.6	12.8	20.7
1939	103	87.4	12.6	27.8	30.8	11.1	23.1
1940	51	86.3	13.7	18.2	57.1	2.3	14.3
1941	44	88.6	11.4	35.9	60	25.6	40
1942	44	84.1	15.9	45.9	71.4	27	71.4
1943	52	81.1	18.9	39.5	55.5	32	44.4
1944	60	85	15	35.3	66.6	29.4	66.6
1945	45	77.7	22.3	45.7	60	28.6	40
1946	84	80.9	19.1	32.3	50	25	25
1947	121	93.4	6.6	34.5	0	24	0
1948	122	83.5	16.5	29.2	31.2	16	12.5
1949	118	84.7	15.3	30	33.3	22	27.8
1950	84	83.3	16.7	37.1	21.4	25.7	21.4
1951	81	84	16	32.3	46.1	13.2	15.4
1952	92	80.4	19.6	29.7	38.9	20.3	22.2
1953	85	82.4	17.6	30	26.7	24.3	20
1954	84	82.1	17.9	42	40	31.9	26.7
1955	64	82.8	17.2	47.2	9.1	37.8	9.1
1956	81	76.5	23.5	45.2	26.3	30.6	21
1957	70	84.3	15.7	33.9	27.3	28.8	18.2
1958	100	87	13	31	30.8	16.1	30.8
1959	91	84.6	15.4	29.8	57.1	25.9	35.7

2. Percentages of total productions, and percentage totals of production runs.

<b>YEAR</b>	<b>Average total of plays per year</b>	<b>Average % by MALE per year</b>	<b>Average % by FEMALE or M/F team. per year</b>	<b>% M 51+ perfs. per year</b>	<b>% F 51+ perfs. per year</b>	<b>% M 101+ perfs. per year</b>	<b>% F 101+ perfs. per year</b>
1918-1923	128.2	83.7	16.1	35.25	25.5	20.6	16.6
1924-1929	222	81.4	17.6	21.5	20.1	11.6	9.75
1930-1935	254.6	87.4	12.6	16.9	20.8	10.4	11.9
1936-1941	117	83.9	16.1	25.6	36.6	13.4	22.4
1942-1947	67.6	83.7	16.3	38.9	50.6	27.7	41.2
1948-1953	97	83.05	16.95	31.4	32.9	20.25	19.9
1954-1959	81.6	82.9	17.1	38.2	31.8	28.5	23.6
<b>Averages PER YEAR OVER 42 YEARS</b>	138.3	86.2	13.8	29.7	31.2	18.9	20.8

Table 1. As shown in Concluding Chapter.

## APPENDIX 3.

The following is a list of published plays by authors whose work is mentioned in the thesis. I have listed the full length plays published, and noted any authors with a number of one-Act plays also published but not listed here.

### ELIZABETH BAKER

Chains	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1911.
Miss Tasse (1a)	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1913.
The Price of Thomas Scott	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1913.
Umbrellas	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1913.
Miss Robinson	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1920.
Partnership	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1921.
Edith, (1a)	Sidgwick and Jackson, London, 1927.
One of the Spicers (1a)	Gowans and Gray, London, 1933.

### ENID BAGNOLD

National Velvet	Embassy Successes, London, 1946.
Two Plays (Lottie Dundass, Poor Judas)	Heinemann, London, 1951.
The Chalk Garden	Samuel French, 1956, New York. (London, 1958)
Four Plays (The Chalk Garden, The Last Joke, The Chinese Prime Minister, Call Me Jacky)	Heinemann, London, 1970.

### MARY HAYLEY BELL

Men In Shadow,	French's Acting Edition, London, 1943.
Duet for Two Hands	French's Acting Edition, London, 1947.

### BRIDGET BOLAND

The Cockpit	Paul Elek, London & New York, 1949.
The Prisoner	Paul Elek, London & New York, 1954.
The Return	Samuel French, London, 1954.
Temple Folly	Evans Brothers, London, 1958.

### CLARE BOOTHE

The Women	Victor Gollancz, London, 1937.
Margin For Error,	Hamish Hamilton, London, 1940.

### MURIEL BOX

Angels of War	Lovat Dickson & Thompson Ltd, London, 1935.
In a Glass Darkly (1a) WITH SYDNEY BOX	French's Acting Edition, London, 1938.

No Man's Island Garamond Press, London, 1934.  
 Anti Clockwise (1a) French's Acting Edition, London, 1936.  
 Home From Home French's Acting Edition, London, 1941.  
 (ALSO PUBLISHED MANY ONE ACT PLAYS AND SKETCHES , MANY WITH ALL WOMEN CASTS)

LENORE COFFEE

Family Portrait Samuel French, New York, 1940.

MABEL CONSTANDUROS

Aunt Maria's Wireless French's Acting Edition, London, 1927.  
 Devoted Elsie French's Acting Edition, London, 1927.  
 Three For Luck Chapman and Hall, London, 1935.

WITH DENIS CONSTANDUROS

Acacia Avenue French's Acting Edition, London, 1945.  
 A Pig in a Poke French's Acting Edition, London, 1951.  
 King of The Castle French's Acting Edition, London, 1953.  
 Elephants to Ride Upon, Evans Bros., London, 1956.  
 The Voice of The Charmer French's Acting Edition, London, 1955.

WITH MICHAEL HOGAN

Murder at The Buggineses French's Acting Edition, London, 1930.

WITH BARBARA TODD

The Frog Prince French's Juvenile Edition, London, 1956  
 The Sleeping Beauty French's Juvenile Edition, London, 1956

(ALSO PUBLISHED OVER 40 ONE ACT PLAYS, SKETCHES AND MONOLOGUES.)

CLEMENCE DANE (b. WINIFRED ASHTON)

A Bill of Divorcement Heinemann, London, 1921.  
 Will Shakespeare Heinemann, London, 1921.  
 The Way Things Happen Heinemann, London, 1924  
 Naboth's Vineyard Heinemann, London, 1925.  
 Granite Heinemann, London, 1926.  
 A Traveller Returns (1a) Samuel French, London, 1927.  
 Mariners Heinemann, London, 1927.  
 Wild Decembers Heinemann, London, 1932.  
 Moonlight is Silver Heinemann, London, 1934.  
 Call Home the Heart Heinemann, London, 1947.  
 England's Darling (1a) Heinemann, London, 1940.  
 Cousin Muriel Heinemann, London, 1940.  
 The Saviours Heinemann, London, 1942.  
 The Lion and The Unicorn Heinemann, London, 1943.  
 Eighty in The Shade Heinemann, London, 1959.  
 Scandal at Coventry ( in, The Collected Plays) Heinemann, London, 1961.

WITH RICHARD ADDINSAL

Come of Age Doubleday Doran & Co., New York, 1934.

GORDON DAVIOT ( b. ELIZABETH MACKINTOSH, pseud., JOSEPHINE TEY)

Richard of Bordeaux Victor Gollancz, London, 1933.  
 The Laughing Woman Victor Gollancz, London, 1934.  
 Queen of Scots Victor Gollancz, London, 1934.

- Leith Sands & other Short Plays Victor Gollancz, London, 1934.  
The Stars Bow Down Duckworth, London, 1939.
- E.M. DELAFIELD  
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