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Expecting Women: Constructing the Pregnant Woman in Twentieth Century United States and British Dramatic Representation.

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EXPECTING WOMEN: CONSTRUCTING THE PREGNANT WOMAN IN TWENTIETH CENTURY U.S. AND BRITISH DRAMATIC REPRESENTATION

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of Theatre

by

Amelia Lynn Cuomo
B.A. Mary Baldwin College, 1985
M.A. Wayne State University, 1991
May 1999

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I'm a riddle in nine syllables
An elephant, a ponderous house
A melon strolling on two tendrils
O red fruit, ivory fine timbers!
This loaf's big with its yeasty rising
Money's new minted in this fat purse.
I'm a means, a stage, a cow in calf.
I've eaten a bag of green apples,
Boarded the train there's no getting off.

Sylvia Plath's
"Metaphors"
DEDICATION

For Ginny, who taught me how to read a play,

throw a party, and survive adversity.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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ABSTRACT

Pregnancy and issues surrounding pregnancy such as paternity and legitimacy have been presented in Western Drama since its inception. Pregnancy in the modern era, however, has become a complex issue. Abortion, birth control, and the advent of new reproductive technologies (such as in vitro fertilization) alter understandings of reproduction. This study explores twentieth century British and U.S. dramatic representations of the pregnant woman and analyzes how pregnant women are constructed in drama.

The dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter One explores four plays by male playwrights: Harley Granville Barker's *Waste*, Eugene O'Neill's "Abortion," and Sidney Kingsley's *Men in White* and *Detective Story*. Each playwright dramatizes the fall of a male protagonist caused by his lover's abortion, and each narrative displaces the pregnant woman, eventually removing her from the text. Chapter Two examines Mary Burrell's "They That Sit in Darkness" and Marie Stopes's *Our Ostriches*. These two plays challenge early twentieth century ideologies which in essence made birth control unavailable to working class women. Chapter Three explores feminist reconceptions of birth in Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth*, Karen Malpede's *A Monster has Stolen the Sun* and Judy Chicago's *The Birth Project*. Chapter Four compares an agitprop drama by Myma Lamb, "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" and Jane Martin's *Keely and Du*. The change in tone between the two plays reflects a dramatic disintegration of support of Roe v. Wade. Chapter Five investigates Michelene Wandor's *Aid Thy Neighbor*, an episode of the television series *Star Trek* entitled "The Child," and a contemporary film, *Junior*. Each of these texts explores the new reproductive technologies' impact on our understanding of pregnancy.
The dissertation demonstrates that dramatic representations are part of a larger meta-narrative that constructs an ever changing understanding of pregnancy and birth. Particular emphasis is placed on how social ideologies concerning women and reproduction inform texts; therefore, narratives from newspapers and magazines are included to provide the necessary social and historical backdrop. This study also suggests that current constraints on women who are pregnant reflect a larger desire to regulate the behavior of all women.
INTRODUCTION

PREGNANCY: LOADING THE DRAMATIC GUN

According to Greek myth, Semele, a beautiful young woman, finds herself the object of Zeus' desire. Zeus, in human form, seduces Semele, and she becomes pregnant. The ever jealous Hera, Zeus' wife, tricks Semele into requesting Zeus to appear before her in his full glory. Semele's viewing of Zeus in his god-like grandeur causes her to burst into flames. Before she is completely consumed, Zeus takes the unborn Dionysus from her body and places it into his thigh; he later delivers the child forth from his thigh and leaves him in Semele's sister's care. Thus the god of theatre is born.

The image of the pregnant Semele, engulfed in flame serves as a central metaphor for this study. If you look closely at the myth, Semele serves as a minor character. Seduced by Zeus and manipulated by Hera, Semele unwittingly precipitates her own destruction. Despite her seemingly central position, Semele is not the focus of the narrative. It is Zeus and the yet to be born Dionysus who capture the spotlight. This myth of double birth is sung by the chorus in Euripides' Bacchae. It is one in a long line of birth narratives that appear in Western dramatic literature.

Birth constitutes a cornerstone in dramatic representation, and playwrights throughout Western theatre history have included pregnancy both as a plot device and as a theme. Pregnancy in drama escalates conflict and increases tension; it is the loading of the dramatic gun. Barbara Wilt in Abortion, Choice, and Contemporary Fiction suggests, "pregnancy, of course, is the ultimate surprise, the roof lifting just as you've finally got the doors and windows closed" (Wilt 5). In addition to adding a twist to the plot, pregnancy always
connotes issues of paternity and legitimacy. These issues constitute a recurring theme and ever present concern in Western drama.

With the beginning of the modern era there is a shift in how birth is presented and explored. Pregnancy becomes an increasingly complex phenomenon with the advent of effective birth control and the availability of abortion, whether it be legal, or illegal.¹ Even wanted pregnancies are perceived in a new light once issues of choice enter the picture. At the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth, traditional understandings of gender roles, the roles of women, the definition of motherhood, and child-rearing all have come into question. Pregnancy can be described as the most defining of female activities.² Therefore, a study of how the pregnant woman is viewed reveals deep-seated beliefs about women in general. The complex issues associated with pregnancy, such as who controls the body of the pregnant woman and her off-spring, have led to a debate between women who wish to claim their autonomy and men who wish to control their behavior. Therefore, the inclusion of pregnancy in dramatic texts and the staging of pregnancy in the theatre reveal anxieties associated with reproduction in the modern era.

This study explores selected plays written in English during the twentieth century that feature pregnancy, birth control, and abortion and analyzes selected dramatic works that focus upon human reproduction. Included is a discussion of historical and contemporary arguments that are currently debated concerning reproductive politics. The essays included

¹Birth control becomes a more practical practice with the invention of vulcanized rubber in 1839 which vastly improves the condom and allows for the development of a rubber pessary, a device worn in the vagina to prevent conception.

²The American Heritage College dictionary defines female as "...the sex that produces ova or bears young."
are designed to answer specific questions relating to birth control, abortion, and the image of
the pregnant woman. Therefore, this dissertation does not attempt to include all plays and
contemporary artistic expressions that address reproductive issues, nor is it intended to be a
complete study of all British and U.S. plays in the twentieth century that consider
reproductive themes. This dissertation is primarily a literary analysis of selected twentieth
century texts that focus upon reproduction, and it investigates what each discourse reveals
about the time and place in which it is written.

The fundamental questions driving this study are: How do historical events
surrounding the play inform the text? What does the play reveal about the attitudes of the
playwright? How are contemporary ideas concerning reproduction reflected in the
composition? How does the text reveal beliefs regarding the identity of the pregnant
woman? Does the text reflect current political thought regarding abortion or birth control?
How is the identity of the pregnant woman constructed? What power issues are reflected in
this construction?

Although numerous studies investigate twentieth century drama, and several works
explore feminist theatre, there has not been an extensive analysis of dramatic texts in terms
of reproductive politics and the constructed identity of the pregnant woman. This
dissertation will illuminate how the image of the pregnant woman has been constructed on
the stage, on the screen, and in art galleries.

Several modern playwrights have seriously examined birth control, pregnancy, and
abortion in their writing. This study investigates eleven plays which focus on reproductive
issues: Harley Granville Barker's *Waste* (1907), Eugene O'Neill's "Abortion" (1914), Mary
Burrill's "They That Sit in Darkness" (1919), Marie Stopes's *Our Ostriches* (1923), Sidney

In addition to dramatic texts, contemporary representations of birth in film, television and fine art are included. Theatrical studies have increasingly embraced a wider variety of artistic expressions. Recent works by theatre scholars have explored dramatic impulses within performance art, fine art, film and television. The dramatic component of installations and exhibitions has been studied in journals such as *The Drama Review*.

Installations and exhibitions in art galleries often are composed of multiple parts arranged in a specific order to convey a message. Numerous exhibitions have a dramatic structure in that they are organized with a definite beginning, middle and end. Therefore theorists have challenged the assumption that fine art is static and have reconsidered art works in terms of their performative nature. For example in "Sex and Death on Display: Women, Reproduction and Fetuses at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry," published in *The Drama Review*, 1993, Catherine Cole analyzed a museum exhibition entitled "Prenatal Development." She asserted that this "spectacle of the human body quietly dramatizes the gestating life" (43). Cole concluded that the arrangement of this display and its location in the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry asserted that birth is women's industry. Cole and other theatre scholars have re-examined the definition of theatre and performance and have come up with a broader interpretation of performance that crosses over earlier divisions. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a re-evaluation of traditional standards of performance. It also provides an opportunity to explore diverse art forms. Also

The inclusion of dramatic representation that is not readily classified as theatre also allows for the exploration of the role of technology in our understanding of pregnancy. The relationship between fetal imaging (which relies on ultrasound) and fetal personhood, and the erasure of the pregnant woman is perhaps best explored in camera reliant media such as film and television as these media can easily duplicate medical imaging technology. Films and television shows will often display an ultra-sound on screen. We can better understand cultural attitudes toward the fetal image by analyzing the camera's projection of the fetus.

Plays are historically grounded in the reproductive politics of their time. Thus social and political history are investigated to provide essential background information to understand and illuminate the text. Contemporary theories regarding reproduction and gender such as those posited by Catherine Cole, Barbara Duden, Peggy Phelan, and Rosalind Petchesky are also employed as tools in the analysis of the drama.

Theatre theorist Jill Dolan in "In Defense of the Discourse" argues theatre scholars need to analyze dramatic discourse not as a "mimetic function for the culture" but as producers of cultural meaning (Dolan 88). What she means by this is that the cultural production of performance is not confined to conventional Aristotelian mimesis: that theatre merely copies and reflects life. Instead Dolan maintains that while dramatic discourses do indeed produce meaning, they also reflect current social trends and influences. This dissertation works to illuminate both the reflections of then current ideologies in addition to the meanings produced.
The dissertation is divided into an introduction and five chapters which are organized by a series of questions concerning the image of the pregnant woman. The first chapter, which includes *Waste*, "Abortion," *Men in White* and *Detective Story*, examines how the pregnant woman is eclipsed within the narrative by her male counterpart. In other words, although the plot revolves around an unwanted pregnancy, the central character is not the pregnant woman, but the men who must deal with her. Additional queries include: Why did the authors choose to focus on the downfall of the male protagonist while the seemingly integral (not to mention dramatic) decision was the woman's? Is the male protagonist valorized? Is the text sympathetic or condemnatory of the woman having the abortion? Does the treatment of the pregnant woman in the text reflect current anxieties over abortion? How is the structure of the narrative focused by this absented woman?

The second chapter evaluates the rhetorical strategies used by birth control advocates and their employment of agitprop drama to advance their cause. Mary Burrill's "They That Sit in Darkness" realistically depicts a poor black family's plight caused by consequences of uncontrolled reproduction. Her appeal is sentimental in tone and melodramatic in structure. She works to evoke sympathy for particular characters experiencing hardship in the hopes this will bring about political change. Marie Stopes's *Our Ostriches* is also realistic in presentation. Unlike Burrill, however, she does not concentrate on the poor afflicted by lack of birth control, but focuses on a young idealistic woman who would save all of England from overpopulation.

Chapter Three explores feminist texts that seek to create a new metaphor for birth. Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth* deconstructs the myth of the perfect American family and examines how social conventions prescribe behaviors for mothers and question the abilities
and worth of women who remain childless. *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* by Karen Malpede and Judy Chicago's Birth Project reject the male medical model of childbirth and reframe reproduction as a woman-centered activity.

"But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" and *Keely and Du* constitute the fourth chapter of this study. Both plays tightly focus upon the topic of abortion; however, their radically different points of view reflect the more ambiguous approach to reproductive rights that has come to characterize the 1990s. Myrna Lamb's "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" employs a process of defamiliarization by creating a scenario in which a man becomes pregnant and begs a woman doctor for an abortion. Lamb as a political reformer presents an extreme look at abortion and women's rights. Martin's *Keely and Du* does not emphasize women's right to choose but instead suggests a public erosion of pro-choice feminist sympathies.

The fifth chapter explores how media informs our perceptions of thematic content, specifically in relationship to the pregnant woman's image. Thus a variety of media are considered: theatre, television, and film. The texts are examined through theories that specifically address their form as well as their content. Film theory, especially the work of Laura Mulvey, provides a framework in which the visual images presented in *Junior* and *Star Trek* can be understood. Also investigated in Chapter Five are the ethical and political controversies regarding new reproductive technologies.

While this dissertation relies on the scholarship of several theorists and historians, certain texts were so insightful and pertinent that they made this study possible. Angus McLaren's acute historical assessment in *Birth Control in Nineteenth-Century England* laid the foundation for an examination of *Waste*. Leslie Reagan's *When Abortion Was a Crime* analyzes...
the changing outlook toward abortion in the U.S. and postulates that America's viewpoint concerning abortion was constructed by media, medicine, and law enforcement agencies. Her work informed my understanding of "Abortion," *Men in White* and *Detective Story*. A theoretical assessment of medicine's role in mandating the manner in which childbirth occurs is the subject of feminist scholar Emily Martin's *Woman in the Body*. Terry Kapsalis's *Public Privates* investigates the development of gynecology and its influence on our understanding of women and their bodies. These two women's work provide the theoretical underpinnings for Chapter Three. Sociologist Dallas Blanchard's study of abortion protests makes a materialist feminist analysis of *Keely and Du* possible. Rosalind Petchesky furnishes a feminist perspective on abortion that is historically grounded. Barbara Duden's book *Disembodying Women* and Peggy Phelan's essay "White Men and Pregnancy" proved invaluable in understanding the problems of fetal imaging as well as the personification of the fetus thus illuminating my understanding of "The Child" and *Junior*.

Each chapter also provides a series of "real life" incidents to serve as a historical backdrop in relation to reproductive issues. This framework allows for an extended comparison of issues present in the play and the political implications present at the time the work was written. The texts themselves are analyzed in terms of their plot, narrative structure, characters, and themes. As the requirements of each dramatic text are different, certain chapters rely heavily on historical events, while the analysis of more contemporary plays requires a theoretical outlook.

How we understand pregnancy and birth ultimately reflects how we, as a society, understand women and their roles. As the needs of the society shift, so does our understanding of reproduction. Early twentieth-century bans on contraceptives reflected a
social ideology, that for diverse reasons, rejected tampering with what was perceived as the natural order of things. Some of the beliefs which impeded women's access to birth control included a glorification of motherhood, the belief in the Darwinian theory of natural selection, and an elitist sensibility that feared a decrease in the labor force would be detrimental to the lifestyle to the rich.

In addition to social ideology concerning reproductive freedoms, in the early part of the twentieth century there seemed to be a nationalist reason to deter birth control based on the simple idea that there is strength in numbers. Conversely, the contemporary respectability of birth control and support of Planned Parenthood also reflect a national desire to limit population, as technology, not labor is considered the national resource. Thus a crucial factor in determining women's ability to control reproduction is the state's desire for a larger or smaller population.

If pregnancy is defined as the most female of all activities then attitudes toward pregnant women reveal deep-seated views about women in general. These attitudes shift according to time, place, race, class and socio-economic condition. By studying the image of the pregnant woman, cultural perspectives regarding women's status are revealed.

Reproductive issues are as hotly disputed now as in the beginning of the century, and dramatic representation reflects a current obsession with the topic. Advances in technology have made the issues more complex, and this complexity is reflected in dramatic and filmic representation. Many plays reveal current ideologies regarding abortion and birth control while some plays create utopic visions of reproduction. The exploration of dramatic discourse which centers on reproductive issues enlightens our understanding and influences our perception of birth control, pregnancy, and abortion. Modern dramatic literature and
contemporary visual representations reflect a cultural dilemma surrounding biological reproduction, that conflicting ideologies and religious points of view concerning reproduction contribute to a cultural anxiety over pregnancy, and that society constructs contrasting images which confuse the identity of the pregnant woman. By either centering her presence or that of the fetus within the discourse, films and theatrical representations foreground or eclipse her presence.
CHAPTER ONE:

FALLEN MEN, FATAL WOMEN

In Aeschylus' *The Eumenides*, the final play of the *Oresteia*, young Orestes appeals to Apollo to save him from the Furies who have been unrelentingly tormenting him. The Furies persecute Orestes because he has avenged his father's death by murdering his mother. The play concludes with a trial in which Apollo defends Orestes' actions, claiming it was impossible for the young man to have committed matricide because Clytemnestra was not his mother. Apollo employs an Aristotelian understanding of conception that suggests the women are vessels who carry the father's seed and do not contribute to reproduction except as bearers of the male progeny. Fortunately for Orestes, Apollo wins his case. His argument, however, negates the role of mothers and reaffirms a patrilineal understanding of family.

Reproductive issues appear throughout the Western tradition. Greek drama contains some of the oldest references to questions of paternity and maternity. In addition to the *Oresteia*, there is Oedipus's secret adoption and Medea's destruction of her children to avenge their father. Questions about the nature of birth and the women's role as producer of children also appear in the Middle Ages. Philosophical questions concerning pregnancy and women's role in society can be found in Hildegard of Bingen's liturgical drama the *Ordo Virtutum* or *Play of Virtues*. Within the text the devil torments the female Virtues by attacking their virginity and suggesting it was sinful for them to decline to become mothers. Shakespeare also employs pregnancy as a plot device. Macbeth's fate hinges on the witches' prophecy regarding a man not born of woman. Unfortunately for Macbeth, he did not consider the possibilities of a cesarean section.
Themes of paternity, adoption, \textit{uxus du sang} and women's duty to children and husband permeate Western drama, but abortion as a social issue does not enter the literature until the late 19th century. German playwright Frank Wedekind explored the issue in \textit{Spring's Awakening} (1891). \textit{Spring's Awakening} addresses adolescent sexuality, and within the text a young girl becomes pregnant and dies from an abortifacient. The play's candid approach to subjects that were considered shocking delayed the play's debut until 1906. The inclusion of abortion in the text was ahead of its time.

One of the first English language plays that clearly makes reference to abortion is Elizabeth Robins' \textit{Votes for Women}. \textit{Votes for Women} is not about abortion. Essentially, it is a suffrage play designed to create understanding and sympathy for women working for the right to vote. Performed at The Royal Court Theatre in 1905, the play preached to the converted. The plot centers around Veda Levering, an attractive woman of thirty-two who battles for women's suffrage. Ten years before the play begins, Levering had an affair with a young man whose political aspirations and domineering father prevented their marriage even though Levering was pregnant with his child. The young man Geoffrey Stoner convinced Levering to have an abortion. Levering, grieved by the loss, leaves Stoner and England. Stoner, now a conservative member of parliament, is unexpectedly reunited with his former lover, Levering, at a suffrage rally. Stoner attends the rally to humor his fiancée, who has been inspired by Levering to support the cause. By the end of the play, Levering converts Stoner, who has come to believe that he will be politically aided by women's votes. Women, Stoner believes, are after all much more conservative than men, and it is for this reason that Stoner agrees to champion women's suffrage.
Votes for Women! is unique not only in that it addresses touchy social issues such as abortion but also because it focuses on a strong female protagonist who is not destroyed by the indiscretions of her past. In her book A Stage of Their Own, Shelia Stowell comments that Levering's abortion and the loss she felt afterward "had the effect of realigning her emotional loyalties..." (33). Although Veda Levering grieves over her past decisions, the result is a woman who has successfully devoted her life to the betterment of society in general. Levering is self-possessed, competent and bright. Robins valorizes this formerly pregnant woman and does not punish the character for her past. Instead she presents Levering's past pregnancy and abortion as a liminal experience. Once she passed through the ordeal, the character is placed in an elevated position. Not only does she survive her trial by fire, she comes out ahead.¹

Votes for Women! provides a stark contrast to the plays discussed in this chapter, which analyzes the work of three playwrights, Harley Granville Barker, Eugene O'Neill, and Sidney Kingsley. Each author uses abortion as a plot device. Unlike Elizabeth Robins however, the focus is not upon the woman and her choice but on a male protagonist who suffers as a result of a woman's abortion. The plays presented in this chapter absent the pregnant woman and focus on her male counterpart. Much like Aeschylus, who negated the role of the mother in The Eumenides, these three playwrights remove the pregnant women out of the play's focus and concentrate on the male heroes. The chapter's purpose is to reveal how male playwrights perceive women's decisions to

¹Shelia Stowell's A Stage of Their Own: Feminist Playwrights of the Suffrage Era provides an in-depth look at Robins's work. Stowell also includes a useful comparison of Robins's Votes for Women! and Harley Granville Barker's Waste.
control their own biology as threats to their status. Within each of the texts, the playwright constructs female characters who essentially operate on the periphery of the story. The issue of abortion and its effect on men are foregrounded, and the pregnant women and their needs are dismissed.

Because this chapter focuses upon literature and events that occurred before 1950, it is necessary to provide an historical backdrop for the texts. Two studies have proven indispensable to this chapter. Historian Angus McLauren's work on birth control in 19th-century England and specifically his study of abortion at the turn of the century provide vital information for understanding the dilemma facing the characters within the text. Historian Judith Reagan's study of abortion in urban America contributes invaluable information regarding not only the dangers of this "illegal operation" but also an insightful look at how the American public came to understand abortion and how that understanding changed over time.

Of the plays examined here, one is British and three are American. As Waste is set in Great Britain and "Abortion," Men in White and Detective Story are set in the United States, a description of their political situations is necessary in order to understand the dramas. Abortion in 1900 in both countries was illegal. Lord Ellenborough's Act of 1803 is described as "the first statutory prohibition of abortion" (Keown 3). The Comstock Law of 1873 prohibited abortion in the U.S. Abortion remained illegal, not because the operation was difficult to perform (by 1905 abortion was a relatively safe operation if performed by a competent practitioner) but because it was considered immoral on both sides of the Atlantic (McLaren 240).
Abortion in Edwardian society, in addition to being illegal, was not considered a topic for polite society. Harley Granville Barker's depiction of abortion in Waste is rather ambiguous and therefore it is difficult to determine his viewpoint on the ethical issues surrounding "the illegal operation" from his play. In her article "The New Women in the New Drama," Jan McDonald suggests that there is a tension between women's right to choose or reject motherhood, and the glorification of motherhood so prevalent in Edwardian England (40). The tension in the play results from the Edwardian belief that motherhood is a woman's primary duty. McDonald specifically cites Waste as an example of this tension and notes that Amy O'Connell, the pregnant woman in the play, may be presented sympathetically, but ultimately, "however moving her plight may be, her life-denying decision is condemned" (40). The female protagonist is condemned by the men in the play because she chooses to escape motherhood. The consequence for such an action is death.

American dramatic representations of abortion center not only on the illegality of the procedure but on the classification of abortion as "vice." Abortion's illegal status in the United States was defined by the Comstock Law. The Comstock Law forbade the printing, mailing or distribution by any means "...obscene, lewd, or lascivious book, pamphlet, picture, paper, print, or other publication of an indecent character, or any article or thing designed or intended for the prevention of conception or procuring of abortion..." (Statutes at Large vol. 27, 1873/1963). This legislation outlawed both abortion and birth control and aligned both with pornography. This alignment would subsequently insist that both birth control and abortion were not only illegal but also morally degenerate. Thus abortion and birth control came under the jurisdiction of the
vice squad and those associated with reproductive "crimes" were considered depraved. American dramatic literature reflected the ideology regarding abortion passed down through the Comstock Law.

In a short and temporarily "lost" play, Eugene O'Neill tackled the subject of abortion. Written in 1914, "Abortion" is the earliest known American play that uses abortion as a plot device. Although it was not produced at the time it was written, this play reflects historical attitudes towards sexuality and abortion at the turn of the century. O'Neill's choice to remove the pregnant woman from the narrative is directly related to the public silencing of women's voices on the topic of abortion. This silencing of women's voices in favor of their male counterparts can be found in journalistic narratives as well. By comparing O'Neill's abortion narrative with newspaper articles on the topic one can begin to understand the political and social ideology regarding reproduction in his day.

The final two plays included in this chapter were both written by Pulitzer Prize winning playwright Sidney Kingsley. *Men in White* and *Detective Story* reflect the dramatic shift in American society's understanding of abortion before and after the second world war. *Men in White*, written in 1933, reflects a more sympathetic view of abortion. Unlike the female characters in *Waste* or "Abortion" the pregnant women in both Kingsley's dramas remain uncensured, and both female characters are entirely sympathetic. The focus of Kingsley's dramas, however, remains upon the male protagonist.

---

2O'Neill's *Lost Plays* were presented in New York at the Key Theatre on October 27, 1959. This production was the New York debut of the plays (and presumably their first production). The play's critical reception was poor (*The New York Times Theatre Reviews*, 1952-1959, v. 6).
Kingsley also explores two male-dominated social institutions, medicine and law. Kingsley sets *Men in White* in a hospital as the title implies. His play subsequently suggests a more sympathetic view of abortion on the part of the medical community of the 1930s. By contrast, *Detective Story* reveals a post-World War II tightening of the law regarding abortion and a prosecution of women unequaled historically in relation to abortion.

As all of the plays included in this section were written in a time quite unlike our own, the focus of this chapter is historical. The political and social situations which surrounded the author at the time of writing are discussed. Therefore, each play is framed by comparing it to other reports of abortion written in the same era. Magazine articles, newspaper series and court reports reveal the historical circumstances and ideologies which surrounded abortion at the time in which the plays were written. By comparing the two genres of journalism and playscripts, one realizes that the historical "facts" create their own dramatic fiction and the fictional texts reveal certain historical facts. These abortion stories, regardless of their classification as fact or fiction, construct cultural attitudes toward women and birth. What becomes apparent is that the representations of pregnant women and abortions are manufactured to suit contemporary socio-political beliefs regarding this then-illegal operation.

In 1888, a Chicago doctor E.W. Edwards was approached by a young couple seeking an abortion. Edwards carefully explained to the woman, "I cannot take your case... but... I have given your friend the address of a physician I can recommend for that." The couple then proceeded to Chicago's Opera district where they met Dr. John B. Chaffe; he agreed to perform the operation. Chaffe assured them that the procedure was safe and that the young woman's life would not be in danger. The man asked the doctor...
whether "cases of this kind" were common. Chaffe assured him that "thousands are
doing it all the time" (Reagan 46). This couple's case, however, would prove quite
atypical.

As it turned out, the young woman was not pregnant. She and her partner were
journalists for the Chicago Times, and they disclosed the encounter in an 1888 newspaper
notes that this series constitutes the "earliest known in-depth study of illegal abortion"
(47). Reagan also suggests that in the journalistic accounts the press was constructing an
abortion narrative of its own. This narrative intimated that abortions were easily obtained
and that doctors, even if they did not perform abortions, would aid "a woman in trouble"
by helping her locate an abortionist. Finally, the expose insisted that there was a
significant difference between "reputable doctors and abortionists" (Reagan 80-90).

Harley Granville Barker's Waste

In mid-December 1898, a scandalous affair captured the attention of Londoners.
The Chrimes brothers, Richard, Leonard and Edward, were tried for blackmail.
Marketing some pills as "The Lady Montrose Miraculous Female Tabules," the brothers
ran advertisements that led customers to believe they were purchasing an abortifacient.
The pills were, in fact, physically harmless but ineffective. The Chrimes kept meticulous
records of all the women who had purchased the placebos and then subsequently
threatened to expose their clients to the police unless they received from each a payment
of two pounds and two shillings. The brothers would have profited eight-hundred and
nineteen pounds from their venture if an irate husband who had opened his wife's mail
had not reported the criminals to the police (McLaren 232-240).
In his summation, Justice Hawkins reviewed the evidence and spoke to the gravity of the crime. He reiterated that in such cases the victim's guilt or innocence was immaterial. Hawkins condemned the Chrimes brothers not only for the heinous nature of this particular crime, but also for preying on those desperate souls who are outside the law. The criminal nature of abortion was not mentioned during the trial. Nor were the women who purchased Lady Montrose's Tabules incriminated in the proceedings. The court specifically tried the Chrimes brothers. Indeed, the women who had attempted to procure abortions were referred to sympathetically but anonymously.

The reasons for this sympathetic view towards these women were three-fold. First, it was impossible to prove that if the women were pregnant; therefore, taking the pills technically could not be a criminal act. Second, the pills were ineffective and could not produce a miscarriage even if the women were pregnant. Third and, most significantly, by portraying the women as helpless victims, Judge Hawkins magnified the Chrimes brothers' guilt.

To accentuate the malice of the defendants' actions and to prove they were preying on vulnerable women, Judge Hawkins read this letter:

October 11, 1898

Dear Sir, — I am very sorry I have done wrong. I did not know I had done wrong to myself or to any one else, and as regards to trying to prevent myself from being confined. I do not know that ever I have done so, for the child that you are alluding to is a big, fine girl, as healthy as any child could be, and is eight months old: and I do not recall that doing away with the babe, or trying to do so. But if I have done wrong I ask you to forgive me, as I did not know I was doing wrong. I will promise that I will never do wrong anymore, for Christ's sake. Amen. (Times, Wednesday, December 21, 1898 column 3 & 4).

Judge Hawkins believed that this letter and others like it were tangible evidence that the women who were blackmailed believed the threat to be real. He subsequently sentenced
Edward and Richard Chrimes to twelve years of penal servitude. Leonard Chrimes because of his relative youth, received a lighter sentence.

From one point of view the Chrimes brothers’ trial is simply another blackmail trial to be found in the court records. From another, it is one of the first widely publicized trials depicting women trying to procure abortions. A significant aspect of the trial proceedings is that, despite the criminal nature of abortion, the judge, as well as the press, cast these women in a sympathetic light.

In Edwardian England, abortion only came to the attention of the public when something went wrong — usually the death of the once-pregnant women from peritonitis. Appearing in the newspaper the same week as the Chrimes’ trial was the case of Miss Mary Ann Birmingham. On December 15, the Times reported that Jane White, a 67 year old nurse, was arrested for performing "the illegal operation" on Miss Binningham. The abortion caused the woman's death. Jane White was charged with performing "the illegal operation" and held without bond (Times, December 15, 1898).

The Chrimes Affair and the arrest of Jane White exemplify turn-of-the-century public accounts of abortion. These accounts precipitated the debates over reproductive issues which permeate the modern era. Controversy over abortion and issues of choice quickly found its way onto the stage. In 1907, nine years after the Chrimes Affair, Harley Granville Barker wrote Waste, one of the first English language plays to employ abortion as a plot device. This early twentieth-century dramatic text reveals Edwardian attitudes

3Elizabeth Robins's Votes for Women! uses abortion as one of the motivating factor for her protagonist’s feminism and devotion to the suffragist cause. The play was produced in the 1907 Royal Court season under the Harley Granville Barker and John Vedrenne management. Votes for Women! preceded Waste by seven months.
towards women, pregnancy and abortion, for the playwright's decision to focus upon the male protagonist constructs a negative image of the pregnant woman.

Throughout his career as a director and playwright Harley Granville Barker expressed a sympathetic view toward women's struggle to expand their limited role in Edwardian society. His previous plays such as *The Marrying of Ann Leete* and his productions of such plays as Elizabeth Robins's *Votes for Women!* at the Royal Court demonstrate his commitment to women's suffrage and autonomy. *Waste* also displays his interest in women's issues. The female characters are intelligent, energetic and forced into the periphery by existing social structures. Barker realizes that these women are caught in a system that relegates them to "the power behind the throne" (Salmon 145).

The politics of the Edwardian era as well as many of the society's growing pains are imbedded in the plot of *Waste*. The play proved particularly thorough in its attack on contemporary political, religious and sexual issues; the play was banned because of its controversial nature.  

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4 When the Office of the Lord Chamberlain banned *Waste*, it could not be performed as part of the Royal Court's regular season. The original script was performed for a private audience on November 24 and 26, 1907. The 1907 script was never performed publicly. Harley Granville Barker published a rewrite of the play in 1927. This version of *Waste* was performed in 1936 and was directed by Michael MacOwan and Barker (Kennedy 160).

The censor, George Redford, was unclear as to the specific reasons that he banned the 1907 *Waste*. Theatre historians debate the exact cause, but they postulate that the play could have been banned for its adulterous affair, or its depiction of political proceedings of Parliament (examined in II ii), or its inclusion of the "illegal operation" (abortion). Dennis Kennedy in his book *Granville Barker and the Dream of the Theatre* suggested that it was the combination of sex and politics that proved to be the antecedent to the ban (85). However, it is quite plausible that the unambiguous inclusion of abortion within the plot is the fundamental offense.
Waste focuses on a prominent politician Henry Trebell and his affair with a married woman Amy O'Connell. Trebell, an unemotional man, is carried away by an atypical flare of physical passion. His energies and intellect have been recently spent upon drafting the Disestablishment Bill. If ratified by Parliament, this bill would allow a great deal of money and manpower, previously held by the Church, to be used for education. Trebell's liaison with Amy O'Connell results in an unwanted pregnancy. He wishes to arrange for the child's welfare; Amy desperately wants his help in locating a doctor who will perform an abortion. Trebell refuses; Amy finds an abortionist and subsequently dies from peritonitis. Her death prohibits Trebell's acceptance into the cabinet. It is not so much that Trebell's actions are censurable but that news of his role in Amy O'Connell's death may cause a scandal within Parliament. Without Trebell's appointment, the bill is projected to fail. Trebell commits suicide, feeling his career, for which he lives, is now over.

Waste begins as the curtain rises on a house party designed to mix political business with pleasure. The gathering continues late into the night, and the conversation shifts from music to education and finally, if not inevitably, to politics. This scene revolves around the women behind the men in power. They are comfortable in each other's company. Their dialogue moves swiftly, and a certain vivaciousness permeates the atmosphere. Almost immediately, their conversation reveals that many of these women are knowledgeable about the machinations of the political system. It is apparent that in a different time several of these women could effectively hold Parliamentary positions of their own. Intelligent and acute, these women's intellects are severely under-
utilized. Their energies are devoted to their husbands' and brothers' success, and they are
drawn together by this common bond.

Within the text one woman stands apart from this close-knit circle of women. She is introduced by the following stage directions: "On a sofa . . . lounges Mrs. O'Connell; a charming woman, if by charming you understand a woman who converts every quality she possesses into a means of attraction, and has no use for any others" (163). An English woman who married an Irish man, Amy O'Connell lives apart from her spouse in order to escape the possibility of motherhood. Because of her estrangement from her husband, Amy O'Connell's public image is tarnished, and her refusal to accept her prescribed role as mother and wife puts her outside the system. In a system where a woman's security is based upon her relationship to her husband, Amy O'Connell's very presence is a threat. She has violated the social standards by leaving her husband; therefore, she is perceived as uncontrollable and dangerous. This combination of outsider and threat to domestic stability negates any possibility of support from her female companions.

In addition to placing Amy O'Connell in the position of outsider, Harley Granville Barker purposefully constructs her character as one that is lacking substance but at the same time possessing great charm. She is not underdeveloped dramatically; rather she is depicted as inconsequential, and she lacks the necessary qualities to have any value in Edwardian society. In the construction of Amy's character, Barker's feminist sympathies take a back seat to his dramatic intent. In an effort to construct Trebell as the
perfect Edwardian tragic hero, he sets Amy as foil. Within the text of *Waste*, the character of Henry Trebell, as well as the structure of the plot, competes with Barker's feminist sympathies. Thus the text's statement is ultimately ambiguous in nature, and it sends mixed messages.

In a letter to Nicholas Hannen, Barker summed up his intentions concerning the casting of *Waste*. In discussing the role of Amy O'Connell, he said: "She is the *femme amoureuse*, but she is not common nor vulgar... She is pretty and witty besides" (Salmon 156). In other words, Amy has aesthetic and entertainment value, but that is all. The playwright emphasizes the significance of her role by saying:

What is vitally important to the play—I repeat: you may wreck it if this goes wrong— is the balance of sympathy in her case. We must feel that beside Trebell's future career and the Disestablishment Bill and a fresh start for the Church of England she is a worthless little thing; but we must also feel enough pity for her fate to understand why Trebell—just because he cannot feel it, did not love her and yet begot a child on her, and has seen both die and still can feel no remorse—shoots himself (Salmon 156).

The audience is to pity Trebell, and by the end of the play the audience may have forgotten that Amy, too, is dead. In terms of dramatic technique, Barker's willingness to sacrifice Amy's character in order to glorify Trebell's may be justifiable. But the view that she is "a worthless little thing," is troubling, especially from a man who did so much to champion women's issues at the turn of the century. Despite Barker's intent, Amy is neither worthless nor is she culpable for the hero's demise.

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5 In his book *Granville Barker: A Secret Life*, Eric Salmon asserts that Barker was trying to create a tragic hero on a Greek scale (143-160). Elmer Salenius notes, "Trebell is a fine conception of the tragic hero in the Greek sense..." and notes that William Archer referred to the play as "our greatest modern tragedy" (55).
Before Henry Trebell enters, he is described by his sister. In a conversation which refers to Trebell's political stance as an independent, Frances states: "I think it's a mistake to stand outside a system. There's an inhumanity in that amount of detachment" (171). Throughout the script Trebell is characterized as cool, detached, unemotional and unflappable. He has no love of women and is consumed by work. Because Trebell is placed above the control of ordinary sexual desire; therefore, it is Amy who bears the responsibility for their affair. If it were not for her amorous nature, Trebell would not have fallen. His nobility remains intact, and what characterizes him is not his one night of passion but his devotion to social reform and his reverence for education. Next to such a grand figure, Amy O'Connell pales. Thus it is Henry Trebell, not Amy O'Connell, who is the protagonist of this drama.

Harley Granville Barker sets the conflict between the two in motion with Trebell's affair with Mrs. O'Connell. This seduction, although tense and terrific in its energy, is devoid of affection on Trebell's part. Trebell acts because of necessity, and his manner reflects a business-like purpose. Trebell displays an animal aggression and a poignant lack of romantic feeling. In 1907, this scene not only aroused the censor's ire, it also invoked criticism from men of the theatre such as William Archer, who claimed "that the last half minute was 'unnecessary and inartistic'" (Kennedy 91). The censor and audience members alike were stunned over the suggestion of passion without sentiment on the part of the protagonist.

While the inclusion of the seduction scene in the dramatic text proved shocking, the affair between the two would not have been out of place in Edwardian high society, which was quick to condemn scandal but not sexual liaisons. The sin was getting caught
not sexual activity. Edwardian high society's acceptance of affairs had nothing to do with an understanding of human sexuality. As J.B. Priestly suggests, Edwardians believed "sex was fun along the landing at 1:30 a.m., but not an essential human activity, a drive, to be seriously examined and sensibly reported upon" (68). Priestly also credits sheer boredom as a contributing factor to infidelity and risky trysts among the upper class. Edwardian ennui seems to be a motivating factor for both Amy and Trebell. Time, opportunity, and nothing else better to do on a Sunday night in Hertfordshire, all contribute to the unfolding of events.

In the second act, a pregnant Amy O'Connell goes to Trebell for help. It has been over two months since they have met, and he has been out of the country for the last five weeks. When she announces that there is "a danger of . . . having a child. . . sometime in April" (188), Trebell is surprised but not incapacitated. He immediately works to maneuver the situation to an acceptable solution. His solution is that the child will be born in secret and cared for anonymously. He begins to fantasize about the importance of this possible child. Trebell states "just think what the child may mean to you . . . just the fact of his birth. . . just to have a child must make a difference to you" (190). Amy is appalled and states that she does not plan to continue the pregnancy. Trebell's response is that she has no other "reasonable choice" (190). Trebell, in his privileged position, is able to choose what is reasonable and what is not. Trebell's view of abortion as unreasonable takes on special meaning when placed in an Edwardian context. Angus McLaren, author of *Birth Control in Nineteenth Century England*, explains that, at the time *Waste* was written having an abortion was dangerous not because of a deficiency in
medical technology but because the procedure was illegal (240). The illegal nature of abortion made it difficult to obtain; few physicians were willing to risk the repercussions. Those who did often charged exorbitant prices or were unskilled and dangerous. Also, abortion was often viewed by middle and upper-class Edwardians to be a solution employed only by the lower class. As newspaper accounts of abortion that surfaced primarily referred to working women, abortion came to be seen as something sought by working-class women. This perception was inaccurate. As one historian noted because upper and middle-class women could afford better doctors, the likelihood of complications was not as great. Consequently, abortions among the more well-to-do would not come to the attention of the authorities (McLaren 243).

In Edwardian society (as in our own) having an abortion carried with it a stigma. But in addition, the very term “abortion” was déclassé in upper-class circles. While the word occasionally appeared in newspapers, it was often avoided; and the euphemistic phrase the “illegal operation” was used to replace it. In short, abortion in discussion or actuality was quite scandalous in Edwardian society.

Trebell’s horror at the very notion of abortion reflects his fear of scandal, but it also reveals his attitude toward women. Like many Edwardians, he considered motherhood a woman’s sacred duty. Indeed, many of the arguments against suffrage emerging at this time centered around how the changing role of women would affect the

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"McLaren asserts that Barker’s Waste exposes Edwardian attitudes regarding abortion. McLaren states "By 1906 the idea that a middle-class woman might seek abortion was sufficiently ‘thinkable’ for Barker to make it a central issue in his play Waste." McLaren also contends that the play reveals that physicians often felt "victimized" by women seeking abortions (McLaren 244)."
most basic of all societal units — the family (Buckley 133). Just as radical a concept as votes for women is the notion that they be allowed to choose when, if ever, they wish to reproduce.

Trebell puts forward an Edwardian glorification of motherhood at the expense of the individual woman. Amy becomes valuable solely because of her ability to produce his child. This child becomes a fantastic image in his mind. For Trebell, a man whose intellect rules his emotions, the "unborn child" takes on the same importance as a brilliant yet undeveloped idea (Salmon 146).

Amy, who is grounded in the reality of her own body, is not concerned with Edwardian society, its intended role for her, or Henry Trebell's notions about a possible child. She is caught and is seeking a way out of a trap. She compares herself to an animal, and she sees herself as a victim of her own biology. Despite her desperate situation she makes several salient points concerning her position. Enraged at Trebell's lack of response to her needs, she exclaims: "There's no child because I haven't chosen there shall be and there shan't be because I don't choose" (191).

In this dialogue Barker sets up the earliest written debate in which a pregnant women asserts that it is her right to control her own body; biological autonomy supercedes all other considerations. Amy O'Connell continues the argument by saying: "You'd have me first your plaything and then Nature's" (191). It is clear that the woman is trapped by society, by nature, and by her own sexual drive. This trap turns out to be a fatal one.

Midway through the play Amy O'Connell is dead. Her death is horrible, painful and needless. Amy is not mourned but rather condemned after her death not only by
Henry Trebell but also by her husband. In the most disturbing scene of the play, Justin O’Connell confronts his wife’s lover – with most unexpected results. Justin O’Connell addresses a group of politicians gathered to protect the protagonist from scandal. As they debate, Henry Trebell walks in and faces Justin O’Connell. O’Connell immediately confronts him, saying: “There is a dead woman between us, Mr. Trebell” (209). But what follows this initial confrontation is surprising. Trebell states: “I have been wondering what sort of expression the last of your care for her would find . . . but not much. My wonder is at the power over me that has been given to something I despised” (210). O’Connell replies: “Yes . . . If I wanted revenge I have it. She was a worthless woman” (210). Both men are momentarily joined by a common sympathy: contempt for a woman who once loved them but a woman who refused to bear either’s child. It is for Amy O’Connell’s refusal to become a mother that Trebell and Justin O’Connell despise her. The roles of wife and mistress were not enough. By choosing to escape her marriage and the children it would bring and subsequently to abort once she conceived, Amy becomes the ultimate villain in both their lives.

Despite her horrible death, neither Henry Trebell or Justin O’Connell feels sympathy for Amy. The reader/audience most probably does not hold Amy in contempt as her husband and lover do; however, she is not the play’s focus and is not presented as one to be pitied. Sympathy is saved for Barker’s tragic hero, Trebell, who at the end of the play kills himself. Trebell cannot bear the loss of his political career and his “child.” This idea of a child has taken possession of him. It fuses in his mind with the Disestablishment Bill, which will now be shelved, and his spirit is broken.
Contemporary critics have also fallen into the trap of seeing Amy O'Connell through Trebell's eyes. Elmer Salenius describes her as "a shallow, selfish, though charming woman" (50). He contends that her life is lost through abortion because she lacks the courage to give birth to a child. Indeed, Amy O'Connell does state that she is afraid, but she never suggests that she is afraid of the process of giving birth; rather, Amy is afraid because she is alone and pregnant and cannot get Trebell to name a doctor she can trust. Amy O'Connell is not afraid of giving birth, she is afraid of having a child she does not want. Her fear is that of being trapped into compulsory motherhood. For this she is condemned and ultimately forgotten.

Barker ordinarily championed women's issues, but in his play Waste, he ultimately fails to do so. While he articulates pro-choice ideas through the character of Amy O'Connell, he silences this rhetoric by her unlamented death. Ironically, fine scholars such as Elmer Salenius and Eric Salmon have readily accepted Barker's assessment of the character of Amy O'Connell. They, too, have been seduced by the grandness of a tragic hero who falls. The last line of the play laments the waste of a great man and the good work that has gone undone. Truly the waste of the play is Amy O'Connell's needless death and the lack of sympathy it provokes from the men who should have aided her.

The Chrimes' Affair and Harley Granville Barker's Waste exemplify abortion narratives that ultimately displace the pregnant woman. Both texts shift women from view and focus upon the male characters. In the Chrimes' Affair this shift of focus ensured the prosecution of three extortionists. In Waste, this shift of focus ensured the successful construction of an Edwardian tragic hero. Despite the fact that women who try to obtain an abortion are initially portrayed in a sympathetic light, these women are
considered expendable within the narrative itself. Harley Granville Barker's decision to focus on the character of Henry Trebell structurally assigns Amy to the position of a tool used to bring down the protagonist. Quite similarly, the judge of the Chrimes' Affair presents the women's story to gain legal leverage and bring about a desired end to the trial. The result of regulating women to the periphery of the abortion debate negates their individual experiences. The Chrimes' Affair and Waste are two examples in which women's voices are briefly heard, but are ultimately silenced as the men within the narrative take center stage.

"Abortion:" A Lost Play By Eugene O'Neill

American dramatic literature tackled the abortion question in a short and temporarily "lost" play by Eugene O'Neill. Written in 1914, "Abortion" is the earliest known American play that uses abortion as a plot device. Although it was not produced at the time it was written, this play reflects historical attitudes towards sexuality and abortion at the turn of the century. O'Neill's choice to remove the pregnant woman from the narrative is directly related to the public silencing of women's voices on the topic of abortion. By comparing O'Neill's abortion narrative with newspaper articles on the topic, one can begin to understand the political and social ideology regarding reproduction in his day.

The plot of "Abortion" revolves around a young college student Jack Townsend whose life is ultimately destroyed by his lover's abortion. A brief plot summary provides a useful starting point from which to analyze the play. "Abortion" begins with a conversation among Jack's friend, mother and sister; they reveal that the protagonist, Jack, has recently pitched the winning game of the college baseball championship. Later,
while alone with his father, Jack discusses events of the recent past. Jack has gotten a
town girl "in trouble." The situation is complicated because the college hero is engaged
to Evelyn, his sweetheart back home. Therefore he cannot "do the right thing" and marry
his lover Nellie Murray. Jack's father, John Townsend, has paid for an abortion which
was performed five days ago. Jack believes the dilemma to be over. As he and his father
are about to leave for the victory celebration, Joe Murray appears with a gun to confront
Jack. Murray reveals that his sister Nellie has died from the abortion which Jack had
arranged for her. Murray decides the best punishment is not to kill Jack, but rather to go
to the police. Jack, fearful of exposure, social embarrassment, and possible legal
recriminations, kills himself with Murray's gun.

O'Neill describes Jack as a "likeable fellow." He is good looking, well-mannered,
and considerate of his family. He speaks well of Nellie and defends her reputation
against his father's insinuations that she is of low character. Yet, ultimately, it is Jack's
character that comes into question. When confronted with the news of Nellie's death, he
offers Murray a bribe to keep him silent. Jack's actions are motivated by fear, but in the
end Jack's self-absorption and inability to understand those that are different from him
lead to his downfall. Jack's failure and selfish behavior reflects certain aspects of O'Neill's
own life.

It is a well-known fact that several critics describe O'Neill's writing as
autobiographical. This tendency is particularly evident in his most famous play Long Day's
Journey into Night. Like Long Day's Journey, "Abortion" also draws its plot from O'Neill's
personal experiences and family history. The playwright conflates a variety of events to
construct both the situation and characters of the play. O'Neill did not have to look far

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for the prototype for Jack. Jack appears to be a younger version of the author; however, while the character often seems to speak for the playwright, O'Neill demonstrates an underlying contempt for Jack and college men in general. (Sheaffer 115).

From 1904 to 1907, O'Neill attended Princeton but never felt as though he belonged in the Princeton crowd (Sheaffer 115). Biographer Louis Sheaffer notes that this attitude is reflected in "Abortion." O'Neill's sympathies are ultimately with Joe Murray. Sheaffer identifies the underdog, Joe Murray, as O'Neill's doppelganger, not the more obvious Jack. "Although himself among those with well-to-do fathers, O'Neill emotionally identified with the under-privileged, with the outsider" (115-116). Sheaffer later notes O'Neill's similarities to the college hero, Jack Townsend. Within the text of "Abortion" it seems that O'Neill's sympathies are bifurcated and that aspects of his own life and personality can be seen in both characters.

Murray acts as Jack's antithesis. His position outside of wealth and class makes him vulnerable. Caught in a system in which he cannot succeed, Murray is bitter and angry. Murray's outrage over his sister's needless death is uncontrollable. His ability to act causes him to appear to have the upper hand, and he plays the role of antagonist within the structure of the plot. Murray is surly, imprudent, coarse and angry, but, despite his exterior roughness and initial off-putting appearance, he speaks the truth and does so with honest passion. His actions are motivated by grief and despair. He could not save his sister and realizes he is trapped by his poverty and social status. O'Neill's empathy with the character may also be evidenced by the fact that Murray has tuberculosis. O'Neill began writing plays while in a sanitarium as he was fighting this dreaded illness.
Jack's father, John Townsend, is reminiscent of James O'Neill, the playwright's father. The correlation between the two is made particularly acute when Jack accuses his father of being guilty of his own sin: "Be frank, Dad! Judging from several anecdotes which your friend Professor Simmons has let slip . . . you were no St. Anthony" (24).

Like his counterpart, John Townsend, James O'Neill was no saint. In 1877 a woman named Nettie Walsh claimed that James O'Neill was her husband and attempted to gain support for herself and her child. James was already married to Mary O'Neill. Nettie Walsh called James' relationship with Mary adultery, and she sued James for divorce. The scandalous affair hit the paper and caused the O'Neill family considerable distress (Sheaffer 11). While Nettie Walsh lost the suit, this segment of family history made its way into Eugene's writing. The similarity of the fallen women's names, Nettie and Nellie, seems not to be a coincidence (Sheaffer 149).

Nellie's character is not based solely upon the Nettie Walsh incident. Eugene O'Neill in 1909 experienced his own difficulties. The playwright met Kathleen Jenkins in New York. An affair developed, and within the year, she became pregnant and wished O'Neill to marry her. The playwright reluctantly consented, and the couple secretly wed on October 2, 1909. Feeling trapped, Eugene turned to his father for help. James arranged a position for his son as a prospector, and Eugene departed for Spanish Honduras. When he returned to New York in May of 1910, Eugene wanted no part in his marriage to Kathleen or in his role as a father. Mrs. Jenkins, Kathleen's mother, sought to "force" Eugene into accepting her daughter. She contacted the New York World and gave them an exclusive story which related O'Neill's desertion of his wife and child. The
story eventually backfired, and the paper placed Kathleen in a bad light. O'Neill divorced Jenkins in 1912. Louis Sheaffer notes:

This period of O'Neill's life, as well as his father's affair with Nettie Walsh, was evidently in his mind when he wrote "Abortion," his short play about a college hero's ill-fated affair with a poor girl . . . If the fate of the girl in the play -- she dies from an abortion -- represents unconscious wish-fulfillment on the author's part, he made commensurate atonement by killing off his counterpart; the college boy commits suicide (149).

"Abortion" reflects O'Neill's distress over his marriage to Kathleen and his attitudes toward her mother, Mrs. Jenkins. Within the play, Jack's father immediately suspects Nellie of purposely becoming pregnant in order to trap Jack into marrying her and supporting her family. The parallel between Nellie and Kathleen is clear. As with much of his playwriting, events from O'Neill's private family life becomes the blue-print for "Abortion."

In addition to the characters, the attitudes toward sex expressed in the play are grounded in O'Neill's personal experiences. Jack's liaison would not have been uncommon to the period, and O'Neill, it would seem, had myriad resources from which to draw his text. Sheaffer notes that O'Neill "went on to lead a sex life more active, more uninhibited than most of his generation" (101). The biographer retells the story of a classmate who saw hanging up in "Gene's room actresses' slippers, stockings, brassieres, playbills, posters . . . But what got me was that among all this stuff he had hung up several condoms--they looked like they'd been used" (116). According to his biographer, O'Neill's behavior and writing exhibit a frank but troubled outlook regarding human sexuality (Sheaffer 116). It is not surprising then, that within "Abortion," Jack's attitude toward sexuality reflects a split between physical passion and romantic love. In a vain attempt to explain his behavior to his father, Jack exclaims: "Do you suppose it was the
same man who loves Evelyn who did this other thing? . . . Such an idea is abhorrent. It
was the male beast who ran gibbering through the forest after its female a thousand years
ago” (24). Jack’s view of sex as bestial and primitive works to alleviate his feelings of
guilt. By ascribing his sexuality to an instinct and a primitive drive, his own failure to
"control" his passion is, to some extent, excusable. Jack does not necessarily feel guilty
because he has harmed Nellie and caused her anguish, but he is plagued by the thought
that his sexual activities with a girl he doesn’t love are base and ignoble.

Sexual guilt plays an important role in O’Neill’s conception of women. The
women in "Abortion" demonstrate a societal regulation of "good" and "bad" women.
Jack’s mother is perfectly motherly. His sister is sprightly and good-natured, but Evelyn,
his girlfriend, is the quintessence of perfect femininity. Lithe, graceful, frail, quiet, and
utterly devoted, Evelyn is a perfect angel. Within the text of the play, Evelyn is elevated
to the role of Madonna. Her virginity intact, she is the woman who, in three months
time, will win Jack. Conversely, the absent Nellie is relegated to the role of whore at worst
and primitive female at best.

In "Abortion," O’Neill tells us very little about the character Nellie Murray. We
know she is a "working girl, a stenographer" (25). Jack describes her as a "sweet, lovely
girl," although she is not of his class. Despite the dearth of information provided by the
playwright on Nellie, historically we can extrapolate and construct a possible background
for this silent woman.

Nellie, as an office worker, probably earned below a living wage. In 1910 an
economist estimated a living wage to be nine or ten dollars weekly. Women were often
paid less (Peiss 38). In addition, a working-class daughter may have been expected to
turn over all or a large portion of her income to help support her family. This was
certainly true in Nellie's case. John Townsend asks his son directly if "she and her brother
support the others." Jack replies he believed they did (25). It is implied by the line of
questioning that Nellie's economic disadvantages cause John Townsend to suspect that
Nellie has entrapped his son. The implications are evident. Nellie has committed the
ultimate sin. She has attempted to marry a man who is socially superior by purposefully
becoming pregnant.

John Townsend accuses his son of showing poor taste for getting involved "with
this young woman in the first place" (25). However, it is not improbable that a college
student could easily meet and develop an interest in a working class woman. For
instance, dance halls, particularly in New York, provided a place where "classes and
cultures intermingled" (98). A dance hall craze swept the country in 1910, and it
embodied a new view of sexuality and sexual expression. The flapper, normally
considered an icon of the 1920s, was already firmly established by 1913 (Evans 161). A
shorter work day allowed for socializing and an increased search for pleasurable
diversions among the lower classes (Peiss 43). The passage of time and this change in
attitude was reflected in action and dress. As Evans notes:

Young working-class women had long been known for their flamboyant dress and
love of nightlife and dancing. After a ten to twelve hour workday they flocked to
dance halls where young men would treat them to drinks and join in the faddish
"tough dancing." The raw sexuality of dances like the slow rag, turkey trot, bunny
hug, grizzly bear, and "shaking the shimmy" horrified the middle classes... Such
public eroticism shocked one magazine into announcing in 1913 that "sex o'clock
had struck" (161).

Nellie and Jack's affair reflects changes in dating practices. One scholar notes that "the
turn of the century was a time when heterosexual dating norms were changing and
women increasingly experimented with (hetero)sexuality and challenged older sexual norms” (Reagan 33). This challenge was not met without resistance.

Nellie's abortion story would not have been unusual; however, it was not in actuality the statistical norm. Leslie Reagan notes that most girls survived their abortions, that those who employed abortion as a way of regulating fertility came from all walks of life, and that most women seeking abortions were married (102). Reagan's research demonstrates that coroners' reports suggest that women did die from botched abortions, that some of these women were single, and that many of those who died were from a lower class. Yet the overriding abortion narratives reported in newspapers such as the Chicago Tribune were those of single girls in trouble who died from encounters with illegal abortion providers (Reagan 102-103).

Several details of Nellie's abortion story, however, are particularly factual. As within the plot of the play, often the male partners found the abortionist, and paid for his or her services, making men additionally at risk from the law. Jack's panic over the possible consequences of his involvement in Nellie's death is not unfounded. "When an unwed woman died because of an abortion, her lover was automatically arrested, jailed, interrogated by the police and coroner, and sometimes prosecuted as an accessory to the crime as well" (Reagan 129). Jack's desperate attempts to bribe Murray, when seen in historical context, are all too plausible.

Within the plot of "Abortion," secrecy plays an integral role. Jack's anonymity is crucial not only for his academic success, but also to keep him out of the jails and the courts. Because Nellie will not reveal her lover's identity, Murray threatens the
abortionist to obtain Jack's name. Despite the fact she is dying, Nellie will not implicate
Jack and tries to shield him from the law.

While it is possible to construct an historical Nellie, O'Neill's character never
enters the stage, becoming only a plot device, a pivotal element in the action of the play.
By completely removing Nellie from the script, O'Neill goes beyond Harley Granville
Barker in the exploration of his protagonist. O'Neill is entirely free to explore the topic
of abortion from a male perspective. Pregnancy is equated with entrapment which
threatens the protagonist. It is his bright future which is jeopardized. Nellie's anguish is
minimized through her absence. O'Neill's strategy removes the woman in favor of the
male protagonist.

Nellie's absence represents a long tradition in Western culture of absent women
in dramatic narrations. In her book Acting Women, Lesley Ferris suggests that melodrama
reinforces an earlier tradition of the absent woman. In French medieval law an
unmarried woman was termed femme vacante. The term suggested that without the
presence of a male the woman was empty. This emptiness was "only filled through the
marriage contract" (Duby qtd. in Ferris 68). This absent woman is also literally silent, for
she has no voice in the society or under the law. Ferris states that the femme vacante
epitomizes "women in patriarchy, where women are rendered invisible within the
dominant narratives of history" (73). Not only are women invisible, they are also
speechless.\(^7\) Tracing a tradition back to Shakespeare, Ferris looks at characters who are
exalted for their silence. She suggests this tradition's epitome can be found in the

\(^7\)The English equivalent to the legal position of women as femme vacante is coverture, by
which a woman's legal identity is subsumed in that of her husband.
classical ballerina and labels her "silence personified." The dancer is the perfect woman, tortured, demure and silent.

This silencing of women's voices in favor of their male counterparts can be found in journalistic narratives as well. Abortion scandals were printed in the press surrounding the time in which O'Neill's play was written. Two years after O'Neill penned the play a sensational story was published about the abortion and death of Anna Johnson. In 1915, Dr. Eva Shaver was tried for the death of Anna Johnson, who was found shot in the head following a botched abortion. Interestingly enough, the paper chose to emphasize the role of Anna Johnson's boyfriend and portrayed him not as an accomplice but as a victim. This spectacular case once again brought the abortion debate into public view, and yet again the pregnant woman's story is undercut by the highlighting of her lover.

Sidney Kingsley's Abortion Plays: *Men in White* and *Detective Story*

*Men in White*

In 1933, at St. George's Hospital, Dr. George Ferguson prepares for surgery. His patient Barbara Dennin is a young nursing student suffering from sepsis of the uterus. Because of the advanced nature of the infection, a hysterectomy is prescribed. In the operating room, Dr. Ferguson leans over to reassure his patient. She recognizes him and surprisingly replies: "Thanks, dear . . . I loved you . . . I don't care . . ." (Kingsley 118). At this point, a surprised anesthesiologist looks at Ferguson. The atmosphere in the operating room becomes troubled and tense. Soon it is discovered that three months earlier George Ferguson had an affair with Barbara Dennin. The result was an unwanted pregnancy and subsequently a botched, illegal abortion.
While truth is often stranger than fiction, this scenario does not come from the annals of history, but rather from Sidney Kingsley's Pulitzer Prize winning play *Men in White*. Despite, or perhaps because of the play's melodramatic tendencies, the play was quite successful and put The Group Theatre on the map. The Group Theatre was one of the most distinguished theatre companies in the U.S. during the 1930s. Founded in 1931 by Lee Strasburg, Harold Clurman and Cheryl Crawford, the company produced some of the finest works of America's up-and-coming playwrights. Although their first successful production was *The House of Conelly*, it was *Men in White* that provided The Group Theatre's first taste of financial stability (Smith 151). The Group continued for ten years, proving to be one of the most influential companies in the American theatre. Despite the historical importance of this play, until quite recently scholarship on *Men in White* has been sparse and has virtually ignored the presence of abortion as a plot device.

The 1933 production of *Men in White* constitutes the earliest staged exploration of the subject of abortion in the United States. Like Eugene O'Neill's "Abortion" and Harley Granville Barker's *Waste*, *Men in White* subverts the issue of abortion by focusing on the fate of the central male character. The inclusion of the abortion issue and its performance on stage denotes the intersection of a growing societal acknowledgement of the existence of illegal abortion and an unwillingness to confront the issue.

While The Group Theatre was known for its political daring, *Men in White*, originally entitled *Crisis*, was not unanimously accepted by the theatre's members. The script had been "making the rounds" in producers' offices for several years, and eventually it was optioned by The Group, despite the actors' protests (Smith 135). The
actors did not object to the political critique within the play; conversely, they believed that the script lacked "strong social commentary" (Smith 136).

The production was simultaneously praised for its seeming "realism" and "balletic" qualities. In actuality, the production styles were mixed. The set was not realistic; however, the props were the real thing (Smith 148). The effect of this mix was aesthetically innovative, and each element ultimately worked to increase the dramatic tension within the text. Wendy Smith in Real Life Drama: The Group Theatre and America, 1931-1940, asserts that the "interplay between abstraction and realism gave a mythic quality to the setting, visually underscoring the drama and nobility of the surgeon's calling" (148). The production received rave reviews. In his book The Fervent Years, The Group's co-founder Harold Clurman cites the production not only as one of The Group Theatre's biggest financial successes but more importantly the company's "most finished" work. He goes on to call the production Strasberg's "masterpiece" (128).

Men in White's plot revolves around George Ferguson, a promising young surgeon who is torn between the demands of his medical career and his exacting fiancée Laura Hudson. The tension mounts when Laura's wealthy father is approached to finance the hospital's growing fiscal needs. The Board of Trustees decides that Ferguson is to be promoted to head surgeon in order to ensure Laura's father's support. The promotion, however, is ill-timed, as Ferguson is expected to receive further surgical training in Europe. The young doctor is torn between a comfortable life with the woman he loves and years of toil in an effort to become a fine surgeon. After the discovery of his brief affair with Barbara Dennin and her subsequent death, George decides, for a variety of
reasons, that he cannot marry Laura. Freed from emotional obligations, George decides to pursue a solitary career in medicine.

While the actors were not enthralled with the play's plot, they were pleased at the production's success. Many were surprised that it received the Pulitzer Prize and felt the play was saved only by their production (Smith 150, 171). The overriding complaint was that the play "valorized medicine" instead of addressing social problems. In her analysis of the work, Estelle Raben notes that the play's "brief statements against the barbarity of outdated abortion laws . . . seemed in 1934 to threaten no one" (30). While the subject of abortion itself may have been threatening and considered improper, the topic is undercut within the text. Men in White does not challenge the status quo, but instead elevates the medical profession to the level of sainthood. It is ironic that a play that hinges upon abortion has so little to do with women and so much to do with medicine. Kingsley, it seems, became too enamored of his subject. He fell in love with the medical profession and became their strongest champion. The playwright spent over a year researching his project. He came to know the doctors personally and was impressed by their hard work and dedication. In writing the play, Kingsley succeeds in ennobling the profession. He virtually ignores the "women in white" who also provide care and are essential to the practice. Like Harley Granville Barker, Kingsley, in creating his noble protagonist simultaneously sacrifices the women in his play and turns them into antagonists.

The three principal female characters in Men in White are Nurse Mary Ryan, Laura Hudson, Dr. Ferguson's fiancée, and Barbara Dennin. Mary Ryan's role within the script is to provide information. She is an older, wiser nurse who offstage informs Barbara of Dr. Ferguson's engagement. Later in the action Mary Ryan informs Dr. Ferguson of
Barbara's unexpected pregnancy and her illness. Outraged by Barbara's undeserved circumstances, Ryan is powerless to change the situation. When she reveals Barbara Dennin's situation to Dr. Ferguson, she becomes angry at his naivete and lack of forethought. Ferguson's reaction to Barbara's pregnancy and abortion is "God! I never dreamed this would happen." Mary replies "Men don't--usually" (105). Later within the scene her anger results in frustrated tears as she descends to the level of the stereotype. Mary's tears reinforce the notion that woman are essentially flawed because they are driven by emotions they cannot control.

Conversely, Kingsley sets up Laura Hudson as Ryan's foil. Laura, George's fiancée, is a young socialite who makes demands on Dr. Ferguson's time, energies and attentions. Laura reacts unsympathetically to his continual re-arranging of their plans. Her response to the demands of George's career is characterized by petulance. Technically, Kingsley casts Laura as a villain in order to canonize George. While she has some admirable qualities, left unchecked, Laura would ultimately keep Ferguson from fulfilling his destiny. Laura is held responsible not only for her own selfish behavior but George's as well. When he steps away from the path of the righteous and has sex with Barbara Dennin, ironically it is Laura, who is ultimately held at fault. She has spurned the young doctor that very evening because, once again, he had cancelled their date because of work. It becomes apparent that Laura must be removed from Dr. Ferguson's life. In the play's final moments, she agrees that George should pursue his medical studies without her. Despite the failed romance, the play is not a tragedy, for at its conclusion Ferguson is on his destined path to greatness and is elevated away from desires of the flesh. As Raben notes: "the hospital presents its demand for a type of almost religious
celibacy, a rising above the demands of sexual commitment that a woman can never understand" (32). Thus Laura's removal from the picture is depicted as necessary.

The character of Barbara Dennin presents a different dilemma. While Kingsley's handling of his female characters often lacks depth, his depiction of Barbara is particularly disturbing. Unlike George's fiancée Laura, Barbara understands the rigors and demands of the medical profession. Ironically, Barbara offers herself to the doctor because of this intimate knowledge and becomes a sacrificial lamb in the process. A young, rather naive nursing student, Barbara is without family and particularly vulnerable. Infatuated with Dr. Ferguson and drawn to him by their common work, Barbara responds to his initial advance. Realizing that she is just "a sweet girl," George apologizes for kissing her and leaves to do his rounds. Barbara, however, decides to stay. The affair itself is never shown. What is depicted is her conscious decision to sleep with Ferguson.

Kingsley's stage directions read:

Barbara takes up the notes... walks slowly toward the door... hesitates there a moment... she leans against the door... hesitates there a moment... is about to go out, suddenly stops... decides to stay. For a moment she leans against the door, breathless, then she goes back to the room, slowly drops the notes on the table, goes to the bed, sits down, takes off her cap, throws it on the bed and sits there... waiting (73).

Just as Laura is held culpable for her rejection of Dr. Ferguson, Barbara is guilty of seduction. Her indiscretion does not go unpunished. The price of her devotion is unwanted pregnancy and an early death. Ferguson never considers the possible repercussions of their actions. For a doctor, his knowledge of biological reproduction seems sorely lacking.

Barbara next appears within the text on the operating table, and she is grateful that Dr. Ferguson will now "help her." She says she is glad, but what is most disturbing is

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her final "it doesn't matter." Barbara's self-abnegation is abhorrent and her self-sacrifice unnecessary. She is depicted as the perfect woman—loving, supporting, selfless and forgiving. Barbara sacrifices herself for the reputation and career of Dr. Ferguson. When he realizes her plight, Dr. Ferguson plans to marry the unfortunate young nurse; however, Kingsley saves his protagonist from this dilemma through Barbara's convenient and timely death.

By killing off Barbara Dennin, Kingsley removes her from the narrative; he negates her experiences and silences her voice. In addition to absenting the pregnant woman, Kingsley uses Barbara to remove the fiancée. After Barbara dies, Laura and George realize they cannot marry. George insists on breaking the engagement, and eventually Laura does not protest. With both women removed, Kingsley's perfect medical world is the sphere of the male. Within this world, George Ferguson is not only a hero, he is also a savior.¹

George is a suffering savior who cannot engage in the physical world. Women are superfluous to his true needs and act only in supporting roles. George is elevated above women (and most men) and performs his idea of medicine upon their bodies. When the doctors discuss Barbara's condition and their possible approach to solving her illness, Barbara is delirious with fever. She has become a problem to be solved, an unconscious body unable to participate in the decision-making process. Dr. Ferguson becomes her guardian and reluctantly, he agrees to perform a hysterectomy. In the brief

¹Winifred Dusenbury characterizes George as a Savior-hero in her book *The Theme of Loneliness in American Drama.*
moments that Barbara is awake, she willingly gives herself over to her physician, placing all hope in his ability to save her.

Estelle Raben suggests that one of the reasons that *Men in White* was so successful was that in 1933 the audience was ready for some assurance that medicine could save them. While Barbara Dennin does indeed die, her death is a result of a botched abortion, and the men in white are not held accountable. The doctors, despite their human foibles, are presented as devoted practitioners of medicine who save two others lives within the text. It is not the theme alone, however, that popularized the play. Strasberg's painstaking direction made the operating scene the most discussed and commented upon in the play.

Strasberg's gift for meticulous attention to detail was apparent in *Men in White*’s operating scene in which Dr. Ferguson attempts to save Barbara Dennin's life by performing an emergency hysterectomy. A large portion of the scene takes place in silence. Strasberg rehearsed the scene by alternately setting it to Beethoven's "Seventh Symphony" and then Offenbach's "Gaîté Parisienne." Eventually a rhythm was hit upon, and each move was meticulously choreographed. Because the operation itself takes place in silence, the timing had to be perfect. The result was, by all accounts, theatrical and breath-taking. In her history of The Group Theatre, Wendy Smith notes the difficulty of making the scene work "...the first five minutes of the scene were completely silent: nurses with sterilized gloves and doctors with freshly washed hands had to meet at the same spot on-stage at the same moment without any dialogue to cue them" (141). The result was a heightened realism in which the action was flawless.
The production elements in the operating scene, particularly the lighting, added to this realistic atmosphere. The lighting also worked to objectify nurse Barbara Dennin. The lighting was particularly dramatic and emphasized the starkness of the operating room while also pointing up particular moments. The lighting designer recalled Strasberg's insistence for a special effect to close Act II. At the very end of the scene, when Dr. — raised his hand and asked for a scalpel, the patient's body was to be lit with an intense bright light. Using a gooseneck lamp, purchased at a nearby drug store, one of the actors turned it on — on cue. As the light was focused on the actress's body, it "glittered in the extra light. The effect, Crawford recalled, was breathtaking, 'as painful as the scalpel making the incision'" (Smith 148). This image of Barbara Dennin unconscious, brightly lit and shrouded in sheets victimizes this once pregnant woman. Here, quite literally under the knife, Barbara's body will pay for the sins of the flesh.

Ironically, while her body is the focal point of the scene Barbara herself is absent and does not appear again within the text. She exists without voice, to be looked at and practiced upon. She is the sacrificial lamb whose femininity is doubly lost in the concealment of her body and the removal of her reproductive organs. This ballet of medicine is performed upon her. The narrative is disrupted as we look intently upon this theatrical moment. Barbara becomes objectified; however, eventually she is lost as the attention shifts to those around her.

The illegal abortion that brought Barbara to this position is condemned by the playwright. Kingsley includes a footnote in which he describes back alley abortions as horrific and unnecessary. Kingsley, although a proponent of safe abortions, qualifies his assertions: "No one wishes to encourage the indiscriminate use of this grim practice."
However, the lash of the law, instead of correcting the evil, only whips it into dark corners" (Kingsley, *Men in White*, 108). Kingsley, at the time, seemed to look upon abortion as a necessary evil best performed in the safety of the hospital. His inclusion of abortion in the narrative was intended as a social corrective. Ultimately, however, Kingsley never really addresses the problem. Like Barker and O'Neill, Kingsley concentrates on developing the male protagonist at the expense of the female characters and the abortion issue. In his second play concerning abortion, *Detective Story*, the author also focuses on the fall of the male protagonist because of his wife's previous abortion.

Kingsley's footnote within *Men in White* is perhaps more illuminating on abortion in the 1930s than the play. He states: "Dr. Rongy, former president of the A.M.A., estimates that there are more illegal abortions every year in New York and Chicago than there are children actually born in those cities. Most of these operations are performed on otherwise respectable, law-abiding, married women" (108). While Rogny's hard data seems to be lacking, his impulse that abortion was prevalent in depression-era America is supported by historian Leslie Reagan.

Sixty years later after Rogny's assertion, Leslie Reagan's in-depth study on abortion in Chicago corroborates Rogny's impression. In *When Abortion Was a Crime* she states: "The Depression years make vivid the relationship between economics and reproduction. Women had abortions on a massive scale" (133). While abortion still remained a taboo subject, censure of the procedure was lessening to some degree in the medical community. In the 1930's physicians were beginning to talk about change, and in 1933 two books which favored the legalization of abortion appeared. While these books were controversial and were met with consternation by many in the medical community,
they marked a shift in opinion towards the procedure (Reagan 133). Reagan points out that the use of therapeutic abortion increased throughout the thirties, although the majority of physicians did not wish to change the legal status of abortion (143).

However, in the following decade a radical shift occurred. With the end of World War II the role of women in American society became once again more rigid and restricted.

Conservative opinions regarding abortion are linked to a national drive in the mid-1940s to return Rosy the Riveter back to the kitchen. Domesticity, not self-determination, was the expected role of women after the war. As men returned from the front and attempted to re-enter the work force, women's return to the domestic sphere became a national concern. As home and the family are once again exalted as the most honorable and desirable places for women, women who step outside of the societal norm are punished. The glorification of the family is reflected in the media of the period. And conversely, the denigration of those who do not fit into society's ideal family model became a common occurrence. Such is the case in Sidney Kingsley's 1949 play, *Detective Story*.

*Detective Story*

In *Detective Story*, Kingsley changes venues and moves from the pristine world of the men in white to New York City police precinct. The reaction to the play was positive; the setting, directing and acting were critically acclaimed (Atkinson 1949). Kingsley once again did extensive research on his subject; he spent several months at a police station in order to gain insights into police work, attitudes and working conditions. Like *Men in White*, *Detective Story* uses abortion as a plot device and focuses upon the male protagonist. While *Detective Story* portrays a world which views abortion with far less sympathy than
*Men in White,* it reflects the more stringent post-war attitude toward women and sexuality even though *Men in White* preceded *Detective Story* by sixteen years. This change in attitude toward the practice of abortion and the intersection of increased police intervention is evidenced in real life by the arrest and prosecution of Dr. Leopold Brandenberg. Reported in both *Time* and *Newsweek,* the Brandenberg case made national news and bears a remarkable resemblance to events in Kingsley's *Detective Story.*

In early September 1947, fifteen police officers raided an abortion clinic in New York City. Five weeks of careful planning, wire tapping and undercover work precipitated the actual raid. Disguised agents, posing as husband and wife visited the clinic in order to gain necessary information for the raid. Timing was a critical factor. Law enforcement agents needed to be sure that the "illegal operation" was underway ("500,000 Mill" 49). The officers surrounded the building, broke the lock on the apartment and arrested Dr. Leopold W. A. Brandenburg for performing abortions. Also "captured" by police were two women found in the clinic on whom Brandenburg had operated, and a third woman who was "lying on the table" ("500,000 Mill" 50). Police pressured two of the women to turn state's evidence by threatening them with prosecution. In New York at this time a woman receiving an abortion was considered just as guilty as the abortionist ("500,000 Mill" 50).

The Brandenburg arrests reveal a growing trend towards police investigations and raid of abortion clinics in the 1940s. This "crack down" suggests a marked difference in public policy when compared to the 1930s. In addition to more restrictive attitudes, the sanctions against abortion became increasingly severe. Leslie Reagan notes:

The repression of abortion during the 1940s and 1950s took new forms. Prosecutors no longer focused their energy on the abortionists responsible for
women's deaths but worked to shut down the trusted and skilled abortionists, many of them physicians, who had operated clinics for years with little or no police interference (160 -161).

*Detective Story*, which premiered in March of 1949, in both plot, style and theme reflects this growing trend toward the restriction of women's social mobility and sexual freedoms.

The plot of the play focuses on Jim McLeod's persecution of an abortionist, Dr. Kurt Schneider. McLeod is a tough and bitter cop whose inflexible ideas of right and wrong often leave him devoid of compassion and bereft of judgement. Schneider, presumably because he is faced with imminent arrest, has turned himself in to the police. Unlike Dr. Brandenberg, the fictitious Schneider is guilty of poor medical procedure and a young woman has died while under his care. Officer McLeod, who views Schneider as the worst kind of murderer, loses control and physically attacks and wounds the abortionist. Schneider's lawyer intimates to McLeod's supervisor, Lieutenant Monoghan, that McLeod may have personal reasons for his intense hatred of Schneider. The lawyer implies that McLeod's wife, Mary, may be involved. When Monoghan calls Mary in for questioning, she confesses that, unbeknownst to her husband, she had an abortion several years ago and that Schneider was the physician. The tension escalates as McLeod discovers that before he and his wife married, she was involved with another man, which resulted in an unwanted pregnancy. She had gone to Schneider and had an abortion. McLeod now views his wife with disdain. He calls her a whore and can no longer see her in the same light. Mary, realizing her husband will never forgive her, leaves. McLeod, distraught and confused, recklessly confronts an armed criminal and is fatally wounded. He dies asking a friend to find his wife and ask for her forgiveness.
Jim McLeod is an honest cop. He has, however, become hard and bitter. Working on the force, he has seen so much crime, and as a result he has become intolerant and inflexible. Worse, he cannot differentiate between hardened criminals and first time offenders who have made a mistake. He has become judge and jury and is now interested in mediating his own form of justice. Jim has one soft spot, his wife Mary, who from the beginning of the play is Jim’s hope and salvation. His gruff and aggressive tone changes when he speaks to her on the phone. He expresses concern over her welfare and is tender to her. When Jim discovers Mary has had an abortion, he feels betrayed by his wife. In his eyes, she is not as “immaculate” as he once believed. He responds by verbally assaulting her. She leaves quietly without a fuss. Her departure leaves McLeod unprotected against the evils of the world. It is as if her feminine purity prevents “the dirt” from getting to him.

*Detective Story’s* plot is melodramatic, and the portrayal of its characters, although meticulously detailed, does not extend below the surface. The play does little to portray an in-depth picture of women in the 1940s; rather both the male and female characters depict recognizable types. These types are sharply divided along gender lines. Prevalent in the text is a misogynist undercurrent that suggests women are whores who can only temporarily rise to the level of a madonna.

Five women—an unnamed shoplifter, Mrs. Farragut, Miss Hatch, Susan Carmichael, and Mary McLeod—define the parameters of what it is to be female in *Detective Story*. Single women are portrayed as more vulnerable and self-centered than their married (or soon to be married) counterparts. The first of the women to appear is the shoplifter. Kingsley describes the shoplifter, who is never given a name as a
"moronic little creature with a Bronx accent" (466). The shoplifter exemplifies women without husbands, lost, lonely and considered valueless by society. The shoplifter has been arrested for stealing a purse that she does not want. Her longest speech reflects a desperate desire to meet society's expectations. Explaining her plight, the shoplifter claims:

Everybody tells you why don't you get married. You should get married. . . Where do you find a man? Give me a man, I'll marry him. Anything! As long as it's got pants, big, little, fat, thin . . . I'll marry him. You think I'd be here? . . . I'd be home, cooking him such a meal . . . (542).

The play suggests the shoplifter's predicament and unhappiness result directly from her single status. She must rely on her brother-in-law to bail her out of trouble. She remarks that she is lucky that her sister is "sexy." The implication is that her lack of "sex appeal" relegates her to single status. The shoplifter seems to provide a warning of what can happen to women who cannot marry.

In sharp contrast to the shoplifter is Miss Hatch. Before the action of the play begins, Miss Hatch has promised to aid the police in the capture of Dr. Schneider. Entering the station wearing a new fur stole, she reneges on her offer to identify Dr. Schneider's picture. The implication is that the fur stole is a bribe given to Hatch by Schneider. Hatch does not keep her word with the police. Her actions are motivated by greed which contributes to the creation of Miss Hatch as a thoroughly dislikable character. In addition to escalating McLeod's anger and sense of frustration, Miss Hatch casts a negative light on unattached women.

Mrs. Farragut, who enters the station only briefly, is an elderly woman. Kingsley describes her as "aristocratic-looking, dressed in the style of a bygone era" (468). We are not given a reason for her husband's absence, but we assume she is widowed. Mrs.
Farragut is paranoid; she fears foreign invasion and atom bombs. The police appease her by falsely promising increased surveillance and protection. Consoled, she leaves the station. Mrs. Farragut provides comic relief, but it is disturbing that she too has been cast off and devalued by the society in which she lives.

Susan Carmicheal is a positive representation of women within the text; however, her saving grace is her selfless devotion to a disturbed young World War II veteran Arthur. Arthur has been arrested for embezzlement, and Susan comes to his rescue. Loyal and devoted, Susan is a younger version of Mary McLeod. Susan is the perfect angel who is patient, virginal, untainted and able to save Arthur from her selfish, callous and unfeeling sister. She represents what Mary could have been had she not had an abortion and married an unforgiving man.

Kingsley describes his leading female character as "a pretty young woman . . . very feminine and very soft . . ." Mary McLeod's life revolves around her husband, Jim. Her devotion is apparent from her first entrance. The essence of Mary's character is her patience and ability to forgive. Jim calls Mary his "angel," but ironically this angel has a past. Mary's abortion haunts her and her personal dilemma becomes public when the police attempt to convict an abortionist.

The text's portrayal of Mary and her interrogation demonstrates a shift in the manner in which women who had an abortion were treated by the U.S. legal system. Illegal abortions were increasingly performed and abortionists were sought out, arrested and prosecuted. Raids became more common and women were once again victimized. Women who sought abortion came into contact with the law more frequently. Leslie Reagan states:
The new mode of enforcing the criminal abortion laws brought women into contact with the criminal justice system in unprecedented ways. Women had before felt the force of law during interrogations on their deathbeds; now women were forced to speak of their abortions in the male-dominated spaces of the police stations and the courtroom (161).

*Detective Story* dramatizes this reality as Mary is summoned to the police station to tell the tale of her previous abortion. Not only is she confronted by the Police Lieutenant Monoghan, she is also confronted by her former lover who reveals her past. Mary's privacy and her marriage are destroyed by the revelation of her previous abortion. In her husband's eyes, Mary has fallen from the pedestal upon which he placed her.

Because Mary's dilemma is not the focus of the text, she becomes part of the periphery. Her function in the text is to bring about her husband's downfall. Thus Mary is constructed and viewed in relation to her husband. While she has come to terms with her own past and does not suffer from guilt over her actions, she is punished for her past by Jim's inability to forgive her. Jim's understanding of people is black and white. If Mary is not his angel, then she is sinful. He is too rigid to erase Mary's deed from his mind and forgive her. Mary eventually has her say and speaks the truth:

> No, let's have the truth! I could never find it in my heart to acknowledge one tiny flaw in you because I loved you... You haven't even a drop of ordinary human forgiveness in your whole nature. You're a cruel and vengeful man..." (557).

Mary leaves immediately after this speech. Within a few minutes Jim is dead. He commits suicide by rushing an armed suspect.

Throughout the text Mary's crisis remains unexplored. The focus resides upon her husband, and the abortion plot only supports the exploration of this character. Mary's once-desperate situation and need for an abortion are articulated clearly, but her crisis has long since been resolved. Her past dilemma is just that, in the past. Her own
pain and fears are now distant. Mary's "defense" lacks urgency. Eventually Mary, as well as her past abortion, disappears during the action of the play. Her character pales in comparison to her husband's and it is difficult to imagine that she ever had an affair, let alone had an abortion.

Much like Eugene O'Neill's "Abortion" and Men in White, the abortion plot in Detective Story serves as a crisis but no argument ensues over the issue itself. Instead the focus is once again skewed as the emphasis is placed upon the male protagonist. Waste, "Abortion," Men in White and Detective Story build sympathy for the male protagonist by placing the responsibility for the pregnancy firmly upon the shoulders of the pregnant woman. Like Harley Granville Barker and Eugene O'Neill, Sidney Kingsley subjugates the female character's wants, needs and desires in order to focus upon the male protagonists.
CHAPTER TWO:
FIGHTING THE GOOD FIGHT:
BIRTH CONTROL AND PROPAGANDA PLAYS

Following the first world war, women's social status advanced. Suffragettes won the vote in both the United States and Great Britain. Women were entering university in unprecedented numbers, and a new era in which women made significant gains in their social independence began. Many women in the United States were also experiencing a sexual revolution. As historian Linda Evans notes, "the twenties formed an era when changes long under way emerged into an urban mass culture emphasizing pleasure, consumption, sexuality, and individualism" (Evans 176). Hemlines were shortened and flappers bobbed their hair. Despite this exhibition of surface sexual freedom, a repressive Victorian ideology still remained firmly fixed in the minds of many. In Great Britain, the Edwardian insistence on the sanctity of motherhood remained staunchly ensconced, and in both countries the vestiges of Victorian prudery and the unanswered "woman question" persisted.

The U.S. and Great Britain experienced the tensions surrounding women's expanding role in society. Human sexuality and human reproduction were heatedly debated during the late teens and 1920s, and at the center of this debate was the issue of birth control. The legal status of birth control differed across the Atlantic. As noted in Chapter One, abortion was illegal in both nations; however, the United States had also outlawed the dissemination of birth control in the Comstock Law. In Great Britain birth control was legal but still vastly unavailable. British birth controllers worked to gain
acceptability for birth control so that it could be promoted and distributed by public health clinics.¹

Despite the central difference of legality, one crucial tactic in the birth control movement remained the same in both countries: change prevalent attitudes about birth control. Objections to birth control appeared on many fronts. In the United States, the legal and ideological association between birth control, abortion, and pornography was sealed with the passage of the Comstock Act, which labeled birth control and abortion lewd topics and their practice obscene.

Opposition to birth control was formidable, and many people resisted the idea of artificial contraception for a variety of reasons. In both Great Britain and the U.S., one of the strongest opponents to contraception was (and remains) the Roman Catholic Church. Catholic doctrine insists that any artificial interference with the process of reproduction is sinful. Social Darwinists believed birth control would interfere with natural selection and therefore damage the race. Some physicians considered birth control unnatural and subsequently harmful. Others simply believed that birth control interfered with a woman’s primary duty: motherhood.

Two women, one in the United States and the other in Great Britain embodied the struggle for birth control. Margaret Sanger became the central figure in the struggle for contraception in the U.S. She is attributed with the coinage of the very term "birth

¹According to Richard Soloway, author of Birth Control and the Population of England, British birth control advocate Marie Stopes, as well as others involved in the birth control movement, believed that the "most promising way of reaching the lower classes was through the more than two thousand antenatal clinics and infant maternal welfare centers distributed throughout the country" (280).
control." Great Britain's struggle for birth control was led by a botanist Marie Stopes. Both women, in an effort to change public opinion, employed similar tactics. Significantly in terms of this study, they both used agitprop drama in order to promote contraception. Sanger and Stopes had their work cut out for them. Just as newspapers and plays constructed ideology regarding the nature of abortion, literature disseminated about birth control played an important role in constructing a societal understanding and eventual acceptance for regulating reproduction. Sanger and Stopes worked to construct a new narrative that refuted established views which considered birth control obscene and unnatural.

This study examines two agitprop dramas written specifically to champion birth control. The first play "They That Sit in Darkness" was written by Mary Burrill, a black high school teacher and an advocate of both the rights of African Americans and birth control. Burrill took an active interest in both theatre and education. Her play was written for Margaret Sanger's magazine, the Birth Control Review. The second play discussed in this chapter is Marie Stopes's Our Ostriches. Our Ostriches is a fictionalized autobiographical sketch of Stopes's struggle to gain acceptance and financial support for birth control.

There are several similarities between "They That Sit in Darkness" and Our Ostriches. In addition to their political purpose, both plays depict the impact of too many children in a poor family. While the plays are about the need for birth control among the lower classes, the intended audience is middle and upper-class. The message contained in the text is that there is a need for those in a privileged class to help the underprivileged limit their population. These dramas suggest that alleviating the over-population problem

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among the poor will improve the race and the conditions for the white, monied audience reading or viewing the play. Both plays include a line of eugenic rhetoric typical of the times and often found within the birth control movement of both countries. While playwright Mary Burrill and activist Margaret Sanger included depictions of the poor that was biased, their intentions were not eugenic per se. Marie Stopes, conversely, espoused a eugenicist rhetoric which she believed.

Stopes and Sanger's crusade was similar, but their motives differed significantly. Stopes's play reflects her personal experiences as a birth control crusader. Therefore, the central figure in the drama is a young woman who resembles the author. Although Mary Burrill wrote her play specifically for Sanger's magazine, her central focus remains upon a poor young black girl. While the playwright includes a character resembling Margaret Sanger, Burrill does not completely shift the focus from the family in need of birth control and the upper classes providing it.

The first portion of this chapter examines the careers of Sanger and Burrill and the strategies and motives for providing birth control to poor, black communities. The second portion of the chapter explores the work of Marie Stopes and her propaganda drama, Our Ostriches. The rhetorical devices employed in order to promote the birth control cause are investigated, and the historical background which contextualizes each play is provided. The authors' reliance on their personal experience for dramatic material, the agitprop message of the dramas, and the inclusion of a eugenic expression in order to gain acceptance for birth control are also examined.
Mary Burrill's "They That Sit In Darkness"

In the fall of 1919, a new play by a Washington D.C. high school teacher appeared in the Birth Control Review. Mary Burrill's "They That Sit in Darkness" dramatizes the need for birth control information for rural, poverty-stricken black women. Historically the play is important because it appears to be the first play to focus upon the issue of birth control. "They That Sit in Darkness" clearly and accurately links uncontrolled reproduction, poverty, and ignorance to voice an immediate and striking protest. In this issue of the journal the work of playwright Mary Burrill and the journalist efforts of Margaret Sanger merged.²

The necessity for Sanger and Burrill's social protest originated in the latter part of the nineteenth century when a new "standard of morality" swept the nation. Obsessed with purity, reformers sought to control vice. The campaign to clean up America's cities and rid the population of indecency resulted in the passage of anti-obscenity legislation known as the Comstock Law (Reed 34-45). Anthony Comstock, a representative for the Society for the Suppression of Vice, campaigned against pornography and obscene literature. Comstock, along with others of his day, considered contraceptive information to be obscene.³ In 1869, because of Anthony Comstock's influence, the New York State

²The acting editor for The Birth Control Review in 1919 was Agnes Smedley. It is unlikely that Burrill and Sanger ever met. Their common interest in birth control, race and poverty converges in this issue of the magazine.

³In the second half of the twentieth century it is difficult to remember that the ability to successfully divorce procreation from sexual intercourse is a relatively new invention. For those obsessed with purity, the idea that decent people may wish to have sex for pleasure and not to create children must have been an odd notion indeed. The very idea of sex for other than procreative purposes was often labeled obscene.
obscenity laws included contraception. Comstock's success set the stage for his future achievements. In 1873 the federal Comstock Law was enacted. As Alvah Sulloway notes, this law "shaped the entire course of the controversy over birth control" (3).

The federal Comstock Law and the state statutes that followed drastically limited the availability of contraceptives and contraceptive information (Field 49). Doctors feared prosecution and hesitated to advise patients on how to prevent unwanted pregnancies. Publication of pamphlets that contained birth control information was illegal, and even contraceptive information contained in medical texts was removed by law (Field 50). In addition to the legal consequences, doctors feared professional and economic ruin if they supported birth control publicly. Many sympathetic physicians did not protest anti-obscenity legislation for fear of being labeled immoral or unethical (Reed 44-45). Doctors, the group of people who would have been most able to aid in the repeal of the Comstock Law, were afraid to protest. Although the law was challenged several times before the turn of the century, the legislation remained unchanged.

The impact of these anti-obscenity laws on poor immigrant communities and poor black families was particularly brutal (Cott 166). Mary Burrill, as a high school teacher in an urban area, must have seen numerous examples of the hardships lack of birth control caused the families of her students. Burrill protested these conditions through her writing, while New York City nurse Margaret Sanger began a lengthy struggle

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*Nancy Cott, in her book *The Grounding of Modern Feminism*, reports that "not until 1936 did the U.S. Supreme Court, in *The United States versus One Package*, remove birth control devices from the inclusive research of the federal anti-obscenity law. The American Medical Association withheld its approval of dispensing birth control devices until the following year" (166).*
to legalize birth control. A pioneer in the struggle for women's right to control their own reproductive systems, Sanger worked to distribute birth control information.

Margaret Sanger was the leading proponent for birth control in the United States from 1914 until her death in 1966. During her fifty-two year crusade for birth control, Sanger was slandered, arrested, jailed, and depicted as a subversive if not the anti-christ. When she began her campaign in 1914, birth control was thought by many to be immoral, and the distribution of birth control devices and information was illegal. Her work challenged existing mores concerning contraceptives, and her continual lobbying resulted in the 1965 Supreme Court's decision Griswold vs. Connecticut, which protects the use of contraceptives under constitutional law.

Sanger employed a myriad of methods in her campaign for birth control. She fought on every possible front: medical, legal, and cultural. Realizing that in order to change birth control policy she must change public opinion, Margaret Sanger devoted a great deal of time and energy to her media campaign. In March of 1914, she published *The Woman Rebel*, a radical magazine that addressed issues such as suffrage, birth control, and the evils of capitalism. In September of that same year, the seventh and last edition of this leftist and short-lived magazine appeared. Sanger was ordered to discontinue publishing *The Woman Rebel* because it violated anti-obscenity legislation. Sanger ignored the injunction and continued publication. In August of 1914, she was indicted for criminal violation of the Postal Code. Sanger fled the country and did not return until the fall of 1916. Due to pressures put forth by both the Birth Control League and prominent individuals who pressured President Wilson himself, all charges, including those specifically dealing with *The Woman Rebel*, were dropped (Baskin x-xiv).
In February 1917, three years after the demise of *The Woman Rebel*, Sanger started her second magazine, the *Birth Control Review*. This time the birth control advocate took a more conservative tone in order to reach a wider audience. While the *Birth Control Review* exhibited what biographer Ellen Chesler called "Margaret's lingering radical orientation," (165) the magazine was significantly more subdued in tone than *The Woman Rebel*. The *Birth Control Review* was also longer-lived than its predecessor; its first publication was in February of 1917, and the final issue appeared over twenty years later.

In her autobiography, *My Fight for Birth Control*, Sanger states that for the laws to change "women of leisure must listen. The women of wealth must give. The women of influence must protest" (191). The *Birth Control Review* sought to change women's (and men's) ideology concerning birth control. The *Birth Control Review* contained poetry, illustrations, dramas, short stories, testimonials, statistics, articles, essays and editorials that portrayed the need for access to birth control. Because of the magazine's eclectic nature it drew upon a wide variety of literary forms and artistic media. The *Birth Control Review*'s inclusive nature encouraged playwrights, poets and illustrators to contribute material designed to persuade readers to fight state and federal regulations that restricted the dissemination of contraceptive information. The magazine contained propaganda aimed at convincing the public of the need for birth control and for reform of restrictive laws that prevented the dissemination of information on the topic.

While the magazine discussed the political aspects of legalizing birth control and demonstrated by a variety of examples its social necessity, not a single article provided practical information on how to prevent conception. Sanger relates that "Subscribers complained that there was 'nothing about birth control in it.'" (*My Fight For Birth Control*
194). Federal statutes at the time prevented the distribution of information on pessaries, condoms, or other birth control methods by labeling them as obscene. The *Birth Control Review* was limited to publishing diatribes in myriad forms, emphasizing the need for the distribution of contraceptive information.

Sanger established the Brownsville Clinic in Brooklyn, New York on October 16, 1916. It was the first birth control clinic in the U.S. The Brownsville Clinic was short-lived because Sanger was arrested and convicted for violating the Comstock Law. Although the clinic was closed in 1916, Sanger's arrest and public protest gained publicity for her work and advanced her legal battle to repeal federal and state legislation which restricted birth control information and the distribution of contraceptives. Margaret Sanger understood that the battle for birth control was fought on two fronts. She must convince the legislators, but to do so she must make birth control an acceptable idea to the public. Sanger used every method at her disposal to sway public opinion in her favor.5

Both Sanger's work in the clinic and descriptions of the desperate conditions of the poor in *The Birth Control Review* often addressed the needs of poor immigrant families

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5In order to visually demonstrate the need for social action, Sanger experimented with a recently developed art form: film. She and the B.S. Moss Company produced "The Hand That Rocks The Cradle." This film depicted incidents from Sanger's work and her subsequent arrest at the Brownsville Clinic. The motion picture was not shown because the Appellate Supreme Court of New York reversed a previous decision and reinstated a restraining order placed upon the film by Licensing Commissioner Bell (*New York Times*: July 14, 1917). The court banned the film because according to the judge "it would have a tendency to arouse hatred as it tends to show that the rich have small families and favor the poor having large families" (*New York Times*: 7/14/1917). The court, it seems, was apprehensive of portraying the upper class as exploiting the poor, and the comments suggest a fear of provoking an uprising.
in New York City. However, dismal working conditions and lack of birth control also plagued poor black women, particularly those in the rural south. A special issue of the Birth Control Review appeared in September 1919 which contained a series of didactic writings by black authors that voiced a crucial need for birth control in the negro community (Perkins 55). Mary Burrill's play, "They That Sit in Darkness" which had been commissioned for the Birth Control Review, was presented to inform the public of the special needs of poor, rural blacks.

The black communities in both the North and South had experienced a great deal of turmoil during the early part of the century. At the rise of the modern era, racial terrorism in the South was reaching its height. Racial bias was rampant, and the disparity between the classes was a cause for alarm. Black women organized to combat social ills. The National Association of Colored Women provided classes, kindergartens, orphanages and homes for the elderly. The organization influenced black leaders such as Booker T. Washington to fight for the rights and dignity of black women (Evans 152). It was out of this tradition of social activism that Mary Burrill began her work.

Burrill, a teacher at Dunbar High School, was one of several black women playwrights who wrote of the lives of black people and protested the inconsistencies of their treatment in American society (Brown Guillory 4-5). Burrill concentrated her efforts upon education and directing plays. She wrote only one other play, "Aftermath," which portrayed the horror and injustice of lynching (Perkins 55). Like "Aftermath," "They That Sit in Darkness" considers a pressing problem that plagued the black community.
Burrill was a member of the Washington D.C. Birth Control League and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (Peterson 45). She was also associated with the Krigwa Players, a dramatic group that performed in the Washington area. The Krigwa Players performed "Aftermath," while less prominent dramatic groups presented "They That Sit in Darkness" (Perkins 55). Given Burrill's association with politics and the stage, it is not surprising that she chose a dramatic format to address her concerns (Brown-Guillory 4-5). Burrill's specific focus upon the needs of black women, as separate from those of white women, was necessary at the time. For although birth control was a pressing issue for women of both races, black and white women found themselves divided by color, and this fact prevented their acting in concert:

Modern America—urban, industrial, bureaucratic—came of age between 1890 and 1920. American women shaped that new order with a profusion of new voluntary associations, institutions, and social movements. The collective power of women, which had been building throughout the nineteen century, reached its apex in a massive push for political reform and woman suffrage. At the same time, new currents eroded female solidarity. The old divisions of race remained deep despite the emergence of black female activism (Evans 145).

The September 1919 issue of the Birth Control Review, in which Burrill's play appears, was entitled "The Negroes' Need for Birth Control as Seen by Themselves." The issue contained not only Burrill's work, but also that of her close friend Angelina Weld Grimké (Perkins 55). While the issue worked to demonstrate the problems of poor blacks who suffer from not enough money and too many children, the article

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*Grimké's story "The Closing Door" is presented in serial form in both the September and October 1919 issues. The plot revolves around Agnes Milton, a young black wife, who smothers her own child after learning of her brother's lynching. This same theme will be repeated in Georgia Douglas Johnson's play "Safe" (1929).*
inadvertently emphasizes racial differences and sets up a double standard. The tone of one particular article is overtly racist. In an argument intended to portray black women's need for birth control information, Blanche Schrack, a white southern woman, addressed Southerners who hire blacks. She first suggests that those who use "colored nurses" should support birth control in an effort to stop the spread of disease in white families caused by uncleanliness of their hired help. She perceives this uncleanliness to be the result of poverty caused by overly large black families. Schrack goes on in her article to suggest that this recommendation is selfish, and she states that "coloreds" deserve a decent life because it is their right. Her previous line of reasoning, however, reveals an intolerable bias against African Americans.

Arguments advocating birth control for the negro poor presented in the Birth Control Review generally appeal to improving the quality of their lives. Chandler Owen, the 1910 census taker for Tidewater, Virginia and a noted economist, stated, "Birth Control, by limiting the number of children born to Negro mothers, would afford opportunities for education and more time and money for a general improvement in conditions" (9). It is Mary Burrill, however, who was able to vividly demonstrate in her play the complex issues of poverty and birth control.

Set in the rural South, "They That Sit in Darkness" is unique because it demonstrates the inexorable correlation between poverty, ignorance, and lack of birth control. Within the eight pages of this very short play, Burrill is able to show the devastation of uncontrolled childbirth upon the Jasper family. The stage directions call for the shabbiest of settings. Malinda, the central character, and her daughter Lindy bear the brunt of inescapable poverty. Malinda lives in a state of constant worry that her
family will not be able to earn enough to ensure their survival. She sends the children to bed without supper because there is no supper to give them; an older child, sent to get milk for the baby is turned away until the bill is paid. Burrill establishes that the reason the Jaspers are so poor is that they have too many children: Malinda cannot buy the milk she needs because she has spent the money to pay the doctor for delivering the new baby. Several times throughout the course of the action Malinda refers to her own impending death. Clearly her line "Yo' chillern' nuf to worry me to death!" is not a figurative statement (69). The play is not intended to be subtle; its primary purpose is political.

Burrill's treatment of the men in her plays reflects similar views to those of Sanger. The two men in "They That Sit in Darkness" are unable to help Malinda Jasper in any way. Her husband gets home from work too late to assist his wife, and her son is depicted as unreliable. While Burrill does not blame these characters for the family's problems, she does include them to demonstrate that only when a woman can control her reproductive system can she take control of her life. Burrill seconds Sanger's claim that: "Birth Control is a woman's problem... (it is) hers and hers alone" ("Women and the New Race" 484).

In addition to the black male family members who are powerless in a racist society, the only other men mentioned in the plot are white workers down the road who have sexually abused Malinda's mentally-impaired daughter Pinkie. After this incident, Pinkie leaves and is lost to the family forever. Through the story of Pinkie, Burrill also establishes that poverty causes emotional turmoil as well as physical want. Not only is Malinda unable to feed her children, she cannot protect them from the horrors of a
prejudiced white society. Pinkie is lost because the Jaspers had to let her work outside the home, unsupervised, in order to support the overly large family.

Both Margaret Sanger and Mary Burrill were convinced that education was the solution to many of society's ills. Burrill uses the heroic figure of Booker T. Washington to provide the essence of the conflict in her work. At the beginning of the play the situation is not hopeless; Lindy is about to go to teachers' college in Tuskegee. Years ago Lindy heard Booker T. Washington speak and was inspired to continue her education, with its promise of a job and better life. Lindy is the most admirable character in the play. She is bright, hard-working, and caring, and she has faith in the possibility of a better tomorrow. The true tragedy of the play is not Malinda's death; it is that, as a result of Malinda's death, Lindy will be caught in the same vicious cycle. Lindy's education is lost from ignorance; because it is illegal for Malinda to obtain birth control information, Malinda dies a physical death and Lindy dies a spiritual one.

The cyclical nature of poverty and ignorance inspired Burrill to change the name of the play to "Unto the Third and Fourth Generations" (Perkins 55). While the revised title did not stick, the title is significant. The reference is based upon Exodus 20:4-5: "I am a jealous God, visiting the iniquities of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generations . . . " Burrill implies the issue is not only a social imperative; it is also a religious obligation. This argument is significant in that it suggests that God sanctions birth control. Exodus 20:4-5 is the first of the Ten Commandments. The retitling of the play intimates a directive from the Almighty to ease the suffering of poor, rural blacks.
Burrill's characters are deliberately one dimensional. Their purpose is to be mouthpieces to protest the plight of the poor black family denied information that could save lives. In many ways "They That Sit in Darkness" is allegorical in nature. Malinda represents all poor black mothers doomed to poverty and premature death due to uncontrolled births. Lindy epitomizes the next generation, lost to this cycle of poverty and ignorance. The father typifies men's helplessness in their inability to relieve the plight of their wives. The only white character within the play, Nurse Shaw, represents a frightened and ineffectual medical community powerless to relieve this ongoing tragedy.

Burrill's use of the character of Nurse Shaw is an obvious protest against the legislation which forbids nurses to disseminate contraceptive information. She perceives these statutes to be a violation of an individual's rights and an unbearable burden upon the lives of poor blacks. Nurse Shaw's speech embodies the theme of the play and eloquently portrays the predicament of nurses who worked with poor mothers:

I wish to God it were lawful for me to do so! My heart goes out to you poor people that sit in darkness, having, year after year, children that you are physically too weak to bring into the world--children that you are unable not only to educate but even to clothe and feed. Malinda, when I took my oath as nurse, I swore to abide by the laws of the State, and the law forbids my telling you what you have a right to know! (Perkins 71-72).

Sanger, who began her career as a nurse like Shaw, saw her own concerns dramatized in a realistic fashion.

In 1913, Sadie Sachs, a married twenty-eight year old women with three small children, found herself pregnant yet again. She and her husband Jake could ill-afford another child. So, Sadie Sachs attempted to abort herself with "an instrument lent to her by a friend." This desperate venture not only jeopardized Sadie's life, it also left her quite ill and unable to care for herself or her family. A young nurse Margaret Sanger was
called in to help. Sanger nursed Mrs. Sachs for two weeks. When the doctor came to check on the patient's progress, Margaret Sanger, at Sadie's request, expressed the overwrought mother's concern over becoming pregnant yet again: "When he came I said: "Mrs. Sachs is worried about having another baby."" The doctor replied: "She well might be... anymore such capers, young woman, and there will be no need to call me."

Sadie pressed the doctor for more information asking "what can I do to prevent getting that way again?" "Oh ho! laughed the doctor good naturedly, 'You want your cake while you eat it too, do you? Well, it can't be done.'" Then, familiarly slapping her on the back and picking up his hat and bag he said: "I'll tell you the only sure thing to do. Tell Jake to sleep on the roof!" (Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control* 52-53).

A distraught Sadie begged Margaret Sanger for the same information, but the young nurse replied she honestly did not know the secrets to preventing unwanted pregnancies. Sanger left the Sachs swearing to herself that she would find out what she could and return. Time passed, and Sanger became busy with her work and family.

Three months later she received a desperate call from Mrs. Sachs's husband; Sadie was "sick" again. Once again she had tried to induce an abortion herself. This time, however, Sadie Sachs did not survive. She died ten minutes after Sanger arrived. "She had become pregnant, had used a drug, then consulted a five-dollar professional abortionist and death followed" (Sanger, *My Fight For Birth Control* 53).

Sanger cites the story of Sadie Sachs as the inciting incident in her fight for birth control. Sanger explained:

The Revolution came—but not as it has been pictured as history relates that revolutions have come. It came in my own life. It began in my very being as I walked home that night after I had closed the eyes and covered with a sheet the
body of that little mother whose life had been sacrificed to ignorance (Sanger, *My Fight For Birth Control* 55).

Theatre scholar James Hatch notes that "Burrill supports Sanger's emphasis on female education as a means to escape poverty" (176). Burrill goes beyond the call for the need for birth control education, but insists that the cycle of poverty will not be broken until black women receive an education that will allow them to earn a living.

Sanger and Burrill present the pregnant woman in their narratives as needless victims. The stories of both Sadie Sachs and Malinda Jackson employ a rhetorical strategy to condemn legislation that prevents the dissemination of birth control information. The stories differ in that in Sanger's narrative the nurse is the protagonist, while Burrill places the nurse in the role of a concerned observer whose ability to help is constricted by law. Burrill and Sanger's accounts are unequivocal political appeals framed in simple stories.

The women's dramatic stories attempt to sway public opinion by gaining empathy for compassionate mothers who suffer from the inability to protect their families from the economic strain of too many children. Sanger's story is printed as a factual narrative, while Burrill wrote a play dramatizing the problems of too many children; both women's rhetorical strategies are the same. Both authors realize that the battle for birth control must be waged on more than one front. The dramatization of factual events, such as Sanger's story, or the presentation of Burrill's agitprop play, successfully argue their cause by presenting both a logical and an emotional appeal.

Without a doubt, both Sanger and Burrill were concerned with the plight of poor people who experienced hardships because of too many mouths to feed and too little money. Because the *Birth Control Review* needed the support of the firmly established and
highly respected eugenists, occasionally the ideologies of the eugenics movement influenced their texts. Eugenics supporters sought to improve "the race" by selective breeding. According to Charles Valenza in the 1920s, the eugenics movement believed that "a better breed of humans would be created if the 'fit' had more children and the 'unfit' had fewer" (Valenza 1). Mary Burrill includes eugenics rhetoric by suggesting that too many children also lead to unfit children. In "They That Sit in Darkness," the baby's leg is deformed, Aloysius is bow-legged, and Pinkie, as her mother laments, "warn't right in de haid" (7). In addition, certain racial overtones can be found in the description of the Jaspers' oldest son Miles as "lazy and shif'les" (68). The placement of Burrill's text in the same issue in which Blanche Shrank seeks to promote birth control for poor blacks in order to insure their cleanliness for potential white employers indicates both racism and eugenics ideology.

These racist and eugenic components certainly exist, but there is a great deal to be said for intent. Much of the rhetoric used in Burrill's "They That Sit in Darkness" and Sanger's Birth Control Review reflects the period in which they wrote more than individual ideology. Mary Burrill worked tirelessly to educate black students, and she promoted the careers of such playwrights as Willis Richardson and May Miller. Her concern for underprivileged black students is expressed by Burrill's colleague, Mary Hundely who stated:

In dramatics, Miss Mary P. Burrill gave many years of outstanding service in the training of speech and acting . . . Students from underprivileged homes, whose color barred them from the usual cultural contacts found themselves developing in speech, posture and poise (Hundely qtd. in Perkins 55).

In recent years Margaret Sanger has been accused of being a racist and a eugenicist. In an article published by Planned Parenthood, Charles Valenza defends
Sanger's work and motives. Citing an article Sanger wrote for the *Birth Control Review*, Valenza concludes that claims that Sanger was a eugenicist are misguided. Valenza reiterates and confirms birth control historian James Reed's conclusion that Margaret Sanger courted individuals involved in the eugenics movement and published their articles in an attempt to confer respectability upon and gain acceptance for birth control (Valenza 2). Sanger defines her position regarding birth control and eugenics in the February 1919 issue of the *Birth Control Review*:

> We who advocate Birth Control, on the other hand, lay all our emphasis upon stopping not only the reproduction of the unfit but upon stopping all reproduction when there is not economic means of providing proper care for those who are born in health... We hold that the world is already overpopulated. Eugenists imply or insist that a woman's first duty is to the state; we contend that her duty to herself is her first duty to the state (11).

Both Sanger and Burrill's concern for the individual won out over eugenic ideology. Through the work of women such as Mary Burrill and Margaret Sanger the Comstock Laws would eventually be repealed. Sanger's political activism paved the way for many political protests. Burrill's drama also foreshadows the use of feminist drama for an overtly political end.

**Marie Stopes’s *Our Ostriches*: Personal and Political Platforms for Birth Control**

At 8:30 in the evening, November 14, 1923, at the Royal Court Theatre, an original work of Dr. Marie Stopes did not take place. *Veczia*, a play depicting the plight of a naive young woman involved in an unfulfilled and, more significantly, unconsummated marriage, remained on the shelf. Banned by the Lord Chamberlain for its unacceptable

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*Veczia* can be found in *A Banned Play and a Preface on the Censorship*. Reproduced with permission of the copyright owner. Further reproduction prohibited without permission.
theme, the work would never be performed. A hastily-scripted "second string"
production was presented instead (Our Ostriches, Times 11/15/1923). Our Ostriches, the
first full-length play that focused upon the issue of birth control, premiered.

In her Preface on the Censorship birth control advocate Marie Stopes allowed that
she was "driven" as an artist to write a propaganda piece because of the unwillingness of
the censor to license her original work (Stopes, A Banned Play and a Preface on the Censorship
5). According to her account, Vectia was not only scheduled for performance but was in
rehearsal when it was refused a license. A substitute was needed immediately. Stopes
hastily contrived Our Ostriches and quickly dictated it to a short-hand reporter. Our
Ostriches represents a struggle for her voice to be heard.

Our Ostriches holds historic prominence as it seems to be the first play presented
on birth control in Great Britain. This play encapsulates the difficulties of Stopes's
struggle to make birth control acceptable to the clergy, politicians, medical community,
and public at large. In many ways the play reflects Stopes's personal and political beliefs
regarding marriage, family, class, and contraception. The script demonstrates not only
Stopes's brave crusade for birth control, but also some of the disturbing notions which
motivated her work. Imperialism, nationalism, and eugenics play an important role in Our
Ostriches just as they did in Stopes's crusade for birth control. Marie Stopes's interests

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8Marie Stopes, in her address to the audience, uses the term "second string" in her
reference to Our Ostriches.

9Stopes claims in her Preface on the Censorship that she dictated Our Ostriches to a court
reporter in about six hours and that it opened on Vectia's originally scheduled performance
date. As Vectia is a play with three characters and one set and Our Ostriches is a play with
twenty-two characters and three sets, one wonders how this shift was accomplished.
were as varied as her distinctions. In 1905, she became the youngest Doctor of Science in Great Britain. Stopes's scientific research alone is quite impressive. She achieved notoriety, however, for her work in the birth control movement and her writings on marital relationships. Stopes's first book, *Married Love*, was so popular that by the end of the first year of its publication in 1918, it was in its sixth edition10 (Hall 135). *Married Love*'s influence reached far beyond Great Britain. A survey conducted among American academics in 1935 placed *Married Love* sixteenth out of twenty-five of the most influential books of the last fifty years.11

Marie Stopes's interest in educating people about human reproduction was inspired by personal experience. In 1911, Stopes met and married Reginald Gates. The marriage was unhappy, and six years later she successfully sued for divorce. Stopes claimed that not only was the marriage unconsummated but also that she had been unaware of what consummation actually involved. Gates's impotence and Stopes's own ignorance of human sexuality caused the scientist great distress in her personal life. *Married Love* stems from Stopes's unhappy relationship with Gates, and her realization of the dangers of ignorance.

While Stopes's book took London by storm, her play *Vestia*, a personal account from her marriage, did not. After the play was banned, it was never produced. Even as Stopes worked to produce and publish the script, she encountered opposition.

10Marie Stopes's biographer Ruth Hall clearly defines the historical significance of *Married Love*. She asserts that the originality of the work appears in her "nonchalant use of physiological terms," which, until this point had not occurred in a popular work.

11Ironically it came in ahead of Einstein's work on relativity, Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*, and Hitler's *Mein Kampf* (Hall 128).
Playwright Alfred Sutro found the content of her text, particularly the protagonist's naiveté, unbelievable. In his article, "Alfred Sutro, Marie Stopes, and her Vecdia," theatre scholar Lewis Sawin analyzes the correspondence between Sutro and Stopes in relationship to her play. Sawin presents a clear depiction of Sutro's incredulity over the events contained within the text. In response to Stopes's request for his assistance in publishing the piece, Sutro replied: "Now look here. Is it conceivable that Vecdia shouldn't have known? After all! Is such ignorance possible?" Stopes replied: "You: Is it conceivable that Vecdia shouldn't have known? Yes and more over she didn't and I am Vecdia" (Sawin 61-63).

Sutro's question echoes louder today than it did decades ago. "Is such ignorance possible?" And more pointedly, is such ignorance plausible for a woman who was graduated as the youngest doctor of science in Great Britain? Stopes was thirty-one when she married Gates. It seems impossible that during the course of her life the basic questions regarding human reproduction would not surface. The subject arouses scientific curiosity if not personal interest. Whatever the truth of the matter regarding the extent of her ignorance on this topic may be, the pain and trauma of the incident spurred her political and artistic work.

Although she was unable to present Vecdia to the public, Stopes was unwilling to give up the opportunity to present birth control issues. Her play OurOstriches, essentially a hastily written diatribe on the horrors of uncontrolled reproduction, was performed on November 14, 1923 at the Royal Court Theatre (Hall 247). The play enjoyed a respectable run of ninety-one performances (Gales 241). The substitution of OurOstriches for Vecdia denotes an expansion from the personal to "the personal is political." Vecdia
revolves around a domestic dilemma. In contrast, Our Ostriches combines both the public and private persona of Stopes. The story of an individual woman's search for happiness is upstaged by Stopes's platform on birth control.

The Times, Punch, and The Observer agreed that Our Ostriches was not a play; it was propaganda. While none of the reviews seemed at all offended by what they saw, neither were they particularly moved by it. The most sympathetic review appeared in The Observer; "It is the advantage of Our Ostriches to put these arguments on a vitally important subject into easily grasped sequence, in a place where they get wide publicity and attention. If it isn't a 'play' who cares" (Our Ostriches, The Observer, 18 November 1923).

While Stopes believed Our Ostriches to be "a play" and would indeed care about its artistic merits, her political concerns in promoting birth control are paramount within the text.

Stopes's crusade to ensure women's access to safe and reliable birth control was slow, difficult and came at a great personal cost. While England never outlawed the dissemination of birth control information, it did censor publication of material labeled obscene. Stopes's problem was dissimilar to her American counterpart Margaret Sanger in that she did not have to wage a legal battle to allow printed material on birth control methods to be published. She did, however, have a similar problem in that in both the U.S. and Great Britain contraception was considered a new idea. Like many new ideas, birth control met with a great deal of controversy. In order to gain political and economic support for birth control, Stopes would have to convince the public not only of its importance but also of its morality. Her work with such a sensitive topic would put the birth control leader under personal attack.
Those seriously interested in publicly discussing or publishing matters related to sex were under suspicion. George Bernard Shaw, who was a friend of Stopes, wrote the following note after she lost a libel suit concerning her birth control writings. Shaw wrote: "My dear Marie Stopes, the decision is scandalous; but I am not surprised at it: the opposition can always fall back on simple taboo. The subject is obscene: no lady would dream of alluding to it in mixed society: reproduction is a shocking subject, and there's an end of it . . ." (Hall 241).

Not only was birth control considered a rather risqué topic, it also ran contrary to current nationalistic politics. The birth rate had been declining steadily since the late 1800s. During the first decade of the twentieth century there were 222 live births for every 1,000 married women between the ages of 15 and 44. By the 1930s there were only 111 births for women in the same group (Lewis 5). This decline was separated along class lines. Between 1910 and 1924 the number of births in a family where the male was a manual worker was 42 percent higher than in homes where this was not the case (Lewis 6). Because of the overall decline in population immediately preceding and following World War I, many politicians and welfare leaders were concerned over Great Britain's declining population, particularly in the middle and upper classes. To satisfy the nationalistic cry for more children, birth control proponents argued that they were employing birth control to produce "better planned families." As sociologist Jane Lewis suggests, the title Marie Stopes gave her birth control society, "The Society for Constructive Birth Control and Racial Progress," served to counter the accusation that birth control was harmful to the nation. (Lewis 32).
Stopes's society and birth control itself were condemned by the Anglican as well as the Roman Catholic Church. Marie Stopes's challenge was not only to change public opinion, but to change clerical sentiment as well. One of Stopes's greatest triumphs was that by 1930 the bishops voted that birth control would be permissible "provided that this is done in light of Christian principles" (Davey 330). Nine years later "more than 280 local authorities approved the possibility of some form of birth control assistance from within a public health facility" (Davey 331).

In 1923, the year Our Ostriches was produced, Stopes's work to advance birth control was under way. Like her American counterpart Margaret Sanger, Marie Stopes vigilantly searched for venues to present her views. Marketing was a paramount concern as she worked to bring human sexuality into an atmosphere of open discussion. Certainly, by putting her political polemic on the stage, Stopes simultaneously attempted to allow for a free flow of ideas and reach a larger, perhaps more tolerant audience. Stopes's convictions on birth control, economics, class distinctions, and the position of women in society were clearly articulated. Our Ostriches' simple plot provides a backdrop for Stopes's cause. The play's delivery of the arguments is occasionally convoluted; however, they can be divided into three basic categories: 1) Birth control is good for the poor because it is humane. 2) Birth control is good for England because it improves the quality of "the race." 3) Knowledge is indeed a dangerous thing, thus the distribution of knowledge should be controlled; however, withholding knowledge from those who need it, is criminal.

The plot of Our Ostriches is straightforward. A young girl, Evadne, visits her old nurse in the poor section of town and announces her engagement to the dispassionate
and highly unsuitable Lord Reginald Simplex. The character's name not only indicates his membership in the aristocracy, his surname, Simplex suggests his simple-minded and unsuitable view of the poor and their problems. Juxtaposed to Lord Simplex's callous attitude toward the lower classes is Evadne's sympathy for the needy. Upon visiting her nurse, who lives on a less than fashionable side of town, Evadne is overcome with pity at the plight of the poor. The heroine decides (with youthful naivete) that she will discover the root of this abject misery. It is no surprise when Evadne realizes that it is unregulated births which cause this poverty and squalor. Determined to alleviate the suffering she has witnessed, Evadne approaches the Birth Rate Commission, asking them to support birth control. Politically she fails, but personally she triumphs by denouncing her former engagement to the uncaring Lord Simplex and by uniting with the attractive Dr. Hodges in this fight for birth control.

A member of the upper-class and an unflappable proponent of birth control, Evadne represents Stopes herself. The obstacles facing Evadne, particularly her inappropriate engagement, the censure she receives because of her interest in such an "unsuitable" topic as birth control, and her devotion to the cause, parallel the life and career of the author. Throughout Our Ostriches, the focus remains on the young heroine who serves as a mouthpiece for Marie Stopes, and the play consequently reveals Stopes's sentiments. The play also reveals her own prejudices embedded in her humanitarian cause.

As Reginald was also the name of Stopes's first husband, the reader is left with no doubt as to the biographical reference within the text.
The point of attack in the play comes in the second scene of the first act when Evadne goes to the "shums" to visit her old nanny, Hettie Ross. Evadne is appalled by the inferior housing in this section of town. She believes that the problem cannot have been created by poverty alone and decides that she will "ferret out" the problem (24). As she greets nurse Hettie, we discover, along with Evadne, that not all of the poor are miserable, only those who have too many children. Indeed Hettie claims that she and her husband Tom lead a happy life. They have only one child. The Rosses are included in the narrative to exemplify those of the lower classes who are able to meet their needs on their small salaries because they do not have too many children to support. Juxtaposed against this happy family are the Flinkers.

The audience is introduced to Mrs. Flinker immediately after Hettie Ross. Mrs. Flinker is a poor woman with six children and a seventh on the way. Stopes describes her as "fat, florid and untidy" (26). The exhausted Mrs. Flinker is overwhelmed by the conditions in which she lives and the plight of raising too many children on too little money. Evadne soon realizes that uncontrolled reproduction is at the root of Mrs. Flinker's problem. The heroine seeks to ameliorate her suffering by beginning her quest for birth control information.

While many groups were sympathetic to the plight of the poor, in 1923 in Great Britain birth control was an unpopular solution for some and an unsanctionable sin for others. The Roman Catholic Church, which still wielded a great deal of political power, spoke out vehemently on birth control and considered its application sinful and dangerous. Within the text of the play, Stopes specifically condemns Roman Catholic ideology. She represents the views of the Church in the character of Brother Peter.
Brother Peter, a member of the Earfyan Brotherhood, visits Mrs. Flinker, only to end up in an argument with Evadne over the issue of birth control. Mrs. Flinker is not only exhausted, she is pregnant for the twelfth time and ill. She now has six living children, five have died. Evadne is horrified at Mrs. Flinker's plight and stunned that unhealthy children are allowed to be born only to die so quickly. Brother Peter remarks that the children's duration on earth is unimportant: "If they just breathe and are baptized then they are immortal souls in the service of God" (39.) Evadne is outraged by his arguments and vows to find out the "secret" that will help Flinker and others like her.

Religion plays a key role both within the world of the play and the debate that raged throughout Great Britain. The morality of birth control was hotly contested by religious groups and the ethics of its application under scrutiny. Evadne sees her role as savior of the poor and believes her work to be inspired by God himself: "My God is a God of Love, of understanding. My God would help these people—yes—would help even through me." (49) It would seem Stopes believed that the almighty sanctioned birth control and stood behind her crusade.13

By focusing upon Evadne and her crusade for birth control, Stopes pushes Mrs. Flinker to the periphery. Looking at the lives of working class poor women during the 1920s in Great Britain reveals that unemployment caused great economic hardships. In addition, working-class homes were often ill-equipped and particularly difficult to keep clean. Women's health suffered from over-work, frequent pregnancies, depressing

13During a libel trial held the February before the play was produced, a defense attorney forced Stopes "into a position appearing to claim the God had personally sanctioned the rubber pessary" (Hall 221).
conditions and hard physical labor (Lewis 24). In addition to being a poor housekeeper, Mrs. Flinker is depicted as an alcoholic. The manner in which these factors are portrayed diminishes audience compassion for her plight and holds her liable for her actions. The characterization of Mrs. Flinker reflects not only a class bias but also a prevalent attitude toward the poor as somehow responsible for their own poverty. It also confirms sociologist Jane Lewis's assertion that "it was motherhood rather than the needs of individual mothers which evoked concern and relatively little attention was paid to the conditions faced by working class wives in their daily lives" (32).

Presumably because of poverty, ignorance, and exhaustion, Mrs. Flinker is also an unfit mother. She strikes out at the children several times during the course of the slum scenes. "Ere, you brats out of my way. What are you blocking up under the table for... (Kicks Teddy. He howls) (30). The combination of Mrs. Flinker’s drunkeness and her decided lack of parenting skills denies her the sympathy of the audience. Nor does the children’s characterization move the reader/audience toward pity. The children of the slums, except for the oldest one, are described in various states of defectiveness: "half witted," "vacant," and sniffling. They are portrayed as shiftless, lazy and problematic. Presumably, the audience’s aversion to the poor could create a desire that the problem will simply disappear. The characterization of the Flinker family does not create a sympathetic attitude toward them or their plight. Instead the audience’s attention and empathy are focused on the protagonist and her cause.

What becomes apparent is that Stopes's beliefs on the necessity for birth control are influenced not only by class bias but by eugenics. Marie Stopes believed that birth control was essential not only to relieve the suffering of the poor but also to insure a
healthy race of people for Great Britain. She theorized that the strength of the human race improved by judicious unions in the same way that genetic engineering in plants and animals limit certain characteristics and strengthens others. Within the text of Our Ostriches, the presentation of the children forcefully depicts Stopes's eugenics philosophy.

The influence of eugenics can be seen in Stopes's political arguments and personal battles regarding birth control. Our Ostriches serves as a microcosm in which the public events in the playwright's life as well as her eugenic ideology are revealed. One particular incident that figures significantly in the text is her trial for libel. On February 21, 1923 the court heard Marie Stopes's suit against Dr. Halliday Sutherland for libel. In his book, Sutherland accused Stopes of using medically dangerous birth control practices in her clinic. Essentially what was on trial were Stopes's ideas about birth control. While Stopes lost the original suit, she gained a great deal of publicity for her cause, received hundreds of letters of support, and sales from her book, Married Love, soared. Although she achieved a moral victory, Stopes decided to appeal the judgement. On July 20, 1923, the court reversed its judgement and awarded Marie Stopes a mere one hundred pounds in damages. Sutherland, backed by the Roman Catholic Church, appealed the case to the House of Lords where he won ultimate victory. Despite the great financial costs of the libel suit, Stopes made great gains in her birth control crusade. Many of the issues, such as

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14In an early play The Race (1918) Stopes portrays a young woman who is forbidden to marry the soldier she loves before he goes off to the trenches in France. The heroine believes her fiancée to be of such fine character that she convinces him to sleep with her so that in case he should die, part of him would live.
as the morality of birth control and its importance to the state, were made public during the first trial. These issues appear in Act III of Our Ostriches.15

Act III takes place in the Library of the Commission Hall where members of the Commission have been petitioned by Evadne to come out in support of birth control. The debate begins before the heroine's entrance with a series of arguments intent on demonstrating the possible harm of interfering with reproduction. The first argument alleges that birth control would sabotage Darwin's ideas of natural selection. Subsequently Great Britain, weakened by birth control, would falter as a nation. Unsurprisingly, the depiction of the opponents is less than flattering, and their views seem backwards and illogical.

Those presenting anti-birth control arguments appear dry and undramatic; not only does the content of their speeches differ from the protagonist so does their style. The birth rate commission members' stodgy appearance contrasts with Evadne's youth and passion. Inspired by the horrible sights she saw while visiting her nurse, Evadne presents her case emphasizing the need to relieve suffering. But as the scene progresses, the focal point of her argument vacillates between the need to help the poor and the concept that birth control is necessary for the good of the nation. The nature of the conflict was not an individual's right to control reproduction but rather birth control as a means of ensuring healthy babies. The only people who should use birth control to prevent births at all are "those who are in some shape or form diseased or unfitted for parenthood or whose children are themselves unfitted for this world's duties" (67).

In her biography on Marie Stopes, Ruth Hall summarizes the events of the trial.
One member of the Birth Rate Commission argues that the upper classes depend upon a growing population for national stability. Stopes's own arguments are presented in a quagmire of nationalistic politics: "Don't you see women want healthy children, they love them. But when the mothers are ill, tired, poor, and overworked, they cannot bear them properly: and I cannot see what good to the State diseased, miserable, half-witted people can do...." (68). Evadne focuses on the good of birth control to the state. Her eugenic bent is painfully evident in her argument for compulsory sterilization. Evadne insists that only healthy people have babies and that "mentally deficient" women should be prevented from reproducing. After referring to the increase in the "lunatic" population this discussion ensues:

Dr. Verro Hodges: Then I suppose you agree that the Government should step in and sterilise them.

...Evadne: Yes, I think so, otherwise the worst kind of babies would be born.

Sir Theodore Ravage: Compulsory sterilisation is a totally different problem. You are there asking for abolition of the liberty of the individual.

Evadne: Yes, and that is why I did not say anything about it (69).

Thus throughout the play Evadne reveals Stopes's own nationalistic agenda for birth control. While Evadne initially seems to be concerned about Mrs. Flinker and others in her initial quest for birth control information, eventually her arguments concentrate on the validity of birth control for its ability to create a better race of individuals. However, as biographer Ruth Hall notes, Stopes's "central belief -- that the human race could be improved by the eugenic application of birth control--is now
shunned" (326). The eugenic themes alone are enough to make Our Ostriches no longer viable to the stage.

While birth control was not illegal in the Great Britain in 1923, achieving acceptance and support for it was no easy task. The government, the British Medical Association, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Episcopal Church resisted the distribution of birth control information. Marie Stopes was able to gain partial acceptance of birth control on the platform that it was good for the nation. Her play, at the time it was presented, received no censure for its eugenic philosophies.

It is impossible to read Our Ostriches today without being struck by its class bias and its eugenic overtones. The eugenics and nationalist attitudes reflected in the play foreshadow the dangers of viewing birth control as a governmental prerogative instead of a matter of personal choice. Our Ostriches, however, cannot be regarded as a political failure. Like Mary Burrill's "They That Sit in Darkness," the play's significance lies in its revolutionary demand that contraceptives could play a positive role in family life and alleviate the suffering of the poor.
CHAPTER THREE:
RECONCEIVING PREGNANCY: FEMINIST NARRATIVES, METAPHORS, AND IMAGES

When I was nine years old, my sister met me at our backyard gate, flushed with excitement and unable to contain her news. Without preface she blurted out: “Mom’s going to have a baby.” “Stupid,” I replied, “Mom doesn’t have babies, we adopt them.” Annoyed with my attitude, my sister curtly replied, “No stupid, she’s going to have one.”

I immediately ran into the house to find my forty-one year old mother bent over the stove crying. Indeed she was pregnant and frightened of the possibilities of childbirth so late in life. The pregnancy was not an easy one and from my limited perspective it was a bad idea. Mom was fat, ugly and cranky. Her ankles were swollen, and, for some reason I could not name, she was, for the first time, an embarrassment. I also couldn’t figure out this drastic change in procedure. After all, when we wanted babies before we adopted them from the Catholic home, took them to the priest who sprinkled water on them and they were officially ours.

While my mother’s first and only pregnancy successfully added a fourth and final child to our family, images of pregnancy and its seeming unnaturalness tainted my understanding of women and childbirth. In the course of doing this study I came to understand that birth is a natural and, for some women, desirable process. I also realized that every woman with whom I’ve spoken to about childbirth has her own story.

One teacher and mentor tells the horror story of her doctor threatening that if she wanted her baby to survive she would do as he required. A colleague relates the tale of an epidural so potent that she felt her lungs would become numb and she would
suffocate. A friend confessed that after a difficult eighteen hours of labor she neither wanted to see or hold her baby. After hearing these stories it became apparent that birth stories reveal the myriad ways in which birth is practiced in the U.S and that these narratives construct our understanding of labor and delivery. Performance studies professor Della Pollock also realized that the repetition of these narratives prescribes the manner in which birth is performed.

Della Pollock's article "Origins in Absence, Performing Birth Stories" examines the narrative tradition of birth accounts and suggests that birth stories "dramatize the convergence of multiple performativities on the birth experience" (15). When these stories are contextualized within a larger cultural framework and against a political backdrop of "reproductive technologies, 'family values,' welfare and health care reform," they reveal a complex social understanding of reproduction (Pollock 15). Birth narratives expose how we understand childbirth and labor, and also reinforce existing expectations for labor and delivery. The following excerpt demonstrates the dramatic nature of these tales:

I heard my first birth story near the end of my first pregnancy—when my round belly and hips betrayed the fact that I would soon be the subject of similar stories, that I was, for all intents and purposes, whether I liked it or not, already inside this particular narrative ring . . . . In retrospect, I was smug about my ability to walk what seemed a fine but clear line between public and private worlds. I lost my perfect balance one day in the neighborhood grocery. As I wended my way towards the produce section, I admired a young infant sitting straight up in the seat of a grocery cart. Her mother was trying to negotiate the cart, an anxious two-or three year old boy, and the last of the summer squash. We exchanged a few pleasantries. Then I was captive. With no warning and heedless of all conventional concerns (including the line forming at our backs and the fact that her son had disappeared down the cereal aisle,) she launched into a horrific tale of labor and delivery. Gesticulating wildly over the cabbages and cucumbers, she punctuated her story with frequent, repeated declarations of its main points—"It was a nightmare" and "I will never have another child"—and demonstrated exactly where the emerging fetus had broken through the vaginal wall to the bowel. I don't
remember many other details of her story. What I do remember—vividly, so vividly that even now my heart races at the thought—was the dramatic urgency with which she told it and my own flight (such as it was) to the place that was and wasn't my home (now more and less than ever) to retell it to my husband and to whoever else would listen (Pollock 11-12).

The appearance of Pollock's article in The Drama Review corroborates the performative nature of birth and suggests that birth narratives are dramatic in nature. Pollock analyzes the narrative as both a performative and cultural event that shapes our understanding of birth. Although based on actual incidents, birth stories create a fiction; they often end with the arrival of a healthy baby and imply the fairy tale epilogue: "and they all lived happily ever after." As Pollock notes, birth stories deliver "with all the flourish of a Shakespearean comedy...order from discord and pleasure from abandon, transgression, and pain" (13). In the same way that Shakespeare's comedies end in marriage (never examining the years that follow), stories of birth end in delivery, suggesting that the birth in and of itself is the complete experience. The scope of birth narratives is such that they disallow the contemplation or discussion of the years between infancy and adulthood and focus on the experience between the onset of hard labor to delivery as the complete scope of the performance.

Comparing Pollock's study of birth narratives to feminist theatre focusing on childbirth illuminates many of the issues surrounding labor and delivery. Feminist playwrights have also explored how narratives and metaphors concerning childbirth influence our understanding of that event. Women playwrights have taken an active interest in pregnancy, birth control, and abortion. Their texts are based upon an exploration of the multifaceted issues surrounding reproduction. Feminist texts exploring reproduction include Caryl Churchill's Vinegar Tom which looks at the connection
between witchcraft and midwifery, Kathleen Tolan's *Approximating Mother* which takes a look at mothering in the 1990s, and Jane Alexander's *The Baby Dance* which focuses on the difficulties for adoptive mothers and mothers who give up their children for adoption.

The plays chosen for this chapter all work to explore the meaning of mothering in terms of narrative and image. All three texts are non-realistic in presentation and each contains recreations of the event of childbirth. The works included in this chapter are Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth*, Karen Malpede's *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun*, and Judy Chicago's *Birth Project*. Each of the feminist works discussed in this chapter is framed in terms of a larger social context. Thus each text is compared to a feminist analysis of the performance of birth in the U.S.

Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth* inverts the birth narrative's usual chronology by beginning with a birthday party of a four-year-old and ending with the a tale of childbirth. The playwright analyzes American cultural attitudes about birth and looks at how these attitudes take shape in daily life. Howe disrupts the traditional birth narrative by presenting a bizarre account of a fictitious birth. *Birth and After Birth* deconstructs the "Mommy Myth" and looks at the process of delivery and labor as a societally constructed event. The playwright clears the stage, calling for a new understanding of mothering, pregnancy and delivery. *Birth and After Birth* includes a fictitious and bizarre tribal birthright. This birthright is compared to a factual but equally bizarre obstetric practice.

Karen Malpede's *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun*, works to create a new birth narrative by contrasting a woman-centered view of childbirth to a male-centered view. Malpede juxtaposes voluntary motherhood against involuntary motherhood. She emphasizes the importance of a woman's perception of pregnancy and how this...
perception influences her birth experience. Malpede works to replace traditional images of pregnancy with positive, women-centered images of birth. Her work coincides with a then growing movement by women to reclaim their bodies and take control of their birthing experiences. In addition to analyzing Malpede's text, this study traces the decline of midwifery and the rise of obstetrics.

Judy Chicago continues in this tradition; however, her work is primarily visual and focuses on the negative and positive aspects of childbirth and delivery. Her work is particularly important in terms of this study in that it focuses upon women's bodies and pregnancy and recognizes that the portrayal of these images is a type of narrative. Chicago has been severely criticized by the art community for her gynocentric view of women. Particular emphasis has been placed upon the artist's ability to create a narrative form despite its seemingly static nature. Understanding Chicago's *The Birth Project* as performative allows for the installations to be examined as a narrative which creates images that construct a new understanding of pregnancy and birth. While Chapter Five of this study investigates how science appropriates female reproductive powers, the focus of the final section of this chapter on Judy Chicago and *The Birth Project* demonstrates the need for a new metaphor for childbirth. Critical reactions to Chicago's attempted to present a new model are also examined.

While many feminist works address reproductive issues, these three works specifically examine the cultural production of childbirth. There are other similarities between texts. Each of the texts presented is in some way iconoclastic and has been censured by the respective critics in the field. All three texts portray birth in an abstract rather than realistic manner. Both Howe and Malpede have characters enact an imaginary
birth experience, while Chicago depicts childbirth in a variety of media including brightly colored embroidery. Real birth is very messy and the presentation of childbirth in naturalistic detail could be off-putting. However, it is probable that the artists decide to portray birth in a more abstract manner because by abstracting the process it is possible to achieve a psychic distance that allows a more thoughtful rather than visceral response.

The central issue addressed in each text is who controls the process of birth, particularly the societal understanding of that process. How do the metaphors used to describe birth influence the perception of it and how does that perception influence the actual process of pregnancy, labor and delivery? This chapter looks at these issues and how dramatic texts reveal our beliefs about pregnancy and pregnant women. Each of the dramatic representations of pregnancy and birth in this chapter places women center stage. This section also examines birth as a type of performance that is rendered by the pregnant woman but often managed and directed by the medical community.

Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth*

Any woman who's had a baby knows that when you're on that delivery table, grunting and pushing and you feel this creature slither out of you like a huge wet pimento, something mysterious and ritualistic happens. I don't think you can write about birth without going back into that strange mystic harbor. (Tina Howe qtd. in Betsko 223-224).

Written in 1973, *Birth and After Birth* tells of a family exhausted and overrun by a four-year-old. The play explodes the myth of the American happy home and debunks the notion of blissful motherhood. *Birth and After Birth* examines the ugly result of post-WWII society's insistence that women return to the home and take up the role of motherhood. Written as the women's movement of 1970s spread from the cities to the suburbs, the play deals with the conflict between those who decide to mother and those
who decide not to mother. Playwright Tina Howe explores the isolation of the suburban mother, and the social coercion of women to become mothers. Howe's work investigates both birth narratives and the prescriptive nature of childbirth in America.

The plot of Birth and After Birth depicts a day in the life of the average American family, symbolically named the Apples. As the lights go up Sandy Apple is introduced. An overwrought mother, Sandy at the moment is frantically wrapping the last of her son Nicky's birthday presents. Her husband Bill is playing with Nicky's tambourine. Bigger than life, Nicky bursts onto the stage, literally overwhelming his mother and father whose parenting skills are not quite up to coping with this energetic pre-schooler.

The child Nicky is the pivot point between the characters. When he is in the room, one parent will give the child his or her undivided attention, while the other parent is left out. As Sandy plays a game of babies with Nicky, Bill worries about his career. There has been talk that his boss will ask for his resignation. Isolated and afraid, Bill becomes angry that no one is listening to him.

In reaction to Bill's explosion, Sandy turns on Nicky calling him a "savage." Nicky acts out, clambering for grape juice, and an argument between the two ensues. Sandy loses control, shakes Nicky and hollers, "Mommy! Said! No!" (32). Nicky immediately falls into a faint. Both parents over-react, with Bill calling for ice and a tourniquet--heroic measures-- to revive their son. After he recovers, Nicky again dominates the action. When he exits, leaving Sandy and Bill alone, Bill tries to get his wife interested in a romantic tryst. Nicky interrupts their intimacy, and Act One ends on a chaotic note with both Sandy and Bill threatening that there will be no party.
The second act revolves around Sandy's childless cousins, the Freeds, and their surreal experience with a primitive tribe and its strange birthing customs. Act Two begins with the Apples awaiting the Freeds and Nicky's imminent birthday party. Sandy reiterates her wish that the Freeds will change their minds about having children this very night. The Freeds arrive not with their own baby but with stories of four-year-olds from other cultures. They present Nicky with his birthday present—a projector with slides of children all over the world. The presentation of the slides sets up the most absurd and intriguing story within the play regarding the Whan See tribe.

The Whan See are delicate people who have retained a prehensile tail. These peaceful and beautiful people fascinate the Freeds. The Whan See spend their entire lives in trees, dying if they hit the ground. For this mythic tribe, birth is a public event, and all members of the community gather to witness the arrival of its newest member. After the birth, the Whan Sees practice an unusual custom. Mia states: "But the very instant it [the baby] emerged, they lifted the tiny creature up and reinserted it back into its mother's womb" (125). In the mythical Whan See tribe, it seems the baby is reinserted and reborn several times as part of the rite of birth. Mia reveals that she too helped in the ritual "reinsertion" but that the baby died "in her hands." Shortly after, the mother committed suicide by dropping to the ground.

Sandy interprets Mia's tale as expressing Mia's own fear of childbirth. She tries to convince Mia that her birth experience would be a good one and that motherhood is a wonderful occupation—one well worth all the sacrifices needed. While Jeffery looks at the slides of primitive tribes, Sandy, Bill and Nicky coach Mia through her imaginary labor. Mia fights "labor" and cries out to be left alone. After Mia passes, out Sandy
exclaims, "Well, I guess some women just...can't have children" (132). Mia comes to, and the Freeds must leave to catch a plane for their next assignment. As the evening ends on a sour note — including the loss of Sandy's front tooth, Sandy exclaims to Nicky, "Four years ago today, you made us the happiest family in the world!" (141). After the events of the evening, the line is ironic. *Birth and After Birth* portrays a world where motherhood is a dubious honor at best and deadly at worst.

The script begins with stage directions describing Bill and Sandy Apple's home as "a surreal space in which the boundaries between the four rooms have long since collapsed" (81). With the collapse of boundaries, both spatial and personal, Howe sets the stage for the chaos that will ensue. By the playwright's own description, *Birth and After Birth* can be classified as "absurdist" (Betsko 227). Perhaps because of its non-realistic inclination, the play was rejected by several producers. After the script's initially poor reception, Howe shelved *Birth and After Birth* for over twenty years; although the play was published, it was not produced.

*Birth and After Birth*’s avant-garde qualities prevented its American debut until 1996 when both the Wilma Theatre and the Woolly Mammoth Theatre produced the play. During the twenty years in which the work lay dormant, Tina Howe became a nationally known playwright with successful works such as *Museum*, *The Art of Dining*, *Painting Churches*, and *Coastal Disturbances*.

When *Birth and After Birth* made its professional debut in 1996, its non-realistic style was misunderstood by a critic from the *Washington Post* who complained that "the work's nuttiness can be annoying, since Howe tends to use it as a substitute for actually writing a play" (Rose B1). Howe wrote a "real play" — just not a realistic one. Tightly
structured and divided into two acts, *Birth and After Birth* juxtaposes realistic situations with absurd visual metaphors. For example, the character of four year old Nicky is portrayed by an adult actor, which visually reinforces the psychic space taken up by a four year old. Also, Nicky's largeness aids his ability to overwhelm his parents, thus reinforcing Howe's point.

The absurdist element in Howe's early work can be attributed to Ionesco's influence. Howe credits the French absurdist as an influential force. As a young woman, she attended a production of *The Bald Soprano* in a small French theatre. Howe stated, "It was as if I had been struck by lightning . . . . The curtain went up and all hell broke loose" (Lamont 27). Despite Howe's interest in the avant garde, rejection of plays such as *The Nest* and *Birth and After Birth* caused the playwright to seek a more mainstream approach to her work (Lamont 9). Rosette Lamont in her article "Tina Howe's Secret Surrealism: Walking a Tightrope" suggests that Howe consciously chose a more popular form of representation in order to allow for her work to be more palatable for American audiences.

*Birth and After Birth* deconstructs the myth of the perfect American family by creating familiar family routines and then exploding them by adding absurd actions and situations. However, Howe causes her audience to re-examine the familiar by peppering her plot with the unimaginable: a four-year-old who towers over his family, Sandy's on-stage physical disintegration such as the loss of hair and teeth, and perhaps most significantly the strange birthing customs of the Whan See tribe. Like Ionesco's use of seemingly ordinary situations to expose the complacency of middle-class life, Howe uses the absurdist tradition to investigate the isolation of motherhood, the overwhelming
stresses of parenting, and the problems of intimacy that are so often disrupted by a
toddler. But by far the most dominant theme present in the play is the tension
surrounding issues of mothering and the cultural meanings of reproduction.

Deeply rooted in Howe's own experiences, the play reflects the lives of other
mothers with whom the playwright was acquainted. In discussing how overwhelming
motherhood can be the playwright noted: "I wrote this play for the suburban woman
with no exit from her kitchen and a four-year-old seven feet tall" (Howe qtd in Burke
101). Birth and After Birth's Mom, Sandy, embodies a mother who is not only
overwhelmed but who is physically stagnating from her entrapment in isolated
motherhood. Early in the first act Sandy, who is ignored by her husband and son,
laments her physical decay. She complains that her breath smells, that her teeth are loose,
that no one cares about her. As she talks, her husband buries her under Nicky's presents.
Literally and figuratively, Sandy is interred by motherhood. Her interior distress takes a
surreal physical toll as she falls apart on stage. As Sandy decays, she complains that she is
not thanked and believes that things would have gone differently in her mother's
household. She is torn apart not only by the isolation and stress of motherhood in the
early 1970s, but also by her own expectations about what a good mother does. Her
deterioration is physically embodied as the stage directions call for sand to literally fall
from the actress' head. Sandy states that her "head is drying up and leaking" (85). In
addition to feeling trapped by motherhood and a failure as a mother in comparison to her
own, Sandy also feels used up because she can no longer mother. She states: "When I
looked in the mirror this morning I saw an old woman who could only conceive once"
Her process of disintegration is directly related to her desire for children and her inability to conceive.

Howe not only looks at mothering, she explores the conflict between women who choose to mother and those who choose not to be mothers, and this tension lies at the center of this work. She states:

Because I had written about courtship in *The Nest*, my next impulse was to write about fertility and childbearing. After I got married, we didn’t have kids for five years. And I was attacked by all these mommies who said you’re not a woman until you have a child. I found that a hideous tyranny. But I also thought it was a wonderful idea: a play about how women compete over their fertility (Richards C1).

The competition between Mia and Sandy goes far beyond individual life choices and reflects a larger cultural debate on the nature of women. In her book *Unwomanly Conduct*, Carolyn Morrell suggests that society sees woman and mother as synonymous terms. Morrell states:

There are women and there are ideas about women. While women themselves vary considerably, one idea about them seems stable: motherhood, as wish or reality, is their essential and defining characteristic or condition (3).

Howe’s beliefs about the societal perception of women as potential mothers are revealed through a birth story delivered by Sandy. She narrates the story of a woman whose shriveled cervix prevented natural birth and states that labor was finally induced in the fifteenth month. “When the poor baby was finally pulled out by Cesarean section, he weighted thirty-six pounds and had a full set of teeth” (108). Nicky, who has been attentive during Sandy’s story asks “what’s a cervix?" Despite his parents’ efforts to clarify the matter, Nicky confuses “the baby hole" with "the poopie hole" (108). Nicky’s curiosity about the baby hole makes for an embarrassing moment when Mia and Jeffery arrive. As she enters, Nicky asks Mia if she "has a baby hole?" Like Sandy and Bill, he is
curious as to why Mia is childless. When Nicky asks Mia if she has a "baby hole," he is also asking why she does not have a baby. While embarrassed laughter usually follows such a naive comment, society seems to assume the same: women, by definition, have baby holes and are expected to use them.

Morrell also suggests that women are assumed to be "relational" in their orientation (10). That is women take the greatest satisfaction in their life from their personal relationships. Despite all of the economic and legal advances that women have made in the U.S. in the twenty-five years since Birth and After Birth was written, certain "essential" assumptions about women remain. Mia's choice to devote her energies to her career seems antithetical to the very definition of woman as our culture defines the term. If mother is the norm for women, then Mia is obstinately abnormal. Sandy cannot understand Mia's decision to remain childless because it is aberrant. Mia's decision places her outside the universal truths of the nuclear family.

Feminist critics have interpreted Mia's birth narrative in different ways. Sally Burke suggests that Howe is criticizing "society's insistence that women become mothers over and over" (199). While Rosette Lamont suggests that "By the end of the play, Mia has indeed given birth, not to a human baby but to an unforgettable story. No one knows better than a creative artist or scientist that there is more than one form of parturition" (35). While Burke looks at the metaphor as enforced reproduction, Lamont focuses on Howe's use of a female creative energies within her text. The ritual reinsertion of the baby back into the vagina sends another and perhaps more literal message. Within culture, the mother is "fucked" to death by the birth process, and she and the child literally die from it. "Only the strongest survive," Mia says of this ritual, and, after
watching the interactions of the Apple family, it is clear that their survival is also threatened. Sandy and the mythical Whan See mother decline under the assault of motherhood.

Howe's inclusion of the Whan See story acknowledges that birth, an awe inspiring and mysterious event, is performed according to cultural specification, and often these cultural constraints are bizarre and dangerous. The American way of birth has been dictated by the obstetric profession for well over one hundred years. Several birthing customs are unnecessary and some are dangerous. Many obstetric practices do not necessarily enhance the birthing process, particularly from the mother's point of view.

During the last two decades, various practices have been called into question such as:

- Requiring all normal women to give birth in the hospital... Separating the mother from familial support during labor and birth;
- Confining the normal laboring woman to bed;
- Chemical stimulation of labor... Delaying birth until the physician arrives;
- Requiring the mother to assume the lithotomy position [lying down] for birth;
- Routine use of Episiotomy1 (Rich 180).

While birthing practices in the U.S. are improving because of consumers' insistence, many practices instituted by the medical profession hinder the birthing process.

On the surface, Tina Howe's Whan See story is a flight of fancy. The idea of reinserting a child into the vagina after it has descended seems ludicrous. Yet, to borrow a cliché, truth is stranger than fiction, for the insertion of a child upwards through the birth canal does occur in obstetric practice. In her article "Reconfiguring the Hysterical Body: Midwifery Stories Meet the Zavanelli Maneuver," Kay Torney discusses how

1As defined in Our Bodies, Ourselves, an episiotomy is "an incision through skin and muscles in the perineum, the area between the vagina and the anus, to enlarge the opening through which the baby will pass" (458).
obstetrical medicine creates its own birth narrative and how doctors perform this narrative on a passive maternal body. An uncommon, but none-the-less practiced, obstetric procedure called the Zavanelli maneuver literally moves the child backwards during the birthing process. This highly invasive technique is employed during shoulder dystocia, a condition in which the baby becomes lodged in the birth canal after the presentation of the head. In layman’s terms the child’s shoulders are stuck and the birthing processes is interrupted. If this condition occurs during a hospital delivery some obstetricians will perform the Zavanelli maneuver "in which the baby’s head is manually rotated back to the facedown position, flexed, put back into the vagina, and a Cesarean section performed .. " (Torney 171).

Shoulder dystocia is handled quite differently by a midwife. Should this situation arise during a midwife attended birth, the midwife would have the woman get on her hands and knees. This simple movement allows the shoulders to be dislodged and delivery to be completed. One midwife reported that "in 21 cases of shoulder dystocia (out of a total of 1628 births)" no injury to mother or child occurred "when the mother assumed the all-four position" (Torney 172). While the example is extreme, it illustrates that the attitude of the physician towards birth is played out in very physical terms.

Torney concludes that the performance of the Zavanelli maneuver by the medical community exemplifies the physician’s prominence in the performance of birth. She asserts that in an obstetric birth narrative "the surgeon, if all goes well, relies on scientific expertise to produce a baby from the body of the mother" (173). The mother’s story and her performance are usurped by the medical profession’s understanding of birth. In this
version of the drama the physician becomes the protagonist while the mother is the subject.

Birth narratives, such as those related by Della Pollock, told at the beginning of this chapter and the obstetric narrative characterized by the Zavanelli maneuver typify our cultural production of birth. Such narratives are not only descriptive, they are also prescriptive. Birth narratives by their repetition prescribe the "normal way" in which a pregnant woman delivers her child. They reaffirm obstetric practices by their sheer repetition. By repeating birth stories, either by a woman's recounting of her experience or by an obstetrics manual's description of a procedure, the stories reinforce what is to be expected—what can be considered "normal." Tina Howe's play, *Birth and After Birth* works to defamiliarize the American way of birth and childbearing by introducing a story so bizarre that it disrupts the conventional birth narrative and calls into question the manner in which we have and raise children.

**Karen Malpede's *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun***

In Louisiana State University's Hill Memorial library, the letters of Dr. McKinney are carefully preserved. The young doctor's correspondence with his pregnant wife reveals a growing prejudice against midwives and a rapidly changing attitude that it was the male doctor who was the authority on childbirth.

In 1857 Jeptha McKinney was a young medical student studying in New Orleans. He was separated from his wife, Adeliza; she had remained in Greensburg to care for their family and small plantation. Adeliza was expecting their third child in the spring. A portion of the couple's correspondence discusses the necessary arrangements for her confinement, and it reveals Jeptha's growing concern for his wife's welfare. The situation
was further complicated by the fact that Adeliza's mother was also pregnant and would not be able to assist her daughter during delivery. McKinney suggests that his wife go to her father's home, as she would not be able to manage without help. Within the text of the letter he implies that he trusts her judgement, yet he advises:

> There is one injunction that I lay upon you, that in your confinement you obey my injunction already laid . . . do not obey others in their desires in trying to have you up too soon. Do not yield to the dictates of others in wishing to have some old midwife with you, and her alone; but have Dr. Williams with you . . . he will also, I expect, tell you what course to follow (McKinney 1/8/1857).

Jeptha McKinney's views regarding midwifery reveal a long-standing prejudice against women healers and midwives. This prejudice against midwifery was heightened by growing attempts to professionalize medicine and obstetrics in the U.S. during the middle of the nineteen century.

The rise of the medical profession coincided with an increased sense of sexual repression of the Victorian period. At this time, according to Adrienne Rich, the "female body became more taboo, more mysterious, more suspected of complaints and disorders" (169). Rich asserts that the male gynecological establishment viewed female sexual responsiveness of any kind as pathological. Physicians "expressed professed reverence for women . . . consisted largely in an exaggerated prudery" (169). The combination of Victorian sensibilities and an increased interest in specialization transformed the process of birth for many physicians and their patients. With the rise of obstetrics, pregnancy becomes pathology, a disease to be studied, controlled, managed and cured.

As male obstetricians gained control over the birth industry, midwives slowly began to disappear. During the 1970s many women, dissatisfied with obstetrical practices during hospital deliveries, began to seek a way in which to reclaim a woman-centered
birthing process. This grassroots movement to reclaim female reproductive power sets
the stage for Malpede’s text.

In *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun*, feminist playwright Karen Malpede examines the
complex ideologies that shape our beliefs about pregnancy and birth. While *A Monster
Has Stolen the Sun* investigates complex sexual issues such as monogamy, adultery, sex
outside of marriage, and incest, its first act (which was produced as a one-act play in
1981) highlights pregnancy and childbirth. The play raises several pertinent questions
about the condition of pregnancy and the act of childbirth. Who controls the birthing
process? Are pregnant women ill? How does the way society views pregnancy affect the
process of birth? Malpede explores the anxieties surrounding pregnancies, the depiction
of pregnant women, the power struggle over the birthing process and the manner in
which ideology regarding pregnancy affects the performance of birth.

*A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* serves as a site for a metaphoric battle between
negative and positive interpretations of pregnancy and childbirth. Emily Martin, author
of *Women in the Body*, asserts: "the concepts of reproductive biology are permeated with
cultural stereotypes" (xi). Karen Malpede not only recognized these stereotypes, her
work struggles to shatter the historical construction of childbirth as illness and restore
autonomy and agency to the pregnant woman.

Written in verse and set in a Celtic island centuries in the past, this epic drama
addresses contemporary issues. *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* reveals the historical battle to
relocate control of the birthing process. The play predicts Christianity’s influence on the
ideology of women and their bodies, the Church’s role in the persecution of midwives,
and the struggle for medical/male domination of the birth process. *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* simultaneously demonstrates the 1970s and 80s feminist reclamation of the body.

Regulations imposed upon midwives are inherently driven by an impulse to control women, their bodies and the actual manner in which birth occurs. This battle for control can be seen clearly in the Church's persecution of midwives during the middle ages, subsequent attempts by physicians to appropriate midwifery, and the contemporary struggle for control of the birthing industry. This battle for control of the birthing process is eventually played out on the body of the pregnant woman. The struggle for control of the birthing process is at the very heart of Karen Malpede's play, *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun*. The text explores the intersection of the historical and cultural anxieties that accompany pregnancy and birth both in the past and present.

The first act of *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* focuses on two pregnant women, Etain and Macha. Etain is married to the lord of the village, Owain. She is under the influence of a Christian monk Vincent. Etain, pregnant and disturbed by the teachings of the priest, is despondent and fearful over the upcoming event of labor. To complicate matters, Etain's husband has turned from her and now sees a younger woman in the village. Brigit, the village midwife, is unable to help Etain because of the influence of Vincent the monk and Etain's unwillingness to trust and rely upon her. Etain's unhappy state is contrasted to Macha, a woman from the mountains. Macha has come down from the hills and lives with a simple shepherd. She rejoices in her pregnancy and, while she enjoys the shepherd's company, her heart belongs to herself and the child she joyfully awaits.
The central conflict arises when Owain, husband of Etain and lord of the village, is confronted by the shepherd who boasts that his wife Macha is not only healthy in her pregnancy, but that she could win a wrestling match with the lord. Angered, Lord Owain insists that Macha concede to the match or be expelled from the village. Macha accepts the challenge and wins the match. Her victory is marred as her new found friend, Etain, dies in childbirth despite Brigit's best efforts to save her.

Malpede's employment of the characters of Brigit, the midwife, and Vincent, the monk, illustrates the church's usurpation of the midwife's autonomy and the subsequent impact on her ability to effectively assist in pregnancy. Malpede's use of the ancient conflict between Christianity and the older, more woman-centered Celtic religion signifies the impact that this historical conflict has had in reconfiguring the process of birth from a female to male-centered activity.

Feminists have found the correlation between midwifery and the persecution of witches a rich vein for scholarship. Works on the subject, such as Barbara Ehrenreich and Deidre English's *Witches, Midwives, and Nurses; A History of Women Healers* (1973), laid the historical ground work for understanding the relationships between the persecution of women healers, the decline of midwifery and the rise of obstetrics.

Jane Towler and Joan Bramall in their book *Midwives in History and Society* provide a testimonial from a woman who became ill shortly after pregnancy. She believed that her ailments were caused by witchcraft and that the witch was a midwife:

I was... pregnant by my lawful husband and as my time approached, a certain midwife importuned me to engage her to assist at the birth of my child. But I knew her bad reputation, and although I had decided to engage another woman, pretended with conciliatory words to agree to her request. But when the pains came upon me, and I had brought in another midwife, the first one was very angry and hardly a week later came into my room one night with two other women where
I was lying. And when I tried to call my husband, who was sleeping in another room, all the use was taken from my limbs and tongue so that except for seeing and hearing I could not move a muscle. And the witch, standing between the other two, said "See! this vile woman who would not take me for a midwife, shall not win through unpunished" (36).

The narrator continues by stating that the midwife/witch cursed her with intestinal sickness. The witch's curse was as prompt in its exit as in its arrival for, according to the woman, her illness lasted exactly one year and then mysteriously vanished. This woman's narrative was originally published in the *Malleus Maleficarum* (Hammer of Witches). This document exemplifies the medieval confrontation between women healers and the Roman Catholic Church. Printed in 1486, the *Malleus Maleficarum* guided the persecution, sentencing and execution of countless women in Europe.

Midwives were particularly vulnerable to persecution because they seemed to possess a special knowledge that made them powerful. Relying on empirical knowledge, midwives often made use of natural remedies. Some practiced chalcedony (the employment of precious stones to evoke a magical effect) in an effort to ease the birthing process while others relied on prayer. Prayer was sanctioned by the Church, chalcedony was not (Ehrenreich 14). Because of their close association with reproductive processes many midwives were thought to be able to procure an abortion, a practice frowned upon by ecclesiastic authorities. Midwives' understanding of the mysteries of birth seemed for some supernatural, but these women's abilities were limited. When midwives failed, as in the case of a stillborn child or breach birth, the charge could be infanticide. When their herbs were unable to heal, these women could be held responsible. Yet even when midwives succeeded, their methods could be suspect. Even when mysterious or mystical charms or potions were employed for good, women were accused of sorcery. One
sixteenth century tract on witchcraft prohibits so-called "good witches" from practicing "medicine and other useful skills." (Towler and Bramall 38). Thus a midwife could find herself in the unfortunate position of being charged with the use of witchcraft even in the event of a successful delivery (Towler and Bramall 38). Set at the dawn of this new Christian era, *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun* foreshadows the vilification of the midwife and the subsequent suppression of women healers. Playwright Karen Malpede demonstrates the consequences of the midwife's loss of her powers and the misery that follows. At the heart of her text, Malpede argues that when the control of pregnancy shifts from women to men disaster results. In the play, when midwife Brigit reports Etain's death, Macha blames her, believing the woman healer was delinquent. Brigit responds: "She came with the monk on her arm. She would listen to nothing I said. It was she took my power away." Like the tale of the wicked midwife in the *Malleus Maleficiarum*, the deleterious effects are not blamed upon the usurpation of the midwife's abilities. Instead the midwife is charged with malice or negligence. Brigit's accusation that Etain "took her power away" is correct only in part. In the instance of Etain's death, her inability to be comforted and assisted by Brigit may have led to her demise. But Brigit's power is taken away not by Etain. Brigit's power, or more generally speaking the power of women healers, was diminished by the church's persecution of midwives as witches, the repeated attempts at professionalization of medicine, and eventually the attempt by physicians to gain control over the birthing industry.

The manner in which childbirth has occurred varies with the time and place which create the cultural norms. Anthropologist Brigitte Jordan asserts that "childbirth is a culturally produced event" (Rich 177). Karen Malpede demonstrates the relationship
between culture and pregnancy not only in her contrasting portrayals of Macha and Etain, but also in the way the men in A Monster Has Stolen the Sun view reproduction.

Owain, leader of the Celtic island and husband of Etain, is unable to conceptualize pregnancy free from pain and illness. His ideology regarding the nature of pregnancy is so unshakable that he insists on a physical battle between himself (presumably the strongest and most able male on the island) and Macha, a healthy pregnant women, to prove his point. Their literal fight encapsulates a battle between pregnant women and those who wish to dictate the terms of pregnancy. In everyday terms, this battle plays out between women and obstetricians. The complex nature of this problem is then that obstetricians often perform their own idea of birth on passive women who wished to be rescued from a culturally contrived "illness." Malpede's examination of pregnancy, power, gender and relationships reveals that the expectations of childbirth are culturally rather than biologically created. It is the cultural creation of pregnancy and childbirth which dominates the play.

Midwives practicing today also recognize that often women have internalized these expectations and that pregnant women's expectations about pregnancy and childbirth influence the manner in which they perform during labor. Pat Ho, a certified nurse midwife who currently works with an obstetrician in Hammond, Louisiana, addressed the issues of cultural and subsequently personal expectations on the process of delivery. During a phone interview Pat Ho revealed an interesting occurrence. While at Earl K. Long Hospital she often worked with teenagers who were pregnant. She said in some way the birthing process was easier for them because they were able to allow the natural process of delivery to take place. By contrast, while she was working in
Connecticut at a private practice near Yale, many of the women she worked with were highly educated, articulate graduate students or wives of graduate students. They demanded their personal performances during labor meet a certain expectations. Often they were unable to relax and let delivery just happen. They were notably interested in their success or failure and viewed the event as a test or an exam. These high expectations actually impeded the process of birth. Ho's anecdote clearly illustrates that the performance of labor is dependent upon the participants' philosophy of birth.

In *A Monster Has Stolen the Sun*, Karen Malpede demonstrated how a woman's attitudes toward pregnancy influenced the performance of childbirth. Macha and Etain represent two different responses to pregnancy: fear and joy. Often these emotions occur simultaneously as pregnancy produces both great expectations and great anxieties. Macha's positive perspective of her pregnancy is credited to her uncomplicated outlook. Born in the hills, Macha is a stranger to Owain's land and is free from its cultural preconception regarding birth. Uninfluenced by a negative view of her body, or of her own sexuality, and disinterested in patriarchal concerns of paternity, Macha is free to enjoy the changes pregnancy incurs because she lacks doctrine that prescribes pregnant women's behavior.

Conversely, Etain believes her pregnancy is a punishment. Influenced by a Catholic monk and grieving over her husband's lack of desire and his infidelity, Etain has lost faith in herself. Etain perceives pregnancy as a woman's duty: "Are we not bound by

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*In discussing some women's need to control the birthing process and intellectualize the experience Dr. Christiane Northrup expressed the connection between over-intellectualizing the birth process and the need for unplanned interventions such as cesarean sections* (Northrup 386-87).
our forms to duties we each would disown?" (124). She wishes to be relieved of this
unbearable "weight."

Macha attempts to comfort Etain and give her strength by telling her about the
birth of a lamb and the ewe's successful delivery. As Macha tells the tale, Etain enacts the
birth in hopes of allaying her own fears. Despite Macha's efforts, in the end Etain is
unable to envision a birth without fear and death. This devout young Christian woman
believes that it is women's nature to be "frightened and weak" (131). Because she is
deeply entrenched in Vincent's rhetoric regarding sexuality and sin, Etain is unable to
accept Macha's comfort regarding the process of birth. She cannot relinquish the idea
that her pregnancy is a source of unmitigated suffering. It is because of her beliefs that
Etain dies. Etain's lack of strength is attributed both to her own misgivings and the
persuasion of the priest, and her death, at least in part, results from the monk's undue
influence. Etain dies because she believes her pregnancy to be a curse and an illness. She
fears divine retribution and this fear has a pronounced effect on her ability to listen to
other women's experience and advice regarding birth.

Many issues in A Monster Has Stolen the Sun are autobiographical. Malpede wrote
the play while she was pregnant with her first and only child. In an interview with
Kathleen Betsko, the playwright stated that she had confronted many fears before the
birth of her daughter and that she was helped tremendously by a psychotherapist who
rubbed her stomach and "spoke to me of the glorious creature" she was carrying (Betsko
267). Malpede's own experiences play a central part in the writing of her play as does the
feminist movement's attempt to reclaim birth as a woman-centered activity instead of an
obstetric practice.
Instead of directly attacking the problem of childbirth in the U.S. in a polemic play, Malpede wrote an epic drama on the scale of Medea which glorifies mothering. Malpede was influenced by such writers as Julian Beck and Joe Chaikin whose works are characterized by the emotional power of the avant-garde. Yet Malpede turns to classic drama (in scope, if not in form) to format her text. Malpede works to reveal "the spirit, the deep essence, the unrealized desires, the true holiness of humankind" (Betsko 259).

Profoundly influenced by the Greek theatre and its emphasis on the human spirit, Malpede's A Monster Has Stolen the Sun views pregnancy and birth in a mythic, epic and poetic manner.

Judy Chicago's The Birth Project

Eileen Miller, a forty-six year old, black Pentecostal pastor, is one of thousands of women who are dissatisfied with their experiences during labor. In an interview with Emily Martin, author of The Woman in the Body: A Cultural Analysis of Reproduction, Miller describes the births of her children,

Sometimes when you're having a baby the doctors act like they're watching TV. Your legs are up and you're draped and all are going like this [gestures the air with a poking motion]. You wonder what they have down there, a portable T.V., or are they really working on me? (Martin 74).

Miller's complaint reveals not only her discomfort at being put on display, "they're watching T.V." it also reveals an intense dislike of the objectification of her body. In this scenario, Miller has become an unwilling spectacle in the drama of birth, and the doctors, from her perspective, are voyeurs rather than fellow performers.

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3 Not the woman's real name.
Yet, in the process of labor, the doctor is often far from being detached. The physician takes an active role in childbirth as his decisions often supersede the laboring woman's. According to anthropologist Emily Martin, the model that permeates obstetrical medicine is based on the understanding of the human body as machine (54). This metaphor translates to a production approach to labor where the physician becomes an active manager of the uterus/woman producer of her product, a child (Martin 63).

Emily Martin interviewed Pentecostal minister, Eileen Miller, along with 165 women of different ages, races and occupations. In her study she sought to provide a feminist analysis of medicine and reproductive issues. In addition to conducting interviews, Martin also analyzed obstetrical texts to gain a better understanding of how medical science understood women, pregnancy and birth. She concluded that the mechanical/technological image of labor and women's bodies prescribes the manner in which obstetrics is performed. The author asserts that this metaphor often has deleterious effects.

Martin calls for the re-envisioning of the reproductive process. She provides a new model of perception for women: "the flexibly adjusting constantly changing body" (XV). Her study has been followed by several re-examinations of language, metaphors and cultural assumptions that inform obstetric practices. Martin is not alone in her emphasis on the tension between women and science. Women such as Donna Haraway, Ruth Hubbard and Terri Kapsalis critique science's rigid outlook on the female body.
The proliferation of texts concerning medical models of reproduction challenges existing modes of medical practice with good reason. Cesarean births, which exemplify a technological approach to labor, are performed frequently in the U.S. and many times are unnecessary. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention has stated that reducing the cesarean rate was a national objective. (DHHS Publication No. (PHS) 94-1929).

Yet despite the numerous protests, whether in the form of women speaking out against unnecessary cesarean sections or books and articles addressing the scientific objectification of women's bodies, the manner in which women's bodies are viewed is still problematic, and the objectification of women's bodies seems to be "somebody else's problem." For example, when speaking to scientists, Emily Martin has encountered resistance to the very notion that pre-existing metaphors influence the way scientists and medical practitioners understand female reproduction. Some researchers had difficulty believing that "concepts of reproductive biology are permeated with cultural stereotypes" (Martin xi). These cultural stereotypes pervade not only medical concepts regarding birth but also are deeply rooted in the public's overall image of pregnancy and birth.

In her article "Sex and Death on Display," Catherine Cole builds on Martin's work and suggests that the Chicago Museum of Science and Industry's display of Prenatal Development implies that women's labor/work is reproduction. Cole asserts that the display dramatically depicts Martin's premise that the model of factory production and its

*Medical models of reproduction often view pregnancy as an illness to be cured or a problem to be medically managed. This model locates the obstetrician at the center of the birthing process. It is the doctor not the pregnant woman making decisions about her pregnancy. Emily Martin, in her book Woman in the Body, suggests that a medical model of reproduction is dominated by a metaphor comparing women's bodies to machines. In this production process the doctor is the manager of this machine.*
correlative labor informs how the public understands birth and delivery. It is with this in mind that we turn to Judy Chicago's *The Birth Project.*

In 1981 feminist artist Judy Chicago attempted to re-imagine metaphors of birth. Chicago's *The Birth Project,* with its focus on the image of the pregnant woman and the process of birth, elicited varied reactions from the public and critics. *The Birth Project* depicts the performance of childbirth rendered in needlepoint, crotchet and quilts. Often Chicago's venture met with resistance similar to that of feminist scholar Emily Martin. Diverse reactions to the exhibition revealed a division in the manner in which childbirth is understood and in the way in which art is defined.

*The Birth Project* is particularly appropriate for this study for several reasons. First, *The Birth Project* not only concentrates on the image of the pregnant woman, it exemplifies a woman-centered model for birth as opposed to a medical one. Second, *The Birth Project,* like many of the artist's previous works, blurs the boundaries between fine and performing arts. Third, Chicago's feminist exploration and re-envisioning of birth resists traditional guidelines for what is acceptably considered art and evoked a negative critical reaction from the art community. This critical reaction reveals a deep-rooted tension regarding both feminism and birth. Finally, Chicago's work, with its emphasis on the body, often received criticism from feminists, who consider the artist's work essentialist.

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5 Essentialism, briefly defined is "the belief in a unique female nature" (Humm 406). This term, however, is hotly debated among feminists. Feminists such as Luce Irigaray champion the idea of women's specificity and suggest this specificity is based in the female body and mind. Other feminists such as Monique Wittig insist that woman is a social category decided by a material basis. (Jackson 21-24).
Premiering in 1985, *The Birth Project* drew its inspiration from much of the artist’s previous works and experience. The path that Judy Chicago took to arrive at *The Birth Project* reflects a complex evolution that is exemplified by her diverse works. A brief look at Chicago’s career as well as the philosophies that influence her work is integral to gaining a better understanding of *The Birth Project*.

Controversial feminist artist Judy Chicago has an established tradition of sparring with the conservative art world. In 1969 she literally slipped on a pair of boxing gloves, changing her surname from Cohen to Chicago and "came out fighting" (Stein, "Midwife to the Revolution" 31). Her career has spanned over thirty years, and her work includes such celebrated creations as *Womanhouse*, *The Dinner Party*, and *The Birth Project*. Chicago’s myriad interests are complemented by her use of a variety of media and styles. In addition to her ability in the fine arts, Chicago has a gift for organizing large-scale collaborative projects. Her works are often popular and draw large crowds. Despite her various talents and popularity, she is the often object of vitriolic criticism from the established art community. The artist continues an uphill battle not only as a woman artist, but also as a woman artist concerned with feminist issues.

Chicago’s overt involvement in feminist art and politics began in 1970 when she and Miriam Schapiro established a feminist art program at Fresno State College. Chicago and Shapiro theorized that the historic invisibility of women artists hindered female students’ ability to view themselves as artists and establish themselves in the art community. Chicago and Shapiro are not alone in their belief. Faith Wilding addresses this issue in the landmark book *The Power of Feminist Art*:
If art grows from other art, then finding precursors engaged in a similar project is vitally important—students and feminist artists still suffer from the invisibility of art made by women both in the past and contemporaneously (36).

Chicago and Schapiro set out to rectify this situation by mentoring women students and by creating a venue in which women’s work could be both seen and experienced.

In 1971, the two artists and twenty-one of their students established Womanhouse. Located in the residential district of Hollywood, Womanhouse was converted by teachers and students into a series of art installations. The goal of Womanhouse was to express an "artistic revelation about women in their homes" (Raven 48). The installations derive their power from publicizing the private. Exhibited at Womanhouse were works such as Chicago’s "Menstruation Bathroom," Kathy Huberland’s "Bridal Staircase," and Sandy Orgel’s "Linen Closet" (Raven 52-57). As the titles suggest, each work focuses on women’s private lives. The artists sought to expose myths concerning women and domesticity. Not all installations in Womanhouse were static. In addition to the fixed installations, Chicago also staged performance art pieces.

Like the exhibits, the performance art had a feminist agenda. In "Cock and Cunt Play" Chicago demonstrates the "culturally assumed connection between biological differences and sex roles" (Raven 58). The play’s two characters are He and She. Both roles are performed by women, and gender is symbolized by costume. She wears an oversized pink labia while He wears an oversized pink penis. Within the play the Cunt asks the Cock for help with the dishes. He replies that "A cock means you don’t wash dishes. You have a cunt. A cunt means you wash dishes." The kitchen scene is mild when compared to the bedroom scene were the Cunt states: "You know, sometimes I
wish I could come too—" At which point the Cock rips off his phallus and beats the Cunt to death (Raven 58).

This radical feminist work demonstrates how biological differences are exaggerated by society and coercively employed to determine gender roles. It also contends that, when women assert their sexual desires, they are both symbolically and physically beaten to death. Arlene Raven notes that the "Cock and Cunt Play" dramatized what feminist theorists such as Ti-Grace Atkinson, Kate Millet and Shulamith Firestone asserted: "women's most intimate relationships, including love and motherhood, are an intrinsic part of a sex class system in this country" (58). "Cock and Cunt Play" is a landmark work in Chicago's career for several reasons. First it demonstrates her gynocentric philosophy of art. Chicago believed that women's arts differed from men's essentially because they had an inner core from which their work emanated. Second, "The Cock and Cunt Play" depicts private parts (e.g. labia and penis) in an exaggerated and unabashed manner. And finally, Chicago's propensity to merge fine and performing arts is established with "The Cock and Cunt Play" and continues in future work such as "The Birth Trilogy" and, in a more subtle manner, in The Birth Project.

Chicago's early interest in birth is also represented in a performance art installation, "Birth Trilogy," which was performed at Womanhouse. The exhibition is divided into three parts and performed by six women. In the first part the women symbolically give birth to each other on stage. During the second segment three of the women then nurture their "babies." Finally, the women begin to hum. As the sound "reached a higher and higher intensity, [it] became the sound of orgasm, of labor, of joy, of ecstasy." (Chicago qtd. in Raven 61) "Birth Trilogy" expresses the joys and agonies of
childbirth and advocates a woman-centered practice of birthing. This performance art work also foreshadowed the return to a woman-centered birthing practice that is exemplified by the rise in the employment of midwives in the late 1970s and early 1980s. "Birth Trilogy" also demonstrates an interest in women's experience as communal and inexorably linked to the physical, female body.

Chicago's interest in female bodies and the reclamation of feminist history is epitomized in her most popular and best known work, *The Dinner Party*. *The Dinner Party* is a mixed media work consisting of a long, triangular table which contains 39 place settings. Each place setting rests on an embroidered cloth containing the name of a famous woman. On the embroidered cloth is a porcelain plate depicting an "abstract butterfly/vagina design" (Stein "Collaboration" 228). While working on *The Dinner Party*, Chicago became particularly interested in birth images. She cites the setting for Mary Wollstonecraft as providing impetus for *The Birth Project*. Chicago notes that the graphic nature of the image of Wollstonecraft, who died in childbirth, frightened her. But from her experience with *The Dinner Party*, she realized that the needlework process provided an avenue for dealing with such a graphic subject as childbirth. In 1980, she began her research. Much to the artist's surprise she found a dearth of birth images. Chicago found the absence of the birthing process from the art world and art history was not only disappointing, but also outrageous: "The more I learned, the more outraged I became that such a universal topic was so shrouded in mystery and, more, taboo." (Chicago, *The Birth Project* 92).

Without historical iconography to guide her work, Chicago based her research on empirical data. She interviewed women about their birth experiences, read about the
history of midwives and asked a couple with whom she was friends if she could attend
the birth of their child. After witnessing labor and birth for the first time, Chicago was
overwhelmed by the sheer power of childbirth. In her journal, she remarked that, “if
everyone were brought up with a familiarity with the birthing vulva, it would be difficult
for anyone to imagine the female gender as passive” (Beyond the Flower 93).

Chicago originally conceived of The Birth Project as one large work but came to see
the enterprise as a "series of individual pieces (Beyond the Flower 133). Eventually she
decided that the final product should be so changeable that it could appear in a variety of
different venues, thus meeting the needs of different audiences (Birth Project 142-143). By
its completion The Birth Project consisted of 85 different works of art that focus on
childbirth. Several images in The Birth Project are rendered in different techniques including
needlepoint, applique, quilting, smocking, beading, weaving and embroidery. Images are
sometimes repeated in form but differentiated by color. For example, one image, "The
Crowning," took a variety of forms and colors. The fundamental design is of a woman
holding open her legs as her child's head reaches the end of the birth canal. "The
Crowning" derives its name from the crown of the baby's head becoming visible for the
first time. One version embroidered on silk by Elisa Skarveland was in pink and red
tones. Another version of the crowning was needlepointed by several women from
Vineland, New Jersey. This image was constructed in blue and blue-green tones. Yet
another image of "The Crowning," created by Jacquelyn Moore, repeated the image four
times in shades of maroon using both reverse applique and quilting techniques (The Birth
Project 40-43). By repeating the same images in various techniques, Chicago not only
demonstrates the unique manner in which each medium influences the portrayal of the
image, but she also allows the project to become more flexible showing a variety of images on the same theme.

*The Birth Project* is unusual in that it can be combined in seemingly infinite arrangements. Chicago wanted the exhibition to be able to reach a diverse audience at diverse sites. She conceptualized eighty different exhibition possibilities (*Birth Project* 145). Chicago planned to exhibit the work in eclectic spaces and to heterogeneous audiences in order to maximize the number of people who saw the project. The flexibility of the exhibition demonstrated her notion regarding the "democratization of art." Chicago wanted "communities that would not ordinarily have access to high quality art . . ." to be able to see this work (*Birth Project* 142).

In addition to its flexibility, *The Birth Project* is unusual for the world of fine arts because of its collaborative nature and its dependence upon narrative. Each artwork is centered in a printed narrative which contains information about the stitcher and the work of art. Documentation surrounds each visual, making the exhibition a combination of pictorial representation and narration. *The Birth Project*‘s dependence upon narrative and its ever changing nature gives it a theatrical bent.

Chicago spent hours listening to birthing stories and sent out questionnaires about childbirth experiences in order that her work might create a new birthing story. The artist’s intent is for each exhibition to tell a story about birth (*Beyond the Flower* 116). When planning an installation Chicago specifically decided on particular narratives to put with each art work (*Beyond the Flower* 136). In this way the visual and the narrative became a unified whole and were a unique display each time *The Birth Project* was performed.
While fine art is usually a solitary art, *The Birth Project*, like *The Dinner Party*, was a collaborative work. Chicago auditioned stitchers to assist in creating her designs. Much like a director searching for the perfect actor, Chicago looked for an ability to conceive of each piece of art in a similar manner to her own. In her book *The Birth Project*, Judy Chicago describes the process:

Each stitcher would send in a sample of how they planned to actualize Judy's design. She would meet with them: "As an example, one woman specialized in bullion knots, which have a distinct texture and look. She used this stitch quite indiscriminately in her own needlework, whereas I thought it might be better applied for specific visual effects, like simulating hair or to make it seem that flesh was crawling (Birth Project 107).

Chicago provided a drawing that workers not only executed, but often interpreted. If Chicago liked the interpretation, all went well; if she did not, the stitcher was either terminated from the project or asked to revise her work. In many ways, Chicago resembles an autocratic director who uses the actor's talents for his/her production goals. The collaborative and narrative nature of *The Birth Project* brings it closer to theatre arts than traditional fine arts.

As any theatre practitioner knows, collaboration brings about its own specific set of problems. Failed communications, ambiguous expectations and differences of opinion plague group interactions. The experience of working on *The Birth Project* was no different. In her book recounting the process of creating *The Birth Project*, Chicago dedicates a good deal of time to talking about the collaborative processes. She notes several of the problems encountered and how many of the projects were abandoned. Several projects failed because women who were excited and committed to the project also had demands from family that they could not meet while stitching. Other projects
failed because Chicago's vision differed from that of the stitchers. Even the projects that succeeded encountered difficulties and revisions.

One of the most difficult aspects of collaboration stemmed from the fact that Chicago is a professional artist dealing with women who normally did needlework for relaxation or their own sense of satisfaction. The difference in approach to the project stemmed from dissimilar values. For Chicago, work came first. For many of the women working on The Birth Project, family and/or jobs were their primary responsibility. Stitching often occurred around other responsibilities. Chicago states that she noticed a difference in approach to work by the women who stitched and herself in that they kept track of the hours they stitched and often included that documentation in the pieces they sent to her. "I tried to explain again and again that, in art, time is of no consequence. Who cares how long a painting takes? What matters is whether it is any good or not" (Birth Project 108). For the women who worked on The Birth Project, the time put into this project counted. Like housework, or even childbirth itself, this activity was uncompensated labor and is at the very root of the problem. Indeed, one of the most repeated criticisms about the project was that the women's labor was unpaid.

Criticism, in the most negative sense of that word, is inexorably linked to The Birth Project. In his article "'Birth Project': Fetal Visions," Washington Post staff writer Paul Richard stated: "The Birth Project embarrasses and drains. Political, repetitive, relentlessly verbose – and not easily forgotten – it is among the most exhausting shows this city has yet seen." He goes on to comment that the power of Chicago's exhibit "comes from her ability to evoke disgust, disquiet, shame" (Richard D7).
Richard's disapproval of the work is grounded in three distinct objections. First, Richard's opinion that the subject matter is distasteful stems from a reluctance to see women's privates becoming public in a manner that is not rooted in a traditional art venue. Second, the critic also objects to Chicago's collaborative process. Finally, Richard's negative reaction to Chicago's work may reveal a deep-seated dislike for feminist art in general.

The reasons for Richard's extreme reactions to *The Birth Project* become evident when he compares the work to "crotch shots" from *Hustler* and complains that such images of birth are indiscreet and that "one's sense of . . . privacy (is) invaded" (D7). The criticism that Chicago's art is "shameful" and that it consists of "crotch shots" stems from the belief that women's private parts are in and of themselves shameful. In her intriguing study of gynecology and women's bodies, *Public Privates*, author Terri Kapsalis asserts that the assumption that the display of women's genitals is somehow inherently offensive can be traced through the etymological roots used to describe male and female genitalia. Synonymous with the word vulva is the Latin word "pudendum" which literally means "that of which one ought to be ashamed." By contrast the word "pubes" used to define male genitalia, comes from the Latin word "publicus" which directly relates to "public" (Kapsalis 5). The idea that women who display their genitals are shameful remains a cultural constant. It seems that artists who portrays other women's genitals,  

"Richard goes so far as to compare women in labor to cows: "Cows about to drop their calves wander from the herd. Women in few cultures bear their young in public. Certain moments call for privacy. That of birth may well be one."
even with the expressed purpose of portraying the vulva as a powerful and active channel through which new life arrives, are often considered unacceptable.

The condemnation of Chicago's *The Birth Project* because of its collaborative nature recurred in several articles concerning Chicago's exhibition. Richard slanders Chicago's work and takes her to task for enslaving women:

> Obedient to the artist's poster-bold cartoons, about 150 unpaid needleworkers worked for months, or years, on the fabric works displayed. This page — if meticulously embroidered, if shot through with gold thread — would no doubt please the eye. So, too, do the efforts of Chicago's patient minions. Their stitchery is splendid. What fineness and precision "The Birth Project" possesses is less hers than theirs (Richard D7).

His retort, suggesting if the newspaper page was embroidered it too would please the eye, is similar to comments made in modern art galleries in which people say, "gosh, I could scribble like that." By calling the women "minions" Richard implies a lack of conscious commitment by the women who dedicated their skills to a work they believed in.

The issue of payment, is, indeed, a difficult subject, and Richard's analysis vilifies Chicago, who herself was painfully aware of the problem of compensation. The artist addressed the issue of payment, or lack thereof, many times, and in her book on *The Birth Project*. Chicago states:

> Is it right that artists don't get paid? No. Should they get paid? Yes. Should I and everyone who worked on *The Birth Project* get paid? Yes. Should I be able to pay everyone who works for me? Yes. Can I? No. Should I stop doing this work because I can't pay for it? Are there other rewards for work besides money? . . . *(Birth Project* 113)

In the end, neither Richard's accusation nor Chicago's rebuttal solves the problem that the women's labor was, like much of women's domestic labor, financially unrewarded. The issue of women's unpaid labor, at home, during childbirth and working on *The Birth Project* remains both problematic and unsolved.
Richard's final objection to Chicago's work, I believe, rests in its feminist nature. "Her imagery — polemical, insistent, disturbing and unsubtle — is less successful than her cult." It would be easy to put down Richard's objection to polemic (read feminist) art as gender biased. However, Suzanne Muchnic also wrote a damning review of the birth project for The Los Angeles Times claiming Chicago's work was "the visual equivalent of a bunch of soap-box speeches" (Muchnic 22). Both Richard and Muchnic vehemently oppose Chicago's overt feminism, and dismiss her work claiming that it lacks subtlety. Muchnic describes The Birth Project as "the howls of an American feminist crusader" (6). Their attacks focused, it seemed, not on the artistic merit of The Birth Project so much as it did on the appropriateness of the subject matter and an apparent dislike of feminist art and its polemic nature.

Both Richard and Muchnic's reviews are significant because their articles appeared in The Washington Post and Los Angeles Times respectively. As these papers have a wide audience, these two reviewers inform what many of their readers understand about Judy Chicago and her work. Both critics seem to approach art without regard to personal perspective. In their analysis of feminist art, Broude and Garrard stated that once:

[A]rt was understood to proceed out of and be shaped by specific conditions of gender, race, sexuality, or class, it became equally clear that audiences also respond to art out of their own conditioning, i.e., the art we find most compelling is art with whose maker we share a basis of common beliefs or experience (12).

This may explain why thousands of people saw The Birth Project and the exhibition was successful.

Ironically, some of the most ardent criticism of Chicago's work comes not from art critics such as Paul Richard or Suzanne Muchnic, but from feminists. Feminist
criticism of Chicago's work is located in an objection to her idea of core imagery and rejection of Chicago's art as essentialist.

In 1972 *Womanspace Journal* published an article by Judy Chicago and Miriam Shapiro. In the article, the artists posed and answered the question, "What does it feel like to be a Woman?" The artists continued the question by asserting "to be formed around a central core and have a secret place which can be entered and which is also a passage way from which life emerges?" (Broude 23) Chicago's concept of a central core image has been condemned by feminists who find this notion too close to the idea that "biology is destiny." (Broude 23). In truth, Chicago's theories have attempted to reclaim women's bodies and to suggest that "women's art, like her own, proceeds from body identification" (Broude 25). Because of Chicago's suggestion that women's art is inexorably linked to their bodies, her theories and her work are often criticized. In "A Working Gynergenic Art Criticism," Cassandra Langer noted that, "Of all gynergenic art theory, that of Chicago's central imagery remains the most controversial" (120). Looking back at Chicago's metaphor for her entrance into the world of arts -- putting on boxing gloves and entering the ring--her choice of metaphor has proven startlingly prophetic and just a bit eerie.

Chicago's *Birth Project* successfully re-envisions labor and asserts a woman-centered image of childbirth. The controversy over her work stems from an anxiety over making the private public (i.e. women's genitalia and childbirth itself) as well as a uneasiness concerning women's autonomy. The conflict in terms of a medical model, simply speaking, is who is in control here, physicians or laboring women. In regard to the art community, Chicago's brash manner and business-like approach to mounting a
large-scale production seems to have provoked the ire of traditional critics. Feminist objection to Chicago's work also seems to stem from a troubled view of the invocation of earth mother or goddess imagery portrayed in *The Birth Project*. As many contemporary feminists move beyond cultural feminism, the raw and theoretically undeveloped feminism put forth by Chicago may seem infantile. Yet Chicago's success lies in the fact that thousands of women viewed *The Birth Project* and many responded positively to the images presented. The performance of birth in this work of art is not static, it resists the attempt to allow the laboring woman to be viewed as static and places her in not only as the focal point, but also as the protagonist in the drama of childbirth.
CHAPTER FOUR:  
ABORTION AMERICAN STYLE

This chapter explores feminism and the abortion debate by comparing two dramas. The first play, Myrna Lamb's "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" constitutes a radical feminist polemic produced to persuade Americans to legalize abortion. Written in 1969 and staged during a part of a feminist protest for reproductive freedom, the play unapologetically demands abortion rights for women and demonstrates the devastation which results from the illegality of abortion. "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" is analyzed in the social and historical context in which it was written. Personal abortion narratives as well as feminist history are included to provide an understanding of the central issues discussed in Lamb's text. The second play, Jane Martin's Keely and Du represents a more equivocal approach to abortion. First produced in 1993, the play attempts to provide an objective framework in which to examine the contemporary abortion controversy. Unlike "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?," Keely and Du is not a diatribe. The drama focuses upon the two title characters and their relationship. The differences between the two texts reveal not only stylistic differences but also a distinct shift in attitudes towards reproductive freedom that has occurred nationwide over the intervening twenty-five years.

The second half of this chapter is divided into two interlocking sections. The first segment concentrates on the rising climate of violence and the attacks by conservative, militant fundamentalists on abortion practitioners and facilities. This study analyzes abortion demonstrations as stage performances. Drawing on the works of social theorist Erwin Goffman, feminist Peggy Phelan and social historian Dallas Blanchard, I analyzed
the protests as performances of ideology. Each element of the protest can be understood in theatrical terms. Demonstrations perform ideology. Protests work to teach rather than to please and production elements employed during abortion protests range from unsavory to fatal. These protests promote two opposing views of women, particularly pregnant women. The first sees women as independent agents while the second regards women as dependent and in need of protection from themselves. Abortion protesters reject a woman's autonomy, equality, and her ability to decide her own best interests.

This chapter works to explore both the dramatic methods employed in protests as well as the motivation of the protesters. The second segment of the chapter builds upon the information provided on abortion protests and compares these demonstrations to the dramatic action found in Jane Martin's *Ked and Du*. *Ked and Du* explores an adversarial debate between militant protestors and the pregnant woman whom they have kidnapped. *Ked and Du* has been considered by some to advance feminist ideology, but an investigation of the play and its criticism reveals a more ambiguous stance.

This chapter provides a social history of abortion in order to contextualize "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" and *Ked and Du*. Analogous to Mary Burrill's *They That Sit in Darkness* and Marie Stopes's *Our Ostriches*, Myrna Lamb's drama is a protest play. Its fundamental purpose is to inspire people to challenge existing ideology concerning abortion and to exhorts its audience to legalize the procedure. Conversely, *Ked and Du* is not a polemic, rather it is a carefully crafted look at both sides of the current abortion debate.

The shift in tone from "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" to *Ked and Du* marks a move from an offensive position to a defensive position in terms of the
struggle for women's reproductive freedom. The comparison of the social and political climates that surround these two plays reflects the appropriation of radical feminist tactics by the right wing fundamentalist factions and an equivocal position held by many towards abortion in the 1990s. With the restrictions that have been levied on Roe v. Wade, coupled with a new wave of religious fundamentalism sweeping the country, this chapter seeks to demonstrate a social climate in which the battles won by feminists, such as Myrna Lamb, in previous decades are in jeopardy.

In order to fully comprehend the transition between Myrna Lamb's unabashed polemical play and Martin's carefully crafted reflection of both sides of the abortion issue, it is necessary to provide a brief analysis of feminism and the abortion debate.

The cover of the June 29, 1998, issue of *Time* magazine posed the question, "Is Feminism Dead?" Inside were articles exploring the changing nature of feminism. In one article entitled "Feminism: It's All About Me," author Ginia Bellafante compared feminism of the 1960s and 70s to the feminism of the 1990s and concluded that, "...if feminism of the '60s and 70s was steeped in research and obsessed with social change, feminism today is wed to the culture of celebrity and self-obsession" (57). Also included in this issue was a *Time/CNN* poll demonstrating a marked drop in the number of women who considered themselves feminists or believed that feminism was personally relevant (Bellafante 58). Despite the articles and polls, the answer to *Time* 's alarmist question is: Feminism certainly is not dead; however, it has experienced a transformation that significantly differentiates it from the political activism which was the movement's trade mark a mere twenty-five years ago.
Early on within the Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960s, abortion became a pivotal issue. The landmark book that provided an impetus and format to the Women's Movement in the U.S. was Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. *The Feminine Mystique* criticized the American myth of the happy housewife and identified for countless women "The Problem That Has No Name." Friedan's work precipitated a feminist dialogue with women nationwide (252). As the Women's Movement grew, feminists within the movement split over myriad political and philosophical differences (at the time feminism could be divided roughly into two groups: liberal and radical). Women who disagreed on how women should gain access to safe and legal abortions agreed that change was essential. While liberal feminists worked to reform existing laws, radical feminists insisted that women be able to obtain an "abortion on demand" (Susan Davis 12). According to Susan Davis, author of *Women Under Attack*, "Despite political differences all feminists united to make abortion a central national issue" (Susan Davis 12). Reproductive freedom remains one of the most crucial issues of the feminist agenda.

After the passage of Roe v. Wade, first trimester abortions became legal throughout the United States. Many women who had struggled for reproductive freedom "discarded their picket signs, believing the struggle was over..." (Susan Davis 3). The victory was declared prematurely. Political setbacks which occurred during the Reagan and Bush administrations placed those who had fought for reproductive freedom on the defensive. The appointment of conservative Supreme Court judges such as Clarence Thomas swayed the balance of the once liberal court. The 1980s and early 1990s saw several Supreme Court decisions which restricted access to abortion. Two significant decisions, Webster v. Reproductive Health Services (1989) and Planned Parenthood v.
Casey (1992) reflected the Court's conservative opinions regarding abortion. In both decisions the Supreme Court upheld state restrictions on abortion (xiv Solinger). Despite the obvious whittling away of reproductive rights, the feminist movement, which fought so hard in the late 1960s and early 1970s to secure safe and legal abortion, has not been able to muster the same enthusiasm and commitment that typified the movement thirty years ago. Feminism has changed.

In her forward to the latest edition of The Feminine Mystique, Betty Friedan, re-evaluates the Women's Movement and looks at its future. Surprisingly, she critiques feminist devotion to abortion rights:

New birth-control technology even beyond RU486, as well as the evolving national consensus, will soon make the whole issue of abortion obsolete. As important as it was, it should never have been a "single issue" litmus test for the women's movement (xxiii).

In light of the murder of yet another abortion doctor, Barnett Slepian on October 23, 1998, the current Republican control of Congress and the unavailability of abortion for the majority of women in rural America, Friedan's assessment is puzzling. Friedan's view

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1 "Webster v. Reproductive Health Services—The Supreme Court in a 5-4 decision upheld a Missouri statute that said that life begins at conception. The State prohibited the use of public facilities or public personnel to perform abortions and required a physician to make determinations and perform tests concerning gestational age, weight, and lung maturity when he or she has reason to believe a woman to be 20 weeks or more pregnant. . . Planned Parenthood of Southeastern Pennsylvania v. Casey—The Supreme Court upheld 7-2 the right of states to impose restrictions on abortions as long as those constraints do not impose an undue burden on women. . . Some of the provisions of the Pennsylvania statute in question require: that physicians provide patients with anti-abortion information to discourage them from obtaining abortions; that a mandatory 24-hour delay follow these lectures; that minors receive consent from at least one parent, with a judicial bypass" (Lisa DiMona & Constance Herndon’s Women’s Sourcebook. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1994, 514-515.)
that abortion should not be a "litmus test" for women stands in direct contrast to the radical feminist belief that the personal is indeed political.

The implications of this shift to a more moderate position on reproductive rights have yet to be seen in full. The revolutionary spirit of activism that precipitated Roe v. Wade seems absent. The spirit of activism, ironically perhaps, has been passed on to the fundamentalist right. Militant Christian coalitions seeking to prevent abortions by any means, legal or illegal, have appropriated many of the tactics of feminist protest, much to the detriment of the pro-choice campaign. The following discussion looks at the tactics employed by those involved in the abortion debate and demonstrates how the narratives discussed in this chapter both mirror the social and political upheaval of this conflict and construct our understanding of abortion and abortion protest.

Myrna Lamb’s “But What Have You Done for Me Lately?”

Caroline describes herself as a "good Catholic girl" from a "good Catholic family. In the summer of 1963, before she began her junior year of college, Caroline discovered that she was pregnant. Rejecting marriage as an option and fearing that she would lose her job and college scholarship, Caroline decided to abort. In Cleveland, where she went to school, members of an "abortion ring" had been arrested. The atmosphere was tense, and obtaining an abortion in the city seemed impossible. Weeks passed. Finally, with the help of a friend, Caroline was able to locate an abortionist in Youngstown, Ohio. Feeling isolated and deserted by her friends, Caroline went to Youngstown with a young social worker in whom she had confided and a newly befriended married couple. Her narration of her abortion experiences reveals the horrors of illegal abortion in 1963 and therefore is quoted at length.
This so-called doctor—this man who called himself a doctor—had two businesses. He was a bookie and he was an abortionist. An elderly man in a ramshackle little house in a disreputable, shabby section of Youngstown. It in no way fit my image of a doctor's house and office. I had never seen a doctor who looked like this man, or acted like this man. I don't recall seeing any medical certificates on his wall. I don't think anyone who was a doctor would also be a bookie. I think there was some actual gambling going on while we were waiting. But that was my only option, and I was very desperate to go through with it. I recall questioning whether he was a doctor at all. I also questioned what I was getting myself into, and whether I was going to survive this.

He had a room with a chair and stirrups set up. I went in and it was all very, very secretive. The money had to be in cash in certain denominations, and it had to be given to him in an envelope. He checked it very thoroughly to make sure it wasn't marked. He was very concerned about keeping the cops out of his operation. But I took the risk of turning my life over to him because I didn't think I had another choice... The "doctor" also insisted that you had to be married. His scruples were such that he would only do this for married women. I think I borrowed a ring to wear... He explained he was doing a saline injection and there should be some cramping and the abortion would happen within twenty-four hours...

When I finally aborted I was alone in my room in the dormitory at school. I went through at least twelve hours of labor alone in my room. The pain was more terrible than I ever imagined partly because I was alone, partly because I was scared. I was timing the contractions and I just didn't think I could bear anymore... I remember noticing that the contractions were getting more frequent and more frequent, five minutes, then four minutes, then three minutes, and then there was a lot of blood and there was a fetus. I was really beside myself, and terrified. I didn't know what to do. There was more blood than I ever imagined... I was terrified of someone discovering me, of being arrested (Messer 8).

Caroline's story, although chilling, is not unusual. The narrative contains several factors typical of abortion narratives of the period: the imperative secrecy under which the operation was performed, the disreputable practitioner, the seedy and often unsafe surroundings, the feelings of isolation on the part of the pregnant woman, and the desperate fear of being found out. Caroline's account also reveals the life threatening complications associated with abortion before its legalization in 1973. In addition to the psychological trauma that Caroline faced, her life was in peril. When performed by a competent physician, abortion is a relatively safe procedure. Often back alley abortionists
were neither physicians nor were they competent. In the late 1960s injury and death resulting from illegal abortion had reached epidemic proportions (Petchesky 125).

Caroline's story is one of many narratives from women who survived their abortion experiences. Abortion narratives are included in several histories of abortion, and they are the sole focus of two books: *Back Rooms: Voices from the Illegal Abortion Era*, edited by Ellen Messer and Kathryn May (1988) and *Our Choices: Women's Personal Decisions About Abortion*, edited by Sumi Hoshiko (1993). These collections, in addition to being of historical interest, are particularly pertinent as they provide a warning, in an increasingly conservative climate, about the dangers of restricting access to legal abortion. These narratives epitomize the feminist slogan "the personal is political." Each woman's political view on abortion was shaped by her own life changing experience with unwanted pregnancy. These published narrations allowed women a chance to voice their experiences and ideology surrounding abortion.

Caroline's story provides a factual account revealing the problems facing pregnant women seeking an abortion in the 1960s. Feminist playwright Myrna Lamb's drama "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" reveals the arguments put forth by women seeking to repeal the laws banning abortion. Lamb used the stage as a political podium during the feminist liberation movement. She presented her work during the speak-outs and protests that come to typify radical feminists in the 1960s. Caroline's story and Myrna Lamb's play are best understood in the political context of abortion at the end of that decade.

While illegal abortion had always occurred under covert circumstances, according to Leslie Reagan, the 1950s and 1960s, demanded a new level of secrecy. Tales of being
blindfolded and taken to an unknown abortionist are not uncommon. This demand for absolute anonymity on the part of the abortionist came from fear of conviction. As the demand for illegal abortion rose sharply in the late 1950s and 1960s, safe abortions became more difficult to obtain (Reagan 193).

Because of the change in sexual mores that have come to typify the 1960s, unwanted pregnancies increased and so did the need for abortions. Many men, like the bookie in the narrative above, found the performance of this straightforward procedure lucrative. Unfortunately, the health care provided by such operators was most often minimal to nonexistent. Abortion became the leading cause of maternal mortality in the years immediately preceding Roe v. Wade (Reagan 99). Illegal abortions resulting in death often were caused by "sepsis, punctures, embolisms and hemorrhage . . . Inept techniques and inadequate aftercare, swelled the number of fatal cases . . ." (Lader qtd. in Reagan 99).

One of the reasons that women died was that they could not reveal their pregnancy to anyone in authority and therefore could not obtain any kind of reliable, professional help. Fearing the reaction of family members or other authority figures, women often undertook desperate measures. Their fears were not ungrounded as pregnancies were often punished by the loss of college scholarships or much needed jobs. In addition, the insurmountable social stigma attached to pre-marital pregnancy drove women to keep their pregnancy secret and to abort.

A brief history of abortion law clarifies the significance of the abortion issue in the U.S. Abortion, which was banned statewide by 1880, was not legalized throughout the nation until the supreme court decision of Roe v. Wade in 1973. According to Rosalind Petchesky, this change of legal policy came about "because at a particular
historical moment social need, feminist activism, and populationist ideology came
together" (132). In her analysis of these factors, Petchesky suggests that during the 1960s
birthrates fell while abortion rates rose because of the changing role of women in society.
Women married later and delayed childbearing. College attendance increased among
young women. More young women entered the labor force albeit in low paying jobs in
relation to the high rate of inflation. Divorce rates also rose and the proportion of female
headed households increased (Petchesky 103). These factors combined with the fact that
women remained ultimately responsible for child care, contributed to a declining
birthrate. Petchesky asserts that these changes "redefined the terms of a "normal life" for
women" (116). This shift in point of view partially accounts for the drastic change in the
public perception of abortion.

Petchesky goes on to assert that in addition to the changing roles of women in
society, there was a national shift in population control policy between the 1950s and
1960s. While initially reluctant to intervene in fertility control on any level, the U.S.
government during Lyndon Johnson's presidency began to seek ways to limit populations
of expanding third world countries. This interest in limiting population eventually led to
birth control programs within the United States which received federal funding.² The
ideology that motivated such a change was not based upon the individual's right to
choose but rather a fear of a population explosion globally and the increase of people of
color nationally (Petchesky 118). While populationists do not necessarily advocate

²In 1967 the United States Government spent nine million dollars for birth control abroad
and twenty million dollars for contraceptive programs at home. (Tietze qtd. in Petchesky
116).
abortion as a method of population control, their ideology helped push reproductive issues into the political foreground. The government under Lyndon Johnson supported family planning clinics, but this was not the crucial factor that propelled the nation to reform abortion laws. According to feminist historian Rosalind Petchesky, the repeal of the anti-abortion laws came about primarily because the laws were becoming unenforceable. Millions of women demanded abortions; also, "physicians and public health nurses were witnessing a virtual epidemic of perforated uteruses, infections, and death caused by illegal abortion; thus the American Medical Association (AMA) also began to concede that abortion was a medical necessity" (Petchesky 124).

The AMA and population controllers' ideologies differed from feminist groups who insisted that the right to legal abortion was inexorably linked with women's right to choose. Those who wished to control the ever expanding population and the AMA located the control of a woman's body outside the jurisdiction of the individual female. Population controllers desired public officials to regulate abortion, while the AMA believed physicians should make abortion decisions. Before Roe v. Wade abortions were performed for therapeutic reasons such as danger to the mother's physical or emotional well-being. Some hospitals would provide abortions if they believed the pregnancy caused the mother to be depressed. Feminists vehemently objected to the "medical model of reproductive health" in which doctors retained control over the abortion decision and rejected the medical differentiation between therapeutic and elective abortions (Petchesky 125). Feminists believed that if a woman felt it necessary to terminate her pregnancy, the procedure was essential and not "elective." Many feminists worked to change the laws that limited abortion, claiming that no abortion was elective,
and by implication, unnecessary. Feminists employed diverse tactics to voice their arguments. They staged sit-ins, marched, picketed, and practiced civil disobedience. Often, they staged speak-outs and other forms of theater to get their point across.

In the late 1960s, the Redstockings, a radical feminist group based in New York, gathered to protest abortion laws. The Redstockings' manifesto called for collective action to fight oppression by men and the institutions they created. One of their tenets emphasized the importance of personal experience and rejected "existing ideologies" because they are constructed by the patriarchy. The Redstockings presented Myrna Lamb's play "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" at Washington Square Church. The play was not written specifically for the Redstockings, rather, it was based on Lamb's own experiences. In her introduction to the play, she reveals its origins:

When I sat down to write "But What Have You Done For Me Lately?" the teeth of a long-continuing rage had found a new hold in my throat. My daughter, then nineteen, suspected she might be pregnant. I knew I could probably help her. There were numbers I could call... But what I wanted, as I wrote, was not only to tell "them" off, but to put "them" in my place and in my daughter's, make "them" understand in a way they could not escape. And so for five or more hours, I wrote a polemic, a diatribe, a piece of agit prop (Lamb 143).

Lamb, realizing the horror which could face her daughter, was outraged. Although her personal story was resolved without a trip to an illegal abortionist, Lamb's desire to "make them understand" constituted a personal as well as a political battle. In an attempt "to make them listen," Lamb wrote a caustic attack against those who supported the ban on abortion. Like Mary Burrill and Marie Stopes before her, Myrna Lamb struggled to change the political circumstances limiting reproductive freedom. Lamb's work also

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3The Redstockings' Manifesto can be found in Robin Morgan's *Sisterhood is Powerful*. New York: Random House, 1970, (533-536).
parallels that of Burrill and Stopes in that all three activists focused on the play's message, and the drama's artistic merit is limited. As Lizbeth Goodman suggests, "the making of some kinds of feminist theatre involves prioritizing feminist concerns over literary and dramatic concerns" (22). Thus "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?'s" agenda takes precedent over plot, character, diction, music and spectacle. The play is, however, replete with thought.

"But What Have You Done for Me Lately?," like many feminist dramas of the era, is not realistic. The play works against a realistic format in three ways. First, as in Sophie Treadwell's expressionistic drama MACHINAL, none of the characters is given a name. They are simply mouthpieces to express feminist ideology. While the dialogue is in everyday speech, it does not work to create three dimensional characters. Second, while an impassioned dialogue occurs between the Woman and the Man, a soldier abuses a young girl in the background. The Girl and Soldier are unrelated to the plot of the play, but they do express the play's theme. This use of simultaneous staging creates a visual backdrop which complements the ideology of the play: women are viciously victimized by men in power. Third, the text provides a forum for the presentation of pro-choice ideology, and the dialogue presents a conglomerate of arguments about abortion in a non-linear fashion. The dialogue reinforces the play's agit-prop nature without necessarily advancing the plot. Lamb's strategy is to structure her drama to compile a series of vehement feminist arguments for the legalization of abortion.

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*Lamb's original version did not include the soldier and the girl.*
Myrna Lamb's premise is pseudo-science fiction: a Man is captured by a Woman scientist who implants an artificial womb and embryo in his abdomen. The play opens as the Man wakes from surgery. Realizing that he has been abducted and recognizing the ill will the Woman bears him, he fears he has been harmed. The Woman wryly reassures him that they have "not taken anything." The play implies the Man is afraid he has been castrated. The Woman reveals the nature of his affliction. She states "we have given you an impregnated uterus" and refers to his impairment as a "parasitic life" (149). The Man is horrified and demands the fetus be removed. By inverting the usual gender roles, Lamb defamiliarizes the ordinary. Pregnancy becomes unique and can be analyzed anew. The play's unusual premise allows the rhetoric concerning the abortion debate to be heard in an atypical context. Once the premise is established, the playwright launches a series of impassioned debates concerning the abortion issue.

Upon learning the nature of his dilemma, the Man immediately voices his protest at the unwanted pregnancy that has been foisted upon him. He reacts vehemently to the Woman's assertion that a human life is involved and replies that there is a human life involved -- his. The Man claims no responsibility for this "little group of cells" and declares that they do not have rights nor are they of "any importance to anyone" (151). He emphatically demands an abortion. Unwittingly the Man espouses pro-choice rhetoric. Lamb's strategy of having pro-life arguments facetiously reiterated by the Woman and pro-choice arguments sincerely articulated by the pregnant Man negates any

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5Unlike the screen writers of the film *Junior* which will be discussed in chapter five, Lamb chooses not to explain the procedure.
real debate of the issue but increases the dramatic tension between these two opposing characters.

Predictably, the Woman initially denies his request to terminate the pregnancy. Her rebuttals to his arguments virtually drip with irony. She sarcastically suggests that if every unwanted pregnancy was terminated there would be drastic repercussions. The playwright then constructs a series of arguments which intermingle population control issues with issues of choice.

The Woman suggests that if unwanted pregnancies could be terminated than national politics would be destroyed, then "hunger as a method and greed as a motive would disappear." She suggests that uncontrolled reproduction leads to war and that nationalist politics promotes the breeding of soldiers. Lamb asserts that over-population causes aggression. She contends that if all pregnancies were wanted "aggression and deprivation that seem so necessary to the progress of society" would disappear (152).

In addition to the brief assertions regarding population control, Lamb's discussion focuses on the multitude of reasons why a Woman would not want to be pregnant. She says there are many women whose "work cannot bear interruption" and mentions those unwanted pregnancies that resulted from rape or incest. Lamb also discusses those situations that preclude a happy or successful pregnancy. But in the end her argument comes back to choice as she contends that there are women who have "no desire to memorialize a casual sexual episode with issue" (152).

The Man alleges that motherhood and pregnancy are natural to women. Lamb counters by suggesting that the inexorable link between women and motherhood has been created by the patriarchy. Pregnancy, it seems, will keep women occupied and
reproduce them from competing with males. She maintains that for many women giving
birth is anything but natural. The female protagonist professes that a multitude of
problems can occur during pregnancy and childbirth, such as incompatible Rh factors,
and the complications that are faced by women who have weak kidneys, rheumatic hearts
or diabetes. She goes on to describe the normal physiological changes of pregnancy in a
negative light: "Your kidneys and bladder will be hard pressed. . . Your skin will stretch,
probably scar in some areas" (156). In her attempts to proselytize her agenda Lamb
denigrates pregnancy itself, and the play depicts pregnancy as an illness and provides no
positive image of a pregnant woman (or, in this case, man).

The debate changes focus when the man, who has repeatedly failed to make his
objections to his impregnation heard, finally asks the Woman if she hates all men or just
him in particular. At this point, another narrative thread reveals a past relationship
between the two characters. Years ago, the Woman and Man had sex and she became
pregnant. Unable to appeal to friends, relatives, or the man, the protagonist was
hopelessly alone and trapped. The Woman is punished for her "sin," while the Man
escapes censure. The Man does not view their encounter as criminal in any way.
Society's double standard, where boys will be boys and women who have sex must be
whores, constitutes the underpinnings of the play's argument. Desperately wanting to
terminate the pregnancy, the Woman tried several remedies such as "caustic agents . .
.coat hanger . . and cheap abortionist." But in the end she was forced to disappear and
have the child in a public institution. After three days of excruciatingly painful labor she
delivered a baby girl, whom she never saw. The child was adopted by a couple
immediately. The Woman states that after this experience she "never allowed a human to
touch me in intimacy again" (162). By setting up the past relationship between the Man and Woman in the play, Lamb once again emphasizes the tenacious coupling of the personal and the political. The Woman does not condemn the Man for his role in her pregnancy, rather she condemns him for his conservative, inflexible and ultimately deadly views on women's reproductive freedom.

Early within the text, Lamb establishes that the Man holds a position of wealth and power in society. Thus his wrong minded political views are particularly dangerous. It is for her female offspring and other young women that the Woman captures this man. By not supporting women's reproductive freedom he condemns his daughter and thousands of women to live under the same political circumstances that caused the protagonist incalculable grief. Lamb asserts that the Man and (and by implication others in power like him) have murdered:

You destroyed the lives of young women who fell prey to illegal abortion or suicide or unattended birth. You killed the careers and useful productivity of others. You killed the spirit, the full realization of all potential of many women who were forced to live on in half-life. You killed their ability to produce children in ideal circumstances. You killed the love and self-respect and the proud knowledge that one is the master of one's fate, one's physical body being the corporeal representation of it. You killed. And you were so damned self-righteous about it (164).

Lamb inverts the rhetorical devices employed by anti-choice groups by asserting that the banning of abortion "kills" women in a very real sense. The Man has no defense; he is helpless. In order to obtain an abortion he must depend on the mercy of a council of women who have been victimized by the system that he propagates.

Lamb concludes the play by introducing a group of women who are never seen, yet they decide the Man's fate. The council of women seems to represent the council of doctors who would decide if a woman was eligible for a therapeutic abortion. The first
woman lost her daughter to an illegal abortionist. The second was raped by her aborting physician. The third was forced to bear a child that was deformed because of a prescription drug. The fourth is an older woman who was confined to a mental institution after the birth of an unwanted child late in life. There are others on the board whose experiences Lamb does not describe. By omitting details about the other board members' pasts, the playwright allows each woman in the audience who has had an experience with unwanted pregnancy or abortion to make her own assumption. This council is significant in that it employs a feminist methodology in deciding the case. Power rests in a jury of the Woman's peers. The decision is made not by one autocratic figure, but by women working cooperatively. Structurally, the play then mirrors feminist ideology.

The Man pleads that he now understands the plight of Woman in a new way and vows to help if they will grant the abortion. The protagonist announces the board's decision in short order. They have decided to grant the abortion because the man's personality would make him an unfit mother.

In her short drama, Myrna Lamb addresses a myriad of reproduction issues through a radical feminist lens. Her rhetorical strategy is to compile example upon example of why abortion should be legalized. Lamb does not contextualize her examples, she merely introduces her arguments. "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" reflects the nature of abortions in the 1960s; by looking at the social, political and

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6Thalidomide was a prescription drug which caused horrible deformities.
historical factors surrounding this agit-prop drama, one sees the play's acute social criticism more clearly.

While the issues surrounding the abortion debate are too numerous and complex to discuss in full, several of the topics that Lamb addresses bear further investigation: the primacy of the woman and her life over the fetus that she carries; the relationship between woman's autonomy and reproductive freedom; the idea that motherhood is not the natural destiny of all women; the church and state as agents of oppression; the tendency to punish the pregnant woman as sexually sinful; the horrors of illegal abortion in the 1960s; the nature of therapeutic abortion; and finally, issues of nationalism and population control in abortion politics. These arguments are hopelessly intertwined not only in Lamb's text but also in reality. Often a discussion of one issue bears directly upon the other.

Myrna Lamb's central argument revolves around her belief that a woman's life takes primacy and that fetal life when unwanted is "parasitic." At the very heart of the abortion debate is the relationship of the woman to the fetus she carries. Nanette J. Davis, in her book From Crime to Choice, succinctly encapsulated the dilemma stating: "That abortion has galvanized the level of political and personal passion that it has should not be surprising. The stakes are momentous: the fundamental right of privacy for a woman to have control over her body and her life versus protection of the life of society's weakest member—the fetus" (7). The premise that without the ability to govern their own reproductive capacity women are at the mercy of the patriarchy is a cornerstone of 1960s feminist protests, and this theme resounds throughout Lamb's work. Reproductive freedom was a fundamental proposition of the women's liberation movement. In her
book the *Politics of Motherhood*, Kristin Luker states that "if we don't own the flesh we stand in . . . [then] the whole course of our lives can be changed by somebody else that can get us pregnant by accident, or by deceit, or by force" (97). She implies that it was inevitable that women as a group came to see abortion rights as an essential part of equality.

Lamb and other feminists' struggle for reproductive freedom arose not only out of concern for women and their suffering from illegal abortions but also out of the belief that the entirety of women's experience within society could not be limited to the roles of wife and mother. In her essay *The War Between the Women: Arguments About Abortion*, Kristin Luker posits the idea that the divisiveness over abortion issues lies in ideas concerning women's place in society. She suggests that those women committed to the idea of domesticity and women's place as keepers of hearth and home are opposed to abortion because it threatens the validity of their way of life (Luker, *Issues in Feminism* 262-271).

Those who argued for women to have access to safe, reliable birth control and safe and legal abortions had several hurdles impeding their way, not the least of which was the idea that motherhood was the sole purpose of women's lives. For example, a psychiatrist who worked to limit the number of therapeutic abortions permitted stated: "We know that woman's main role here on earth is to conceive, deliver, and raise children . . ." (Reagan 203). This narrow-minded belief concerning women's position in society was not uncommon. The "woman question," raised at the later half of the nineteenth century seemed to be asked again in the 1960s. Women's ability to control their own reproductive systems was perceived to be a threat to the ongoing safety of society. The
term "natural" is particularly problematic in its relation to the role of women in society and to sexual mores which began to expand openly during this era. Appeals to "the natural role of women" have chronically been used to suggest women take a subservient role in society.

"But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" argues on several levels for the legalization of abortion. But what is particularly evident is the pain and suffering caused by illegal abortion. Lamb's depiction of the horrors of abortion in her drama coincides with first person abortion narratives from the same period. In addition to the physical horrors, the rage experienced by both Lamb's protagonist and the women who underwent often horrific ordeals resounds in their texts. Margaret Cerullo underwent an illegal abortion in May of 1968. In discussing the incident, Margaret stated:

As I rode in the back seat of the car through the Maryland countryside on my way to have an illegal abortion that day in May 1968 I came to a shocking realization. For the first time in my life, I understood that I was a woman, not a "human being," but a woman. For the first time, I understood something about what it meant to be a woman in this society--that the lives of women were not of value. And I realized, that an inchoate rage that is with me today as I recall this story, that in this society, because I had sex, someone thought I deserved to die (Gerber 89).

Cerullo's story asserts that when women's autonomy and ability to choose are subverted, women become second class citizens, and their needs are secondary to the laws of society. Pregnant women's lives are devalued when the fetus takes primacy. Cerullo's narrative also echoes Lamb's assertion that women are punished for having sex.

Abortion throughout the twentieth century was regarded as a crime on the same level with prostitution and other forms of illicit sexuality (Reagan 3-4). And women who had abortions were often thought to be women of bad character. Thus several abortionists
inflicted needless pain upon clients while performing abortions to remind them not to come back again. Other abortionists made heinous advances toward their clients:

One woman, who had an illegal abortion in the mid-1950s after being raped, recalled the humiliation she felt when the abortionist remarked, "You can take your pants down now, but you shoulda' ha! ha!-kept'em on before." When he finished the abortion, for which he charged $1,000, he offered to return $20 if she would give him a "quick blow job" (Reagan 199).

While some abortionists legitimately wanted to provide a safe service for their clients, several unethical practitioners, such as the abortionist in the story above, added to the pain and misery of the abortion experience.

A compelling need for abortions was partly generated by a burgeoning sexual revolution. Jenny, who attended Berkeley in the sixties, states that sex "was like a badge of seniority...proof that you were a young liberated person" (Messer 81). As college aged women in general became sexually active, the need for birth control increased. However, birth control was widely unavailable to an unmarried women in a time where sexual expression was becoming more common. Men, single or married, could obtain condoms, while unmarried women could not obtain birth control, demonstrating a very real consequence of the double sexual standard—a consequence that women often paid.

In addition, as sexual activity outside of marriage still carried connotations that ranged from impropriety to sinfulness, women were often reluctant to acknowledge that they were engaging in sex. Women who became pregnant before abortion was legal were in another bind. Pre-marital pregnancy still carried a serious social stigma, and an unmarried mother would have great difficulty supporting her child on her salary. Women, according to Leslie Reagan, were caught in the unenviable position of having to control their own reproduction without the means to do so.
In addition to lack of birth control and sexual assault by abortion practitioners, the inept handling of the operation caused great damage to women. Detroit hospitals reported seeing as many as three to four patients a day who suffered from botched abortions (Reagan 49). Lila, a black woman who attended college in the sixties, tells of her abortion via a "coat hanger in the vagina — to be left there until abortion occurred" (Messer 23). Another young black woman brought into Cook County hospital had attempted to abort by placing a "grey tablet" in her vagina. Caustic agents such as "abortion pills" could be fatal.

The Woman scientist in Lamb's drama survives her failed abortion attempt and gives birth to her daughter, whom she gives up for adoption. The playwright implies that the protagonist felt a sense of loss, "I never held that baby." Adoption, touted by the Right as the panacea for accidental pregnancies, often causes great distress for the biological mother. Women who feel they were coerced to surrender their children because of the stigma of illegitimate pregnancy speak of their regret and loss:

For ten years I tied up all my emotional energy in trying to pretend it never happened, and I almost believed it. I had to stay emotionally detached to survive. I was afraid to face all this pain, but I was numbing myself to everything else in life, too. Part of me died. I feel empty inside, I'm afraid to make decisions about anything, and I can't trust anyone. I was told so many lies. I can't let anyone get close to me, especially men, and I cringe if a man touches me. (Anderson, Campbell and Cohen 348).

The biological mother's reference to her feelings of isolation and to her rejection of intimacy reiterates that of Lamb's protagonist who states: "I never allowed a human being to touch me in intimacy again" (162).

Adoption policies that suggest an unwed mother give up her child because of issues of legitimacy are particularly problematic. In a brief article on "Adoption Abuse,"
Carole Anderson and Lee Campbell assert that social workers propose that adoption is a way for an unmarried woman to "correct her mistake" (349). This mistake is undoubtedly pre-marital sex which reinforces the inseparable tie between abortion and ideology concerning legitimate and illegitimate female sexuality.7

In an attempt to address all of the possible reasons that abortion should be made legal, Lamb includes a line of argument in her script that could be interpreted as a nod to population control ideology. In a sarcastic retort to the Man, the Woman states that if abortion were legal, "The population of the world would be so effectively decimated as to render wholly redundant the mechanisms of lebensraum*, of national politics of hunger as a method, of greed as a motive, of war itself as a method . . ." (151). Read in context, Lamb condemns restricted access to abortion as a policy of misguided nationalism. Despite the then current rise of population control programs, Lamb does not ally reproduction rights with population control ideology. In every instance Lamb's alliance remains radically feminist.

The changes that occurred during the 1960s eventually led to the passage of Roe v. Wade. This landmark Supreme Court decision ended the necessity for back alley abortions performed by unlicensed practitioners and saved thousands of women's lives. While the importance of Roe v. Wade cannot be overstated, according to political scientist Rosalind Petchesky, the interpretation that Roe v. Wade successfully engendered

7Jane Alexander's The Baby Dance explores the emotional, legal and ethical complexities involved in adopting a child today.

8Webster's New World Dictionary defines lebensraum as German for "living space." It continues by noting that the term is also synonymous for German imperialism.
feminist revolution is erroneous. The law lacked an essential paradigm shift that would ensure reproductive freedoms for years to come. As Petchesky so aptly suggests: "for that change to have been radical—a liberating force for masses of women, a lasting social need and feminist activism would have had to merge with a popular feminist ideology, one that turned the accepted meanings of abortion upside down. And this did not happen" (132). In light of the current backlash against feminism and the legal disintegration of Roe v. Wade during the 1980s and 1990s, it seems that Myrna Lamb’s "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" could be as pertinent today as it was almost thirty years ago. Jill Dolan suggests that radical feminists have once again assumed an "activist stance" partly because of the attacks on reproductive freedoms. (Dolan "Personal, Political, Polemical" 45). "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" could serve as a primer in contemporary feminist theatre protests against the imposition of limits on women's reproductive choices.

The Performance of Abortion Protest

On the morning of March 10, 1993, a small group of anti-abortion demonstrators protested in front of the Pensacola Women's Medical Services Clinic. Dr. David Gunn, the only regular abortion provider in the Pensacola region, had parked his car in the rear of the building and proceeded toward the clinic when one of the activists, Michael Griffin, "calmly walked up to Gunn and fired three bullets before dropping his .38 caliber handgun and approaching the police" (American Political Network Abortion Report, March 11, 1993). Two hours later, David Gunn died during surgery. Griffin, who surrendered to police immediately following the shooting, was charged with murder.
In retrospect, Gunn's death seems unavoidable in light of the increasingly violent nature of anti-abortion protests. Since the Supreme Court ruling of Roe v. Wade, abortion providers and clinics have been troubled by anti-abortion activists. Protestors' activities range from hate mail, death threats, and burglary to stalking, vandalism, bombings, and arson. Statistics from the early 1990s reflect an escalation of violent protests over abortion clinics. In 1993 over half of the clinics in the U.S. were the sites of violent action ("National Clinic Access Project," Feminist Majority Foundation Brochure). In 1993 murder was added to the list of violent protests intended to limit the availability of abortion.

The murder of David Gunn and the rise in violence used by the religious right in its efforts to stop abortion reveal an increase in tensions regarding reproductive issues in the U.S. These tensions are played out both on the stage and in the streets. The controversy over abortion has proven one of the most divisive issues in the second half of the twentieth century, and those who support freedom of choice and those who denounce abortion usually feel deeply about the issue. Because this dilemma has no easy solution and the arguments concerning abortion are reiterated at every national election, this issue has become a peculiarly American litmus test. As free speech is at the cornerstone of American politics and Americans' ideas about themselves, speaking out and protesting are part of the fabric of this society's political life. These protests often "perform" our cultural beliefs on a particular topic. The anti-abortion protests themselves constitute a national drama in which these cultural tensions over abortion are performed.
Anti-abortion activists employ multiple tactics during clinic protests. Many of these tactics are theatrical in nature, and like theatre are designed to elicit an emotional reaction. Erwin Goffman, in his analysis of human social behavior, suggests that all interactions are in some way performative and that our understanding of these behaviors depends upon the framework in which we operate. Goffman creates a theatrical metaphor to explain people's actions in terms of onstage and backstage behaviors. He implies that when we have an audience that needs to be impressed, our onstage personae are visible, while in more casual circumstances a backstage manner predominates.9

Clinic protests constitute an onstage performance of fundamental beliefs regarding abortion. In her insightful article "White Men and Pregnancy," Peggy Phelan concluded that "rescuing" pregnant women at abortion clinics constituted "theatrical performances of extraordinary boldness and violence" (131). During clinic protests, however, both pro-choice and anti-abortion groups perform for each other, and more importantly, for the media. This spectacle can also be framed in theatrical terms both in terms of its method of performance and its dramatic text.

At a clinic demonstration protestors work to create a melodramatic narrative which they then act out. Their story is of the sacrifice of a nation of unborn who are persecuted by evil abortionists motivated solely by monetary gain. As historian Leslie Reagan notes, journalists at the turn of the century began to construct an abortion narrative in which women were often victims and abortionists evil villains. Contemporary abortion narratives constructed by anti-abortion proponents weave a tale

9 For further information see Erving Goffman's Behavior in Public Places: Notes on the Social organization of Gatherings.
of the persecution of the fetuses and of victims too vulnerable and powerless to protect themselves. These powerless characters are championed by the self-sacrificing demonstrators who fight to protect these innocent babies.

The women seeking an abortion are not usually perceived as the antagonists. Groups such as Operation Rescue and their followers construct a narrative portraying the doctor as the aggressor. While militant protestors have followed and harassed women seeking abortions, the most violent acts have been perpetrated on the abortionists. Physicians are harassed at their homes or in airports. One doctor's elderly mother was phoned in the middle of the night by a caller who claimed the physician had been killed in a car wreck (Blanchard 99). Dr. Hector Zevallos was kidnapped; Dr. George Tiller was shot; Dr. David Gunn and Dr. John Britton were murdered.

Like the plays of Barker, O'Neill and Kingsley, contemporary anti-abortion narratives decenter the pregnant woman. She operates on the periphery and is negated within pro-life rhetoric. The pro-life activists intentionally disconnect the fetus from the pregnant woman's body in order to prove its autonomy. Yet, while the woman is pushed to the margin, anti-abortion proponents seem reluctant to portray her as villainous. Instead the woman is often cast in the role of duped victim. In a speech delivered to pro-life activists gathered in Buffalo in 1993 to impede the operation of abortion clinics, the Rev. Keith Tucci stated:

In fact most of their mothers don't even choose to do it—they feel compelled to do it or pressured to do it because the pro-abortion industry is so concerned that, if those mothers even get the right information, they might not choose to do it. That's why they don't have sidewalk counselors out there making sure these women make good choices! That's why they don't have adoption programs. That's why they don't have day-care centers; that's why they're not offering free medical care for any woman who wants to bear a child because they're not choice. They're profit (Szykowny 13).
Tucci implies that mothers would never choose to harm their children and suggests that women's attempts to procure abortions are mistakes born of ignorance and pro-choice pressures. Tucci lists adoption as a panacea and appeals to liberal attitudes on medical care to promote his fundamentalist views on reproductive freedom. By appealing to the notion that abortion is a capitalist monstrosity that prevents women from making "good choices," he casts himself as a liberal thinker out to protect the pregnant woman and her offspring.

Both pro-choice and anti-abortion protestors recognize the importance of rhetoric to construct a frame and reference point for their beliefs. Anti-abortion activists employ terms such as "the unborn," "baby," and "murderers" while pro-choice activist talk about "reproductive freedoms," "fetuses" and "abortion providers." In addition to the careful choice of phrasing used in describing abortion, rhetoric plays an important role in clinic protests. Chants are used on both sides to rally activists. Those involved in protests use chants repeatedly in order to bolster morale and to show strength in numbers by drowning out the opposition. At the abortion protests in Buffalo, pro-choice refrains included:

Keep your rosaries off my ovaries!; Pro-life, your name's a lie; you don't care if women die!; Two-four-six-eight, Tucci doesn't ovulate!; Four-six-eight-ten, why are all your leaders men? (Szykowny 27).

On both sides of the debate, the rhetoric chanted during the clinic protest is not used to communicate, but rather as a weapon.

The rhetoric often reveals deeper issues involved in the abortion debate. For example in the 1993 assault on Buffalo clinics, the anti-abortion supporters screamed "Fags! Babykillers! Lesbians!" at the clinic defenders (Szykowny 22). Their rhetoric
consists of chants and pre-rehearsed phrases that reveal their homophobic and anti-feminist beliefs. Pro-choice supporters responded to the slurs with "Racist, sexists, anti-gay born-again bigots go away." (Szykowny 15). Other pro-choice supporters flaunted their non-traditional beliefs. In Buffalo, a lesbian group defending the clinics wore fluorescent green patches that read: "I Fuck to Come, Not to Conceive" (Szykowny 15).

The rhetoric is emblematic of far more than a group's stand upon abortion; it reveals a debate of life-styles and value systems. While differences of ideology regarding the social and legal status of the fetus certainly represent the focus of the abortion debate; the heart of the abortion debate rests in the completely incongruent value systems of those who wish to establish a traditional idea of the family and government and others who seek a more liberal interpretation of the family and the U.S. Constitution.

Although rhetoric itself can be viewed as a type of symbolic action, the use of certain images, specifically aborted fetuses, evokes an emotional and often violent response. Dallas Blanchard, in his analysis of anti-abortion protestors, suggested that the movement from denouncing abortion to actually participating in protests is a move from rhetorical devices to symbolic action.10

Blanchard explains the relationship between symbolic action and rhetoric by stating:

A step beyond the use of rhetoric is the use of symbolic actions, which have the same basic motivations as rhetoric, with the additional goal of reducing abortion options. Baby Charlie, the fetus displayed by John Burt in a 1985 picket line in New Orleans, is an example of a symbol; in displaying it Burt wanted to shock

10Kenneth Burke's The Philosophy of Literary Form: Studies in Symbolic Action provides an in-depth analysis of symbolic action.
ambivalent people and to convince them of the humanity of the fetus. Like rhetoric, symbols are a form of propaganda (98).

Displaying fetuses is a particularly effective form of propaganda because it depicts as a separate entity something that is entirely dependent (Myrna Lamb would argue parasitic) on the body of another. One young protestor is pictured carrying a miniature coffin with a mirror that reflects the tiny fetus lying within its satin lining. The picture is particularly disturbing as it suggests the murder not only of an independent entity but of a person.11

As if to prove that America is in serious decline, fetuses, considered by some to be the nation's weakest and most vulnerable citizens, are often depicted in anti-abortion literature and protests. In the battle that ensued in front of one Buffalo women's clinic, an anti-abortion protester, Richard Schenck, displayed a preserved fetus as a symbol of all the "babies" being "murdered" at the clinic. This fetus is known as "Baby Tia."

According to one reporter, the appearance of Tia at the clinic protest seemed to escalate the intensity of the demonstration. Pro-lifers defended this image of a dead baby while

11Dallas Blanchard suggests that one way in which we decide on personhood is through funeral rituals. He states: "Traditionally, Western society has accorded different levels of 'humanness' to fetuses and infants, dependent on their being assigned social roles, at different stages of incorporation into the family. For example, a spontaneous abortion, or early miscarriage, is typically flushed down the toilet. An induced abortion is treated in virtually the same way. An infant who takes at least one or two breaths is treated differently. It receives an infant death certificate and possibly a truncated funeral. If an infant lives long enough for the family to interact with it, it usually receives more recognition, including being named and baptized and given a more complete funeral service. Another indication of the differences in status for fetuses and infants lies in the different kinds of death certificates required. In the first two trimesters of pregnancy, no formal record is required. Death in the last trimester requires a fetal death certificate. Following live birth, death in the first year of the infant's life requires an infant death certificate. After one year of life, a 'normal' death certificate is issued" (17).
pro-choice advocates were "disgusted by the sheer grotesqueness and obscenity of his display" (Szykowny 16). One photographer asked, "Why wasn't this baby buried?"; Schenck replied: "She was attempted to be buried several times . . . [but] she has no death certificate" (Szykowny 17). It is implied that a death certificate would provide Baby Tia with the social status of a person, and Schenck is suggesting that abortion is state-sanctioned murder. One of the pro-choice clinic defenders confronted Schenck screaming: "'That is not alive'" he snarls, pointing at Tia. 'The woman is alive! That's nothing outside of a woman's body! Women are not incubators --!'" (17). Baby Tia's appearance demonstrates two uncompromised ideological differences. The fundamentalist position is that the baby's life is separate from, and takes precedence over, the mother's while pro-choice advocates view the fetus as part of, and dependent upon, the woman who carries it.

The employment of "Baby Tia" as a spectacular element of Operation Rescue's dramatic protest also illustrates the manner in which pregnant women are erased by the performance of anti-choice ideology. Commenting on the use of fetuses during abortion protests, feminist theorist Peggy Phelan asserted:

In making the fetus the focus of the visible spectacle of the demonstrations, Operation Rescue subtly erases the pregnant woman herself. . . This literal ignore/ance of the pregnant woman limits sympathy for her situation and represses ethical uncertainty about her liberty (133).

By exhibiting "Baby Tia" as an independent entity, separate from the body of the pregnant woman, anti-choice advocates construct the image of the fetus as a separate citizen in need of the protection of the law.

The performance of abortion protests has had significant results. As Blanchard notes, anti-abortion groups have successfully lessened the number of doctors willing to
perform abortions and therefore limited women's access to reproductive health services. According to his study, Blanchard concluded that while the majority of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists believe in the necessity for legal abortions, two-thirds do not approve of doctors who perform them (66). The result of this stigma is that abortion is only available in 17 percent of U.S. counties. Many physicians who work in abortion clinics travel significant distances in order to avoid censure (Blanchard 66).

Those who become involved in anti-abortion protests are motivated by a variety of factors. There is a fundamentalist slant that crosses religious delineations:

There are at least six basic commonalities to what can be called Protestant, Catholic, and Mormon fundamentalists: (1) an attitude of certitude—that one may know the final truth, which includes antagonism to ambiguity; (2) an external source for that certitude—the Bible or church dogma; (3) a belief system that is at root dualistic; (4) an ethic based on "traditional" family; (5) a justification for violence; and, therefore, (6) a rejection of modernism (secularization) (44). Blanchard goes on to suggest that the reason people join the anti-abortion movement can also be divided into four categories: "status defense; anti-feminism; moral commitment; and cultural fundamentalism" (39). Those committed to anti-abortion protests fear loss of social status due to the rising number of minorities; they also may feel threatened by the changing role of women during the last three decades. While anti-abortion protesters usually have a deeply felt religious motivation for their actions, they also act in order to define their idea of a "Christian nation." Motivations can include a complex combination of anti-feminism, xenophobia, racism and nationalism. Also, for many who protest there is a sincere desire to "save babies" from slaughter.

Militant anti-abortion groups have used kidnapping in an attempt to further their pro-life cause. In August of 1982, Dr. Hector Zevallos, an abortion provider, and his
wife, Rosalie, were kidnapped from their home in Granite City, Illinois. The three white male kidnappers, all members of the Army of God, threatened to kill Zevallos unless the doctor made a statement renouncing abortion (Morgenthau 29). The kidnappers also left a ransom note demanding "President Reagan denounce abortion as a condition of the couple's release" (Sheppard D11). Inexplicably, the kidnappers released the Zevalloses eight days after their abduction.

Jane Martin's *Keely and Du*

The murder of Dr. David Gunn and the kidnapping of Hector and Rosalie Zevallos constitute a public performance of the cultural split created by the abortion debate. *Keely and Du*, a play by Jane Martin, attempts to look at the issues surrounding the abortion debate. *Keely and Du* debuted at Actor's Theatre of Louisville during the 1993 Humana Festival. This play addresses what many perceive to be an unbreachable division caused by the abortion debate and explores the personal dilemmas of individual women which are often historically overshadowed by the controversy surrounding abortion. Premiering only two weeks after the murder of David Gunn, *Keely and Du* sets the abortion dilemma in the current social context: the rise of violent right-wing fundamentalist protest. The play includes the increasingly violent tactics used by militant pro-life organization, the male leadership of the fundamentalist movement, the rhetorical debate between pro-choice and pro-life members and provides a profile of those involved who have become pro-life protestors. *Keely and Du* humanizes the conflict by concentrating on the personal relationship between two women on opposite sides of the fence.
The play begins as the pregnant Keely is wheeled unconscious onto the stage. Du, a sixty-five year old nurse, receives her instructions and a chart containing vital statistics concerning her charge. She promptly handcuffs Keely to the bed. This image of the captured and bound pregnant woman prevails throughout the play. Keely has become an incubator to the unwanted "life" she carries inside her. Imprisoned by a group who militantly oppose abortion, Keely is victimized because of her unwanted pregnancy and the circumstances surrounding it.

The group that has kidnapped Keely is called Operation Retrieval. A direct correlation to Terry Randall's Operation Rescue, the organization is militant in its tactics. The fictionalized operation is led by a middle-aged Christian male Walter. Walter characterizes the right-to-life male leadership, its fundamental nature and its military manner. In the first of the play's seventeen scenes, Walter enters with the men who deliver Keely to the basement where she will be imprisoned. He gives brief instructions to his accomplices: "Please be at dispersal in twenty-three minutes, we are running seven minutes late. (The TWO MEN look at their watches.) Seven twenty-two" (9). One assumes that with their watches now synchronized, the two men go off to continue their next task. Walter then commands Du to memorize a number, to be used "Only in an emergency," and leaves Keely in the nurse's capable hands. From the play's beginning until its climax, Walter calls the shots. Only when the mission ends unexpectedly is Walter forced to abandon the operation, and Du takes charge.

While Walter represents the male radical leadership of anti-abortion activists, Du represents the women who follow and assist. Du, a kindly, "covenant Christian," is portrayed as sensible, practical, devoted, and, despite her actions, likeable. During Keely's
self-imposed silence we learn that Du is somewhat lonely and she laments the uncommunicative disposition of her husband and sons. The relationship between Du and the captured Keely begins when Keely, unable to maintain her aggressive silence, begins to communicate with her captor.

Through Keely and Du's dialogue, we learn that Keely has an invalid father, two jobs and seventy dollars in the bank. Her pregnancy resulted from her ex-husband's forcible rape. The playwright makes Keely's decision to abort multi-faceted. She does not have the money or time to care for a child; she believes her ex-husband would never leave her alone if she has the baby; she feels that she is not emotionally stable enough at the present; and she does not think she could be a good mother at this time. Keely's abortion decision is not based on a single reason and is not frivolous. The playwright strategically provides Keely with serious motivations for seeking an abortion in order to maintain a sense of balance between both anti-abortion and pro-choice positions. In her essay "The War Between the Women—Arguments About Abortion," Kristin Luker concludes that pro-choice people believe that the woman's rights take precedent over the fetus, but that the fetus' "right increases" the closer it comes to viability. Thus the use of abortion for routine birth control often causes a moral dilemma even for pro-rights activists (Luker 267). It may also be surmised that because of this "gradualist" view of the fetus' potential rights, the decision for abortion is more comfortably accepted when the pregnant woman's motivation is serious in nature.

As Du places the fetus' rights on an equal if not greater level than Keely's personal needs, the circumstances surrounding Keely's abortion decision do not sway her. The information does not change Du's opinion, nor does Du's counsel influence Keely.
What does happen is that, despite their inability to compromise on ideology, the two women become closer. In Time's review of the play, William Henry III stated:

> The play's inner life is the growing bond between the captive, Keely, and her grandmotherly keeper, Du. Part of the closeness is their natural sympathy as women beleaguered by men. Part is a shared, stereotypically feminine impulse to focus on an individual situation more than an abstract principle. Part, too, is the "Stockholm syndrome" of intimacy between hostage and hostage taker as a way of enduring forced togetherness. The effect is especially strong in this situation because, unlike most hostages, the young woman has no fear of being murdered – her captors are desperate to keep her alive, if only as an incubator (71).

Henry's review succinctly captures the essence of the two women's relationship. By contrast, the adversarial relationship between Keely and Walter increases in vehemence. Walter tries repeatedly to convince Keely of the sacredness of the "life" she carries within her. Keely continually resists. Their arguments reveal the stagnant use of language employed in the abortion debate. Rhetoric used both by pro-life and pro-choice advocates resounds with such familiarity that it has become cliched. One prolonged debate between the two escalates and ends with Keely spitting in Walter's face. Walter then apologizes for speaking harshly, to which Keely replies, "Fuck you." Walter's responds with, "Thank you for accepting my apology," after which both Keely and Du burst into laughter. Though Du remains on Walter's "side," she realizes that his pomposity and arrogance are laughable.

Keely and Du's bond grows so deep that Du takes a risk and provides Keely with birthday presents. Keely has been incarcerated several weeks, and on her birthday Du presents her with three gifts: she takes off the handcuffs, gives Keely a dress that has

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12 Linda Kintz in her insightful article "Chained to the Bed: Violence and Abortion in Keely and Du" analyzes the play by employing Saussurian linguistics and Lacanian psychoanalysis.
been hanging in the fridge to keep it out of sight, and presents a six pack of beer. Du and Keely spend her birthday talking and drinking beer. Within this scene, Keely describes her rape and her pain while Du rocks her to sleep.

Du also falls asleep after their party, and both women are surprised by the return of Walter. In haste to cover their illicit activities, Du hides the beer bottles, and Keely shoves the hanger and plastic bag from her dress under the mattress. Under Walter's accusing glance, Du breaks down and confesses that she brought Keely beer. Walter retorts that, "Hell is a place, it is not an obscenity. It would be very difficult for two women in this circumstance not to develop complicity" (57). His implication is that women are essentially weak and fall into evil when left to their own devices. He then goes on to tell Keely that her ex-husband Cole has been born again and that he is here to see her.

Keely becomes violently angry at the suggestion and retorts, "You think I care about rapists who find Jesus?" Despite her objections, Cole enters the room. Talking incessantly about himself and his conversion experience, Cole begs Keely's forgiveness and asks her to take him back. He pleads with her to have the baby and suggests they become a family again. Walter's work to reform Cole and construct a patriarch for this new family is doomed to fail. Cole extends his hand and asks that, with a simple gesture, he and Keely make a pact. Keely responds by biting Cole's hand. Cole pulls free and "slaps her hard." Angered at his failure to save Cole and construct an ideal father, Walter angrily removes him from the room. Because of Cole's desperate cries of repentance and continued physical resistance to Walter's command to come out, Du exits with the men.
to aid Walter. Keely immediately reaches for the coat hanger that has been stashed under the mattress and aborts herself.

Walter and Du return to find Keely passed out and the sheet soaked with blood. Walter wants to clear out and call the paramedics five minutes after they've escaped. Du tells Walter to leave, and, knowing that she will be imprisoned on kidnapping charges, she chooses to stay with Keely. In this moment Du takes charge. She remains not only because of her friendship with Keely but also because she considers deserting her unchristian.

The final scene of the play takes place in a prison. Du has had a stroke and does not speak. The situation mirrors the beginning of the play with Keely as the caretaker and Du abjectly silent. Keely fills in the rest of the story for the audience. We discover that Cole has given himself up and that Keely is once again taking care of her invalid father and working on rebuilding her life. Du is suffering from depression and her doctors are having trouble adjusting the dosage of her medicine. The play ends with Keely tearing up over the story of a little girl she saw at a concert. The story's implication is that presumably had she not aborted, she too could have had a little girl. The final moment between the two women reveals the confusion they feel over recent events:

(The conversation burns out. THEY sit. DU looks directly at her. THEY lock eyes. The pause lengthens.)
DU. Why?
KEELY. (Looks at her. A pause.) Why? (70).

Despite all the time they've spent together the play ends where it began. Neither woman truly understands the other. In addition to suggesting the inability to compromise on the abortion issue, the ending of the play also suggests Keely's regret over abortion. Keely's
sense of confusion and loss at the end of the play heightens its ambiguity and thus allows a myriad of interpretations of her decision to abort.

The beginning of this chapter establishes the performativity of abortion protest and examines the ideology behind the pro-life movement and how this ideology is performed to the detriment of women who support reproductive choice. The social conflicts presented in *Keely and Du* not only mirror the real-life protests' ideology and methods, but the play also introduces issues directly related to the abortion debate. This drama also exemplifies the debate over reproductive freedom that takes place on several levels. *Keely and Du* comments upon the political, social and economic status that women currently hold in the U.S. Jane Martin's representations of the fundamentalist interpretation of family values, the underlying anger surrounding militant actions taken by some abortion groups, the link between rape and abortion politics and the relationship between pregnancy and domestic violence bear further investigation.

The battle over abortion has deep-seated roots in traditional definitions of the family and gender roles (Blanchard 119). Women in the right-to-life movement tend to act in subservient roles while men assume the leadership. Within *Keely and Du*, this patriarchal model dominates. Du is under Walter's control. She entered the anti-abortion crusade partially as a result of her husband's new-found religious passion. When Du allows Keely to have a beer and acts without Walter's permission, he castigates Du and suggests he can no longer trust her. Walter's dismissal of Du reflects an overall distrust and misogynist view that women are duplicitous and unsuited for leadership roles.

As exemplified by the kidnapping of Dr. Hector Zevallos and the murder of Dr. David Gunn, violence now seems inexorably linked to fundamentalist abortion protest.
While many anti-choice groups eschew the use of violence, others, such as The Army of God, embrace militant tactics. In *Keely and Du*, Walter’s execution of the kidnapping and his control of events mirror the militaristic efforts of radical anti-abortion groups. His unrelenting pro-life rhetoric and his attempts to convince Keely of his position are reminiscent of the Zevallos kidnappers’ repeated attempts to convince the abortionist to recant his evil ways and give up his practice (Morganthau 29).

Those who believe in the use of violence to end abortion often invoke Christ’s name and Christian ideology. Paul Hill’s pamphlet "Should We Defend Born and Unborn Children with Force?" elicits the use of violence in the following analogy:

If someone were about to tear your limbs from your body, what would you do? If you could defend yourself with force, would you? If you couldn’t defend yourself with effective force, would you want someone else to? If so, Christ teaches that you should treat others similarly (Hill qtd. in Maxwell 118).

Although most violent acts are directed toward abortion care providers, a deep-seated hatred of women’s autonomy often lies at the root of the problem. While Walter perceives himself as a Christian man who cares deeply for Keely’s welfare, there is an underlying anger that precipitates violent action. In *Keely and Du*, the playwright reveals Walter’s anger in several ways. He quotes Old Testament scriptures that state God will "demand an accounting" (43). Walter’s thinly masked anger towards Keely for her obstinate refusal to listen to his diatribes and later towards Du suggests a violent nature that is strictly contained. Walter’s ire toward Keely resonates when he raises his voice at her. At one point, angered by Keely’s use of obscenity, Walter roughly turns Keely’s face toward him. At this point Du intercedes and suggests Keely isn’t able to hear him. In addition to Walter’s outburst, his kidnapping of Keely denotes a belief that the ends justify the means.
While the kidnapping of Dr. Zevallos and his wife and the murder of Dr. Gunn are blatant examples of violent action, rhetorical devices used in the anti-abortion campaign might be considered less damaging. They are, after all, only words. However, rhetoric escalates violence and suggests that violent action is an acceptable form of protest. The president of the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice, the Reverend Katherine Hancock Ragsdale, commented on anti-abortion violence and rhetoric by stating:

I don't think incendiary rhetoric [about 'baby killing'] is non-violent . . . Violent rhetoric leads to violent action, and the first step is disrespect for the consciences of people they disagree with. This rhetoric trivializes, dehumanizes and demonizes us. It marks us as fair game for violence (Hancock qtd. in Clark 300).

Ragsdale's understanding of the link between violent words and actions was mirrored by Planned Parenthood, whose members took out a full page ad in The New York Times stating "Words Kill" (Clark 301). One nurse who works at Hillcrest Clinic in Washington, D.C. provided a concrete example: "They call patients and employees whores and prostitutes and murderers," says the nurse. "They say, 'How can you work in a place like that?' or 'We can give you another job,' or 'You've got blood on your hands.' (Clark 307). Not only does anti-abortion rhetoric seem to incite violence, it is in itself an act of violence.

Because the play works to humanize both the kidnappers and Keely, the rhetoric used by both Walter and Du tends to be structured to convince rather than accuse. Walter emphasizes fetal development and tries to get Keely to read pamphlets on the horrors perpetrated on the unborn. Both Walter and Du emphasize "the baby" and its existence. Walter insists that "the child" is a separate issue from Keely. By contrast Keely, although she refers to the fetus early on as "little" cells, concentrates on why it is
impossible for her to have the baby and keep it, or give it up. She expresses her concerns over financial, emotional, and physical vulnerability caused by her recent rape and the ever persistent threat of her ex-husband. Dialogue results in an impasse. Walter and Keely argue and are unable to reach common ground. The following excerpt shows their fundamental difference. Keely expresses her inability to have a baby and responds to Walter's rhetoric, while Walter's arguments revolve around his concept of Christianity and Nationhood. Because it demonstrates the lack of communication and different ideological positions of anti-abortion and pro-choice people, the section is quoted at length:

**KEELY.** .. cannot do this!
**WALTER.** Living in a nation based on ...
**KEELY.** ... do this to people ...
**WALTER.** Christian values ...
**KEELY.** Saving these babies while you rip the rest of us ...
**WALTER.** Because it is a central issue in a Christian society ...
**KEELY.** My dad locked in a bed, man, who takes care of him ...?
**WALTER.** We address those responsibilities, Keely ...
**KEELY.** ...like I was some baby farm, baby sow, like they make veal by nailing those calves' feet to the floor ...
**WALTER.** Because you will not confront ...
**KEELY.** ..'til I'm fattened up for Jesus, right?
**WALTER.** That's enough, Keely.
**KEELY.** Enough, my ass!
**WALTER.** Do not shout at me! Christ says in the ...
**KEELY.** Christ this, Christ that ...
**WALTER.** Because you will not take responsibility
**KEELY.** So you and a bunch of old guys ...
**WALTER.** When you have alternatives that clearly ...
**KEELY.** ... can do whatever you want and ram your Christ right up my ...
**WALTER.** Enough! You listen to me, young lady, you are carrying a child and you will carry it to term. As to my Christ, he will speak to you, saying "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth ..." (43).

Walter sees abortion as a threat to Christian society. He accuses Keely, who takes care of an invalid father and works two jobs, of being irresponsible. Keely feels that she has lost
all autonomy and has been reduced to a breeder. As the argument resumes Walter states: "when we transgress or ignore Christ's commandments we no longer have democracy, we have anarchy . . . this anarchy begins in the family which is a nation within the nation" (44). Walter's narrow view of Christianity and the family constrains his ability to hear Keely, and his vision of abortion as a threat to national security has led him to act as a terrorist.

*Keely and Du* specifically includes a reference to Baby Tia, the aborted fetus displayed by anti-abortion protester Richard Schenck. Keely accuses Du (and by implication Walter) of wanting this specific "baby" for political motives. She states "You don't care about this baby, you just want it to be . . . God's little visual aid you can hold up at abortion clinics . . . hold up Baby Tia" (38). Tia visually appears to be autonomous and speaks louder than all of the rhetoric used to defend its legal status. The voice of the playwright speaks through Keely, who is well aware of the political implications.

Before Roe v. Wade, most states allowed abortion in instances of rape and incest. Several years ago, the case of a young woman in Ireland who was raped by her father received international attention when the government attempted to prevent the young woman from leaving the country in order to obtain a legal abortion. Feminists assert that because women can be raped, unwanted pregnancy can be beyond their control; therefore, abortion must remain legal. Within the text, Keely has been raped by her ex-husband and is chosen specifically by "Operation Retrieval" to prove the point that "the baby is not rape" and deserves to live. Keely's role as a victim of rape and domestic violence is crucial to her emotional state as well as her desire to obtain an abortion.
Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury for women in the United States (Glazer 171). According to recent estimates, over half the women who are raped know their assailants. One form of domestic violence, wife rape, has been overlooked until quite recently. In her book, *Wife Rape: Understanding the Response of Survivors and Service Providers*, Raquel Kennedy Bergen summarized several factors that characterize wife rape. She asserts that women in relationships that have been marked by extreme physical violence are more likely to experience wife rape (16). One of the motivating factors in wife rape is the husband's belief that he is entitled to sex (Bergen 20-21). Women are vulnerable to wife rape particularly when they are separated or divorced (Bergen 21). Pregnancy does not protect women from spousal rape and often it precipitates it (Bergen 23). In Bergen's study, police showed a reluctance to address complaints by women who accused their husbands of raping them (56).

Keely's situation can be compared to Bergen's analysis of wife rape. Keely's relationship with Cole had been admittedly tempestuous, and Keely tells Du that when asked for a divorce, Cole hit her. When Keely left, Cole stalked her in an attempt both to retain control and frighten her. Suggesting that he wanted to talk things over, Cole gained access to her home. In an intimate moment between Keely and Du, Keely explains that during the attack, while her ex-husband pummeled her head on the floor, she dreamed of being alone and climbing in Wyoming, hanging in a sleeping bag 3,000 feet above the ground. Keely longs for the isolation that Du cannot understand. But her "dreaming" while Cole beat her suggests that she distanced herself mentally from an unbearable situation. Bergen reported that some women experienced "out of body
experiences" or a sensation that they were watching themselves from a distance, while being attacked (31).

Like many victims of wife rape, Keely did not contact the police but tried to get on with her life. Keely realizes when Cole promises to make amends that he will return to his violent ways and that if a child is involved he will have an irrevocable hold over her.

Walter's insistence that Keely and her ex-husband reunite mirrors one of the largest hurdles from freeing women from abusive situations. In an article entitled: "I just raped my wife! What are you going to do about it, Pastor?: The Church and Sexual Violence," Carol Adams challenges pastors to recognize that, by refusing to recognize that violence against women shatters the marriage vows irrevocably, they imperil women's lives and help perpetuate domestic violence. Fundamentalist interpretations of certain biblical passages also create problems for women. Adams notes that the "theological justification for women's subordination" increases the risk of women's abuse. Abuse happens more often in fundamentalist households than in households in which both the man and his wife share equally in the decision making process (75).

To illustrate the problem of pastoral ignorance of domestic violence, Adams tells the story of Shirley, who was raped and beaten repeatedly by her husband. Shirley's fundamentalist pastor counseled her to forgive her husband. The author concludes that this type of counsel is unacceptable. She suggests that in order to aid women who suffer from domestic violence and wife rape that, "rather than asserting that the family must stay together, the church could acknowledge that violence has already sundered the family, and it is the abuser who has broken the covenant" (68). In Keely and Du, Walter's
vehement insistence that Keely and Cole reunite reflects this fundamental and
fundamentalist interpretation of marriage and gender roles within marriage.

Though *Keely and Du* is often regarded as a pro-choice work, its emphasis on the
women's relationship obscures the political issues, making the drama somewhat
ambiguous. Jon Jory, Artistic Director of Actor's Theatre of Louisville, acts as
spokesperson for the anonymous Jane Martin. He commented on the variety of
interpretations that the play has had. He stated that, "In Ireland, I think they thought it
was a pro-life play. At Hartford, it was sort of like being at a pro-choice rock concert"
(Erstein 1J). However, *Keely and Du* is problematic, for despite its ever present image of
the pregnant woman chained to the bed, the text undoes the growing nature of
violence in abortion protests and focuses instead upon the private interactions of Keely
and Du. In a review of the New Brunswick production of the play, critic Alvin Klein
reiterates this point. He states:

(I)n the end, the director frees the play from the shackles of grim debate. A
connection between two women distorted by all creation is shaped with ineffable
grace. Add the trickery of fate in the final summing up. And listen to the play's
multi-leveled ending: a couple of unanswerable questions. Then take your side with
safe renewed convictions (Klein 17).

While Klein also notes that Keely achieves "the spoils of a Pyrrhic ideological victory" at
the end, it is unlikely that those involved in the debate on abortion will change their mind
(Klein 17).

As Jory suggests, reactions to the play depend upon the audience and production.
Critical response has also been just as mixed. While some reviewers insist that *Keely and
Du* is essentially a pro-choice play, others interpret the production from their own firmly
entrenched beliefs regarding abortion. One feminist critic, Alisa Solomon, writer for the
Village Voice, suggested that contrary to popular belief, Kedy and Du did not present a pro-choice argument, but instead it only provided an opening statement:

Leaving aside the possibility that some ideas really are better than others (should we have "balanced" plays about lynching or rape or "ethnic cleansing"?), and that audiences still get to decide what things mean when confronted with a point of view, what "political theater" are they talking about? Like the term political correctness itself, this paradigm is meant to close off the very discussion it claims to desire. The play, after all, merely demonstrates that each side has a point. That's not the place to conclude; it's where debate has to begin (95).

Kedy and Du is not a play that debates the abortion issue. In Kedy and Du abortion remains a plot device used to bring down a tragic figure. In this play, that figure is Du.13

The play's attempt at fairness works to increase our sympathy for Du, which is necessary to develop the relationship between the two women. Keely's regret at the end of the play and Du's stroke and imprisonment are a direct result of her abortion. Keely's final monologue also alludes to a longing for a "child" that was not to be. And, although the play is usually considered pro-choice, the text suggests that the choice to abort brings grief and sorrow to all those involved.

In a review of Kedy and Du published by the Seattle Times, Jon Jory stated that "women friends were infuriated that I had anything to do with a play which allowed a platform for pro-life attitudes" (Berson D14). A pro-life advocate who read the review responded by writing to the editor applauding Jory for advocating a pro-choice position ("Pro-life Tolerance" M3). Playwright Jane Martin, it seems, has deliberately opted for

13 Chapter One focuses on four male playwrights who employ the abortion issue to bring about the fall of a male tragic hero. Jane Martin remains anonymous, although many have surmised that this playwright is Jon Jory. At present there is no way to determine the gender of identity of this author. Despite his objectives, if Jory is Jane Martin, then he has conveniently co-opted a woman's identity in order to speak for and on behalf of women. In many ways, he has as little success as Barker, O'Neill, or Kingsley.
ambiguity and her refusal to take a position on the abortion issue stands in stark contrast to the position taken by Myrna Lamb. Lamb, in the midst of fighting for abortion rights never wavered in her commitment to women's freedom of choice. Jane Martin's *Keely and Du* reveals an uncertainty regarding women's ability to decide for themselves on the abortion issue. Keely's own self-doubt regarding her choice to abort and the pain caused as a result of her decision inverts the paradigm set up in "But What Have You Done for Me Lately?" in which legal bans upon abortion caused incalculable grief and suffering.
CHAPTER FIVE:

UPSTAGING WOMEN: THE NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGIES

The April 1909 issue of Medical World contained a bizarre and unusual story; A.D. Hard, a medical student studying in Philadelphia in 1884, related a tale that he had kept a secret for twenty-five years. Hard writes: "At the time, the procedure was so novel, so peculiar in its human ethics, that six young men of the senior class who witnessed the operation were pledged to secrecy" (Hard qtd. in Phillips 296). The incident involved a forty-one year old merchant and his wife who was his junior by ten years. The couple were unable to conceive a child, and the merchant sought medical assistance. As the professor and medical students discussed the case one of the students jokingly remarked "the only solution of this problem is to call in the hired man" (Hard qtd. in Phillips 296). Hard suggests this comment initiated the following procedure:

The woman was chloroformed, and with a hard rubber syringe some fresh semen from the best-looking member of the class was deposited in the uterus, and the cervix slightly plugged with gauze. Neither the man nor his wife was initially informed of the procedure, but, according to Hard, the professor who performed the insemination later "repented of his action, and explained the whole matter to the husband. Strange as it may seem, the man was delighted with the idea, and conspired with the professor in keeping from the lady the actual way in which her impregnation was brought about" (Hard qtd. in Phillips 296).

If true, this account marks the first known instance of artificial insemination by donor (Phillips 297). The narrative is problematic not only in terms of its questionable validity. The doctor and students' artificial insemination of the pregnant women without her consent is tantamount to rape. Equally disturbing is the husband's reaction and his

1This narrative is often repeated by scholars researching artificial insemination. There is an account of this incident in Cheryl Meyer's The Wandering Uterus (9).
subsequent decision to "conspire with the professor in keeping from the lady the actual way in which her impregnation was brought about" (Hard qtd. in Phillips). Significantly, within this medically documented account of artificial insemination, many current concerns connected with assisted reproduction surface. The narrative begs the question what are the ethical implications of artificial insemination? Are technologically assisted reproductions in the best interest of women? Who decides who has access to this technology? How are abuses of the technology (such as the woman's absence of knowledge, choice and consent in the above narrative) to be prevented?

At the time of the story's publication in 1909, the artificial insemination of the merchant's wife was considered an unusual and freakish occurrence. Assisted reproductive technologies have become a reality. On July 25, 1978, Lesley Brown gave birth to a 5 lb. 12 oz. baby girl whose arrival marked what was to become an explosion of interest in new reproductive technology. Lesley Brown's daughter, "miracle child" Louise Brown, is the world's first "test tube" baby. Lesley Brown conceived Louise through in vitro fertilization. In the sixteen months following Louise Brown's birth "278 women . . . participated in known experiments with IVF, but only three gave birth, a mere .04 success rate" (Lublin 12). In the twenty years following her birth, thousands of childless couples sought access to in vitro fertilization in the hopes of having a child. Today, reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination have become routine. Their pervasive place in medically managed pregnancy marks a dramatic shift in how pregnancy is understood and denotes an increasingly complex climate in which a woman's decisions regarding pregnancy are made.
Assisted reproductive technologies is an umbrella term for a range of new reproductive technologies used to combat infertility. For the purpose of this study, these technologies can be divided into three categories: scientific developments that aid conception, technologies employed to screen fetuses for possible genetic defects, and finally, technologies used to aid and visualize pregnancy. New techniques developed to aid in conception include IVF (in vitro fertilization) egg harvesting and donation, surrogacy, embryo freezing, and embryo transfer. Those technologies used to screen for genetic defects include a blood test called alpha-fetoprotein screening and a procedure for analyzing fetal cells called chorionic villus sampling. Imaging technology includes ultrasound, amniocentesis, fetoscopy, and sonography.

These technologies create ethical, as well as economic dilemmas. Who should have access to reproductive technologies? Should there be an age limit restricting women's access to in vitro fertilization? Is the commodification of reproductive medicine harmful to the participants? Should technology that is used to determine gender so that unwanted female fetuses can be aborted be legal? Who pays for the astronomical costs of hospital care for premature newborns who are the product of multiple births due to fertility drugs?

While myriad groups have debated the ethics of the new reproductive technologies, some of most outspoken responses have come from feminists. Feminist viewpoints on artificial technology span a diverse terrain. Some feminists, such as Shulamitha Firestone and Donna Haraway, envision new reproductive technologies as a method by which women can achieve a new equality. Firestone considers technologies that could remove women from biological reproduction as advantageous. As Firestone
locates the root of woman's oppression in her reproductive capacity, woman's removal from the tyranny of reproduction would free her from the constraints society places on women because of their fecundity. In Haraway's vision human reproduction becomes technically reliant and results in a new type of human — a cyborg. Haraway predicts that humans will be a "cybernetic organism . . . a hybrid of machine and organism, a creature of social reality as well as a creature of fiction" (Haraway qtd. in Lublin 32). Haraway does not claim that this vision of humanity is beneficial. She argues that this technological world is problematic; and unlike Firestone, she does not believe that new reproductive technologies will automatically free women from oppression. Yet Haraway does not call for the rejection of technology. In her analysis of Haraway's work, feminist Nancy Lublin asserts that the writer mandates that women embrace technology in order to "put ourselves in positions where we can influence and control its meaning" (Lublin 34).

Many feminists are not as entranced by new reproductive technologies as Firestone, nor are they as convinced of their inevitable persistence as Haraway. A group of feminists who call themselves FINRRAGE (Feminist International Network of Resistant to Reproductive and Genetic Engineering) struggles to ban new reproductive technologies. Members of FINRRAGE, such as Genea Corea, editor of *Test Tube Women* and author of *The Mother Machine*, focus on the abuses of reproductive technology such as unauthorized harvesting of women's eggs (Lublin 63-64). Feminists involved in FINRRAGE do not seek a compromise in which assisted reproductive technologies are further regulated to stop abuse. They reject the use of new reproductive technologies entirely; by doing so, they negate many women's desire to employ reproductive
technologies to have a child, suggesting that the women who seek to conceive through artificial means are victims of false consciousness.

Early touting of reproductive technologies as women's salvation and the backlash from feminists who condemn these technologies out of hand represent the far edges of the continuum. Currently many feminists, such as Rosemarie Tong and Nancy Lublin, are searching for a moderate approach to reproductive technology. Nancy Lublin, author of *Pandora's Box*, seeks a feminist praxis for new reproductive technology. Lublin sets forth a series of tenets aimed at providing reproductive options that are not damaging to women. In outlining a possible feminist response to reproductive technologies, the author suggests: "Women should be viewed in the holistic fashion in which we actually exist" (16). In other words, guidelines and ethical consideration regarding reproductive technologies must consider issues of economics, individual differences and desire, political reality and cultural expectations of women.

Reproductive technologies are often threatening because they redefine terms which were once thought to be both biological and unalterable. As Dion Farquhar noted in her book *The Other Machine: Discourse and Reproductive Technologies*, "Reproductive technologies are thus a switchpoint for policy and value negotiation over displaced anxieties about changing sex roles as well as cataclysmic changes in marriage, family, and kinship practices" (9). These technologies alter the way in which we conceptualize our ideas of the family. While many feminists decry the use and abuse of reproductive technology, Farquhar aptly states that reproductive technologies cannot be classified as good or bad. They create complex issues requiring an examination that resists binary classification.
In essence, the new reproductive technologies force a reinterpretation of ideology and consequently laws and policy regarding the family. This reinterpretation is problematic because it relies on traditional laws regarding family and subsequently, paternity. In her study of reproductive technology, feminist Gena Corea astutely notes:

According to U.S. law, the parental rights of sperm donors disappear or appear depending on the marital status of the woman. If a man donates his sperm to a married woman, his status shrivels to that of an anonymous "semen source" who supplies a bodily fluid; but if he donates his sperm to an unmarried woman, his status quickly swells "to that of a father with rights over his issue" (Corea qtd. in Tong 169).

Despite the difficulties, both legal and medical, supporters of the new reproductive technologies suggest that one of the benefits of AID (Artificial Insemination by Donor) is precisely that it allows non-traditional families to be created. It is hoped that these new families will help eliminate prejudice against gay couples particularly (Tong 163).

This chapter explores dramatic narratives that focus on reproductive technology and critiques the way these technologies construct our understanding of women and their relationship to their reproductive capacities. The purpose of this chapter is to examine many of the complex issues surrounding artificial reproduction and to look at how they are reflected in dramatic narration as well as popular culture. Many feminist scholars' works have aided the understanding of the implications of reproductive technologies on the lives of women.

This examination specifically attempts to locate the position of the pregnant woman within media: theatre, television and film. The texts chosen for this study are playwright Micheline Wandor's Aid Thy Neighbor, an episode of Star Trek, The Next Generation entitled "The Child" and finally Junior, a film starring Arnold Schwarzenegger.
Michelene Wandor's *Aid Thy Neighbor* constitutes the first play published examining artificial technology. Her work simultaneously supports the benefits of reproductive technologies while seeking acceptance for non-traditional families who wish to have children. Wandor's exploration of technologically aided reproduction explores the personal decisions and political implications of two couples who employ artificial insemination. Unlike many feminists, the playwright does not critique the use of assisted reproductive technologies, rather she criticizes a conservative censure which would deny these technologies to a certain group of women, in this case a lesbian couple.

The other two texts included in this chapter are technological representations of new reproductive technology. Like the ultrasound images that separate the pregnant woman from the fetus she carries, television and film, separate the audience from the performer. Media portrayals of imaging reproductive technologies have dramatically impacted society's understanding of pregnancy and pregnant women. Visual representation creates a unique narrative, and its impact is far-reaching and politically motivated. In order to understand the relationship of dramatic representation of the image of the pregnant woman, I will focus on two contemporary representations of birth on television and in film.

Susan Walters in her study of media and culture, *Material Girls*, argues for the development of "an analysis that stressed how representations construct sexual difference, rather than simply reflect it" (Walters 47). Science fiction is in a unique

\[2\text{Rosalind Petchesky's "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction" and Barbara Duden's *Disembodied Women* analyze how the fetal image has been separated from the body of the pregnant woman. These two authors' scholarship lays the groundwork for this study.}\]
position to critique society's shortcomings because it simultaneously reflects current issues while constructing an alternative narrative for the future. Often science fiction predicts future events, but more importantly it formulates a utopic solution to be achieved or portrays a dystopic future to be avoided.

Star Trek proves particularly appropriate for an exploration of assisted reproduction for several reasons. First, the rise in public attention to modern reproduction technology increased enormously in the intervening years between the end of the original Star Trek series in 1969 and the advent of the second Star Trek series, The Next Generation, in 1987. Star Trek is enormously popular, and it reaches a diverse viewing audience. Finally, science fiction, by virtue of its ability to reframe familiar ideas in a new way, ultimately offer a fresh perspective. This process of defamiliarization can eventually lead to the development of new paradigms that would posit creative solutions to increasingly complex problems.

Junior, the last text to be analyzed in this chapter, combines romantic comedy with science fiction to explore artificial reproduction's strangest possibility – male pregnancy. The film also represents an attempt to re-establish a heterosexual norm for pregnancy and to affirm reproductive technologies at the expense of women's individual reproductive freedoms. Junior stands in direct contrast to Aid Thy Neighbor and demonstrates how the commodification of reproductive technologies appropriates women's control over their reproductive capacities.

The years between the appearance of Aid Thy Neighbor in 1978 and the appearance of Junior in 1994 have witnessed an increased medicalization and regulation of reproductive technologies. The United States' Department of Health, Education and
Welfare's 1979 Ethics Advisory Board and Great Britain's 1984 Warnock Commission suggested that access to reproductive technologies be limited to "stable heterosexual married couples" (Farquhar 181). Dion Farquhar observes that, although reproductive technologies have become an accepted part of society, their acceptance does not suggest a greater autonomy for women in terms of their reproductive freedom. Farquhar notes:

The past ten years have proved more hospitable to reproductive technologies in terms of both favorable public discussion and legislation expanding the rights to medical coverage at the same time that access to abortion and contraception have become more restrictive (182).

While Aid Thy Neighbor portrays a broadening in the range of reproductive possibilities, its optimism was premature. Star Trek's "The Child", which was produced by the time artificial reproduction became an accepted reality, demonstrated the tensions brought about by fetal imaging and the possibility of scientific advances in genetic engineering. Within "The Child," as within U.S. society, women are still allowed to decide whether to abort or to have a child; however, their choices are constrained by the society at large. Junior clearly demonstrates that women's choices regarding reproductions can be completely usurped by medicine, law, and social convention.

Despite their benefit to individual women, reproductive technologies have aided in the glorification of the fetus at the expense of pregnant women. Restrictive attitudes regarding pregnant women's bodies are evidenced throughout the dramatic texts included in this study.

Lesbians Just Like Us: Micheline Wandor's Aid Thy Neighbor

With candor and humor, Claire, now a college student, recounts her experiences as one of the first children conceived through artificial insemination of a lesbian mother.
Claire's story, printed in Good Housekeeping, a popular women's magazine, reveals the difficulties of growing up in a non-traditional family.

Twenty-one years ago, my mother, then 38 and never married, went to the bus station. When the bus pulled in, she picked up a package she was expecting: a metal thermos filled with liquid nitrogen and three tubes of semen. It was a simple transaction, but it was also revolutionary. This was, after all, 1976, before the terms artificial insemination and sperm bank were familiar to the public, before gay and lesbian adoption was considered even remotely possible.

Over my lifetime, through the daily routines of homework, soccer practices, and college applications, I would often forget that by the simple act of wanting and having me my mother took a very brave and difficult step. But there were plenty of other times as I was growing up that I was reminded of my differences—on two counts. First, my mother had me through artificial insemination. Second, while I was growing up, my mother was a lesbian (Knight 102).

Claire acknowledges the kindness and wisdom of both her mother and her mother's partner and maintains that in and of itself, growing up in a lesbian home was primarily a positive experience. She asserts that her childhood was idyllic—until she started school. "Once I entered kindergarten, I sensed immediately that announcing "my mommy's name is Joan, and my other mommy's name is Nora," wouldn't fit in at morning circle" (Knight 102).

The social denotations of a "typical family" conflicted with young Claire's understanding of parents and family relationships. Eventually Claire was able to resolve these issues, but the rigidity of the monolithic definition of family continued to prove daunting to Claire in her teenage years.

As an adult Claire has come to accept and appreciate her unique background. She allows that part of her own self-acceptance is due to the cultural belief that lesbian relationships and artificial insemination are "fact(s) of modern culture" (Knight 102). Like most proponents of artificial insemination for lesbians, gays, and single mothers, Claire suggests what is most important is for a child to know that he or she is loved. Throughout her narrative, Claire argues that the difficulties she experienced were caused
by a lack of understanding of lesbian existence, and she frames her narrative in such a way that lesbian family life is comparable to its heterosexual counterpart. This framing allows a heterosexual audience to see a lesbian couple as similar to themselves and therefore acceptable.

Today, artificial insemination as a means for couples who are unable to conceive children is more widely acknowledged as a viable option. New reproductive technologies such as artificial insemination and in vitro fertilization are commonplace and discussed in newspapers, magazines and talk shows. However, twenty years ago, when British playwright Michelene Wandor chose artificial insemination by donor as the pivotal plot point of her play, she was breaking new ground. Coinciding with the birth of the world's first test tube baby, Louise Joy Brown in 1978, Wandor's play, *Aid Thy Neighbor*, was staged. The production tackled two relatively new social phenomenons: artificial insemination and open lesbian relationships.

*Aid Thy Neighbor* and Claire's narrative attack the narrow definitions of couples, parents and families. In addition to their choice of subject matter, playwright Michelene Wandor and Claire both frame their tales to emphasize the similarity between lesbian and heterosexual lifestyles. By accentuating the likeness of lesbians and heterosexuals, Claire and Wandor hope to gain acceptance for lesbians in mainstream American and British society, respectively. Interestingly enough, the depiction of lesbianism in both narratives is both positive and clear. The discussion concerning artificial insemination, however, remains somewhat ambiguous.

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*Although Claire was born and raised in the U.S. and *Aid Thy Neighbor* takes place in Great Britain, both narratives reveal the similar attitudes held in both nations about the family.*
Problems regarding conception for both couples in *Aid Thy Neighbor* dominate the first act. The lesbian couple, Georgina and Sandy are experiencing problems in their relationship because in an attempt to become pregnant, Georgina slept with an old friend. Sandy subsequently is jealous and wants little to do with the baby. While the heterosexual couple, Mary and Joe, find that the science of conception can interfere with the pleasures of lovemaking.

Wandor carefully crafts her plot to emphasize the "normality" of lesbian existence. The play begins with the entrance of each pair's breadwinner. Sandy, who is Georgina's partner and Joe, Mary's husband, are shown returning home from work. Joe is a journalist, while Sandy is a teacher at a local school. Mary and Georgina fulfill the role of traditional housewife, although Georgina does some photography work. Wandor juxtaposes the couples' daily existences by directing that the stage simultaneously reveal the apartments of the two couples. The playwright strategically moves back and forth between the two couples so that the problems of each mirror those of the other. Scenes depict the heterosexual and lesbian couples performing similar rituals such as spouses greeting their partners after work, and partners talking in bed. Both relationships are comparable in the individuals' problems and needs.

In addition to comparing the activities of lesbian and heterosexual couples, the characters are constructed to replicate what are traditionally considered male and female behaviors. In stressing the similarities in the manner in which the two couples operate, Wandor suggests that social roles within the family are not biologically determined but socially constructed. As representatives of the social norm, Joe and Mary provide a reference point against which Sandy's and Georgina's behavior is compared. Even the
couples' names are symbolic, for Joseph and Mary are in essence the "first family" of the New Testament. The lesbian couples' names, by contrast, are both male in connotation. Sandy's name is androgynous, whereas Georgina is derived from the masculine George.

The text's structure reinforces the ideology presented within the dialogue. John Berger, in his postmodern assessment of art *Ways of Seeing*, states, "the meaning of an image is changed according to what one sees immediately beside it or by what comes immediately after it" (29). Thus the straight audience's perception of the lesbian couple is shaped by the actions of Mary and Joe. The strategy validates their existence and makes it palatable to an audience that may otherwise be uneasy about lesbians and their lifestyle choices.

Wandor employs yet another tactic to win her audience's acceptance of lesbians. She designates Mary to represent the viewpoint of someone who may initially be ill-at-ease with lesbianism. In a telling scene between the two wives, Georgina helps a naive Mary understand that she and Sandy are lesbians.

Georgina: I'm sure it's not as though you disapprove... It's more that you've probably never knowingly had a lesbian in the house... I mean I look quite normal... and Sandy's a terrific and responsible teacher... and we're very committed to each other... now you can see that we're not really very different from the rest of your friends, it's all quite alright, isn't it? I mean, you were absolutely right not to hold any prejudice against us.

Mary: Georgina, I do believe you're trying to put words in my mouth (130).

Technically, the Biblical Joseph and Mary could be considered one of the first recipients of artificial insemination by donor. In this case the donor is considered to be The Almighty, while AID took place with the help of the Holy Spirit. The title also plays off Jesus' commandment to "love thy neighbor as thy self."
Wandor's rhetorical strategy is two-fold; she presents lesbians who mirror the heterosexual norm and then directly addresses the audience through Georgina's speech in the hopes of propagating understanding and acceptance of lesbians.

Wandor's conventionalizing of lesbian relationships and their "normalcy" is particularly important when it comes to lesbian parenting. Lesbians have often lost custody battles because of their sexual preference. Wandor's suggestion that lesbians be allowed equal access to reproductive technologies may have seemed revolutionary in 1978; however, legislation designed to limit access to new reproductive technologies followed not preceded artificial insemination's development. Wandor's strategy to gain acceptance for lesbian lifestyles extends to vying for acceptance of lesbian use of artificial insemination.

Late in the first act the play takes on a new twist. A mutual friend, who, like Joe, works as a journalist, arrives and discloses that the ante-natal clinic is the focus of a conservative journalist who opposes the use of AID for lesbian couples. This journalist, Geraldine, plans to pose Sandy and Georgina as lesbians and therefore unsuitable parents. The introduction of Geraldine into the plot strategically relocates issues concerning new reproductive technologies from the private to the public sphere. Without the appearance of Geraldine, the play revolves around the private decisions made by individuals regarding reproduction choices. Geraldine's opposition to lesbian use of artificial insemination forwards the political implications of reproductive technologies and addresses such issues as who controls reproduction and who decides on the definition of parents and family. With the appearance of Geraldine the very personal choice of reproduction becomes a political issue.
Geraldine's homophobia is explicit; the conservative journalist writes: "(L)esbian relations... are more violent, tempestuous and fraught with jealousy than any heterosexual relationship you can imagine" (141). Geraldine serves as a melodramatic villain with no redeemable qualities. No explanation is given as to her reasons for persecuting lesbian couples other than her own misguided bigotry. Because she is an unsympathetic character, the audience is free to laugh at her failures and condemn her attitudes and behaviors.

While Wandor succeeds in creating a comedy which frames lesbian parenthood in a positive manner, her dramatization of the lesbian mother, Georgina, is, in some ways, problematic. Georgina is upstaged by the other characters in the text. In terms of comedy, she is the straight man (no pun intended), while her lover, Sandy, is assertive and occasionally outrageous. Sandy draws the audience's attention by her facile use of language and her barbed wit. Mary, while naive, is energetic. Perhaps more to the point, Mary grows and changes throughout the play as she enters feminist consciousness. Georgina, by contrast, is simply the ever patient, forgiving, saintly mother to be. Her most dramatic moment occurs when she miscarry's during her first pregnancy. Even then she is relatively unassuming. The focus on Georgina and her second pregnancy is usurped by the journalist plot that threatens to expose lesbians using AID to an uninformed and possibly hostile public. Georgina as a lesbian mother is non-threatening. She seems to be a woman whose sole need is to be a mother. The play's statement would be quite different if it were the flamboyant Sandy who chose to have the baby. Even AID Thy Neighbor, a play about pregnancy, backgrounds the pregnant woman within its text in
favor of the "male" Sandy. Like other texts focusing on pregnancy, often the pregnant woman is elided and other characters take precedence within the plot.

The play employs a comic tone to alleviate tensions surrounding gender identification and sexuality. Women's sexuality is the focus but only in comparison to a male/heterosexual model. In her provocative article "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality," Gayle Rubin asserts that sexuality is classified by binary opposites. Sexual behaviors are categorized as "good" or "bad." Good sex is defined in terms such as "normal, natural, healthy, (and) holy," while bad sex is defined as "abnormal, unnatural, sick, sinful (and) way out" (14). Rubin declares that the Western Christian tradition stigmatizes sex, but procreative, monogamous sex within marriage is permissible. She also states that "sexual acts are burdened with an excess of significance" (28). Aid Thy Neighbor validates both lesbianism and heterosexuality by de-emphasizing the erotic elements in both couples' relationships and highlighting procreation and normalcy.

Lesbian sexuality and its relationship to reproduction are of paramount importance in the text. The situation presents a unique theoretical dilemma. How do we perceive lesbian sexuality in terms of its non-reproductive capacity especially when the parameters of the sexuality so closely mirror monogamous "good" heterosexuality?

Rubin also notes that, "The new scholarship on sexual behavior has given sex a history and created a constructivist alternative to sexual essentialism. Underlying this body of work is an assumption that sexuality is constituted in society and history, not biologically ordained. This does not mean that the biological capacities are not prerequisites for human sexuality. It does mean that human sexuality is not comprehensible in purely biological terms" (10). Aid Thy Neighbor uses only one model for sexuality — monogamous heterosexuality.
Interestingly enough in *Aid Thy Neighbor* the lesbian couple, Sandy and Georgina, are considered male and female – but reproductively flawed, as are Joe and Mary.

Sandy and Joe are grouped together as reproductive "deficient" males since neither can "father" a child. Both Joe and Sandy joke about their inability to reproduce. They quip about faithfulness and their partner's infidelity.

Joe: Mary? How do you fancy fucking by proxy?
Mary: It's worth a try, eh?
Joe: I never thought you'd commit adultery with a test tube (133).

Sandy: In all my struggles against monogamy in the nuclear couple, I never thought I would aid and abet you to be unfaithful to me with a plastic syringe.
Georgina: Isn't science wonderful. (134).

The couples employ medical technology only as a last resort. Joe and Mary attempt several methods including tracking ovulation, while Georgina previously asked a male friend to be the child's biological father. Joe and Mary ultimately do not succeed in conceiving a child, while the lesbian couple, with the help of AID, does.

Michelene Wendor and Claire (whose narrative began this chapter) both suggest that non-traditional families seek to emulate the traditional two parent norm and share in common a desire for children. Artificial insemination then becomes a means to create a more "normal" family life, and by suggesting this normality both narratives vie for lesbian acceptance.

Current clinic practices, however, do not seem to promote such liberal views. When medical intervention is needed for the new reproductive technologies (unlike Claire's mother in the opening narrative who was able to artificially inseminate herself without medical aid) an added element of control occurs that is exclusive instead of
inclusive. Most physicians offer their services only to heterosexual couples who are married (Our Bodies, Ourselves 386). In her report on infertility clinics, Charis Cussins asserted that at the clinic where she did her research the receptionist screened calls that did not imply "stable heterosexuality" and an ability to pay for the clinic's services (Cussins 72).

Unlike the world created in Aid Thy Neighbor, where socialized medicine provides for lesbians and those not in the upper-level income brackets, the world of in vitro fertilization, at least in the U.S., is for heterosexual couples who can afford it. In vitro fertilization costs between $8,000 and $10,000. This does not cover the cost of childbirth. Because the play was written in Britain in 1978, Wandor could not have foreseen the big business that the new reproductive technologies would create. Her work is admirable in its attempt to gain acceptance for lesbians who want to raise children.

Feminist scholar April Martin wrote a candid report about her experience as a lesbian woman entitled "Lesbian Parenting: A Personal Odyssey." Martin reveals her and her partner Susan's efforts to conceive children employing new reproductive technologies. Like Wandor, Martin emphasizes the similarity between lesbian and heterosexual parenting. She also uses candor and humor to discuss the differences in a lesbian household. Martin relates the following anecdote:

On one occasion I called the parents of a school chum of Emily's about PTA business. The phone was answered by Emily's friend, and we exchanged a few words. As she passed the receiver to her mother, I heard her say, "It's Emily's mom. Well, it's one of them--she's got two (260).

April Martin's biographical essay and Claire's narrative of growing up in a lesbian household work in a similar manner to Michelene Wandor's Aid Thy Neighbor. The rhetorical aim of both narratives is to reduce lesbian difference. Both stories reinforce
"family values" by suggesting that lesbian families work quite similarly to heterosexual families, and the only difference is society's inability to accept the normalcy of reproductive technologies and lesbian couples.

Decoding “The Child:” Fetal Imaging and the Identity of the Pregnant Woman

Portrayals of the recent advances in reproductive technologies proliferate in the media, popular culture and dramatic representation. These technologies, which include artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization, embryo transfers, amniocentesis, fetal imaging, and surrogacy, have become a standard part of daily life. On the surface, new reproductive technologies appear to increase women's options in terms of controlling their biological reproduction. These new technologies, while designed to enhance women's lives, can be problematic on several levels. One case in point:

The moment her baby's image appeared on the ultrasound monitor, Alison Connor's pregnancy was transformed from a rise in her abdomen to a concentric life within. "I was so touched and amazed," she recalls. While Connor marveled at her new daughter, her physician spotted some cysts on the fetus' brain.

The same technology that shed new light on Connor's pregnancy laced the next three weeks of her life with anxiety and uncertainty. The doctor explained that cysts usually disappear but in some cases can be indicators of Down's syndrome, a chromosomal abnormality that causes mental retardation. Though amniocentesis had already ruled out Down's, the doctor said that there would still be reason for concern if the cysts persisted past Connor's 22nd week of pregnancy. By then, the cysts had vanished. "Why couldn't my doctor have waited until she knew one way or the other?" Connor wonders. "I felt like I wanted to be in the Dark Ages with no tests, when they just had to wait and see what happens" (Conway 78).

While research and new discoveries in the field of reproductive technology continue, the painful decisions and hard choices that accompany the use of these new scientific advances are a reality that many women must cope with today. Technological advances are celebrated while the impact of these technologies upon individuals seems to be ignored. Unfortunately, scientific advancements in reproductive technologies are
employed within the larger context of culture; culture often devalues women and exhibits anxiety concerning their reproductive capabilities. As Renate Duelli Klein suggests, an "underlying hatred" of women still exists in society and new reproductive technologies create the potential for additional oppression (Corea 65). Yet the fact exists that many women welcome these new reproductive technologies and the perceived benefits that these advances can make in their lives.

In his book, *Manufacturing Babies and Public Consent*, author Jose Van Dyck traces public acceptance of assisted reproductive technologies. He states that, "the issue is not whether these technologies are 'good' or 'bad' but how they have changed images of procreation, motherhood, and the female body" (Van Dyck 21).

While examples of assisted pregnancy now pervade television, this study will investigate one episode of *Star Trek The Next Generation*: "The Child." This episode allows for a narrow focus on three interconnected issues involving our cultural understanding of pregnancy in light of new reproductive technologies: first, the role assisted reproduction plays in simultaneously restricting and expanding the choices of the pregnant woman; second, the complex issues of control governing reproductive technologies and finally, the inexorable link between certain reproductive technologies, particularly fetal imaging, and restrictions placed on abortion.

As a cultural phenomenon, *Star Trek* parallels the growth of reproductive technology and the growth of American feminism. The original series, which began in 1966, arrived at the very beginnings of the women's movement and an increased political interest in birth control and abortion. Several episodes of the original *Star Trek* are concerned with reproduction; "The Mark of Gideon" specifically addresses the Roman
Catholic Church's resistance to birth control and the possibility of overpopulation. *The Next Generation* continued to explore this essential component of human existence. In the eighteen years between the end of *Star Trek*'s original series and the advent of *The Next Generation*, the complexity of reproductive issues increased. Abortion, though established legally with Roe v. Wade, continued to be contested. Technologies allowed for the first in vitro fertilization in 1978 and the ethics of genetic research captured the public's attention. Writers of the *Next Generation* responded to this increased interest by including reproductive issues in their texts. Several scripts, such as "Up the Long Ladder," "The Offspring" and "Suddenly Human," explore the instinct to reproduce and its relationship to technology. Only one episode, however, uses an image of the fetus.

Airing in 1988, "The Child" revolves around an alien entity who wishes to understand what it is to be human. It seeks the totality of the human experience from conception through death. The episode reveals a societal concern with single motherhood, an ambivalent attitude towards reproductive rights, and a fear of genetic engineering. Most significantly, however, "The Child" explores the deep-rooted and problematic connection between assisted reproductive technology, abortion and fetal imaging.

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6 "The Child" was originally written for a 1970's revival of the series. However, it was shelved and subsequently revived for the second season of *The Next Generation*. One can only speculate how the incidents portrayed would have been handled in the 1970s. The Writer's Guild strike precipitated the use of a script from a series that never aired entitled *Star Trek II*. Modifications must have been made in order for the script to employ *The Next Generation*’s characters. An in-depth comparison between the original script and its adaptation would prove interesting.
Fetal imaging technology is a double-edged sword. While it allows for the
detection of birth defects, it also has become a banner for the anti-choice campaign.
Feminist theorist Peggy Phelan believes "fetal imagery locates reproductive viability as a
term and an image independent of the woman's body [and that] erasing the woman from
the image has allowed the fetal form to become a token in a discourse of and about men"
(132). This image has absented the pregnant woman from the anti-abortion argument.
Her right to self-determination and choice are eclipsed by "fetal rights." This fetal image
has become the banner for the New Right.

Set in its historical context, "The Child" epitomizes the influence that fetal
imaging exerts on the manner in which a pregnancy is medically managed as well as in a
woman's individual choice to continue or abort her pregnancy. The episode has a dual
plot that links an unplanned and uninvited alien impregnation of one of the crew
members and genetically altered bacteria which are being transported to a plague infested
planet.

The primary plot begins with the disturbing alien impregnation of Troi. The
portrayal of the alien before it becomes human reflects the idea of an "essence" present
prior to and at conception. This being is viable before pregnancy. It enters the ship as a
beacon of light. In its search for a suitable mother, it rejects a sleeping male figure and
opts instead for Troi. The light enters her room while she is sleeping. It proceeds from
the base of the bed and presumably enters her body vaginally. Much like the Virgin
Mary's immaculate conception, Troi's conception does not involve intercourse and the
use of a white light connotes a spiritual presence. The motives are also similar to those of
the Immaculate Conception. This alien wished to experience life as a human being. To
do so he will not descend and assume human form but rather be "conceived." Later tests will determine that the alien who becomes Troi's child has her DNA. Unlike the Immaculate Conception, no angel descends to ask permission for this life form to take up residence in Troi's womb in order to become human.

Troi's reaction to conception is ambiguously portrayed. The camera shows Troi with her eyes closed, one fist clenched, breathing heavily. It is difficult to ascertain if she is experiencing sexual orgasm or a very bad dream. She awakens, startled, still breathing hard. Her brow is covered with sweat. The audience is at a loss to understand the meaning of the event. In the strictest of interpretations, Troi's pregnancy is the result of rape. However, if Troi's mission is to make contact with alien species, her consent may be implied. In this event, Troi becomes a surrogate to this alien presence.  

Just as the nature of Troi's conception of the alien is portrayed in an ambiguous manner, so the issues surrounding assisted reproductive technologies and surrogacy are often unclear. The issue of "choice" in relation to women's encounters with reproductive technology is hotly contested. Many feminists analyzing policies regarding new advances in reproductive technology maintain that choice is illusory. Patricia Lublin, author of Pandora's Box, notes that, "Choice is illusory in a culture that defines a woman's identity in terms of motherhood because a woman cannot remove herself and her decisions from

7 In addition to surrogacy, Troi has donated her genetic material to this child. Dr. Pulaski states that the child is male but its DNA is identical to that of its mother. It would not be a far leap to consider the pregnancy the result of "egg theft." Feminists who claimed that some physicians were stealing women's ovaries without permission were considered alarmist. However, a scandal involving the University of California at Irvine's Center of Reproductive Health revealed that "Unapproved egg 'transfers' involving at least thirty women were made between 1988 and 1992, and there is some suspicion that such practices were not confined to the state of California" (Tong 164).
this social context and forced identification" (96). In other words the very need for women to bear children may be a social construct. Society suggests that it is women's social role to bear children and not to do so suggests inadequacy. Lublin also notes that a woman's economic condition may dictate whether she becomes involved in a surrogacy program. "Since surrogates are paid a minimum fee of $8,000, it would seem that 'a woman's economic status helps construct her "will" to sell her womb' (Corea qtd. in Lublin 90).

Decisions on who will and will not be able to receive assisted reproductive technologies reside outside the pregnant woman's purview. As with Troi in "The Child," a woman's maternal suitability is decided by someone other than herself. Cheryl Meyer, in her book *The Wandering Uterus*, concludes that much of women's choice involving artificial insemination lies in the hands of physicians who ultimately decide who can receive infertility treatment. Physicians often choose the donor and decide how much information to pass along to the woman regarding the genetic background of her child (21).

Troi is also ignorant of her child's origins, and her attempt to understand her pregnancy leads to further investigation employing scientific methods. She seeks the counsel of Dr. Pulaski who immediately informs the Captain of Troi's pregnancy. As

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*There is also considerable debate over the suitable nature of the recipient of an egg donation. The most cited case is that of Dr. Severino Antinori who has made it possible for women who have passed menopause to bear children. Antinori's work has been severely criticized. However, as noted by Cheryl Meyer, "Objections to postmenopausal pregnancies often reflect double standards in notions of parenthood. When an older man fathers a child, society seems to revere him as a paragon of masculinity and virility. Yet when older women give birth, concerns abound..." (31).
with some well-known cases involving artificial technology, this pregnancy, thought to be a private matter between a woman and her physician, becomes a source of public debate. After ascertaining the unusual nature of this pregnancy, its presence is announced to the command crew.

As she discusses this abnormal pregnancy, Dr. Pulaski portrays the fetal image on a view screen. Dr. Pulaski relies on an image of Troi's fetus to confirm pregnancy making what is invisible visible. This larger than life projection dominates not only the crew's attention but that of the viewing audience. The presentation of the fetal image gives an undeniable presence to the "alien" life. How we understand this fictional fetus is directly parallel to how we, as a society, perceive the anonymous fetal images presented by right to life groups. This understanding also shapes current political and cultural ideology. This image constructs the identity of the pregnant woman, negates her individuality and right to self-determination, and usurps her rights within society.

"The Child's" portrayal of the fetus initially disconnects it from Troi and shifts her into the periphery; however, the scene attempts, through a series of gestures, to reunite Troi to her disconnected fetus. As the scene begins, Troi isolates herself from her companions by taking a seat farthest away from them and the monitor. Her self-imposed ostracism helps set her apart as the "other." She is now "different" and unconnected to her companions because of her unwanted pregnancy. Captain Picard announces her pregnancy by stating "Counselor Deanna Troi is pregnant - she is going to have a baby." Picard assumes an invariable trajectory toward motherhood. His statement suggests that once pregnancy occurs motherhood will result. It is then that Dr. Pulaski displays two sonograms. The alien presence has collapsed the normal time for pregnancy into thirty-
six hours. Thus the two sonograms represent a fetus at six weeks and then again in a more developed state (I would venture a guess of at least twelve -- if not sixteen weeks). While the first fetal image appears dependent, situated in a mass of blood and fluids and not quite identifiable, the second image creates a separate individual male identity which dominates the scene.

Rosalind Petchesky states "the fetus is not only 'already a baby,' but more -- a 'baby man.' ("Fetal Images" 407). The fetus's very maleness gives it a societal advantage over the woman who is disembodied by its visual presence. The image itself also relies upon the viewer's interpretation of it. By the time "The Child" aired in 1988, it is likely that most U.S. viewers would have seen a fetal image. This photographed fetus taps into ideologies that surround it. The perception of this image is based on an amalgamation of thirty years of debate that have surrounded the anti-choice movement in the U.S. What is often overlooked is that this fetal image absents the pregnant woman.

Society's view of the pregnant woman has experienced a radical shift in the last thirty-one years. Barbara Duden's _Disembodying Women_ charts the complex change of historical perceptions regarding pregnancy. Duden's premise suggests that the term "a life" has become an idol and that "controversy has attached a halo to this idol" (Duden 44). Paradoxically, this idolization of the fetus creates in the minds of many an autonomous, though unarguably dependent, other self. If the fetus is a "self," this individual requires protection from a mother whose actions may threaten it in some manner. Protection for the fetus from the mother is sought by those who champion fetal rights. Elevating the unborn to "a life" results in the relegation of the pregnant woman to the role of eco-system. Her needs are subjugated to those of the separate self which is
trapped within her womb. As a result, the woman is disembodied, disconnected and ultimately disenfranchised. Duden inexorably links this phenomenon with the art of medical illustration and the depiction of the fetus; she specifically attributes this radical change in perception to the 1965 *Life* magazine photos which document the growth of the fetus.9

In "The Child" in what appears to be a reaction to the visual presence of the alien, the crew attempts to formulate a plan of action to protect themselves. The focus of the scene, however, is not upon the discussion, but upon Troi and her reactions to the fetus, both in terms of its image and to her own biological connection to it. The camera's focus shifts to Troi. As she looks at the fetus on the screen, the crew's voices are distorted. Troi's eventual decision to continue her pregnancy is not based upon logic, and she is separated from language. She is unable to hear or acknowledge the debate that resounds around her. While Worf, Data and Riker are discussing the possibility of aborting the fetus, Troi gazes at the fetal image. The camera focuses upon her stomach and then upon her face. Troi makes her decision stating: "Captain, do whatever you feel is necessary to protect the ship and its crew. But know this. I'm going to have this baby" ("The Child").

Troi's resolution to continue her pregnancy results from her commitment to the fetal image. This fetal image dominates the screen and seems to have mesmerized Troi,

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9"...Carol Stabile notes that while the pregnant woman is decentered but not erased in the 1965 photoessay documenting fetal development, in the 1990 update she is completely absent. The representational shift produced by the 1990 text and accompanying images reinforces the supposed autonomy of the fetus by excluding any visualization of the essential material symbiotic connection to the bearing woman—the amniotic sac and the placenta" (Stabile qtd. in Farquhar 164).
forcing her to accept its presence and viability. Language is usurped by the image of the fetus. The arguments of the crew are merely distant echoes as the sound of the fetal heartbeat becomes louder. As Troi connects with the fetal image on the screen, she decides that it is "her baby." The scene confirms Rosalind Petchesky's assertion that bonding is shaped by the fetal image and that "Women develop powerful feelings of attachment to their ('private') fetuses, especially the ones they want, and this complicates the politics of fetal images" (Petchesky, "Fetal Images" 416).

Troi's connection with this fetal image rather than the announcement of her pregnancy confirms "the child's" reality to her. Feminist scholar Dion Farquhar asks (W)hether a fetus' prenatal "public" appearance on a sonogram screen in a clinic or physician's office necessarily appropriates, adjusts, or otherwise negatively influences whatever pre-technological "private" relationship a fetus is imagined to have or could have with a pregnant woman, or "women" in the case of feminist discourse (161).

In other words, does the image on the screen affect a woman's decision making process regarding her fetus? In "The Child," the screened image constructs Troi's understanding of her pregnancy and her relationship to the fetus.

Troi's willingness to accept this unknown and invasive alien is problematic. She seems to be captivated by this dominating visual presence. She willingly allows her body to become an "eco-system" for this male fetus, yet she uses her own voice to state her desire to carry the fetus to term. The scene as presented suggests that the right to choose is only "good" when the decision results in the continuation of the pregnancy. However, in the context of this episode, this choice may not be in her best interest.

Troi's appearance in the last stages of pregnancy presents an interesting moment within the text of "The Child." A very pregnant Deanna Troi enters the bridge, and
Wesley turns to stare at her. His stare mirrors the audience's gaze and subsequent reaction to the visibly pregnant woman. There is a fascination with the changes in her body and an interest in her power to reproduce.

Mulvey's groundbreaking article, *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, suggests that women in film halt the narrative while the male (presumably) experiences a moment of erotic contemplation (14-26). Mulvey goes on to state that the gaze is always male, and that women see themselves through a male context. In his discussion of art and perception John Berger arrives at a similar conclusion. He states,

Men act and women appear. Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus she turns herself into an object—a most particular an object of vision: a sight (47).

What happens when the woman on screen is visibly pregnant? Assuming that eroticism is not the response, the narrative must be arrested as the audience interprets the visual symbols (the distended stomach) that signify pregnancy. Our interpretation of pregnancy within the political climate of 1988 as well as that of 1999 is laden with anxiety. This anxiety is connected to the political and philosophical interpretation of the pregnant woman. Pregnancy can be perceived as visual evidence of sexual activity thus it is immediately laden with an entire system of cultural assumptions. It is also laden with deep-seated fears regarding feminine reproductive power. What would our cultural response to pregnancy be if the condition was not in any way visually signified? Pregnancy becomes communal because it is visible. And it becomes the topic of heated debate when the fetus becomes more visible than the woman who carries it. Certainly the biological process of pregnancy changes both the woman's view of herself and society's
gaze upon her. The contemplation of the pregnant body distances the viewer from the narrative. Emphasis shifts from the story to the cultural interpretation of the pregnancy.

Current cultural and legal interpretations of the pregnancy have once again placed the fetus in a position of primary importance while the pregnant woman's best interests are negated. The best example of this trend is the increasing attempt to legislate the behavior of the pregnant women. Several women have been arrested and charged with damaging their fetuses. Others have lost their jobs as companies fear lawsuits for impairing women's reproductive capacities. In both cases, the health and welfare of the individual woman do not seem to enter the equation. As Dion Farquhar notes:

Recent years have witnessed expanded attempts by some physicians, ethicists, and legal scholars to hold pregnant women liable for causing parental harm, to impose criminal or civil sanctions on them after the birth of a sick or disabled infant, to restrict the behaviors of pregnant women, and to impose medical or surgical procedures (transfusions, cesarean sections) forcibly on them, ostensibly in order to prevent fetal harm (170).

While no one wants to see a child born with defects caused by fetal alcohol abuse or any other substance abuse, the attempt to restrict the pregnant woman's behavior and punish her for harm done to the fetus she carries seems an uncivil manner in which to correct birth defects.

"The Child" is not devoid of sympathy for the pregnant woman. While the manner in which the image of the fetus controls Troi's decision making process is problematic, by contrast, the manner in which delivery occurs reveals a feminist attitude toward birth. As Troi goes into labor she is assisted by Commander Data, an android, who asks permission to stay to observe the birth. Pulaski responds that what is needed here is the warmth of a human touch and not "the cold hand of technology." Her observation mirrors current trends in the birthing industry which allow family members...
to be present during birth and to understand the importance of support. Troi is upright for the birth — sitting in a twenty-fourth century birthing chair and attended by female medics. The birthing stool reflects a rejection of the traditional twentieth century supine birthing position.\textsuperscript{10} Also, the female attendants at birth suggest a more woman-centered approach — one more akin to midwifery than obstetrics.

In contrast to the ideal delivery, however, is the conflict created because of Troi’s choice to have a baby. As Troi goes into labor, security is summoned. The security team represents the state’s interest in controlling birth. An individual woman’s reproductive activities and her relationship to the state remain at the heart of current political debates. The child’s paternity is not known, and the mother is unwed. She becomes a concern of the state which works to restrict and control "unwanted" reproduction. After delivery Pulaski tells security, "relax gentlemen, it’s only a baby."

Troi names the baby after her father, Ian. Riker, who initially suspected Troi of illicit sexual conduct, "forgives" her once the child is born. His benevolence is brought on by an overriding concern for the mother, yet his distance during the delivery itself is somewhat disconcerting. The scene reads as though he must now accept the child because there are no other options.

The plot involving pregnancy and motherhood directly relates to the second story line. Because of a severe plague, the Enterprise agrees to take on several deadly viruses, many of which are man-made. The episode begins as a model of a special containment field is installed to prevent these biological specimens from reproducing. The

\textsuperscript{10}As one doctor noted "except for being hanged by the feet . . . the supine position is the worst conceivable position for labor and delivery" (Rich 178).
containment field in engineering and the security guards in sickbay work both to regulate and guard against unwanted growth. Both the unknown alien who has become Troi’s child and the viruses and bacteria pose a threat to all aboard the ship.

Later in the episode Pulaski reviews the manifest containing a detailed list explaining the genetic origins of the deadly biological specimens that will be transported into the special containment field. Twenty percent of these specimens are genetically engineered biological life forms. Dr. Pulaski remarks on one particular virus’s origins stating, "some eager beaver at play . . . some overachieving genetic engineer who probably because of lack of anything better to do has forced this strain of virus to mutate just so he can see how bad bad can get." Pulaski’s dialogue reflects a distrust of science run amok and an anxiety over the possibility of detrimental tampering with human DNA. The perceived threat posed by misuse of genetic engineering is intrinsically connected to fears concerning reproductive technology. Debates and fictional narratives regarding cloning or engineering genetically superior children abound. While screening for Downs’ Syndrome and spina bifida are common, the fear that science will work to eliminate specific genes that could alter weight, height, and sexual preference evokes eugenic nightmares.

The two plots of "The Child" converge when the entity who has become Troi’s child emits a type of energy that stimulates unwanted growth of the deadly bacteria, placing the entire crew in mortal danger. This supernatural child, now Deanna Troi’s eight year old son, realizes that he is the cause of the growth of the deadly bacteria. He tells Troi he must leave, and the child dies. At the moment of his death, his body
disappears and becomes a beacon of light once again. When he departs, the containment field is able to stabilize, and the unwanted growth of deadly bacteria ceases immediately.

When one looks at the episode as a whole, the result of the advances in reproductive technology is a community in turmoil followed by loss. The coupling of the two plots suggests a relationship between fetal imaging, genetic engineering and assisted reproduction. It also reveals an ambiguity about who should be in control of reproduction. While Troi's decision to continue her pregnancy to term is her own, it is influenced by the power of the fetus' image. In Junior, which debuted only five years later, women's decision making capacity is completely usurped by men and science.

Scientific Appropriation of Female Reproductive Power in Junior

There's a baby here. There must be a mother.

---Junior

The premise that children are born to mothers is a logical assumption, and one which remained virtually unchallenged within the world of science fiction film—at least until 1994, when the fictitious Dr. Alex Hesse (Arnold Schwarzenegger) was impregnated with a fertilized egg and forty weeks later gave birth to a baby girl, Junior. Junior combines science fiction and romantic comedy, resulting in a curious hybrid. Its fantastic plot introduces a myriad of questions surrounding the nature of biological reproduction and the cultural significance of filmic representation of pregnancy. Junior seems to challenge the idea that "biology is destiny," as traditional reproductive roles are reversed. Yet the film does not set up a utopian world in which biological responsibilities are equally disseminated. Instead, it reinforces the dominant ideology surrounding the interpretation of the pregnant woman. Throughout the film, pregnancy is appropriated
by the scientific/male world. Female reproduction is denigrated and is replaced by science, which legitimizes its own role in reproduction, absenting women in the process.

Science and technology play a preeminent role within the discourse of Junior. Unlike its predecessor, Rabbit Test, in which actor Billy Crystal mysteriously becomes pregnant, Junior meticulously explains and demonstrates the medical procedures employed. Junior’s screenwriters Kevin Wade and Chris Conrad had the advantage of an article written by Dick Teresi in 1985 entitled "Male Pregnancy" upon which to base the movie’s premise (Teresi, "How to Get a Man Pregnant," 1994). According to Teresi, Junior’s screenwriters used the information provided in the article to lay the scientific foundation for the impregnation of Dr. Hesse.

Dick Teresi investigated the medical possibilities of implanting a fertilized egg in a man’s abdominal cavity. The zygote would attach itself to the omentum, a fatty tissue on the outside of the large intestine and there develop to term. According to Teresi, there is "no insurmountable biological or technical barrier to a man carrying a baby to term" ("How to Get a Man Pregnant" 54).

At first glance, the theory of male pregnancy seems implausible: what about the enclosed habitat provided by the womb that nurtures the fetus? The article anticipates the question and provides the following response:

As for wombs, they’re not totally necessary. Abdominal pregnancies—outside the womb—are rare, but they do happen about once in every 10,000 pregnancies. Few of these reach full term or result in live births. But some do. In May 1979, for example, in Auckland, New Zealand, a woman named Margaret Martin gave birth to a healthy five-pound baby girl eight months after having had a hysterectomy. An errant fertilized egg had attached to her bowel and grown to term. About two dozen other cases of pregnancy after hysterectomy have been reported (54).
To further advance his theory, the author notes that scientist Cecil Jacobsen claimed to have impregnated a male baboon while researching ovarian cancer at George Washington University. He reported that the male baboon carried the fetus past four months.

Baboon gestation is seven months (Teresi, 1994, 55). After completing his initial research, Teresi decided to implement his theory. He contacted Jacobsen who laid out a "cautious plan for the experiment." Bob Guccione, founder of Omni, agreed to finance the project (55). Sober judgment set in as Teresi began to consider the medical problems that lay ahead. Advance pregnancy kills 10% of women who experience it, and additional problems, such as the twisting of the placenta and intestines, were a considerable risk. Other social problems epitomized by something so simple as what to call a male mom also plagued the researcher. Teresi notes, "Like someone waking up from an intoxicating dream, I came to my senses. I quietly let the project drop" (55). And so it did—at least in real life.

Which brings us back to Junior, a film heavily dependent upon the theoretical work of Teresi. Scientific rhetoric provides the exposition of the film: Dr. Alex Hesse enters surrounded by young scientists taking notes. We hear:

miscarriage-prone female reproductive system is merely an extension of the body's natural and necessary instinct to reject foreign matter... The body mistakenly identifies the embryo as an unwanted foreign substance and creates antibodies to fight and to reject it... (The drug Expectain) acts to neutralize interferic antibodies and promotes successful embryo attachment.

Jacobsen's reputation was irrevocably destroyed upon his arraignment on 53 felony charges for impregnating women with his own sperm without their consent or knowledge (Teresi, 1994, 55). This incident brings into question the validity of previous research and the integrity of its findings.
Immediately the film sets up the idea of pregnancy as pathology. "Miscarriage-prone females" are unable to complete the necessary trajectory of pregnancy: motherhood. Science comes to the rescue with an answer: Expectain, a drug administered to counteract woman's natural propensity to destroy the fetus. This monologue links the role of science to the politics of reproduction. Here the fetus is given primacy as science undermines the body of the woman in order to bring this "new life" to term.

The implication is that without medical/technological intervention the female body will attack the fetus. The discourse within the medical context of the film sets up an adversarial relationship between the woman's body and pregnancy. Tension between the pregnant woman and her body or indeed any woman and her body is not a new concept. However, science, within the confines of the film, proposes a swift and efficient solution: eliminate the body of the woman and replace it with the body of a man.

Theoretically, reproductive technology should allow women to have a greater variety of choices. At first glance, male pregnancy seems to provide an option which

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12In her article, "American 'Fat,' the Fetus," Lauren Berlant states: "This essay . . . seeks to establish pregnancy as a condition distinct from the narrative that so often and so powerfully governs the ways women who reproduce are thought about, a narrative in which the pregnant woman is cast in advance as already a mother embarked on a life trajectory of mothering. I mean to take on the pregnant woman's multidimensional form—its fat, its femaleness, its fetus—to explicate its status as a national stereotype and as a vehicle for the production of a national culture" (148).

13Adrienne Rich's ground-breaking work, Of Woman Born, discusses the various perceptions and problems of pregnancy, birth, and motherhood. For Rich, the Cartesian mind/body split occurred during her adolescence. During her first pregnancy she began "the long process of reunion with the body I had been split from at puberty" (Rich, 175).
might allow women to be free from the tyranny of biological reproduction. Teresi's article revealed that some feminists viewed this advancement in a positive light. "Flo Kennedy, the black feminist who popularized the slogan 'If men could get pregnant abortion would be a sacrament' saw the proposition as beneficial" (Teresi and McAuliffe 118). Gloria Steinem initially suggested that "pregnancy could make men less violent" (Teresi and McAuliffe 118). And, long before the scientific research on male pregnancy hit the press, Shulamith Firestone called for a technological revolution that would "free women from the tyranny of their reproductive biology" (270).

The separation of woman from the necessity of biological reproduction, however, had unseen consequences. While Adrienne Rich also recognized the tyranny of motherhood, she considered Firestone's views of biological pregnancy "shallow and unexamined." Rich states: "...Firestone is so eager to move on to technology that she fails to explore the relationship between maternity and sensuality, pain and female alienation" (174). Upon considering the ramifications of such technology, Gloria Steinem stated: "I have a small nagging fear, ... that if we women lose our cartel on giving birth, we could be even more dispensable than we already are" (Teresi and McAuliffe 118).

Steinem's "nagging fear" is given full body within the text of Junior. Women are backgrounded as the miracle of male reproduction becomes the central issue within the film.

Junior begins to dispense with the need for women by visibly removing them from sexual intercourse. One of the most revealing scenes portrays in vitro fertilization and implantation of the fertilized egg. The male body and clinical impregnation are depicted in almost sexual terms within Junior. We watch as Dr. Larry Arbogast (Danny DeVito)
and Dr. Hesse fertilize a female egg in a petri dish. The needle injects the sperm. The microscope acts as voyeur and the process is somewhat obscene but ultimately fascinating. The implications are two-fold: science has changed the private to the public; it has sanitized sex and created a moment of permissible spectatorship of conception. Scientific intervention is seen as primary, and the woman and her role in reproduction become secondary.

Within the same scene we observe Hesse and Arbogast search for a space to attach the fertilized egg. This site for male pregnancy is carved out by men for procreation; the process results in the erasure of the woman. At the moment of this fictitious conception, the woman becomes obsolete. Within the world of Junior, this new site of creation is masculine. The male cavity depicted on the ultrasound is an emptiness, and, at the moment the audience recognizes this cavity as a future home for the fetus, this empty cavity takes on a new meaning. At this moment, lack becomes presence and emptiness is transformed. It is through the magic of scientific discourse (and the aid of technology) that the male medical community succeeds in reconfiguring and controlling the womb.

This reconfiguration is dependent upon imaging technology: ultrasound. Seeing is believing, and, through representation, perceptions are altered to allow empty space—the male "womb"—to appear real and replace the uterus. The use of ultrasound imaging is pivotal and reveals a thematic message as well as a structural link. The first depiction of the ultrasound creates the male womb. The second ultrasound reveals the fetus. Upon viewing the screen, Hesse responds with a simple phrase: "My baby." As Lauren Berlant notes, the advent of ultrasound displaces the woman by creating a competition between a
helpless victim, the fetus, and the woman (151-2). Berlant states: "Her technical irrelevancy to the child's reproduction is a condition of political erasure, since all reproduction is now public, the condition under which fetuses and mothers vie for personhood in America" (169).

E. Ann Kaplan studies the effect of pictorial representation of fetal imaging and analyzes the status of the mother. She poses the following questions:

Is the fetus the new savior of humanity, delivering us from all the messes we've made? Is the focus on the fetus part of man's drama to make the perfect being? Is the focus on the fetus the latest form of the age-long male utopian urge to control reproduction, to control the body, perhaps to the extent of eliminating it altogether?

When the image of the fetus dominates the screen, the woman is lost. While women are ever present, they are not part of the critical focus of the film. With the advent of the "male womb" woman's role in procreation becomes somewhat superfluous. The central issue becomes technological reproduction's ability to absent the body of the mother from motherhood.

By eliminating the woman from the process, Junior sets up binary opposition between the woman and fetus. The film (deliberately, I believe) works to counter this separation by presenting the pregnant woman Angela (Pamela Reed), the former wife of Dr. Arbogast. Angela serves as the biological norm by which Dr. Hesse's pregnancy is judged. She is of little interest to her ex-husband Dr. Arbogast in comparison to the experimental pregnancy of Hesse. Consequently, her body is not dissected by medical science, and no pictures of the fetus serve to cloak her identity. Conversely, Angela and her pregnancy are constructed as a single representation. The camera does not work to split her image or focus upon her unborn child. Ironically, within this technological
world, the consequence of this unified identity ultimately is erasure. Angela is
backgrounded as artificial pregnancy and the body of Dr. Hesse are foregrounded within
the film's narrative. At every turn within the structure of the narrative, the character of
Angela helps maintain the focus upon Hesse. As her pregnancy is coincident with his,
Angela serves as a standard. Both visually and in terms of the narrative, Hesse's
biological and emotional changes are paralleled and compared with Angela's. Angela's
pregnancy is uneventful, and her role within the world of *Junior* becomes unremarkable
when contrasted with Hesse's.

Two segments of the film underscore Angela's relative insignificance. In the first,
when Arbogast realizes that Hesse intends to carry the fetus to term he expediently
dismisses his pregnant ex-wife (and patient) by touching her stomach and saying she's
fine. Arbogast reluctantly explains "something important has come up." Angela replies,
"Larry, I'm important too." Yet she is whisked away, untouched by modern technological
medicine. The second scene cuts from Hesse as he undergoes a cesarean section to
Angela as she begins labor. Even Dr. Diana Reddin (Emma Thompson) cannot keep her
attention upon Angela and leaves her in attempt to get a glimpse at Hesse in surgery. The
gaze of the audience as well as that of the female characters within the film is directed
toward Hesse. This focus on Hesse confirms that a man's pregnancy commands more
attention than a woman's.

The continual contrast between the abandoned pregnant Angela and the pregnant
Hesse suggests that medical diagnosis and interior visual proof constitute legitimate
pregnancy. The validity of the pregnancy is evaluated within the text not only by
technical standards but also by social criteria. Legitimacy becomes a central issue within
the film. We learn that Arbogast was unable to impregnate his wife and that their childlessness led to divorce. She becomes pregnant accidentally during a brief encounter with a physical trainer. Dr. Arbogast, with all of his scientific expertise, was never able to father a child. His inability to prove his potency is re-channelled into his scientific work.

Angela's pregnancy, unlike Hesse's, is uncontrolled, accidental, and therefore problematic. Arbogast is able to father Hesse's child. More importantly he is able to ensure legitimate paternity in Hesse's situation, and he retains control. Ironically, in his effort to provide the necessary egg for the experiment, the child's maternal lineage comes into question.

If further evidence of the appropriation of female reproductive power by the male scientific community is needed, it is clearly demonstrated by the depiction of Arbogast's theft of Dr. Diana Reddin's egg. Working in the area of cryogenics, Dr. Reddin freezes one of her own eggs for possible future use. Arbogast diverts Reddin's attention in the lab and removes the frozen canister marked "Junior." Arbogast's deception and theft are problematic when discovered by Hesse and subsequently Reddin. When Hesse reveals he is pregnant with Reddin's egg, she is furious, referring to his actions and the experiment as "an immoral, arrogant stunt." "This is so male!" she cries. Reddin's complaint is later dismissed by Arbogast: "I can't tell you how many times I've had a pregnant women complain 'I just wish a man could go through this.' You finally do it and what do you get--attitudes and insults." Arbogast's insensitivity (which is a trademark of his character) to Reddin's criticism reveals a deep-rooted bias against women's ownership of their bodies.

Arbogast's insensitive comment coupled with his unethical behavior depicts the ease by which the female body is appropriated by a male medical community. A "Doctor
knows best" attitude prevails as Arbogast performs his own version of reproduction—seizing the necessary biological materials from a non-consenting woman. Dr. Reddin's vehement criticism of Arbogast's action is undercut because her voice is silenced. She is not present to respond to Arbogast's remarks. Reddin's body and her opinions are downplayed within the text and serve as a dutiful expression of a female perspective that falls on deaf ears.

*Junior* is not the first work to explore the appropriation of female reproductive power. Women's control of their own biology serves as a central theme in feminist science fiction. Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* depicts a nightmare world in which women's autonomy is stripped away. (The first step is to deplete their bank accounts). Women fall prey to the mercy of the patriarchy because they are no longer protected by law. *A Handmaid's Tale* depicts a dystopia in which women lose all control of their lives so that a society can ensure biological reproduction. In the novel, women's entire bodies are appropriated by the men in power. In *Junior*, only Dr. Reddin's egg is stolen. Yet the end result is loss of control over one's own biology.

Margaret Atwood's tale is essentially concerned with surrogacy issues. *Junior* also introduces the idea of surrogacy within its initial premise. In her article "The Politics of Surrogacy Narrative: Notes Towards A Research Project," E. Ann Kaplan states that "surrogate mothers often announce their motive for becoming such mothers as a single desire to help infertile women" (189). *Junior* 's narrative begins with Hesse and Arbogast's fight to legalize Expectain—the drug to cure miscarriages in pregnant women. Thus initially, Hesse acquiesces to impregnation to prove the validity of the drug. Like so many surrogate mothers, he becomes attached to the fetus and, in this case, decides to carry the
child to term. The theft of Dr. Reddin's egg introduces legal issues of ownership related to surrogacy and reproduction.

*Junior* broaches these issues of parenthood and surrogacy in a brief interchange between Arbogast and Reddin. The dialogue occurs quickly, and, amid so much excitement, at first viewing it can easily be missed. Arbogast works to displace Reddin by claiming paternity and diminishing her role in the project. He tells her: "Just because your egg is in some guy, that doesn't make you the mother." Reddin is not easily dissuaded, and she insists upon claiming her role as the mother. At this point, the film depicts an uneasy tension between the biological mother, Dr. Reddin, and the carrier/father of the child, Hesse. This role reversal exposes an unwilling dependency of men upon women to carry their offspring. Hesse's pregnancy is a filmic attempt to free men from the necessity of women in the reproduction of their children.

Within the context of surrogate motherhood and male pregnancy, *Junior* also has much in common with Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild." This short story, published in 1984, explores an alien race who enslave humans and confine them to protective areas in order to exploit their bodies. Within the narrative humans are hosts and carry the aliens' young. "Bloodchild" deconstructs the myths of motherhood and de-romanticizes the joy and pain of birth by setting up a fictive narrative in which male humans are used as breeders. "Bloodchild," like *Junior*, is an example of science fiction's preoccupation with reproduction and reflects male anxieties regarding women's reproductive powers (Roberts...
Unlike *Junior*, Butler's work is subversive and questions the validity of glorifying the birthing process.

"Bloodchild" also condemns the exploitation of women's reproductive organs and can be read as a text that condemns surrogacy. As surrogate mothers are usually of a lower income than the adoptive parent, issues of financial gain and exploitation are moral and legal dilemmas currently facing society (Kaplan 194). Issues of economic dependency and ownership may also come into play concerning the legal disputes over "ownership" of children born to surrogate mothers. Kaplan notes that "the surrogate mother's violent desire to keep the child may be provoked precisely by the adoptive mother's urgent desire to claim the child" (*Politics of Surrogacy Narratives* 195). *Junior* conveniently expiates the surrogacy problem by neatly marrying the surrogate mother, Hesse, with the egg donor, Dr. Reddin. Their mutual physical attraction is established early on within the film, making this traditional romantic ending almost plausible.

In an unusual twist, the film's exploration of the surrogacy issues also includes the possibility of the state having parental rights. One of the most dynamic scenes in *Junior* occurs when the university threatens to take away Hesse's fetus at birth. The result is a fight and chase scene which heightens the dramatic action. While in hiding, Hesse is forced to cross-dress in order to pass for a woman in a birthing center. At this point he loses the privilege of a scientist and is removed from the decision-making process. Hesse becomes the "wife" of Dr. Arbogast, and will be taken care of by the staff at the center.

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14 Robin Roberts's "Adoptive versus Biological Mothering in *Aliens*" *Extrapolation*, Vol. 30 no.4) contains a complete analysis of reproductive issues in Octavia Butler's "Bloodchild."
The privileging of science and its technology ultimately results in the privileging of the male. While working as scientists, Arbogast and Hesse enjoy an equality that allows for an exchange of ideas as well as independent action and thought. For example, as Arbogast searches for the site of impregnation, Hesse, in his role as fellow scientist, assists in choosing the location. Hesse’s opinions are privileged because of his scientific expertise. As Arbogast determines the spot, Hesse contradicts him, saying, "no there—a little lower." We watch the needle penetrate Hesse’s stomach (in something visually reminiscent of intercourse) as Arbogast injects the content of the syringe inside the male body. Hesse is allowed at this point to participate as an equal. Significantly, once Hesse becomes pregnant, he loses his autonomy and comes under the control of gynecologist Arbogast.

The doctor/patient relationship of Arbogast and Hesse mirrors a dynamic often found in male doctor/female patient relationships. Some women experience a socially constructed need to be rescued by their gynecologist (as if birth could not occur without him). Junior explores this dynamic in two ways. First it feminizes Hesse by the use of female hormones. Hesse’s femininity emphasizes his vulnerability. The film also creates a situation in which birth literally cannot take place without direct intervention by a physician. The result is the glorification of medical technology and those who employ it over natural childbirth. Medical appropriation of women’s bodies and their reproductive power occurs at each stage of pregnancy – from conception to delivery, science, technology and a male medical authority dominate the process.

The role of women in science, ironically, also is represented by the pregnant Dr. Hesse. As Hesse progresses through his pregnancy, he becomes less scientific. In
addition to Expectain, which is consumed to keep the embryo attached to the omentum, Hesse takes female hormones. As Hesse continues to ingest the mixture, he becomes increasingly "feminine." The implications are that gender is contained in a bottle and that femininity can be scientifically duplicated. Hesse experiences a loss of decision making capacity during his pregnancy. The stereotypical images of women, particularly pregnant women, are reinforced throughout the film as Hesse becomes increasingly feminine. This gradual metamorphosis from scientist/male to stereotypical female begins with teariness and ends with Hesse in drag. Science, by contrast, remains essentially male as a certain machismo is implied within Arbogast's speech. Arbogast speaks in staccato style giving necessary information without elaboration. His terminology is a mixture of scientific rhetoric and machismo. When Arbogast observes the motility of Hesse's sperm, he comments: "Strong swimmers—big load—way to go." The inexorable link between maleness and science is verbally re-established.  

The development of a specialized scientific language traditionally has been used to establish the medical "profession." In his article "Physicians, Science, and Status: Issues in the Professionalization of Anglo-American Medicine in the Nineteenth Century," Dr. S.E.D. Shortt claimed the professionalization of medicine largely depended upon the use of scientific rhetoric as distinguished from scientific methods. Ironically, Junior, in an attempt to remain verbally accessible, uses the images of science, such as needles, vials, microscopes, ultrasound, and surgical implements to construct a professional atmosphere.

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15 This idea of machismo and science is also found in Teresi's article on male pregnancy. He gleefully relishes his contribution to the fictitious pregnancy of Schwarzenegger, closing his New York Times Magazine article with the following note: "Go ahead Arnold. I'm the guy who got you pregnant." (55).
Junior combines these visual signifiers with a recognizable "tough-guy" speech to reinforce the male control of the field.

Machismo and "tough-guy' attitudes abound in Junior. Despite the fact that the most interesting relationship within the film is between Hesse and Arbogast, the film intentionally undercuts any homosexual overtones by setting up female love interests for both men. Indeed, homosexuality is clearly implied when Angela catches Dr. Arbogast touching Hesse's pregnant stomach. "You were touching," Angela accuses. "Are you a twosome?" Shocked and surprised, Arbogast and Hesse immediately deny the implication. Compulsory heterosexuality is again confirmed as Dr. Reddin announces, "Well, call me old-fashioned, but I'll be damned if I'm having a child with a man I've never slept with." Within the narrative, male/female couples are reestablished by the end of the film. Love conquers all as Hesse and Reddin eventually marry, making the initial conflict over reproduction a trivial one encountered on the road to heterosexual happiness. Arbogast and Angela also reunite over the birth of her son.

By structurally introducing two heterosexual couples, the narrative conforms to the norm and excludes the possibility of a non-traditional interpretation of family. Junior valorizes the nuclear family and reaffirms its most conventional definitions. Questions of race are also negated as non-whites are conspicuously absent from this world. While reproductive roles are temporarily redefined, gender roles essentially are not. The scientific community within the film, therefore, is male, heterosexual, conservative, interested in capital gain, and it espouses traditional values that confirm the status quo.

The privileging of science is directly linked within the film (and in American society) with monetary interests. The development of Expectain is sponsored by a
university which discontinues the project after the FDA initially rejects the drug. No more lab space. No more money. Additional funding is promised by a private Canadian pharmaceutical company providing that a volunteer can be found for the protocol. Hesse asks, "What woman is going to take an unapproved drug while she's pregnant?" Arbogast replies: "Who says we need a woman." Science works on principles of exclusion (no woman need apply) and sponsorship. Capitalism and science are inexorably linked. This miracle drug is projected to generate great income overseas. Arbogast states "Once we have European approval, the FDA will fall in line for testing in the United States." European women become the test market and are made part of the experiment without their permission or knowledge; their bodies are a lesser concern. In a broad reading of the text Europe here becomes the female body, while the United States remains essentially dominant and therefore male.

While the capital links with pregnancy within the confines of the film are centered around the marketing and distribution of the drug, Expectain, male pregnancy has far-reaching implications in terms of capitalist production and economy. Catherine Cole, in her article "Sex and Death on Display: Women, Reproduction, and Fetuses at Chicago's Museum of Science and Industry," explores reproduction in terms of industrial production. Cole believes this constructed display of human reproduction implies "that maternity is the industry of women and that babies are their products" (Cole 48). If women are no longer responsible for making the babies, are they then expendable?

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16 Cole voices several questions that also plague the unspoken text of junior. "Is bringing children into the world the responsibility of women and is baby-making their "industry?" Who controls women's bodies? Who can say when a fetus or embryo becomes a viable human life?" (58).
According to *Junior*, they are necessary for love and warmth, and to ensure the traditional representation of family. The film demonstrates that women can reproduce, but women reproducing certainly is not as controllable or even as interesting as when men do so.

Hesse's pregnancy and delivery remain the dramatic focus in the film, and the audience's concern and sympathies stay with him throughout. His labor pains are much more intense than Angela's. His Cesarean birth is a highlight, while Angela's vaginal birth is incidental. Our concern for Hesse is intensified not only because the situation is unusual and dangerous, but also because he is male. Western society expects men to be in control of their bodies and emotions; they are also required to refrain from expressions of pain. When men are not in control, or when they express pain, they receive pity for their unenviable state. However, in the beginning of the film, Dr. Reddin remains unmoved by Hesse's initial complaints about labor. She states: "Try being a woman. It's a nightmare. Your body goes peculiar on you with your first period and doesn't stop until menopause. It's a lifetime of leaking, swelling and spotting with smears, crippling cramps, raging hormones—and that's if everything is normal." This film reflects the expectation that women will suffer due to their reproductive capacity. Because of their biology, women are offered far less sympathy than their male counterparts.

In addition to the biological and social questions relating to reproduction, *Junior* also addresses monetary concerns. Issues of capital, and subsequently control, arise quite consciously in the film. Hesse and Arbogast are university employees. The villain, Noah Baines (Frank Langella), upon discovering the first male pregnancy in history, tries physically to capture the results. As he approaches the visibly pregnant Dr. Hesse, Baines states: "Exploitation of results from all university funded research shall be at the sole
discretion of the university. You and your baby are university property now." As university police attempt to apprehend Hesse he exclaims: "No, I'm not. My body. My choice."

The ironic use of pro-choice rhetoric cannot be escaped. It is not the marginalized pregnant woman who asserts her right to control her own biological reproduction. Instead, it is the male asserting that he will fight, flee, or do anything necessary, even become a woman, in order to control reproduction. This divorce of procreation from the female body has implicit political implications. The male within the world of junior is better suited to protect his offspring from female infidelity and caprice. The film gestures toward a world that glorifies technology and reinforces traditional interpretations of gender roles.

Junior, unlike feminist science fiction such as "Bloodchild" or The Handmaid's Tale, does not intentionally work to unmask the moral dilemma surrounding the politics of reproduction. Predominately designed to entertain, the film introduces issues such as woman's reproductive freedom, surrogacy, ownership of reproductive materials, and the displacement of the pregnant woman by the fetus. Unfortunately, the problems are never fully explored. Yet despite the film's commercial nature, its very subject matter raises feminist issues. Their presence within the text of the film reflects a growing anxiety and unshakable concern over advanced medical technology and its impact upon the most basic of all human activities—reproduction.
CONCLUSION

No matter how we change the laws, or the art forms, or the stories about pregnancy and birth, until we have a paradigm shift that alters the way we see women and their role in society, nothing will really change. The image of pregnancy and motherhood is not static; it changes as society changes. This dissertation demonstrates a variety of historical interpretations of pregnancy and the way in which media portray these interpretations. Though these media representations differ in time and place, they still represent either the dominant ideology regarding pregnancy or an opposition to it. Feminist theorists such as Rosalind Petchesky and Peggy Phelan emphasize the dangers of reproductive politics that fail to take into account the myriad needs of individual women from divergent backgrounds. The narratives in this dissertation reveal the many ways in which women's desires are negated by social structures aimed at retaining the status quo. The issue shifts from concern over an individual woman's well-being to pregnancy as a public burden. The ever changing ideologies regarding the role of women during the first half of this century are reflected in each of the plays discussed in the first chapter. The Edwardian belief in women's natural role as mothers dominates Granville Barker's *Waste*. The backlash against new freedoms seized by working class immigrants plays a crucial role in Eugene O'Neill's "Abortion." Tensions caused by a loosening of restrictions regarding abortion can be seen in Sidney Kingsley's *Men in White* while the reactionary efforts to constrict women's roles after World War II plays out in the Pulitzer Prize winner's *Detective Story*. 

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Chapter One's exploration of male playwrights who included abortion in their texts revealed several common strands. Each of the narratives depicts a male character who is made to suffer because of his lover's abortion. Each narrative displaces the pregnant woman and eventually removes her from the text. Her needs, wants and desires are eclipsed by her male counterpart. All of the women who become pregnant and choose to abort are punished both for their illicit sexual actions and their decision to have the "illegal operation." While the women are punished for their promiscuity, the central male figures are punished by the actions of the women. Thus the pregnant women who choose to abort are constructed as dangerous.

In all of the texts in the first chapter, the male protagonist holds an important position in society. Henry Trebell is a cabinet member, Jack Townsend a sports hero and promising leader, George Ferguson a talented surgeon, and Jim McCleod a dedicated law enforcement officer. The dramatic narratives, even when they are sympathetic to the abortion question, (as is the case with Kingsley's work) eventually use the abortion plot to bring about destruction. The abortion decision in each play does not just threaten an individual couple, it threatens society as a whole.

Harley Granville Barker, Eugene O'Neill and Sidney Kingsley's inclusion of abortion as a plot device adds to the meta-narrative of abortion in the first part of the twentieth century. In addition to revealing the historical realities at the time of their construction, the dramas analyzed demonstrate how narratives help construct our ideology regarding pregnancy. Both fictional and non-fiction narratives are part of cultural meta-narrative. The newspaper articles which include trial records and exposes illuminate the ways media forge a cultural attitude towards reproductive issues. Each
story printed or told concerning pregnancy either reaffirms present beliefs regarding
t reproduction or provides an alternate understanding. This dynamic relationship between
narrative and event provides an ever-changing understanding of pregnancy.

Pregnant women are in an ambiguous state. They are physically at their most
creative and often at their most vulnerable. Economic disparity dictates the fates of such
characters as Nellie in "Abortion," and Malinda Jasper in "They That Sit in Darkness."
Society also enforces a sexual double standard and vilifies pregnant women, such as Mrs.
Flinker in *Our Ostriches*. These women are often in a position where their decision making
capacity is diminished or eliminated.

Chapter Two reveals how economics play a crucial role in women's ability to
control reproduction. Playwrights Marie Stopes and Mary Burrill in their dramas depict
poor families suffering from lack of birth control; however, in each case the only
character with any power to ameliorate the situation is from a higher social class. In *Our
Ostriches* this character is Evadne, while in "They That Sit in Darkness" the character is
Nurse Shaw. In essence, *Our Ostriches* and "They That Sit in Darkness" are plays in which
the subject -- the poor -- is not the agent. The end result is that the plays suggest unless
the viewing/reading audience take action, there will be more misery. Significantly, there
will also be more "unfit" and poor people.

While Mary Burrill's text works to gain sympathy for the poor, by contrast,
Stopes's drama seeks to eliminate them. Stopes's portrayal of the Flinker family stands in
contrast to Burrill's sympathetic treatment of Malinda Jasper and her daughter Lindy.
This difference denotes a radically different approach to birth control. For Marie Stopes,
the good of the state became the ultimate reason to support birth control. Despite their
flirtation with eugenics, birth control leader Margaret Sanger and Mary Burrill strove to improve the quality of life for women and their families.

Playwrights who set out to change ideology about reproduction were well aware of the media's influence over public opinion. Propaganda plays written to change then current ideology regarding birth control are both works of fiction and political documents. Birth control plays consciously reflected the current legal restrictions regarding contraceptives. These dramas provided information regarding the political struggle from the point of view of those working to liberalize birth control legislation.

Controlling birth remains the topic of the third chapter; however, the topic shifts from preventing pregnancy to cultural understanding of motherhood, pregnancy and delivery. How we understand pregnancy and who makes the decision about the birthing process is the topic of the three plays presented. The progression from Tina Howe's Birth and After Birth to Judy Chicago's The Birth Project reveals a cultural shift in the manner in which birth is perceived. Tina Howe's challenge to the monolithic medical image of childbirth reflects the grassroots movement started by many women to reclaim the birthing process. Karen Malpede continues in this tradition in her play A Monster Has Stolen the Sun. Malpede sets up two realities in which birth can occur. One choice, the woman-centered manner of birthing, is portrayed as positive, while the male-centered manner of birth results in death. Malpede's stratification of birth into two opposing binaries is expanded by Chicago. Chicago's images of birth are multifaceted and reveal a variety of images, both positive and negative, concerning pregnancy.

Emily Martin, author of the insightful study Women in The Body, delivers a warning concerning the glorification of natural childbirth and the vilification of medicine. It is
indisputable that modern obstetrics has saved uncounted women's lives and that many women not only rely on modern medical technology for their well-being and that some prefer to leave the decision making process to their physicians. Nonetheless, many of the problems that have epitomized the tensions between the medical community's understanding of childbirth and individual women's needs and desires during their pregnancy and delivery remained unsolved. While women's options regarding childbirth have increased significantly since 1973 (when Howe's text was written), often a woman's individual desires during pregnancy are negated.

Tina Howe, Karen Malpede and Judy Chicago work to deconstruct preconceptions about pregnancy and mothering. Through non-realistic works, these women shattered the mommy myth by exposing both negative and positive experiences regarding pregnancy and mothering. Works by artists such as Howe, Malpede and Chicago reflect a grassroots movement to return decisions regarding pregnancy to pregnant women instead of the medical community. Tina Howe's *Birth and After Birth* debunks the myth of the perfect American Family. Judy Chicago's work explores the physicality of pregnancy and provides an alternative image of childbirth that places women and their bodies at the very center of the narrative. This movement has met with much resistance, but because of vocal protests from women about the manner in which pregnancy and childbirth occurs, many hospitals and doctors have responded by providing an atmosphere more friendly to women. Works by feminist artists were part of the impetus for this change.

Arguments about who controls the birthing process continue in Chapter Four with the exploration of dramas which focus on abortion and women's decision making...
capacity regarding reproduction. Myrna Lamb's abortion drama *But What Have You Done for Me Lately?* traces its lineage to the protest dramas, such as the suffrage play *Votes for Women*, and anti-lynching dramas, such as Georgia Douglas Johnson's "Safe." This polemic also harkens back to Mary Burrell's "They That Sit in Darkness" in that it works to expand reproductive choices and considers morally and ethically wrong laws which directly or indirectly cause women pain and suffering. Lamb and Burrell's works were written in eras when feminist protest was at an apex. The same cannot be said of *Keely and Du*.

*Keely and Du* lacks the spirit of activism that characterizes dramas concerned with providing women with reproductive options. Instead the play demonstrates a 1990's willingness to compromise on reproductive freedoms. Analysis of the dramatic nature of abortion protests reveals that the central issue is a conflict between nationalism and feminism. This debate occurs between a material feminist realization that economic issues often dictate personal choice and the romantic notion that each individual born in the U.S. has the same opportunities. This overwrought individualism suggests that each aborted fetus is a wasted American who lost his chance to fulfill the American dream. There is no place in this ideology for women's psychological, personal or economic reasons not to carry a pregnancy to term.

*Keely and Du* resembles the dramas of Harley Granville Barker, Eugene O'Neill, and Sidney Kingsley in that the play fails to champion women's control of their own reproductive capacities. It does differ significantly, however, in that it focuses on the body of the pregnant woman. Yet the play does not resolutely support women's autonomy. While the central image of a pregnant woman chained to the bed dominates
the action, the valorization of Du and the inclusion of Keely's post abortion regret blurs the central message of the play and allows for myriad interpretations.

The difference in tone between *But What Have You Done For Me Lately?* and *Keely and Du* reflects a softening of American Feminism between the years 1969 and 1994. Betty Friedan's surprising lack of commitment to women's reproductive freedom as expressed in her forward to *The Feminine Mystique* epitomizes current trends aiding the erosion of Roe v. Wade. This new "kinder and gentler" feminism allows for the intolerable to be tolerated.

"Who controls the process of birth?" constitutes the central question in dramatic representations analyzed in this dissertation. Chapter Five looks at the new twists put on this old question because of the advent of new reproductive technologies. Just as the marketplace has responded to women's demands for a change in obstetrical practice, it has also responded to women's demands for children. Programs to aid infertile women are a multi-million dollar business, and it is difficult to ascertain whether the demand for assisted reproduction is a societally created desire or whether some women do have an instinctual need to bear their own children.

The acceptance of procedures such as artificial insemination, in vitro fertilization and egg donation must be heavily influenced by the pervasive media images of such procedures. Conflicts about reproductive technologies can clearly be seen in Micheline Wandor's play *Aid Thy Neighbor* and in media representations such as Star Trek's "The Child" and the film *Junior*. Each drama reveals the problems associated with fetal imaging and the abuses which result from the misuse of technology.
The hopeful embrace of the dream of reproductive technology found in *Aid Thy Neighbor* in 1979 seems to have slipped into a nightmare in 1994's *Junior*. The rapid advancement of technology is not to blame; rather the central problem is the ever restrictive view that society has of women and their role in society. Technologies supporting women to have children have increased while those designed to prevent conception or terminate pregnancy are restricted.

Part of the problem in assessing the harm or benefit of assisted reproductive technologies is that so many women have been harmed and so many have benefited from these scientific advances. The lesbian couple in *Aid Thy Neighbor* embodies so many women who wanted to have children and were eventually aided by modern science. Other women have suffered the theft of their biological material, just as Diane Reddin did in *Junior*. The issues remain unresolved, as testified to by the increase of dramatic representations that portray assisted reproductive technology. Dramatizations of in vitro fertilization and artificial insemination populate television programming. Most recently, the news has provided copious coverage of the birth of octuplets—the result of fertility drugs.

In some way, I believe this interest in assisted reproductive technology (in addition to our fascination with technology in general) stems from the belief that women need to mother. In light of the increasing legal restrictions placed on access to birth control and abortion and the decreasing number of abortion providers, this cultural fascination with baby-making seems to advocate a return to traditional roles for women. The promotion of artificial reproductive technologies is an affirmation of motherhood. The notion that women must be mothers in order to be fulfilled lingers still.
Ancient Greek drama's depiction of pregnancy reveals a cultural apprehension over women's reproductive capabilities. In the twentieth century, this apprehension has not abated. While the Greeks embodied wisdom in the female form of Athena, she was not of woman born; instead, Athena sprang full grown from the head of Zeus. This could be considered the birth of patriarchy: clean, efficient, and absent of the pain and power of female reproduction. Mothers in Greek drama receive poor treatment. Clytemnestra's role as mother is negated as she is relegated to the role of empty vessel. In the Orestia, Clytemnestra and all mothers are legally re-defined as the carriers of the father's offspring. Semele, the mother of the god of Western drama, is engulfed in flames, leaving the theatre to be born of the very male, not to mention womanizing god, Zeus.

Most of the pregnant female characters who appear in this dissertation do not fare much better than poor Clytemnestra and Semele. Barker's Amy O'Connell is damned for her decision not to become a mother, while O'Neill's Nellie is verbally condemned and eventually dies a horrible death without ever having the privilege of crossing the stage. In Junior the pregnant Pamela is upstaged completely by her male counter-part. Perhaps the worst erasure of the pregnant women occurs in Keely and Du. Ironically, while Keely provides a realistic portrayal of a pregnant woman, the validity of her decision rejecting motherhood is negated at the end of the play.

Even feminist playwrights who recognize the problems of representing women on stage can background the pregnant woman. Micheline Wandor, whose work in the area of feminist playwrighting and theory is exceptional, subverts the character of Georgina (the script's pregnant woman) to advance the plot. By doing so, Wandor allows
the focus to remain on the issues regarding women and childbirth but hesitates to explore the individual pregnant woman. This reveals a reluctance to fully stage women at perhaps one of their most powerful and creative moments.

On a more hopeful note, this past October at Arena Stage, Lisa Loomer's *Expecting Isabel* opened. The play explores pregnancy and the new reproductive technologies. Much of the play focuses on a somewhat neurotic and rather likeable woman, Miranda. Miranda's hopes, desire and fears are given voice in Loomer's script; however, the play is not one-sided, nor is it completely introspective. *Expecting Isabel* explores the myriad problems of motherhood in the U.S. today. The play recently won a Fund for New American Playwright's award which suggests subsequent productions.

From Semele's death and the saving of Dionysus to the theft of Diane Reddin's egg in *Junior*, the basic question in each text remains the same. Who controls the body of the pregnant woman? Though it sounds like a cliché, in each of the narratives contained in this dissertation the question is always one of choice. Disaster results for the pregnant character (and for pregnant women in general) when the choices relating to their physical and mental well-being are not their own.
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March 11, 1999

Amy Cuomo
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Dear Ms. Cuomo:

This letter will serve as permission to reprint all or portions of your article entitled, "The Scientific Appropriation of Female Reproductive Power in Junior," from Extrapolation, Volume 39, No. 4 (Winter 1998) in your dissertation. Good luck with the project.

Sincerely,

John T. Hubbell
Director

JTH/sdc
VITA

Amelia L. "Amy" Cuomo attended Mary Baldwin College in Staunton, Virginia, and received a bachelor of arts in theatre in May of 1985. After graduation, Amy worked at The Barter Theatre, Syracuse Stage, Delaware Theatre Company and stage managed four summer seasons at Heritage Repertory Theatre in Charlottesville, Virginia. Amy attended Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, and earned her master of arts degree in 1991.

After surviving Detroit, Amy returned to Stuart Hall School where she had worked during college. She resurrected the drama program and taught literature and theatre to grades six through twelve. While at Stuart Hall, Amy served as a dorm parent and academic advisor. She also directed several plays and ran the annual one-act play competition.

In 1994, Amy left Stuart Hall to pursue a doctoral degree at Louisiana State University. During her four years on assistantship at L.S.U., Amy house managed for both L.S.U. and Swine Palace, taught several classes, translated and directed a one-act play and published an article on the film *Junior*.

Currently, Amy is an instructor at Louisiana State University and Southeastern Louisiana University. She plans to continue her research on reproductive issues in theatre and film, after receiving the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in May of 1999.
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