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IMAGES OF WOMEN IN AMERICAN POPULAR CULTURE: THE POST-WORLD WAR II LEGACY

by

Jennifer Beever

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of the Senior Scholars Program

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ABSTRACT

"Images of Women in American Popular Culture: The Post-World War II Legacy" examines popular images of women in light of American social, political, and economic history after World War II. The paper is structured not as a mere catalogue of the postwar images of women but in terms of significant themes that affected those images.

The first chapter presents ideas and attitudes about American women and their role as evidenced in speeches given by American social and political leaders in the post-World War II years. The significance of these speeches is not only in the ideas and attitudes about women that are evidenced, but also in the manner with which these were voiced. The way in which woman's role after World War II was discussed qualifies the attention paid to women's economic, social, and political rights and suggests that this attention was a mere reaffirmation of traditional ideas couched in a rhetoric of egalitarianism.

The second chapter, "Images of Women in Post-World War II Advertising," examines dominant images of women in advertising. Significantly, women were the primary American consumers during the postwar years; when advertisers played on American fears of infiltration and identity, they did so at the expense of female identity.

Chapter Three, "Female Sexuality in the Postwar Years," examines the challenge posed by factual data on female sexuality to the idealized female role. The 1953 Kinsey Report on female sexuality affected images of women in a negative way, even though Alfred C. Kinsey had intended a positive, educational effect on humanity. Rather than portraying an integration of female sexuality with other identities that women acknowledged, in the post-Kinsey years images of women began to suggest that sexuality was a dangerous and insidious part of women's lives. In this way images of women become increasingly fragmented and distorted.

Finally, the fourth chapter, "Isolation and the Decline of the Female Image," further explores the fragmentation and distortion of female identity and examines the dynamics surrounding this phenomenon. Not only were some women isolated geographically (through suburbia) in the postwar years, many women experienced isolation through the ideology of separation of function between men and women. Because this ideology was unrealistic, popular images that were already fragmented and distorted further deteriorated. This post-World War II deterioration of female images provides today's historian with an important documentation of attitudes about American women; in terms of popular images of women, the deterioration leaves American women a legacy of fragmented and distorted identity.

CONTENTS

Introduction 1

American Social and Political Leaders Speak on Women's Role: Social Housekeeping in the Cold War Era 7

Images of Women in Post-World War II Advertising 31

Female Sexuality in the Postwar Years. 68

Isolation and the Decline of the Female Image 101

Conclusions 129

Bibliography 133

INTRODUCTION

Images of women in the post-World War II popular culture provide the twentieth-century historian with a documentation of the era's attitudes and beliefs about women that might not otherwise be available for research. In studies from the past decade, many historians appear to dismiss the true value of these images by defining them as paradoxical or inexplicable.[1] Indeed, images of women during the postwar years had very little to do with the documented, real existence of women. But to dismiss images of women as merely paradoxical or inexplicable is to ignore the significance of the postwar popular culture, for those very images illuminate the dynamics involved in the shaping of attitudes and beliefs about women.

I began this study of post-World War II images of women with several questions in mind. First, I asked what were the dominant images of women in the post-World War II years? Second, were there any significant changes in the images of women? Third, if there were recognizable changes, what, in terms of economic, social, or political realities, may have affected the changes? Fourth, what is the result of the discrepancy between the images of women and their very real role in American society? My findings in terms of these questions bring me to conclude that the

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[1] William Chafe, The American Woman: Her Changing Social, Economic, and Political Roles, 1920-1970, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 184,188.

post-World War II discrepancy between images and reality was unusually great. While images of women through the late forties and early fifties reflected the projection that women were to be housewives and mothers, the reality of the American female existence tells a different story.

Women in the immediate postwar years were either laid-off from work, or they quit their jobs to return full-time to their homes during the reconversion of American war industries. After World War II, the employment of American men, especially veterans, became a primary goal of the war industries. In terms of economic standing, this removal of women laborers from war industries was hardly a loss. First, women had been working in the war industries under the understanding that their participation was temporary; they were only war-time workers. Second, women did not lose significant economic standing because within three years after the war's end, they re-entered the working world in larger numbers than ever before.

Even though women workers were not paid or employed on a basis equal to men because their husbands, fathers, sons, and brothers were back home, their numbers grew in a short time. By the year 1960, the number of working women had doubled from the number in 1940; forty percent of all women over the age of sixteen years held jobs. Interest-

ingly, by 1952, married women held 10.4 million jobs: an increase of two million more than at the peak industry time during World War II.[2] Women's economic involvement in the post-World War II years was not only stable, it was increasing. The potential for women to gain recognition through this unprecedented economic involvement was great. Why, then, did images of women as housewives and mothers dominate the popular culture?

Rather than dismiss the discrepancy between the popular culture's images of women and women's real existence as a paradox, I have sought, throughout the following paper, to find some explanation for it. Why would American society insist on images of women that were limiting and confining? The answer to this question is addressed in Chapter One, "American Political and Social Leaders Speak on Women's Role: Social Housekeeping in the Cold War Era." Because the immediate postwar years were a time of fear and anxiety, due to economic inflation, the ever-present threat of the A-bomb, the supposed and sometime genuine threat of Communist infiltration or subversion, Americans sought to reaffirm the traditional and the normal. This reaffirmation in terms of women's role became most important because Americans feared for the sanctity of the home: an institution that traditionally depended

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[2] William Chafe, American Woman, pp. 150-218.

on women in the role of nurturer and moral provider. Moreover, because the postwar boom in materialism offered mere quantity, Americans looked toward representations of the qualitative. The traditional concept of woman's role as mother and housewife offered such a representation.

Thus, with the answer of why and how social and political leaders expressed the reaffirmation of traditional roles for women established, the paper includes an examination of two important phenomena that significantly affected images of women in the popular culture. First, woman's potential power as consumer was significantly diminished by advertising's portrayal of women. Women, as the primary American consumers, were appealed to by images of housewives and mothers that limited and minimized their potential. Advertisers in the postwar years projected images of the unreal expectations society had for its women. They appealed to women to live up to these expectations, therefore limiting images by not representing reality. The resulting insecurity led women of the postwar years to be increasingly malleable as consumers.

Second, the potential offered for educating society about women's sexuality by the publication of Kinsey's Sexual Behavior in the Human Female[3] was extremely dis-

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[3] Albert C. Kinsey, et. al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, (PA: W.B. Saunders and Co., 1975).

torted by the ambiguous public reaction to the report and the effects of such ambiguity on images of women. Because the concept of sexually experienced women was a threat to traditional female roles, Kinsey's data was manipulated to serve needs of the reviewers. For example, it was discredited by those who feared female sexuality, or it was praised by those who believed a knowledge of sexuality was valuable, not for women as individuals, but for the educated mother. Ultimately, images of women were adversely affected by the public response to the Kinsey report. In the same year the Kinsey report was published, Hugh Hefner began to publish Playboy magazine. Rather than leading to images of women as integrated beings, the threat that knowledge about female sexuality posed to Americans led to images of the sexual woman as potentially dangerous.

Finally, Chapter Four ("Isolation and the Decline of the Female Image") is an examination of the ideology of the separation of function between men and women. This ideology led to a further isolation for women who, in many cases, were already living in suburbia and experiencing geographic isolation. Because the ideology of separation of function was so unrealistic, the popular images of women began to express evidence of female dissatisfaction with their isolation. However, rather than portraying

strong images of women confronting their situation, the popular media portrayed women as fragmented, diseased, or sexually predatory beings. These images of female malaise served to further the deteriorating process that advertising and popular conceptions of female sexuality had encouraged. In many ways, the postwar years from 1945 through the early sixties constitute a turning point in the quality of popular images of woman. For today's women, the post-World War II deterioration of popular images offers a legacy of fragmented and distorted conceptualizations of the female experience in America.

CHAPTER 1

American Social and Political Leaders Speak on Women's Role:

Social Housekeeping in the Cold War Era

In the immediate postwar years as the female labor force moved from the war industries back to homes or to other jobs, the question of what women's role should be was of primary importance to Americans. Political and social leaders responded to the changes that women had experienced by reaffirming the traditional role for women that was synonymous with the American concept of family and home. During the Cold War years, when Americans saw great potential for their nation yet feared its vulnerability, the reaffirmation of past values offered security and stability. As a result, any potential that women had through their larger workforce and greater economic participation was undercut by traditional ideologies.

Moreover, answers to the question of what woman's role was to be were couched in a rhetoric of egalitarianism. Not only were traditional roles for and ideas about women reaffirmed, but they were restated in such a way that indicated equality. During the postwar years, equality between women and men was merely paid lip service in a

way that was similar to attention paid to matters of racial equality. This Cold War rhetoric is evidenced in speeches given by social and political leaders during the postwar years. For many leaders, equality for women was to serve as a "barometer for democracy."[1] Again and again it was stressed that women were equal in that their homemaking function was as important for society as the male function. In this context, the optimism that speakers of the 1948 Women's Bureau conference expressed for women's status as a labor force was virtually defeated by a reaffirmation of traditional female roles in the rhetoric of the Cold War.

In 1948 the United States Women's Bureau held a conference in Washington commemorating the centennial of Seneca Falls. The focus of the conference was on working women in the United States. Frieda Miller, director of the Women's Bureau at the time, gave one of the first speeches at the conference, entitled "Who Works, Where, and Why?"[2] Miller asserted that working women in the United States had a long and solid history to draw on for the future. She stressed that most women worked out of

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[1] Wiley T. Rutledge, "Women's Rights: Barometer of Democracy," _Vital Speeches_, Vol. 14, March 11, 1948, pp. 509-11.

[2] Frieda Miller, "Who Works, Where, and Why?" _Report on the 1948 United States Women's Bureau Conference_, (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1948).

economic necessity and that, contrary to what many believed, the numbers of working women had not declined markedly after the war's end. Miller's speech was optimistic in terms of working women's status, and it acknowledged that along with the strength of working women's history, another reason for the continuance of a strong female labor force had arisen: the failure of naziism. She said:

> As far as we can now see there is no reversal of this process in store. Hitler tried to turn back the clock for women, but he failed. Others who seek to take that path will also fail. It is our job in 1948, then, to take stock of where we are, to set our sights on where we want to go, and to conspire with the future, as those women did whose work we are here to honor, to help coming generations of women make equal progress and as great a contribution as did their predecessors in terms of the world of the next century.[3]

In 1948 Frieda Miller saw no reversal for the possibilities of progress. To her, there was little or nothing to stop women's progress after liberating the world from Hitler.

Miller's views seemed warranted by the economic growth and resulting optimism in America after World War II. In 1951 the Women's Bureau published a pamphlet entitled "Why Do Women Work? How Do They Use The Money They Earn?" Eight thousand and three hundred women workers from

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[3] Ibid, p. 18.

one hundred Trade Union Locals were questioned about their work. The workers, in reply to the surveys, stressed that they worked for economic need, and thereby justified the existence of a female labor force for the Women's Bureau:

> More than eight out of ten of them say they work to make a living. In most cases there are others, too, who depend upon these women for financial help. . . .Practically all (ninety-eight percent) of the women without husbands work to support themselves and others. The vast majority of the married women (sixty to eighty percent) in six unions work to contribute to living expenses.[4]

By citing statistics about women's earnings, the pamphlet attempted to justify working women's participation in the labor force.

Yet even though significantly large numbers of women continued to work after the war industry reconversion, they were paid less than men employed in comparable work and were barred from obtaining jobs at higher levels or jobs in line for promotion to a professional level. As William Chafe claimed, by 1945 women who were working in manufacturing industries earned "only sixty-five percent of what men received."[5] What was the possible reasoning behind this economic inequity? To the country's social and political leaders, economic equality with men was an

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[4] U.S. Dept. of Labor, "Why Do Women Work?" (pamphlet), (Washington: U.S. Dept. of Labor, Women's Bureau, 1951).

[5] William Chafe, American Woman, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 158.

issue that was irrelevant in light of the ideologies surrounding the question of women's role. Although "equality" between men and women was given lip service, it was never addressed in concrete, economic terms.

By juxtaposing the optimistic views of Frieda Miller with those of the President, Harry Truman, the ideologies that overshadowed any question of economic equality become evident. At the 1948 Women's Bureau Conference, Frieda Miller opened the conference that was entitled, "The American Woman, Her Changing Role--Worker, Homemaker, Citizen." The President, Harry Truman, followed Miller with a second welcoming speech and the words,

> When Mrs. Miller opened her remarks she started off by saying that you represented workers, homemakers, citizens. I want to reverse that order. I want to say 'homemakers, workers, citizens,' for if it were not for the homemakers we would have neither the citizens nor the workers.[6]

Here Truman imposed his priority on the Women's Bureau Conference. By putting "homemaker" first, Truman affected the orientation of the conference.

In an earlier speech, Truman's assumptions about women of the postwar years are clear and serve to illuminate his emphasis on the "homemaker." On October 18, 1947, Truman addressed Americans in a nationwide radio

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[6] Harry Truman, as quoted in "The President of the U.S." Report of the 1948 Women's Bureau Conference, p. 1.

address. The address was entitled, "The Moral Force of Women: Destiny of America in Their Hands." In his speech, Truman said:

> I know that if the women of our nation exert the tremendous moral force for good which they possess, we shall make greater and more lasting progress in overcoming the other difficulties that concern us and the world. . . .The moral force of women has always had a wholesome influence upon the character of civilization. They are deeply responsive to the fundamental human values. Women are more for people than for dollars, more for healthy children than fat dividends. Women want a society in which we build schools instead of prisons. Women want a world in which we sow and harvest the seeds of a good life instead of the seeds of war.[7]

Truman's 1947 speech evidenced a number of factors that influenced his conception of women's role. First, he was conscious that the nation stood "on a threshold of a wonderful opportunity, unique in history."[8] Like most speakers of the time, Truman suggested that women's role in this "new" nation would change in the postwar years. The qualities that Truman stressed suggest that he was concerned with the future of this unique world. Women were to act as moral buffers between the materialistic consumer culture and its creator, man.

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[7] Harry Truman, "The Moral Force of Women: Destiny of America in Their Hands." Vital Speeches, Vol. 14, October 8, 1947, pp. 23-24.

[8] Ibid, p. 23.

Thus, the ideologies surrounding the question of women's role counter more concrete, economic concerns. During the Centennial Conference in 1948, an ex-director of the Women's Bureau, Mildred Thompson, spoke of the limitations that traditional concepts of women put on female experience. In her speech entitled "Woman's Status--Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," Thompson defined the probable barrier to progress for the working woman:

> The incompleteness of women's attainments thus far, I believe, does not derive from biological difference of function or from predestined mental and emotional fixities and inferiorities. It is due, rather, to environmental condition and to traditions of culture.[9]

This is Thompson's explanation for the inability of American women to achieve a "completeness." But what Thompson failed to see was that the "environmental condition" and "traditions of culture" were, in the postwar years, composed of ideas of "biological difference of function" and ideas about "predestined mental and emotional fixities and inferiorities" for women. The "environmental condition," which was an atmosphere of Cold War anxiety, encouraged social and political leaders to reaffirm traditional roles for women. This reaffirmation was, in many cases, in terms of biological destiny and function. Thus, the

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[9] Mildred Thompson, "Woman's Status--Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow," Report on the 1948 U.S. Women's Bureau Conference, p. 51.

reconversion from a war economy to a domestic economy and the rhetoric of the Cold War shaped the "woman question" in terms of ideology, not reality. The potential of a significantly larger female labor force was devalued by a theoretical, ideological answer to the woman question. Answers to the woman question in the postwar years were, for the most part, abstractions of the reality of women's existence.

Women's role was to be ideologically sound in relation to the new American nation. In peacetime,as well as in war, they were to serve their country according to its needs. In 1947 Mildred McAffee Horton, president of Wellesley College, gave her impressions of the transition from women's war-time role to a peace-time role before a women's luncheon of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce in Washington. Horton had been the director of the WAVES during the war. She first acknowledged discrimination against women that came to light during World War II because women in the service were not placed in individual positions of authority. Again, as a group, the WAVES were merely paid lip service as far as equality went. As individuals, they could not be equal. From this experience, Horton believed that women would have to work from this "half-way status" to better the American world. She said, "I mention these matters. . .not to bemoan or criticize. . . .This is the

framework within which American women can expect to contribute to the nation's needs in time of peace as well as in time of war."[10] Horton accepted women's status in the services during the war, and she attempted to use it as an example for peacetime.

While Horton's speech utilized the rhetoric of the postwar "new nation," it also utilized traditional views of women as self-giving, nurturing citizens. Why didn't Horton cite the possibilities for women moving up in the work-force? She mentioned woman's career only in terms of an abstracted responsibility, geared to community responsibility. In this way, Horton's speech is an example of the reaffirmation of traditional values about women in spite of significant change for women.

Others spoke in similar terms of women's public role in the process of strengthening the nation. The use of Cold War rhetoric implied that women had a new role, yet the "new" role had existed before. In a speech given to the Mississippi Federation for Colored Women's Clubs in 1947, the Federation President, Ruby E. S. Lyells, stated the following assumptions about women's role. One was that a better world was inevitable for the United States; the other was that all "sane" people would have to contri-

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[10] Mildred M. Horton, "Women's Responsibility Today," Vital Speeches, Vol. 14, October 30, 1947, pp. 505.

bute to this better world. About women's role in procurring such a world, Lyells said:

> The time was when women and women's organizations devoted their energies to securing women's rights. But those were the days when everyone looked out for himself and his own interests. . . .This is a new age. . . .This is an age which gives meaning to the Biblical admonition to let every man seek another's and not his own welfare.[11]

Women were not, therefore, to look out for themselves, but they were to look to a greater cause, that of serving others' welfare. More specifically, Lyells said:

> The area of relations between the sexes is woman's peculiar sphere of influence. It has been said that no race or nation rises higher than the ideals of its women. There is also a slogan, especially popular in advertising circles, 'Never underestimate the power of a woman.' Somewhere in my consciousness lurks the idea that women are a civilizing influence in a man's world.[12]

Even though Lyell's words were geared toward the Civil Rights cause, her words constitute evidence of the Cold War rhetoric. For Lyells, the ideals engendered by "womanpower" were to civilize the world. Woman's role in the "new age" would be traditional; she was to temper man's world.

Further evidence of the reaffirmation of women's traditional role to temper the anxious Cold War American

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[11] Ruby E.S. Lyells, "Womanpower for a Better World," Vital Speeches, Vol. 14, October 30, 1947, pp. 217-220.

[12] Ibid, p. 219.

world is present in a 1948 speech given to members of the DAR. Frances Bolton, U.S. Representative from Ohio, spoke on "Fundamental Defenses: Women's Responsibilities."[13] Bolton's emphasis in her speech was on the strength of the American nation and the role of women in it. She spoke of past women's support of this strength through "child-rearing," through "ascertaining men of their divinity," and through their responsibility to a type of social housekeeping. To the post-World War II American woman, Bolton said:

> Our woman's job isn't finished, friends. We are still needed to do these same things in a different way. . . .Isn't it pretty dangerous to let the fire of Communist propaganda be hurled or insinuated into our schools and colleges, our organizations, our labor unions, into our very Government? . . .What can we as women of the twentieth century do to put out the fires being thrown over our stockade?[14]

Bolton's analogy between the post-World War II society and an early American stockade or between the Communist threat and an early American uprising was an appeal to her audience's sense of patriotism. As it was for the early settlers, so it would be in the 1950s. Women were to put out the "Communist fire" by re-assuming responsibility for their children, their husband, and ultimately, their

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[13] Frances Bolton, "Fundamental Defenses: Women's Responsibilities," Vital Speeches, Vol. 14, April 21, 1948, pp. 503-505.

[14] Ibid, p. 504.

community.

1948 was the year that the United States found that Russia had the A-bomb, the year when the draft was introduced, and the year in which Whittaker Chambers accused Alger Hiss of Communist subversion.Even as early as 1945, Americans suspected some amount of subversion when it was found that the magazine Amerasia held diplomatic documents stolen from the United States.[15] It was between 1948 and 1951 that the question of women's role was "answered." It seemed inevitable that any answer to any question at the time would converge with Cold War rhetoric.

A common theme in speeches at the time was a comparison between American women and women of other nationalities. For example, Mary Donlon gave the speech, "Get Into Politics," to the New York State Board of Business and Professional Women's Clubs in the fall of 1949.[16] To begin, Donlon mentioned that women in other countries were politically active, but of American women Donlon said:

> Women are not sufficiently represented in politics or government. If politics is the art of government--and it is--and if government is public housekeeping--and it is--then women's place, quite

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[15] William E. Leuchtenburg, A Troubled Feast, (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1973), pp. 23-37.

[16] Mary Donlon, "Get into Politics," Vital Speeches, Vol. 16, 1949-50, pp. 282-4.

logically, is in politics.[17]

Donlon went on to list several reasons for women's involvement in politics. When Donlon spoke of a nineth reason, she employed Cold War rhetoric:

> Today there is a nineth reason. Now it has been told; Russia, too, knows how to split an atom. Can women any longer hide their heads like ostriches to avoid looking at the facts of life?[18]

As long as government work could be described in terms of housekeeping, women were justified in joining the fight against Communism. Women were to move out of the house to a more public sphere in government; their role remained that of one who cleans and orders for the benefit of others: her family, her country.

In Hartford, Connecticut, during 1949, Mrs. J. B. Bonny spoke to the Federation of Women's Clubs about "Women's Heritage: Beware of Propaganda."[19] Her first question to the audience was "what can one woman do?" in the face of an increasingly threatening environment.[20] Bonny's answer was that women would work to preserve traditional values and institutions:

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[17] Ibid, p. 283.

[18] Ibid, p. 284.

[19] J. B. Bonny, "Women's Heritage: Beware of Propaganda," Vital Speeches, Vol. 15, May 19, 1949, pp. 594-7.

[20] Ibid, p. 594.

> My answer is--constantly--personally conduct an endlessly vigilant fight to preserve those things which assure our unique place in the world of women. Fight against the encroachment of socialism and communism and for constitutional government.[21]

How did Mrs. Bonny tell her audience to continue the fight? After commenting on the subversive nature of postwar dangers (in Bonny's words, "socialism is a creeping thing"), she suggested the dangers for women to be aware of. Women were to watch and study all proposals for welfare, because such liberal legislation would lead to socialist or communist infiltration. They were to "guard" their own organizations and clubs against possible subversion. In short, women were not to be what "Russian propagandists called a 'Useful Innocent.'"[22]

Finally, Bonny's speech presented an interesting analogy. She said, "Let us never be in a position of sorrow comparable to that of a bereaved parent whose child died of neglect."[23] Woman's responsibility to the nation was, in the speaker's eyes, comparable to that of a mother's role toward her child. She must nurture it, educate it, and protect it from the world.

Another important "answer" to the question of woman's role in the postwar years was the assertion that,

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21 Ibid.

22 Ibid, p. 595.

23 Ibid, p. 597.

formally, the Women's Rights movement had been won. In 1948, Wiley Rutledge, Supreme Court Justice, spoke to students at Bryn Mawr College. His speech was entitled "Women's Rights: Barometer of Democracy."[24] Rutledge spoke about the women's rights movement in America and woman's role in the postwar society. He stated that an "informal" continuation of the push for equal rights was acceptable, "but, in spite of these qualifications, the basic issue of women's equality with man as a citizen has been won."[25] Unfortunately, during his speech, Rutledge neglected to elaborate on aspects other than equality with men as citizens. To say that women had won voting rights meant that the barometer of success was rising for American democracy.

Rutledge's words about women's equality suggested that he was attempting to judge the democratic system of the nation upon the status of women. If he had said that women were discriminated against in aspects of their lives other than citizen's rights, he would have admitted the failure of a democratic system. However, not wanting his acknowledgement of women's "victory" for equal rights to be carried too far, Rutledge qualified his statement:

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[24] Wiley Rutledge, "Women's Rights: Barometer of Democracy," op. cit., pp. 509-511.

[25] Ibid, p. 509.

> I do not conceive that women's political future lies in action as a special group. There are and will be, of course, areas of special interest to her, to which her feminine nature and function are peculiarly attracted and adapted, which will demand and receive her special attention. . . .But her greatest influence will be exerted by acting as citizen rather than merely as a group or segment of the population.[26]

Rutledge stressed that women were to be effective in traditional ways; by asserting feminine qualities women could work toward change. His speech is representative of the feeling after World War II that the women had won; now their job was to work from their "separate but equal" position in society.

While the call to women's activity in the public sphere was largely rhetorical, the novelty of the idea of American "womanpower" posed a threat to the postwar seekers of security. Many of the addresses to women, even though they proposed that women take a public, responsible role, stressed the importance of the home, the family, motherhood, and the "career" of marriage. For example, in 1953, women at Westbrook Jr. College in Portland, Maine, heard a speech entitled "Woman, The Key Individual of Our Democracy" at their graduation.[27] The speaker, Senator Margaret Chase Smith, told these women that their role

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[26] Ibid, p. 510.

[27] Margaret C. Smith, "Woman, The Key Individual of Our Democracy," Vital Speeches, Vol. 19, June 7, 1953, pp. 657-9.

through political involvement should include independent thinking and voting, and the formulation of constructive, positive work as a result. However, three-quarters of the way through her speech, Smith stated:

> I wish that there were more women holding top positions in our democracy. . . .But in that wish I regard the role of homemaker for women as being far more important than the role in public office. For surely the very backbone of our democracy is the family and the home in which the family lives. As long as the family home structure of our Nation is firm and sound our democracy will be firm and sound and well defended.[28]

Smith's words are important because, although they stress the importance of women's role for the nation, this role is not that of "public housekeeping." The role that Smith sees as important for the public good is a private one:

> Since woman is the homemaker--the keeper of the home--she is the key individual of our democracy at the grassroots level. . . .Woman is the primary and basic governor of our democracy for our governing starts right in the home. Woman moulds the citizens of tomorrow in the rearing that she gives the children.[29]

Although it was necessary in the American democracy of the Cold War to give lip service to the potentials of women in the public sphere, the need for security accompanied by the reassertion of American institutions made leaders stress the importance of the roles of motherhood, house-

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[28] Ibid, p. 658.

[29] Ibid.

keeper, and wife. If speakers like Margaret Chase Smith dared to propose a public role for women, it was a role couched in the rhetoric of traditional concepts of the female role.

One such traditional concept was the Freudian theory of biological destiny. The sense that women possessed sex-specific qualities was crucial to answers to the question of women's role. Not only did many propound the theory that women were inherently more moral, but they believed women to be destined by biological determinants. For example, Elizabeth Morissey, at the time a Professor of Economics at Notre Dame, told members of the National Council of Catholic Women in New Orleans that "to be equal does not mean to be identical."[30] Morissy spoke of the confusion in society about women's role. She argued that the fight for women's freedom was creating dissatisfaction among women. Moreover, Morissy claimed that protective laws for women were being sacrificed for the ERA; these protective laws were necessary because women and men were different. The failure to recognize this difference created in American society feelings of "unrest" or "frustration."[31] Finally, Morissy argued that women's dissatis-

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30 Elizabeth Morissy, "Status of Women," Vital Speeches, Vol. 15, 1948, pp. 55-60.

31 Ibid, p. 56.

faction with "intangible rewards for work and home" resulting in alcoholism, disease, divorce, and failure in child-rearing led her to ask, "Is it that in attempting to be both man and woman she has failed in both?"[32]

Morissy's answer was that "woman's interest is in the home" and that "the social duty of woman is motherhood."[33] Her solution to the woman question was to confine women to their sex-specific, nurturing role, even though in her speech she admitted that many women work to support (fully or partially) their families. Women's duty fell within the self-giving role of motherhood. On a larger scale, Morissy said:

> This may be taken in the strict sense of actual motherhood or in the more spiritual but no less real. . . .By that [motherly] giving she can attain the twofold purpose of her existence, her own moral perfection and her service to humanity.[34]

According to the above statement, women were to remain in service to the nation only by employing their inherent qualities: morality and nurturance. In this sense, the reaffirmation of biological destiny for women was limiting.

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[32] Ibid, p. 58.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid, p. 60.

The theory of women's biological destiny reappeared continuously during the postwar years to qualify the attention paid to women's equality through the Cold War rhetoric. In a 1949 speech entitled "Can the Intellect Survive?" women graduates of Vassar College were told that they had three possibilities as they left college. One such possibility was to enter graduate school and study toward a professional career. The speaker, Mrs. Rustin McIntosh, added that such plans were too specialized and that the development of woman's personality would be stunted in this environment. Another choice was to simply get a job. Here Mrs. McIntosh cautioned that the working women should "watch for temptations" in this world, especially popular literature and television, two media that "crush" the intellect. Finally, for college-age women, there was the "career of marriage." This McIntosh "left to the last" because it was most important. In her words:

> I believe that the experience of the race is more profitable than the intellect enthroned: that fundamentally, the man must be the person whose career comes first because women's biological role is not to support and defend the family, but to bear and rear the children.[35]

The speaker's advice did not stop here, however. Not only was woman to give up her career, she was to accept her situation and have a large family to fulfill her need for

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[35] Ibid, p. 560.

expression:

> Most of you will have to do all your own domestic work. Here the wise acceptance of your situation, and the intelligent appraisal of its pitfalls, will save you much frustration. . . .I urge you to have as many children as you can--as close together as possible--and I recommend as required reading for college women the classic 'Cheaper by the Dozen.'[36]

McIntosh's words here involved a recognition that women did need intellectual fulfillment. However, instead of pursuing traditionally male-oriented careers, they were to expand the traditional wife-mother role until it became a career itself.

Thus, because public careers or work roles for American women threatened the insecurities of Cold War America and because the theory of woman as the embodiment of morality best suited the materialistic emptiness in America, women were retired to the home in the late forties and fifties. Indeed, this "retirement" that speakers of the postwar years projected was accompanied by an increase in the number of earlier marriages, fewer women in professions, and the baby boom. But, more importantly, the fact that women were resigned by others to guard the home, family and future generations of America did not eliminate the reality that in the postwar years, not only did more women work in general, more married women were employed

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[36] Ibid.

than in previous years.

Even through 1960, the woman question was answered in terms of Cold War rhetoric. In 1960, leaders and government officials were comparing American women with women of the USSR. At a conference to commemorate the American Women's Bureau's fortieth anniversary, James T. O'Connell told participants that womanpower should be used more efficiently in the United States, because, in Russia, women who composed fifty-five percent of the country's population made up fifty-three percent of its work force. O'Connell said, "In contrast, one-third of our own labor force is composed of women, with the heaviest concentration largely in the clerical, teaching, and service fields."[37]

In the same year, Mrs. Lily Wigny gave a speech about women to the Golden Key Breakfast of the Los Angeles Community Chest. Her speech, entitled "Role of Women in the World of Today," set forth women's responsibilities in the world of the 1960's. Of the time, Wigny said, "we are menaced by barbarians. . . .To save ourselves [and] to save the world, we may have to embark on a real crusade."[38] The barbarians Wigny referred to were

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[37] James T. O'Connell, "America's Womanpower Future," Today's Woman and Tomorrow's World, (Washington: U.S. Gov't Printing Office, 1960), pp. 2-8.

[38] Lily Wigny, "Role of Women in the World of Today,"

Communists; the crusaders she mentioned were women. Wigny also used a religious rhetoric in discussing woman's role:

> The soul of Western man is sick or rather, debilitated. If we want to survive, we should rebuild this soul by the use of themes and slogans, by a continuous and permanent effort in all strata of our daily life. I think in particular of those social women's organizations of which there are so many in the U.S. . . . .Today, it is chiefly the principle of altruism and solidarity that moves them. In the face of pressing danger, we live in a city which is not yet besieged, but already seriously threatened. We have to do more to instill the virtues of faith and hope, and try in every way not to permit our nations the self-indulgent satisfaction of what they have accomplished, but to foster a feeling of impatience to do still better.[39]

Thus, even as late as 1960, the same Cold War anxieties existed as had earlier led politicians to reaffirm traditional roles for women. Wigny's reference to the "menace" of "barbarians" and her call for a "crusade" by women was a clear reaffirmation of women's traditional role to assure the nation of security. This reaffirmation of tradition, brought on by Cold War fears and anxieties, was an ideological projection that devalued the significance of women working because it failed to acknowledge a female labor force. The ideology created an image of woman that failed to respond to changes in reality throughout the post-World War II years and that was ultimately detrimen-

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Vital Speeches, Vol. 27, October 15, 1960, pp. 143-146.

[39] Ibid, p. 145.

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CHAPTER 2

Images of Women in Post-World War II Advertising

By the 1920s, the American woman had become the country's number one consumer. This role of consumer had many different effects. Women were the translators of an increasingly materialistic world; they bought, they loved, and through this love for an unattached object, made it a possession. They were the moral buffers between an existence of people and things and were responsible for the home and its contents, while the post-war economy provided greater quantities and qualities for consumption. Carl A. Naether reported in the 1920s that " 'woman buys 80-90 % of all things in general use in daily life.' The breakdown of this generalization specified: 96% of the dry goods, 87% of the raw and market foods, 67% of the automobiles, 48% of the drugs, etc."[1]

In the years after World War II, woman remained the primary American consumer. Yet the responsibility had become even greater. The post-war, post-depression economy boomed; as in previous times of American prosperity, materialism was the subject of both pride and fear. What

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[1] Carl Naether, as quoted in Fishburn, K., Women in Popular Culture: A Reference Guide, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), p. 62.

would happen to American ideals if its people became preoccupied with materialism? The answer to this question included the role of the consumer, woman. In 1948 at the Women's Bureau Centennial Conference in Washington, D.C., the Chairman of the Board of Higher Education, Orway Tead, spoke on "Social Patterns for Women."[2] His primary concern was with the problems of materialism. In his words:

> Since an economy of material abundance is conceivable as a reality in the foreseeable future, it is clearly the qualitative or value aspects of what our civilization should cherish that needs to preoccupy us most centrally.[3]

Tead suggested that the American "civilization" cherish women, who traditionally represented the qualitative. More importantly, women could merge this qualitative value with their role as consumer, and actively control the emptiness of mere quantity.

Indeed, in some cases women were able to control consumption. One example is the meat strike of May 1946, in which the WTUL, auxiliary movements, other activists from the thirties, and the Washington Committee for Consumer Protection organized a boycott of high-priced meats. The slogans "Don't buy high," "Compare your prices" led to petitioning in the U. S. Senate and resulted in a drop in

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[2]Orway Tead--see Ch. 1.

[3]Ibid.

some meat prices.[4] Harry Truman, in the 1948 Women's Bureau Conference, stressed the potential of women's role as consumer:

> Women's organizations have at hand a ready weapon which they have not yet used to its full capacity --the power of the consumer. It has been said over and over again that women control the bulk of the Nation's wealth; they certainly channel its day- to-day spending for food, for clothing, for education, for all the things that made for better living.[5]

Truman's assertion that women could wield their consumer-power as a weapon against economic problems was a possibility, and in some cases it came true. Yet woman's potential power as consumer was complicated by one major event: the rise of American advertising in the post-war years.

Much has been said about advertising's exploitative images, its manipulation of the consumer, and its effect on society. But to focus on advertising in the post-World War II years necessarily ties it with mass media, mass consumption, and the "re-affirmation" of American values. In the 1950s, advertising expenditures more than doubled. Due to the establishment of the national television system

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[4] Anne Stein, p. 157.

[5] Harry Truman, "The American Woman, Her Changing Role," _Report on The National Women's Bureau Centennial Conference_, p. 2.

as well as to the added incentive to create consumer needs and desires, annual advertising expenditures rose from 5.7 billion in 1950 to nearly 12 billion by 1960.[6] The effects of advertising's media inundation were phenomenal; yet what made advertising even more potent was its audience.

Society as a whole was in a period of uncertainty in the late forties. As Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak define the immediate post-war years in The Fifties, it was the "Age of Fear." American producers were faced with a situation that was conducive to advertising; the consumer was becoming increasingly malleable in light of the nation's fears and anxieties. Genuine Cold War anxieties left Americans searching for a "norm" or the American identity; American businesses were ready to create that identity--hand in hand with their product.

By the mid-fifties, businesses were consigning large amounts of time and resources to motivational research. In the Hidden Persuaders, Vance Packard quoted Pierre Martineau's 1956 philosophy for advertising:

> Basically, what you are trying to do is create an illogical situation. You want the customer to fall in love with your product and have a profound brand loyalty when actually content may be very similar to hundreds of competing brands.[7]

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[6] John W. Wright, Edsels, Luckies, and Frigidaires, (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1979), p. 9.

[7] Vance Packard, Hidden Persuaders, (New York: David MacKay, Inc., 1975), p. 47.

Suddenly the shape of a package, the color, the position on a shelf, the jingle used to sell it, were all crucial factors to be considered. Consumers as a whole were polled, interviewed, questioned. Some researchers installed hidden cameras at supermarkets to record the eye movements of women shoppers as they moved through the aisles.

The results of advertising's motivational research constitute a number of different thematic groupings, from a fairly simplistic approach of offering raised social status through the purchase of a new or improved good to a more complex approach in which advertisers specifically appeal to women to achieve perfection as mother and housewife. Most importantly, the very fears and anxieties that led American society to project an ideal on the role of women during the post-war years are evidenced in advertising. The fear of infiltration on a social level is perhaps analogous to advertisers' creation of a fear of germs in a woman's household, on her children, or in her own body. The insecurities generated in women for not fulfilling their ideal role led them to be increasingly malleable, and advertising played on this in offering identity to women through the possession of their product.

One important value or need that was present in advertising was the knowledge that the "new and improved"

product was a reflection on the consumer, her family, her community, her nation. Americans took pride in the invention of synthetic materials and the development of a number of products that were "safer," "quicker," "easier," less expensive. In an advertisement for "Brand Names Foundation, Inc." (Ladies Home Journal, March 1952), this theme was expressed:

> Who is the girl in the dreams of ten thousand men? Unlike most dream girls she is very real! She lives and breathes--and buys! For she is you--the American consumer! You are the one in the dreams--and foremost in all the working hours--of America's brand manufacturers. You are the one for whom they are constantly dreaming up new products. . .new improvements. . .to make you, the consumer happy with the things they make. These men of industry go to endless effort to try and outdo each other to win your favor. That's what free competition means to you.[8]

The Brand Names Foundation projected several assumptions about the American consumer. First, the consumer was female. Second, this female consumer held another role: the dream girl of American men. This indicates not only that American producers were "dreaming" of the female consumer, but that women should be aware that they are the object of men's dreams and that what they buy does matter. Third, the consumer is made happy, is perhaps fulfilled, by consumption of "new" and "improved" products. Finally, the Brand Names Foundation's mention of "free competition"

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[8] "Brand Names Foundation, Inc.," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 69-1, March 1952, p. 198.

suggests to women that the consumer plays an important role in the maintenance of American free enterprise.

The idea that the "new" and "improved" product was to be a personalized expression of the consumer was expressed in most fifties advertisements. For example, household appliances were advertised as a reflection on the consumer as well as utilitarian. Realistically the consumer might think of a gas stove or electric range as a long-term investment--a product that will last quite a few years. But, according to the advertisers, each article in one's kitchen should be the newest, most efficient expression of a family's well-being and especially of a woman's success as home manager.

Frigidaire launched such an advertising campaign in 1946. Each Frigidaire model claimed to be "new;" each year the improvements were purported to make a world of difference from the previous year's model. In 1947, the words "You'll say we made it just for you--this New Frigidaire Cold Wall." And, the "New Frigidaire Electric Range is so simple, even a man can use it! Also it's _fast_ -- it's clean --it's WONDERFUL" told the consumer that a personalized and perfected appliance had been made just for them.[9] The refrigerator wasn't merely a utilitarian

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[9] "Frigidaire," _Ladies Home Journal_, Vol. 64-2, June 1947, p. 13.

object, it was an object of pride and familial love.

Revere Ware had a similar approach in its late forties advertising. The advertisement suggested that the reader would finally be satisfied with the year's new pots and pans. The copy read:

> Here's what you've been waiting for! The New revere ware pressure cooker. . . 1.) New Revere long-life, tight-sealing gasket. 2.) Cool, evenly balanced Bakelite handles to fit your hands. 3.) Easy and simple to use. Saves time and fuel, and retains vitamins and minerals in food. 4.) Free, a brand new recipe book![10]

The Bakelite handles were described as if they were made to fit the individual customer's hands. The improvement on the pans may have been a simple gasket, but it was a Revere gasket, a long-life gasket, a tight-sealing gasket.

In the March, 1950 issue of Ladies Home Journal, International Harvester placed an ad for refrigerators. They were "new," but with a special feature:

> They're femineered! The NEW 1950 International Harvester Refrigerators. Women dreamed them. . . home economists planned them. . . .You not only dreamed them--you actually created them! Because your needs inspired these new, improved, featurefull I.H. Refrigerators. Femineered from top to bottom. Yes! Femineered to fit into every apartment, home, or farm-kitchen. Be sure to see these I.H. Refrigerators-- femineered for you![11]

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[10] "Revere Ware," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 66-3, September 1949, p. 11.

[11] "International Harvester" Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 67-1 , March 1950, p.127.

The ad claimed differentiation through the "femineering" of the refrigerator; yet it offered no specifics. Exactly what was changed or improved? It was simply the image. Finally, a refrigerator was made exclusively for the feminine consumer.

While it seems that most manufacturers of household appliances used the "new" and "improved" approach in reaching the consumer, a more diverse group of producers strove to equate their product with emotional qualities. To convince the consumer that through possession of a certain product she would derive some emotional fulfillment was a primary goal of many advertisers. Frigidaire ran an ad in Ladies Home Journal, April 1947, that promised a love-relationship between women and their Frigidaires. The illustration showed a refrigerator absolutely packed with food beside its owner, a woman, who was surrounded by red hearts. She said:

> I just saw the new Frigidaire Cold-Wall. It was love at first sight! So many wonderful things--I knew I'd never remember them all, so I made some quick notes. . . .[12]

Implied here was the assumption that the woman who could love her refrigerator would be happy-- especially if she could keep it as well-stocked as the ad suggested.

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[12] "Frigidaire," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-1, April 1947, p. 167.

A more obvious example is a Pequot Sheet advertisement (Ladies Home Journal, July 1950) in which a woman was pictured hugging her sheets and standing next to a well-stocked linen closet. She looked ecstatic, and the copy read:

> She's in love. . .she's in love. . .she's in love with a wonderful buy! Who could help loving these wonderful, wonderful Pequots. . . sheets that look so beautiful, feel so refreshing, retain their smooth, firm texture through years of extra wear![13]

Again the consumer was told of the potential relationship between herself and the product. And, through the ad's illustration, it was implied that she would be happiest with an abundance of "loved" linen.

In 1953, Armstrong Linoleum appealed to the consumer with a promise of fulfillment. By choosing Armstrong Linoleum, the woman in the advertisement had fulfilled her dream of completing the perfect bathroom. It was a more narrowly focused version of "the American Dream," but the copy used phrases like "the bathroom elegance I'd dreamed about," or "another dream was realized," and "my final obsession was . . . ."[14] Armstrong's message was that if "nine years of planning went into [a] bathroom," then the

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13 "Pequot Sheets," LHJ, Vol. 67-2, July 1950, p.66.

14 "Armstrong Linoleum," LHJ Vol. 70-3, October 1953, inside cover.

housewife shouldn't spoil her dream with the wrong kind of linoleum.[15]

Community Silverware offered promises of marital permanence in their ads of the forties and fifties. In 1946 the copy read, "He and she--they and theirs--one plus one equals one-- this is 'you and me' . . . for keeps."[16] The illustration showed an embracing couple; in the foreground was a table setting of Community Silverware and the words: "For keeps, too, through a radiant lifetime, you'll delight in your Community."[17] The most outstanding feature of this ad is the name of the silverware. "Community" brings to mind togetherness, friendship, and, in its association with silverware, entertainment, all simply through the possession of this brand of silverware.

In 1953, the Community ad stressed a relationship between the silverware and the female consumer, "Ann."[18] The copy read:

> She's in love and she loves Community. No slow poke collecting for Ann--she wants her service complete! . . . Ann's a lot like you. With a head full of dreams these days, but plenty of common sense, too. That's why she made up her mind to have all the silverware she needed, right from the

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15 Ibid.

16 "Community," LHJ, Vol. 63-2, May 1946, p. 199.

17 Ibid.

18 "Community," LHJ Vol. 70-3, October 1953, p. 205.

start.[19]

Again, the consumer should be in love and love her product. More specifically, this female consumer, Ann, loves "community:" togetherness, friendship, entertainment. According to the ad's copy, her possession of this brand of silverware was the key to all these things.

One outstanding example to show advertising's attempt to equate emotional or human qualities with their product was a 1947 advertisement for Plymouth automobiles. This ad pictured a woman possessively looking at her car. The copy read:

> Something clicked! At first I just sort of circled around you--saying 'Yes, how lovely' to the fenders, and being impressed with your silvery grille-front. They are lovely fenders. It is an impressive front. BUT--It wasn't until John started talking Engine that this feeling happened! I'd sneaked away, slid behind the wheel into this soft seat, and suddenly--everything seemed so right, so natural, I reached for the key. That impulse sealed the pact between us, now and then.[20]

The ad suggested not only a love-at-first-sight reaction in the female consumer, but also sexual attraction--to a car! The woman circles this car, admiring "fenders" and "fronts." But she isn't simply daring to admire her car. After her husband unwittingly tries to interest her in its

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19 Ibid.

20 "Plymouth," LHJ Vol. 64-1, January 1947, p. 93.

"engine," she furtively slips behind the wheel. The ad implied that this woman is conducting some sort of affair with the car.

By "turning the key" on "impulse" this woman consumer comes to own this object. Whether she owns it sexually or merely as a bought possession is for the reader of the ad to surmise, but the ad's copy leaves the former more in evidence:

> Plymouth! I knew you were mine--and you knew it, too. Even the friendly lights on your jewel-case instrument panel flashed a friendly wink to prove it! Now it's official-- because you're installed at my own front doorstep where all the world can see. Beautiful, obedient car-- ready to carry me on any errand, in cozy luxury. Plymouth--you're for me![21]

Important in these words is the fact that all the world can see the "obedience" and "luxury" of this woman's possession. It is ready to go at any time, at the turn of a key; it's every woman's fantasy.

Presenting the opportunity of falling in love with a material object was an ingenious approach to advertising in the fifties. Another approach that probably hit home (literally) with even more effectiveness was through guilt. In the post-war period, as women were expected to excel in their sanctioned roles as mother, companion, and housewife, they were expected to reflect the advances that

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[21] Ibid.

technology and science had made. Women's consumption of the "new" and "improved" product was crucial to their perfection in mothering or housekeeping; advertising took advantage of this expectation of post-war women.

There is an important twist to the housewife's guilt that was exploited by advertising. New and improved products quite frankly offered an easier, better way to do housework. For women who found identity through their own, creative approach to housework, these new products posed a threat. In the words of the President of the Institute for Motivational Research during the fifties, "Every time you sell a self-indulgent product. . ." you have to assuage his [the buyer's] guilt feelings. . . offer absolution."[22] Vance Packard wrote:

> Another area where guilt feeling on a large scale presented a challenge to marketers was with the easy-does-it, step-saving products devised for the housewife. The wives, instead of being grateful for these wonderful boons, reacted in many cases by viewing them as threats to their feelings of creativeness and usefulness.[23]

Research done in certain industries during the fifties did show this guilt response to new and improved products to be a real one. As a result, advertisers made an attempt to counter the guilt feelings.

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[22] Dr. E. Dichter, as quoted in Vance Packard, Hidden Persuaders, pp. 57,58.

[23] Vance Packard, Hidden Persuaders, p.62.

For example, an ad for a Frigidaire Electric Range featured a husband cooking on the stove. The copy read:

> It's fast--it's clean--it's WONDERFUL. Practically does the cooking itself, she says--but you should see her blush when I praise the meals she turns out now![24]

The man in the ad admits that the stove does most of the cooking, but he includes his wife in the commentary. If she blushes at his praise, she is being modest for her work in the cooking. Therefore, the advertiser has given credit to the woman, however indirectly.

Another guilt-producing product was ready-made food. Advertisements for Campbell's canned soup put the woman cook as the primary agent--not the soup she used-- in producing a meal. In one ad, she responds to her husband's praise with these words: "That's what he says! But I've got Campbell's soups to thank for helping me out."[25] A soup ad that aired on television in 1954 stressed that it had real ingredients and that the woman had to prepare this soup. The speaker said:

> What you buy here is _ingredients_. It's not a canned soup that you just add water to, and heat. No, no. You _cook_ these ingredients. . . .You cook it yourself.[26]

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24 "Frigidaire" _LHJ_, Vol. 64-2, June 1947, p.13.

25 "Campbell Soup," _LHJ_, Vol. 63-2, June 1946, p.53.

26 Campbell's Soup, in Diamont, Lincoln. _T.V.'s Classic Commercials, 1948-1958_. (New York: Hastings House,

Of primary importance to the advertisers was that women recognize their input into preparing the soup. Their guilt-feelings would be over-come by this recognition.

Guilt was more involved in advertising in a different way. Rather than trying to relieve guilt feelings, advertisers attempted to create them. A popular way to bring out guilt-feelings was to create an embarassing social situation that resulted from inadequacy as a consumer. Singer Sewer Company ran an ad in 1946 depicting a visit by one mother and her son to another mother with a daughter. The children chatter about what their mothers have told them, finally disgracing the hostess. The perfectly dressed, neat little boy tells the unkempt, rumpled little girl, "My mom says your mom needs a trip to the Singer Sewing Center!" The hostess, realizing her state of disarray, looks horrified. The trim and neat visiting mother is surprised. The copy read:

> To be perfectly frank about it, both mother and offspring could do with a little assistance from that famous place, the local Singer Sewing Center.[27]

The message of the advertisers hits home; what woman, faced with the expectations of others for her perfection, would want to be caught in a social situation like the one

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1971), pp. 39-41.

[27] "Singer Co.," LHJ, Vol 63-1, April 1946, p. 214.

in the ad? More importantly, this mother finds out her inadequacies through the conversation of her daughter and a friend, not directly from a well-meaning peer or professional.

Drano used a similar social situation to enforce the guilt message in 1946. A mother, her daughter, and "Aunt Sue" were pictured in the ad.

The daughter:
"Mummy! Aunt Sue said the nastiest thing!"

The mother:
"Sue. . .how dare you tell Lucy my sink's dirty as a sewer?"

Aunt Sue:
"Calm down! I simply said sewer germs breed in everyone's sink drain. . .two inches from where you wash food, silver, dishes!"[28]

The copy followed with advice to "use Drano regularly." The emphasis in the ad was on "sewer germs" and every women's inability to be free of them. In fact, it stressed that it's O.K. if the woman didn't know about the germs--as long as she had Drano at hand.

Three years later, in 1949, the Drano ad was a little more graphic. The copy read:

> If you could slice your sink drain in half. . . you'd see this muck, crawling with sewer germs, that liquid disinfectants can't budge! Filthy, greasy muck--crawling with nasty sewer germs--collects in every sink drain--inches from where the family's food and dishes are washed! Liquid disinfectants can't budge this stubborn grease. It takes Drano to boil out this muck and the germs

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[28] "Drano," LHJ, Vol. 63-2, June 1946, p. 68.

that breed there![29]

The illustration for this Drano ad is of a woman, saw in hand, staring horrifiedly at a cross-section of pipe. Again, it was important that the woman recognize the potential danger of not acting on these germs and that she feel guilty about not having discovered them herself.

As I read the above ad for Drano, I was reminded of Eric Goldman's words in The Crucial Decade--And After as he wrote about the post-war, "whole, vague feeling that corruption was moving through all American life like a swarm of maggots."[30] Women were directed toward a kind of "social housekeeping" in this atmosphere: to guard against Communist infiltration and subversion. Through advertising, this expectation was filtered to a more specific and seemingly irrelevant role: to keep one's house free of germs.

Guilt by association with rampant germs in one's household was effective as an advertising approach. Advertisers for "Lysol" combined this tactic with that of guilt through non-fulfillment of children's needs. In June of 1946, the Lysol ad pictured two babies in a conversational pose.

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29 "Drano," LHJ, Vol. 67-1, Feb. 1949, p.70.

30 Eric Goldman, Crucial Decade, (New York: Random House, Inc., 1960), p. 198.

First Baby:
"Try to skip a week with us watching?"

Second Baby:
"You'd think we were born yesterday."

First:
"Our own mother! Taking chances with us babies around!"

Second:
"She told us herself how many germs can collect" on the kitchen floor!"

First:
"Well, there she goes! Mopping it up this time" without 'Lysol' brand disinfectant. . . .[31]

Again, the mother isn't quite aware of her oversight. The feelings of guilt the reader of the ad feels stems from this. How can you know if there are or are not germs in your own house? What was a logical conclusion? The smart housewife had better use Lysol just in case.

By 1948 Lysol used this message more directly with the illustration of a young girl. She said, "New Cleaning pail? What--just soap 'n water? Where's the 'Lysol?'. . .Skipping could put my health in danger!"[32] The ad's copy continued:

> Yes, Mother! With germs a daily household threat, your whole family may be in danger of germ infection, unless you disinfect--every time you clean. . . . . So don't take chances. Keep your kitchen and bathroom hygienically clean with 'Lysol."[33]

Again the connection between the advertisement and

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[31] "Lysol" LHJ, Vol. 63-2, June 1946, p. 205.

[32] "Lysol," LHJ, Vol. 65-1, January 1948, p. 117.

[33] Ibid.

society's expectations of the ideal woman are evident. This ad implied that the woman had an inherent responsibility to safeguard her entire family from problem germs. On a larger scale, the post-war societal expectations for women were very similar. The home was to be a defense against Communist influences; as housewives, women were expected to safeguard this sphere.

Advertisers continued to use women's mother-role to bring out feelings of guilt. An ad for Curity bandages stressed the importance of responsibility and foresight. The copy read:

> When you're the 'nurse on duty' depend on Curity wet-pruf adhesive tape. . .the Hospital quality adhesive tape. You know, Mother, how often emergencies arise in your home. so why not be sure NOW that the next time there's a cut finger, skinned knee, or any other similar mishap, you're ready with Curity wetproof. . . .[34]

The words in this ad's copy suggest that mother ought to become the next best thing to a professional nurse--by keeping Curity bandaids at hand. The phrase "hospital quality" adds to this image of the professional mother. If she doesn't live up to the image (most average women probably didn't), she should feel guilty.

Johnson and Johnson ran an interesting series of ads in the late forties and into the fifties. The ads

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[34] "Curity," LHJ, Vol. 66-3, September 1949, p.216.

featured a housewife whose image had been shrunk down to infant-size, while her son's image (he appears in diapers) was enlarged to adult-size. The housewife, in her infantile appearance, would be sitting in a highchair, playpen, crib, or stroller while the son would stand over her. The copy for a 1946 ad read:

Baby:

> "Didn't I tell you a baby's life is tough, Mom? But you had to try it--to believe me.[35]

The baby then advises his mother to use Johnson's baby products; when she agrees she can resume her role as mother. This particular group of ads reflected a popular concern of the post-World War II years: that mothers, through a preoccupation with their children's (especially their son's) upbringing, would emasculate their sons or inhibit their children's development. In 1947, Philip Wylie termed this phenomenon "momism" in his book, Generation of Vipers.[36] Momism became a concern for post-war society because it resulted in a counter to the ideal image of American man--tough, in-control, individualistic.

Betty Friedan, over ten years after Wylie's Generation of Vipers, wrote of this phenomenon of extreme self-giving mother-love in The Feminine Mystique. In this 1963

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[35] "Johnson and Johnson," LHJ, Vol. 63-2, June 1946, p. 196.

[36] Philip Wylie, Generation of Vipers, (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1947).

work, Friedan used very much the same argument to develop her picture of the "feminine mystique" as had others throughout the fifties. She wrote that women who followed the mystique were "committing, quite simply, genocide, starting with the mass burial of American women and ending with the progressive dehumanization of their sons and daughters."[37] Advertisers, perhaps realizing that women were aware of a concern with "momism," appealed to women as if they were sole determinants of their children's futures.

In December of 1948, Ovaltine used an ad in Ladies Home Journal that showed a worried mother watching her sad, isolated son. The copy read:

> Mother's love is not enough when a child is frail and nervous. The more you love him, the more desperately you want him to be tall, strong, and happy. So it is well to remember, when a child becomes frail and nervous or underweight, the most common correctable cause is faulty nutrition. And this is one which you, the mother, can do something about.[38]

The copy in this ad presented mothers with the ability to "correct" the problems of the "frail and nervous" child. In fact, it distinguished between correctable and incorrectable causes. In making this distinction, the ad

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[37] Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963), p. 293.

[38] "Ovaltine," LHJ, Vol. 65-3, December 1948, p.87.

suggested that mothers should be aware of incorrectable causes for their child's weakness; it elicited the guilty recognition that they were responsible for their children's well-being or the cause of their problem.

Moreover, the idea that a mother should love her child "desperately" echoed Wylie's momism. The ad called for the mother to remedy the child's weakness; yet by using the word "desperately" to describe a mother's love, it brought out the possible causation for it. A later Ovaltine ad, February 1949, said very much the same thing:

> How well do you really understand him? If your child seems frail and languid here's something you can do that may make a wonderful difference. . . .The health of a child is largely in his mother's hands. His welfare depends upon how well she understands his needs.[39]

In this ad, the mother looks longingly at her son, who is staring into space. The direct question "How well do you understand him?" again suggests that the ability to understand is alone the mother's responsibility. If she doesn't, her child will fail.

In 1950, the Ovaltine ad was even more guilt-evoking. It concentrated on the potential of the boy to grow into an inadequate, emasculated man. The mother was to stop this potential by giving him "Ovaltine."[40] The copy read:

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[39] "Ovaltine," LHJ, Vol. 67-1, February 1949, p.87.

[40] "Ovaltine," LHJ, Vol. 67-1, March 1950, p.129.

> Sissy. . .they called him. But he was just too frail to keep up! Try this for the nervous, underweight child. . . . As every mother knows, a lifelong complex can easily develop in a child who lags behind the others. That is why you strive so earnestly to keep your child healthy in body, mind and spirit.[41]

Here the advertisers assert that "every mother knows" and that they do "strive" to maintain their child's health. As a result, the reader of the ad wants to be like "every mother"and, if she doesn't strive, she should. The ad suggests that by using Ovaltine, mothers can combat the lifelong complex. The advertisers also connect the "body," the "mind," and the "spirit," therefore suggesting a cause and effect relation between Ovaltine and spiritual well-being.

Although the above examples illustrate a mother's responsibility to her son and society's fear of "momism," a mother's responsibility was not confined to her male children. For her daughters, the post-World War mother had the responsibility of passing on the feminine mystique. Advertisements for Listerine best exemplify mother-daughter relationships of society for women.

In March of 1951, one Listerine ad showed a happy baby, sitting down and clapping. The copy read:

> Tomorrow's Glamour Girl? . . . Maybe! . . .You naturally want her to grow up to be attractive and

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[41] Ibid.

> sought-after, you hope she will meet nice boys and marry one of them. Of course you do. When she's a little older you will encourage her to guard her charm and daintiness. . .you will, of course, see to it that, above all, her breath is sweet and wholesome.[42]

The advertisers indicate that even the infant years was not too early to begin plans for guarding one's daughter against bad breath. Moreover, they assert that it is "natural" to wish that one's daughter dates boys ("nice" boys) and finally marries.

A 1952 Listerine ad played more heavily on motherly guilt. The illustration showed a mother, lying in bed, while her sad, forlorn daughter, in full formal attire, stands at the foot of the bed. The copy read:

> Poor child, she had no means of knowing why her first real party had been such a failure. . .why one boy after another cooly ignored her and whispered about her behind her back. The very night she wanted to be at her best, she was at her worst. It can happen that way when halitosis (unpleasant breath) steps in. One little suggestion from her mother might have made the evening a delightful one instead of the nightmare it was.[43]

The ad was entitled, "And her mother was to blame. . . ."[44] The pain that this girl experiences is directly caused by her mother's ignorance of that "one little suggestion." Again the advertiser uses the embarrassing

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42 "Lysterine," LHJ, Vol. 68-1, March 51, p.9.

43 "Lysterine," LHJ, Vol. 69-1, February 1952, p. 9.

44 Ibid.

social situation to enforce the guilt-message. This mother's daughter has failed in "her first real party." Every mother reading the ad was supposed to feel her guilt vicariously.

Not all Listerine ads focused on a mother's responsibility to her daughter. One 1949 ad for Listerine cautioned a mother against having bad breath herself. But, she doesn't offend her peers with halitosis, she offends her son. The ad depicts a cross, frowning baby who pushes away his smiling mother. The copy read:

> Who says a boy's best friend is his mother? . . .He's definitely crossed her off his list today as you can see by the picture. If he could talk he'd tell her just as much as anyone else. Even a mother can't get away with it.[45]

The ad stressed that a woman must strive to please others in her dress, appearance and hygiene. Most importantly, it implied that her own son would disavow her love if she is not perfect.

This idea that women were using cosmetics and wearing clothes to please others was popular among advertisers of the post-war years. If one were to feel insecure about fulfilling the expected roles of mother and housewife, there was always another identity to be had by buying a certain product. Personal products for women, the primary

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[45] "Listerine Antiseptic," <u>LHJ</u>, Vol. 66-1, January 1949, p. 9.

consumers, were advertised with an appeal to identity. First, some ads used the "new and improved" approach. These primarily concerned personal hygiene products such as deoderant. In 1946, an ad for "Arrid" deoderant simply said:

> Postwar Arrid--no other deoderant stops perspiration and odor so effectively, yet so safely! It's the improved deoderant you've been waiting for![46]

Arrid claimed to be a part of post-war scientific improvement; the implication was that association with the product would identify its user with progression and improvement.

Another improved deoderant was advertised as a scientific discovery in 1955. Ads for "Mum" before 1955 had shown a woman standing alone, wrapped in a towel. This particular ad showed a woman accompanied by a doctor on one side and a nurse on the other. Both were smiling. The copy read:

> New! Doctor's deoderant discovery now safely stops odor 24 hours a day. Proved in comparison tests made by a doctor. A deoderant without M-3, tested under one arm, stopped perspiration odor only a few hours. Yet, new MUM with M-3, tested under the other arm, stopped odor for a full 24 hours.[47]

In this ad, the advertiser impresses on the consumer the

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[46] "Postwar Arrid," LHJ, Vol. 63-2, May 1946, p.12.

[47] "Mum," LHJ, Vol. 72-2, August 1955, p.1.

importance of a scientific, professional association with the product. The presence of the doctor and nurse is intended to reassure the consumer and, through implication, further endorse the product. Moreover, the ingredient M-3 adds a hint of the newly discovered. The consumer is never told what M-3 is, but, used in this ad, it is almost legitimated by the presence of professional images.

An ad for "Veto" deoderant (LHJ, 1957) stressed the importance of hygiene to those other than the consumer. The copy says "'Veto'. . .because you are the very air he breathes."[48] The woman in the ad has on a low-cut evening dress; a man stands over her. This approach was more complex than merely associating the product with scientific improvements so the consumer feels improved as well. The Veto ad brought in the idea that women must please others in their personal appearance. The rest of the ad read:

> Aren't you glad you're a girl? Isn't it a fabulous feeling? . . . .to know he'd rather be close to you than anyone else in the wide, wide world? Don't let anything mar this moment. . . (Remember, if you're nice-to-be-next-to. . . next to nothing is impossible.)[49]

The ad suggested that if a woman uses Veto, she will have a better social life with men who will make her the very

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[48] "Veto," LHJ, Vol. 74-2, February 1957, p.23.

[49] Ibid.

air that they breathe.

In the more immediate post-war years, ads for personal products often featured women embracing husbands who are dressed in uniform. The husbands are on leave or have just returned home. Thrushay hand cream promised to maintain a romantic look for hands--in a time when demands on women (possibly in the home, more probably at the factory) were greatest. The ad said: "So be sure your hands stay romantic. . .even though you're busier than ever before."[50] The woman's hands are shown clutching a soldier's back as she embraces him.

An ad for Ipana toothpaste contained a short feature about a model who was also a wife and mother. It was entitled "Model Mother with a Star-Spangled Smile." Illustrated were the mother and her children; of course, the mother is smiling. Yet, the copy read: "her soldier-husband a German prisoner," Clare Von Syckle hides feelings behind her famous smile."[51] The advertisers for Ipana took an unhappy situation and actually created an ad from the fact that Clare Von Syckle was without her husband. Her smile, and, more indirectly, Ipana, would get her through this crisis.

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[50] "Thrushray," LHJ, Vol. 62-1, January 1945, p. 11.

[51] "Ipana," LHJ, Vol. 62-1, April 1945, p.1.

Other ads used popular social concerns or situations to get out their message. A 1946 Listerine ad asked:

> What's ahead for Sweet Sixteen? It all depends. . . .So much happiness, so much opportunity--if she's careful. So much trouble, so much failure--if she isn't. . . .Whether it's marriage you're after, or a career, or both--always put your best foot forward.[52]

The ad's illustration showed a young girl looking into a crystal ball: one side of the ball showed a wife and husband, mother and baby; the other showed a woman with a typewriter, and a spinster. The idea was that, in any situation, a woman should use Lysterine. But, judging from the ad's illustration, one situation was preferable over the other: marriage.

In the Ladies Home Journal, 1945, an ad for Lux warned about embarassing one's husband by appearing unkempt.[53] It showed a woman frowning as an older man takes her hand; her husband frowns as he introduces them. She says, "I hurt Bob's pride by my dishpan hands." The ad goes on to convince the consumer to use Lux in prevention of "dishpan hands." Lux advertisers played with the idea that a woman was to be a reflection of her husband's status; anything short of that would prove to be an

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52 "Listerine Antiseptic," LHJ, Vol. 63-2, May 1946, p.9.

53 "Lux," LHJ, Vol. 62-1, January 1945, p.61.

embarassment.

Other ads suggested that through their product, women could be a part of the "better" society. Advertisers for Peter Pan Foundations used the words "get into the Peter Pan inner circle" not only to describe the construct of a particular foundation, but to hint at the social results of wearing it.[54] Moreover, they claimed, "Inner Circle lifts the just-ordinary-figure. . . out-of-the-ordinary!"[55]

Maidenform advertisers used a similar approach in ads for bras. The woman pictured in the ad has a far-away look on her face as the copy read: "I dreamed I was a lady editor in my Maidenform Bra."[56] The implied result of wearing the Maidenform Bra is success. The rest of the copy read:

> Nice work if you can get it. . .making headlines in a Maidenform bra! What a glamorous means of support. . .I'm so well-rounded, such a fabulous figure in fashionable circles. No wonder I get such a lift from this dreamy bra![57]

By wearing this bra, the advertisers suggest that a woman gets not only a physical lift but a lift in self-esteem or

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[54] "Peter Pan Foundations," <u>LHJ</u>, Vol. 70-3, October 1953, pp. 88-89.

[55] Ibid.

[56] "Maidenform," <u>LHJ</u>, Vol. 68-1, March 1951, p. 120.

[57] Ibid.

status. She must be transformed in order to be acceptable.

Thus, the idea that women were malleable as to personal appearance was essential to advertisers in the twentieth century. The cosmetic industry depended on the idea that there was an ideal image of woman to which all other women aspired. This woman was perfect; she was often a star or movie actress. Woodbury make-up placed an ad in Ladies Home Journal along with an article about using make-up. The ad's copy read:

> Pink of Perfection--Woodbury Flesh. Lana Turner. . .of the rosebud skin! Capture her look of pink toned perfection, of bewitch-and-bewilder beauty. . .with Woodbury Film Finish FLESH![58]

Woodbury promised that women could even change their "flesh" toward a pinker, more perfect tone. The accompanying article, "Wake Up With Make-up," promised that with make-up a woman "emerges as the ideal American girl. Make-up has brought out her best points, dramatized her personality."[59] Most importantly, the advertisers promised the possibility of perfection or achieving an ideal look.

Another approach for cosmetic advertisers was the transformation to a little-girl look. An ad for liquid

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58 "Woodbury," LHJ, Vol. 63-1, April 1946, p. 99.

59 Louise P. Benjamin, "Wake Up with Make-up," LHJ, Vol. 63-1, April 1946, p.190.

make-up said, "You've got the sweetest little Angel Face (by Pond's)"[60] Ponds promised an innocent, ageless look with their make-up:

> It's New--the little-girl glow that's making you look so much lovelier! New--the touchable, velvety smoothness of your face. And very new-- the secret of the whole delightful transformation.[61]

Again, the "transformation" was easy; it was secret. The look was "new" and, of course, "lovelier." The advertisers implied that behind a mask of make-up, a woman would be transformed, given identity, personality, and, above all, social success.

The advertising of cosmetics in the 1950s illustrates an important point. In a time when societal concerns included homogeneity and a need for consensus, advertisers were telling a woman to strive for the ideal, for perfection, in searching for identity. They played with the fact that there was an external self and an internal self; in advertising their products they created a connection between the two. Advertisers used words like "transformation," "change," "unsatisfied desires," "Inner Self," "Outer Self" to convince the consumer that there was more than one identity to be had.

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60 "Ponds," LHJ, Vol. 66-1, January 1949, p. 27.

61 Ibid.

Advertisers for Pond's and other cosmetics continued the approach of offering consumers a new identity. In 1949 a Pond's ad said:

> Another woman within you, unseen but beautiful--can open a new world to you. Never believe you must stay the way you are. . .you <u>can</u> change yourself. . .you can be lovelier! Deep-rooted in every woman's heart is the longing to be appreciated, loved--to feel that she really 'counts' in life. Yet so many women are pathetically unsure of themselves. They are baffled by vague unsatisfied desires. They feel they are 'missing something' which should rightly be theirs.[62]

If the consumer would only buy Pond's, another identity would emerge in her. Through the externally applied cosmetic, women could bring out an internal self.

In the same Pond's ad the copy went on to say:

> No woman has to live with an unhappy, humdrum self. You can consciously change yourself--become lovelier, charming. A wonderful force within you can help you do this. Like a seesaw, this force is balanced between your Inner Self and your Outer Self. It explains why your outer appearance can so easily sway your Inner being--the way you act, and your whole appeal to other people.[63]

Thus, the ad stressed that a woman's self was made of two parts: the inner and the outer. The advertisers wrote that external appearance would "sway" one's inner being. Again, the emphasis was on gaining some sort of well-being through artificial means.

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[62] "Ponds," <u>LHJ</u>, Vol. 66-3, October 1949, pp. 76-77.

[63] Ibid.

Thrushay hand lotion was advertised along a similar line in 1949. The ads showed a woman in one half washing dishes and, in the other, dressed to go out with her husband. The copy read, "For every woman who leads a double" life. . . .Home-loving you! . . . Party-loving you! [OR] Efficient you! . . .Enchanting you![64] The hand lotion was to be valuable as it allowed women to move from one role to another. The "double life" every woman led wouldn't be hindered by rough hands.

Advertisers seemed to assert that there was, in every woman, the potential for the roles of mother and housewife, and the wife-companion or sexual-being. A Revlon ad (Ladies Home Journal, 1952) best exemplifies this. The copy, below the picture of a woman with bright red nails and lips, read:

> For you who love to flirt with fire. . . who dare to skate on thin ice. . .Revlon's 'Fire and Ice' for lips and matching finger-tips. A lush-and-passionate scarlet. . .like flaming diamonds dancing on the moon! What is the American girl made of? Sugar and spice and everything nice? Not since the days of the Gibson Girl! There's a new American beauty. . .she's tease and temptress, siren and gamin, dynamic and demure. Men find her slightly, delightfully, baffling. Sometimes a little maddening. Yet they admit she's easily the most exciting woman in all the world! She's the 1952 American beauty, with a foolproof formula for melting a male! She's the 'Fire and Ice' girl.

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[64] "Thrushay," LHJ, Vol. 67-1, February 1949, p. 131; March 1950, p.181.

(Are you?)[65]

This ad promoted the multiple-identity female. She should be beautiful--but not in a definitive, understandable way. She should baffle and madden men by assuming the double identity. Ads like Revlon's 'Fire and Ice' emerging in the early 1950s reflected the popularized discovery that women, while fulfilling the role of mother and housewife, had also a sexual identity. Because female sexuality was seen as a threat to the norm, images of women at the time suggested that the sexual self was the hidden, inner self; other roles were external.

Thus the advertising of postwar years reflects not only attitudes about women's role, but also the fears and anxieties of the time. First, the fear of infiltration is evidenced in advertising's call for overzealous cleaning: in one's house, on one's children, and on one's own body. The fear of momism's overprotective mother was used in reaching women who were to be concerned about their children's health. Perfection was offered through various products; if the consumer could not achieve perfection, then she should feel guilty. The feelings of insecurity or guilt that the consumer may have had were, however, easily assuaged. Other identities were on the market; again advertisers played on an anxiety that American felt

[65] "Revlon," LHJ, Vol. 69-3, November 1952, p. 82.

during the postwar years. How could one tell what or who was normal?

The identity of a person began to be less of an indication of who or what that person was. While advertisers were creating images of a multiple-identity woman, the postwar society was looking out for threats to consensus: Communists or Socialists, who in the popular conception were not identifiable by appearance, or the sexual woman who may have appeared harmless on the outside but who harbored a sexual self that threatened popular conceptions of women.

Perhaps the most striking aspect of advertising in the Cold War years is that it exploited the very elements that most Americans feared. The witch-hunts and book-burning of McCarthyism grew from an awareness of "subversion" and espionage in America. In 1945 it was discovered that the offices of the magazine Amerasia held stolen official documents. Klaus Fruchs was found to be passing information to the USSR; Julius and Ethel Rosenberg were tried and later convicted for espionage. Men and women were warned to be on the lookout for Communist or Socialist infiltration. Advertising, like the popular view of Communist infiltration, was subtle in its approach, seemingly normal at first glance, and preyed on Americans' weaknesses.

CHAPTER 3

Female Sexuality in the Postwar Years

Sexuality in twentieth century America owes its amorphous quality to the taboos and confusion surrounding its definition. As Victorianism fell by the wayside at the turn of the century, a twentieth-century popular interpretation of Freud arose to offer definition and explanation for an aspect of human life that was rarely examined. Sexuality became known (in neo-Freudian terms) as the motivating force of human activity. One who was repressed sexually turned his or her frustrations elsewhere, be it to their career, their selves, their family.

Sexuality in the twentieth century seems to have had greatest expression in times of prosperity; in the twenties the flapper arrived, danced, and dated, in the post-World War II years Kinsey published extensive reports of male and female sexuality, the sixties constitute what many have named the "sexual revolution." Yet there is more to this phenomenon than merely the "expression" of sexuality. The question in light of my research is this: What was the effect of the public acknowledgement of female sexuality for the post-World War II female experience?

Popular conceptions of sexuality in the postwar era appear to take two major viewpoints. The two conceptions, perhaps inverses of each other, are not distinct in chronological terms. First, Freudian influence on the popular conception of sexuality during the post-World War II era is obvious. Images of women in novels, film, popular magazine articles and advertising show the sexually-repressed career woman who lacks fulfillment through her biologically-destined role. Moreover, images showed that Freudian psychoanalysis was hailed and suggested as the solution for any subnormal activity in the postwar years.

The second concept of sexuality maintained that people of the prosperous, materialist, and anxiety-ridden postwar years saw sex as an escape from sobering realities. Instead of seeking fulfillment through career and family life with the energy of one's sexual repression, a man or woman turned away from the "real world" to find fulfillment through sex. In Miller and Nowak's words:

> The diversions of the fifties--the extreme sex myths, the endless material consumerism, television--all drew Americans away from having to consider the consequences of their nuclear behavior. In order to avoid thinking with sensitivity about nuclear war, both sensitivity and peace had to be redefined.[1]

Miller and Nowak specifically discuss escapism in terms of

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[1] Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak, "Learning to Love the Bomb," The Fifties, p. 66.

nuclear horrors. Not only do they speak of sex as a "diversion," but they include consumerism and television-watching as other possibilities for escape.

Others using the escapist conception of sexuality focused solely on sex as an escape and its results for the nation's morality. Jean de Menasce, writing for Commentary magazine, had this version of the escapist argument:

> When modern man, lacking the satisfactions of noble ambitions, devitalized, living without power or prestige, goes through his dull monotonous life without joy or beauty, his dead existence depends on a fictitious sexual life. His sexual joys are moral joys camouflaged. . . .These disguises of aspirations are the opposites of those which Freud indicated.[2]

The author's belief was that sex replaced man's moral preoccupations that were destroyed in the "modern" times of the fifties. De Menasce's argument is perhaps an attempt to overturn the threatening yet much-believed Freudian theory that one's sexuality was the underlying force to one's reality.

Thus, the two conceptions of sexuality in the post-World War II era are inverses of each other. With Freudianism, the repression of sexuality lead to preoccupation with other activities and identities; with escapism, the insecurities and fears arise from realities and focus on sexuality. Throughout this chapter, I will describe how

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[2] Jean de Menasce, p. 167.

each conception of sexuality affected images of women--to very much the same end: oppression and limitation.

In the postwar years Freudianism appeared in the extreme in the late 1940s. The tenets of popular Freudianism most discussed were women's biological destiny, the mother-son relationship or the Oedipal complex, penis-envy in women, and, in general, the subversive nature of human sexuality due to its repression. At a time when women were receiving recognition for their efforts in World War II American factories and when the security of the nation as a whole was uncertain, the particularities of Freudian theory most oppressive to women were stressed.

For example, in 1947, Marynia F. Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg published Modern Woman: The Lost Sex. Lundberg and Farnham argued that the increased technological advances of the postwar period mainly affected American women. They argued that the growth of factory production took the potential for creativity out of the postwar home, therefore disenfranchising women. Women, without the identity gained from creative homemaking, sought to emulate men. As a result, Lundberg and Farnham "claimed that the failure of women to achieve sexual satisfaction is a neurosis that stems from a negative view of child-bearing and from attempts to 'emulate the male in seeking

a sense of value by objective exploit.' "[3]

In general, Lundberg and Farnham worried about the effects of the "lost sex" on American society:

> Women are a problem not only as individuals, but collectively as a separate group with special functions within the structure of society. As a group and generally, they are a problem to themselves, to their children and families, to each other, to society as a whole.[4]

In terms of Freudian theory, Lundberg and Farnham saw the turning away from women's "biologically-destined" role as an attempt to emulate masculinity and as a threat to society. Philip Wylie, who wrote Generation of Vipers to explain the phenomenon of "momism" or the overbearing mother, wrote a review that appeared in The Saturday Review in 1947. Wylie stressed many reasons one should read Lundberg and Farnham's work:

> I suspect that women are readier for the true news about themselves than most men. For feminism, I also suspect, has augmented man's pomp and vanity by keeping him unconsciously in touch with the fact that his womenfolk are passionately jealous of him![5]

In this review, Wylie argued that feminism was self-defeating for women because it assured men of "passionate

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[3] Lundberg and Farnham, as quoted in Maxine Margolis, "Blaming the Victim," Researching American Culture, (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michegan Press, 1982), p. 218.

[4] Ibid, p. 212.

[5] Philip Wylie, "Masculinesque Womenfolk," Saturday Review, February 1, 1947, pp. 13,14.

jealousy." He went on to say that women of the postwar years were dangerously boistering the male ego in this way; if it continued, men would fail to recognize potential evils.

Articles for and about women and their role in American society stressed, as did Lundberg and Farnham, biological destiny. The roles of wife and mother were primary for women; any other was considered a result of female sexual frustration. The role of mother was absolutely favored over that of career women in popular literature of the late 1940s, while in fact, more married and single women worked than ever before.

Images of married or soon-to-be married women promised happiness and fulfillment in the postwar years. Ladies Home Journal presented the career woman/wife contrast in many of their short stories. One, called "Julie," showed a young architect struggling to begin a career while sheltering and watching over a lonely riches-to-rags woman in New York.[6] As he protects Julie from economic problems, he begins to fall in love with her. He says, "I'm responsible for you, Julie, married or not."[7] Later, when he asks Julie to marry him, she refuses

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[6] Ruth Babcock, "Julie," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-2, August 1947, pp. 34 (+).

[7] Ibid, p. 105.

in order to begin a career. In the architect's words, "I knew I had struck against that stone core in the center of Julie's nature. She wasn't going to marry me and she was going to find a job."[8] Thus, the determined career woman has a "core" of "stone" as she refuses to be protected by a man.

Portrayals of career women who are spinsters were more common in fiction and popular articles. "The Terrible Miss Dove" (Ladies Home Journal, January, 1947) was a simple story about a woman schoolteacher.[9] The story is about Miss Dove's personal unhappiness and how it is reflected in the treatment of her pupils. The author writes:

> She had been young when she first started teaching. Her pupils would have hooted at the notion; they would have felt it more reasonable to believe Miss Dove had been born middle-aged with her mousy hair screwed into a knot at the back of her head and a white handkerchief pinned to her dark, bony bosom.[10]

The woman with a career in this 1947 story had "mousy" hair and a "bony" chest; she was invariably unhappy.

The career woman or spinster often was portrayed as living vicariously through her career identity or through

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[8] Ibid, p. 111.

[9] Frances Gray Patton, "The Terrible Miss Dove," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-1, January 1947, pp. 34-35, 118-120.

[10] Ibid, p. 118.

material possessions. In Freudian terms, the career woman was unable to fulfill her destined role and, therefore, became neurotically attached to other identities. In a story entitled "Just What She Wanted" (Ladies Home Journal, January 1947) a governess living in Switzerland got profound satisfaction from looking at material goods (more specifically, a tea set) in store fronts as she finished her work each day.[11] In the author's words:

> She needed somebody, something, to transmit her joy in her possessions to. . . . She had seen the tea set in the window and had known it would bring her a husband, home and friends.[12]

This woman needed the real thing to fulfill the superficial value she assigned to a tea set; yet at the end of the story she loses her chance at getting married--she is too caught up in the neurotic love of a tea-set to love a man.

While examples thus far have been from the late 1940s, the Freudian views that career women had jobs to make up for their repressed, true nature (either sexual or motherly, wifely tendencies) by no means ended in the next decade. Even though (and perhaps because) the 1953 Kinsey Report brought to light factual evidence of women's

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[11] Selena H. Brenner, "Just What She Wanted," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-1, January 1947, pp. 24, 149-153.

[12] Ibid, p. 150.

sexuality, the view that women were biologically destined to be wives and mothers was continually emphasized. Freudian-influenced concepts of female sexuality did not disappear when "the truth" was published in the form of the Kinsey Report. If anything, popular Freudian views persisted to counter the idea that women were sexually experienced even before marriage.

In 1954, American Mercury magazine contained an article entitled "You Ought To Get Married."[13] The author focused on the fact that, while women were born to be "females," many were "feminists by inclination and choice."[14] In the article, career women were portrayed as maladjusted and as women who "eventually [turned] into neurotics."[15] Of the married and unmarried, the author wrote,

> The Victorian Era's involuntary, unhappy spinster is today's successful, unmarried career girl. So different in their external lives, they are, nonetheless, identical twins in their innermost feminine natures. Sooner or later, today's sophisticate must come to the same bitter realization as her naive turn-of-the-century sister: that there is no loneliness in the world for a woman like the loneliness of being unloved.[16]

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[13] Irene C. Kuhn, "You Ought to Get Married," American Mercury, November 1954, pp. 15-20.

[14] Ibid, p. 15.

[15] Ibid, p. 18.

[16] Ibid, p. 15.

The persistence of these views about career women could very well have been a result of the growing number of working women in America. Most importantly, the late Freudian images of neurotic, maladjusted career woman were responses to factual data about female sexuality (i.e. the Kinsey Report, 1953): that single women were in many cases well-adjusted psychologically and sexually.

The co-existence of Freudian images of the overbearing "mom" and maladjusted career woman and of images of the sexually loose career woman served to confuse concepts of female sexuality in the postwar era. The Freudian images were dominant in the late forties, but, in the early fifties, there was a turning point in terms of female sexuality. Factual data in the form of the Kinsey Report showed that women were sexually active, even in their pre-marital years.[17] The authors of the Kinsey Report attributed changes in women's sexuality to the following:

> (1)Women's progressive sexual and economic emancipation; (2) the all-pervasive influence of Freud's views and discoveries; and (3) the exposure during the World Wars of millions of American youth to cultures and peoples whose sex codes and practices differ greatly from those in which they have been reared.[18]

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[17] Alfred C. Kinsey, et. al., Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, (PA: W.B. Saunders Co., 1953).

[18] Kinsey, "Foreword," p. viii.

Interestingly, while postwar popular images of Freudian theory tended toward the negative for women, Kinsey and his researchers attributed a positive female sexual freedom to Freudian influence. Ironically, while the popular interpretation of Freud served to enforce the roles of marriage and motherhood, Kinsey's understanding of Freudian theory was one of a number of reasons that Kinsey did his study on female sexuality.

The researchers of the Kinsey Report found that by the age of fifteen, forty percent of their female sample had "petting" experience, and by eighteen years sixty-nine to ninety-five percent had such experience. Moreover, "about ninety percent of the entire sample, and nearly one-hundred percent of those who had married, had had some sort of petting experience prior to marriage."[19] The publication of facts of this sort led to a proliferation of articles on sex in popular magazines. "How Dr. Kinsey's Report on Women May Help Your Marriage" (Collier's, September 18, 1953), "Kinsey: on the Difference Between Men and Women--If Years Had Names, 1953 Might be Called the Year of the Second Emancipation of Women" (Collier's, September 4, 1953), "Hullabaloo on K-Day" (New Republic, November 9, 1953), "Sex Without Love" (The Nation, October 10, 1953), "What Women Want to Know about the Kinsey Book"

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[19] Kinsey, p. 233.

(Ladies Home Journal, September 1953) were few among the hundreds written in the early fifties.

Responses to the Kinsey Report varied. Many condemned Kinsey's attempt on moral terms, fearing an increase in juvenile delinquency, a decline in the family institution, and a general decline of the nation's morality. There were concerted efforts to ban the report from publication. For example, Regina Morantz wrote in 1977:

> Hysteria reached Congress when New York representative Louis B. Heller called upon the Postmaster General to bar the Female Report from the mails until it could be investigated, charging Kinsey with 'hurling the insult of the century against our mothers, wives, daughters, and sisters.' Soon rumors spread that the Special House Committee founded during the McCarthy era to inquire into the use of funds by tax-exempt foundations would ask Kinsey to testify regarding financial aid from the Rockfeller Foundation. Others accused Kinsey of aiding communism.[20]

Such an "insult" to the women of America and a threat to the nation's morality called for Senate investigation, and as a result, the association of the Kinsey Report with communism. In this way, the question of female sexuality was seen as a threat even at the level of national government.

Positive responses to the Kinsey Report often admitted the possibility of a margin for error in Kinsey's sam-

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[20] Regina Morantz, "The Kinsey Report," American Quarterly, Vol. 29, 1977, p. 575.

ple, but acknowledged its value in terms of sexual openness. In 1953 Bruce Bliven reviewed the Kinsey Report for The Nation, writing:

> When one reads the big new book, it is at first glance a little hard to see what all the uproar is about. . . .It overrepresents, among others, those with college educations, youngish women, Protestants or those without formal religion, city dwellers, those living in the Northeast, Florida and California, and of course, those interested in a study of this type and willing to TELL ALL.[21]

Bliven didn't discount the value of the report because of its sampling, however. He went on to say:

> The superficial impression that the Kinsey Report is unjustified is false. In a deep sense, it represents one phase of a wide struggle against our monumental public hypocrisy. . . .As a nation we are unwilling to surrender our hypocrisy, but we feel guilty about it. . . .For those whose Puritan load of guilt is extra heavy, Kinsey's two books taken together offer a sort of ready-made self-psychoanalysis: your wickedness is not unique as thought but has been shared by seventy-one percent of the sample.[22]

Here Bliven acknowledges the value of the uproar over Kinsey's book. In his view, the report forced Americans to confront their hypocrisy about sex and acknowledge widespread experience among most American adults.

In the Ladies Home Journal, an editorial appeared to explain the value of Kinsey for their women readers. The

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[21] Bruce Bliven, "Hullabaloo on K-Day," The Nation, Vol. 129, November 9, 1953, p. 18.

[22] Ibid.

article, entitled "What Women Want to Know About the Kinsey Book," stressed the value of Kinsey's information to wives and mothers.[23] It was the opposite response from those who lamented the report's possible effect on the declining American family. The Journal editors wrote:

> Because of the importance of a happy sex relationship in marriage, Dr. Alfred C. Kinsey's book, to be published in September, is sure to hold the attention of mothers and all those concerned with the care and training of children. Believing that any knowledge which can help to stabilize marriage and the family is of immeasurable value, the Journal presents this preview of Dr. Kinsey's findings. . . .[24]

Thus, the value of the Kinsey Report came to be whatever the reader, critic, or reviewer projected onto it. It was immoral as an expose, invalid in its sampling, or important if it could be supportive of already established beliefs.

Almost twenty-five years after the publication of Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, the previously unrecognized positive value of the book was lamented by Regina Morantz in American Quarterly. She wrote:

> Kinsey was no revolutionary. Though he wished that the world would be a better place because of his books, his vision required no fundamental social or economic changes. He understood neither

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[23] Barbara Benson, "What Women Want to Know About the Kinsey Book," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 70-3, September 1953, pp. 52-3, 200.

[24] Ibid, p. 52.

> the revolutionary nor the disintegrative potentialities inherent in sexual liberation. In the end, Kinsey's hedonism has become a conservative force, and he the unwitting agent of an increasingly callous and wasteful society.[25]

While Morantz writes of Kinsey's good intention in publishing Sexual Behavior in the Human Female, she attributed the Kinsey Report with a causality that she failed to explain. Kinsey's data did serve the purposes of those who feared or chose to ignore women's sexuality because they could adapt his argument to their beliefs, choosing to ignore parts of the data that may have created contradictions. First, Morantz could have referred to the increase in popular images of the sexual woman during the 1950s when she spoke of "disintegrative potentialities." Second, another concurrent and disintegrative phenomena was the founding and growth of Playboy and other pornographic magazines in 1953 and after.

To attempt to further Morantz' argument, I think it is important to examine two phenomena that developed concurrently with the Kinsey Report of the early fifties. Images of women in the popular culture through the fifties reflected a change in the popular view of female sexuality. Even though the Kinsey Report was discounted by many and even though its "revolutionary potentialities" were lost to moralizers or the editors of the Ladies Home

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25 Morantz, op. cit., p.589.

Journal, the factual data on women's sexuality had some influence on popular images. For example, the majority of images of single career women from 1952 to 1953 through the early sixties had less to do with Freudian maladjustment than with an equation with sexual looseness. There seems to be a shift in images of female sexuality at the same time Kinsey published his report. Sexuality was no longer seen as repressed but as an outlet or an escape: women became symbols of that outlet in the popular media.

The transition from Freudian images of female biological destiny to images of the sexually loose woman created conflicts for the fifties woman. The two could not coexist; many articles in popular magazines addressed this concern. For example, Patty DeRoulf wrote an article in *Coronet* magazine entitled, "Must Bachelor Girls Be Immoral?" In this 1952 article, DeRoulf argued that sexual experimentation for a single woman would interfere with her biologically destined role. About sex, DeRoulf wrote:

> Many women conclude it's easier to succumb, or perhaps more sensible. The average bachelor girl. . .often believes this may be a method of getting a man for keeps. If not that, at least it's a way of experiencing sex and male companionship--even though it may be fleeting. . . .'Promiscuous girls are cutting their own throats for marriage,' states a New York psychoanalyst. . . .[26]

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[26] Patty DeRoulf, "Must Bachelor Girls Be Immoral?" *Coronet*, February 1952, pp. 58,60.

Because marriage was a woman's destiny, sexual promiscuity could only interfere. Therefore, the unmarried career woman, obviously failing to meet her destined state of marriage, was associated with a stigma of sexual promiscuity.

At this point the co-existence of the Freudian female sexual images and the "escapist" sexual image created an image of a dual-identity woman. Women could be sexual beings, but they should only express their sexuality through attaining a husband and family. If they failed to marry, their sexuality became a stigma to carry. Ellen and Kenneth Keniston, writing about images of career women in American history, said this about the media message:

> American society provides few models adequate to the situation of modern woman. On the whole, mass media and popular fiction portray career women as mannish, loose, or both, and the happy ending for working girls still involves abandoning work, marrying and having many children--and there the story ends.[27]

Images of women in the post-Kinsey years did reflect the inadequacy of female role-models for real female experience that the Kenistons described. Perhaps the best examples of female sexual stereotypes can be found in film of the postwar years.

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[27] Ellen and Kenneth Keniston, "The American Anachronism," American Scholar, Vol. 33-3, 1964, p. 370.

Film in the post-World War II years is a much studied industry, perhaps because of its tremendous growth in that time, or because of the controversy surrounding Hollywood during the HUAC investigations. More importantly, historians agree that images of women in the fifties films go through radical changes, and portrayals of female sexuality are closely related to these changes. Before the decade of the fifties, film concentrated on popular Freudian images of women. Molly Haskell (From Reverence to Rape) writes that the "forties were more emotional and neurotic, alternating between the self-denying passivity of the waiting war wife and the brittle aggressiveness of the heroines."[28] Brandon French, writing of forties films, agrees with Haskell:

> The domestic female image that dominated the reality of the late forties and the fifties was the product of certain sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, educators, authors, and physicians, as well as the organs of mass media which preached the dangers of women's lost femininity and the bounties which awaited women within the boundaries of the traditional female role. It coexisted throughout the forties with a more emancipated female image; oftentimes, the two images were combined to create a double message.[29]

French's theory is that, during the forties, women were to be feminine and domestic but emancipated as separate but

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[28] Molly Haskell, From Reverence to Rape, (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Wilson, 1974), p. 172.

[29] Brandon French, On The Verge of Revolt, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1978).

equal. By the 1950s, images of successful career woman were few and far between. I attribute this in part to the changing views of female sexuality.

As I argued earlier, career women in the late forties popular culture could appear strong and successful, but only because they had failed at their destined role. They could appear to put great energy into their work: energy that arose from oppressed sexuality. However, when the Kinsey data proved that single women had quite extensive sexual experience, the images of career women began to change. By the late fifties, career women in movies, fiction, and other media were not to be pitied; they were actually seen as dangerous.

An essay by Betty Chmaj, Professor of Humanities, American Studies, and Women's Studies at California State University, Sacremento, examines female images in popular film of the thirties through the present.[30] Chmaj divides the era into three categories for images of women. First, from the thirties into the forties, she found images of a strong, independent American woman. Second, Chmaj believes that there was a "wipeout phenomenon" that eliminated the images of successful career women from popular

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[30] Betty Chamj, "Some Paradox, Some Irony," in Luedtke, Luther S. (ed.), American Culture, Contemporary Conflicts, (Deland, Florida: Everett, Edwards, Inc., 1977), pp. 121-175.

culture during the fifties.[31] By the 1960s, Chmaj wrote that images of women had deteriorated into "images of female zombies, grotesques, bitches, and sex-object nymphets."[32] In the third section of her article, entitled "The Transformation of the Career Woman: American Film versus American Economics," Chmaj discussed the causes of the fifties' "wipeout phenomena" affecting images of career women. She wrote:

> It was part of the unwritten Hollywood code of the era--as totalitarian as the insistence that Crime Must Not Pay, and rising from the same simplistic moralism --that the Career Woman must be put in her place at the movie's end--which is to say, her place as 'dear little housewife.'[33]

Here Chmaj qualifies her recognition of images of strong career women. Her study showed that an image of a career woman did not exist unless it was accompanied by a transition to the housewife image. Her phrase for this phenomena is "The Negligee in the Seventh Reel."[34]

Of the second stage in film's images of women, Chmaj said that causal factors were either economic or ideological. She mentions that the fifties reflected the effects of the new psychology, Freudianism; sex and the family

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[31] Ibid, p. 146.

[32] Ibid.

[33] Ibid, p. 136.

[34] Ibid.

role were changed by this. The era was dominated by either "sex symbols or Mrs. Americas" (Doris Day).[35] Chamj goes on to say that:

> By the fifties, it was clear that the negligee in the seventh reel had done its work: the career woman, along with other types of independent women and working women, virtually disappeared from the screen.[36]

Chmaj seems justified in arguing that any valuable (strong, independent) career woman image disappeared from popular media; I would add that if images of the career woman remained, they were images of single women who were sexually loose and unfeminine.

Chmaj's third stage sheds a disturbing light on the transition of film's images of women. Chmaj found it difficult to draw the line between stage two and three, but she was able to define the third stage's image as one of "the sexually predatory, castrating, man-eating" woman.[37] In the later fifties and into the sixties, Chmaj's "wipeout phenomenon" continued, and only "marginal people--mutations, misfits--" remained.[38]

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[35] Ibid, p. 158.

[36] Ibid, p. 140.

[37] Ibid, p. 138.

[38] Ibid.

Incorporated into her argument about the third stage was Chmaj's belief that the growth of pornography occurred simultaneously with the wipeout of career women images and the increase of the images of woman as sexually predatory. In 1953, the same year in which women's sexuality was publically acknowledged through the Kinsey Report, Hugh Hefner began to publish Playboy.

In 1952, Hugh Hefner, working in Chicago for Esquire magazine, turned down his employer's offer of a twenty dollar raise to move to New York with the magazine and to continue his job as a circulation man. Hefner borrowed money from his friends, relatives, and the bank to raise 20,000 dollars. In December, 1953, Hefner published the first volume of Playboy.[39] The editors of Playboy stated their intent in this first issue with Marilyn Monroe on the front:

> We believe we are filling a publishing need only slightly less important than the one just taken care of by the Kinsey Report. . . . Playboy will emphasize entertainment. Affairs of state will be out of our province. We don't expect to solve any world problems or prove any great moral truths. If we are able to give the American male a few extra laughs and a little diversion from the anxieties of the Atomic Age, we'll feel we've justified our existence.[40]

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39 "For Young City Guys," Newsweek, Vol. 46, November 7, 1955, p. 68.

40 Hugh Hefner, et. al., Playboy, Vol. 1-1, January 1953, p. 2.

What were the anxieties Hefner and other editors wrote of? Were they simply of the Atomic Age? Or was Playboy an effort to objectify and bring under control the new data about the sexually active woman? Playboy's acknowledgement of Kinsey's work in its first issues seems to indicate that American men and the American society had anxieties other than Atomic. The development of the magazine through the fifties is evidence of an attempt to simplify and control American women's sexuality.

In the years just after the Kinsey Report came out, Playboy ran several spoofs on Kinsey's work. While acknowledging Kinsey's effort, Playboy downplayed the value of the Kinsey Report by offering a version of female sexuality that was "funny as hell":

> Dr. Alfred Kinsey and associates have just completed a very impressive, 1,000 page volume on sex. It's jam packed full of fascinating charts, figures, tables, and graphs, and represents nearly five years of exacting, objective research. The drawings on these two pages are on the same subject and represent almost no research whatsoever. Dr. Kinsey makes sex seem very, very serious and oh, so scientific. Virgil Franklin Patch II just makes it funny as hell--and, personally, that's the way we prefer it.[41]

The cartoonist, Virgil Patch, had done a two-page series of cartoons about sex. The message to Playboy's readers was that the Kinsey Report could be ignored in light of

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[41] "V.I.P. on Sex," Playboy, Vol.1-1, January 1953, pp. 20,21.

the "entertainment" the magazine offered.

Not only does an anxiety about female sexual awareness show up in Playboy's response to the Kinsey Report, the types of articles Playboy ran and the changes in them indicated a growing concern with the sexuality of the typical American Woman. In January 1953, one article depicted women as threatening man's world. It was entitled, "Miss Gold Digger of 1953," and said the following,

> The whole concept of alimony is a throwback to the days when grandma is a girl. A couple of generations ago, this was a man's world, and a nice young woman without a husband had a difficult time finding her own way. Nothing could be further from the truth in 1953. . . .Even the simplest wench can make a handsome living today.[42]

Playboy acknowledged that women could "find their own way" in 1953. The article cautioned men against marriage and divorce because women could gain economic independence and threaten man's world with income gained from alimony.

In the May 1954 issue of Playboy, a "pictorial history of surgery" appeared and was attributed to "Lejarn 'a Hiller."[43] The article is a clear example of Playboy's concern with controlling, limiting, and defining women's sexuality. The sole type of surgical procedure shown was

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[42] Bob Norman, "Miss Gold Digger of 1953," Playboy, Vol. 1-1, January 1953, pp. 6(+).

[43] Lejarn 'a Hiller, "Pictorial History of Surgery," Playboy, Vol. 1-16, May 1954, pp. 39-43.

the hysterectomy, historically a controversial and often unnecessary operation removing women's reproductive organs. The copy for the pictures read:

> Hiller's recreation of a successful hysterectomy described by Giovanni Croce, a Venetian surgeon of the sixteenth century. Three assistants held the writhing patient throughout the operation.[44]

The picture, of course, depicted a naked, writhing woman surrounded by men dressed as sixteenth century surgeons. The men looked more like quacks than surgeons; the portrayal was hardly authentic. The message to *Playboy's* audience was symbolic: that women were to be held down and controlled while men removed their sexual power.

Other interesting articles in the early issues of *Playboy* also objectified and limited women's sexuality. For example, in July of 1954, an article entitled, "One Man's Meat" discussed a "scientific" study done to test men's preferences for women's body types.[45] Here *Playboy* used a scientific method (as did Kinsey), but the *Playboy* study served to objectify women's sexuality whereas Kinsey attempted to clarify it.

In August of 1955, Jules Archer wrote an article for *Playboy* entitled "Don't Hate Yourself in The Morning" in

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[44] Ibid, p. 39.

[45] Charles Armstrong, "One Man's Meat," *Playboy*, Vol. 1-18, July 1954, p. 10.

an attempt to tell the "truth" about sexually promiscuous women.[46] Archer wrote about the guilt feelings many men would have after purposefully seducing a woman. In his words:

> Today's bachelor can enjoy much more peace of mind if he realizes that the girl he thinks he has persuaded to sleep with him has made up her mind to do the same long before he throws her a pitch. This is particularly true of the bachelor girl who is out of her teens, and who is career-minded.[47]

Thus, men should be aware that women are sexually promiscuous; they should not feel disturbed about one-night stands, especially with career-minded, single women. Archer's words exemplify the late fifties image of the sexually loose career woman.

Playboy's success in the 1950s was spectacular. In December of 1953, 52,000 copies were printed of the first issue.[48] One year later that number had doubled to 175,000; in 1955 *Playboy* printed 250,000 copies.[49] By 1955 *Playboy* had distinguished itself from other "stag" magazines; in August of that year the magazine told its readers:

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[46] Jules Archer, "Don't Hate Yourself in The Morning," *Playboy*, Vol. 2-8, August 1955, pp. 21,32.

[47] Richard A. Kallan and Robert P. Brooks, "Playmate of the Month: Naked But Nice," *Journal of Popular Culture*, Vol. 8-2, Fall 1974, pp. 328-336.

[48] "Playbill," *Playboy*, Vol. 2-3, February 1955, p.1.

[49] Ibid.

> Beginning next month, you'll enjoy a bigger, brighter Playboy. There'll be more pages, more color, more stories, more pictures--more of all those choice, unique, distinctive elements that have made Playboy.[50]

One of the most obvious distinguishing characteristics that differentiated Playboy in its early years was the "Playmate of the Month." It became a unique feature of the magazine; and reasons for its popularity correspond with other images of women in the post-Kinsey era.

In July of 1955, Playboy began the "Playmate of the Month" section.[51] Whereas in the two previous years the women in Playboy were unnamed and without personality, the "Playmate of the Month" section contained biographical information on the playmate. The July article, entitled "Playboy's Office Playmate," described the magazine's reason for beginning the new section:

> We suppose it's natural to think of the pulchritudinous Playmates as existing in a world apart. Actually, potential playmates are all around your office, the doe-eyed beauty who sat next to you at lunch yesterday, the new secretary at your office. . . .We found Miss July in our circulation department, processing subscriptions, renewals and back order copies.[52]

Thus, the image of American women as "naked but nice" was

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[50] Cover, Playboy, Vol. 2-8, August 1955, p.55.

[51] "Contents for the Men's Entertainment Magazine," Playboy, Vol. 2-7, July 1955.

[52] "Playboy's Office Playmate," Playboy, Vol. 2-8, July 1955, p. 26.

perpetrated. The "naked but nice" image encouraged men to seek out the hidden sexuality that Playboy thought existed in all women. The result was an image of sexuality in women that was passive or, more drastically, that lurked under women's superficial appearance waiting to be discovered.

In Hugh Hefner's words, the playmate was highly accessible to Playboy's readers:

> She is never sophisticated, a girl you could really have. . . .The sex that we fight for is innocent sex. Anybody can join. We are not interested in the mysterious, difficult woman, the femme fatale, who wears elegant lace, . . . she is sad, and somehow mentally filthy.[53]

In a time when censorship battles threatened to close down the pornography industry and, in fact, managed to end funding for the Kinsey Sex Research Institute at Indiana University, Playboy legitimized itself with the "naked but nice" centerfold.[54]

Moreover, Playboy magazine went on to make sex and the centerfold a parentally approved phenomenon. Richard Kallan and Robert Brooks wrote in their article "Playmate of the Month: Naked But Nice":

> Regular readers of the Playmate section were not

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[53] Hugh Hefner, as quoted in Kallan and Brooks, op. cit.

[54] Kallan and Brooks, op. cit.

> surprised to find pictures of 'mom and dad.' Parental approval was often a theme of the commentary. Thus, the mother of Miss January 1958 was '. . .no prude. She's a broad-minded and charming lady who accompanied Liz to the _Playboy_ offices and fully approved of her teenage daughter becoming the first Playmate of 1958.[55]

Again, the playmate was accessible--this time because her parents present no barrier to her sexual activity. Thus, _Playboy_ became known in the late fifties for its sophisticated portrayal of sex and the modern woman.

Concepts of female sexuality underwent transition as Freudian concepts moved into a more confusing arena. The Kinsey Report threatened ideas about women's pre-marital sexual experience; reactions to the report did not live up to its potential value. Attempts at staving off the fifties' scientifically-researched data on sexuality ultimately objectified and limited women. The rise of pornography is one example. Another is the attention addressed to questions of female sexuality and health in the post-Kinsey years.

After the 1953 publication by Kinsey, articles about sex and sexuality increasingly appeared in popular magazines. Many were positive and helpful, perhaps because they addressed the questions women wanted to ask in pre-Kinsey years but had no means of doing so. _Ladies Home_

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[55] Ibid.

Journal contained such articles, for their attitude about women changed along with their interpretation of women's history:

> A dozen new-age dilemmas harassed the New Woman. Some of the problems of freedom, however, now seem to be on the way to solution. The new generation--post-World War II American women--was not brought up in conflict with her parents, as her mother often was. Today, girls have large families again, without apologizing for them. In general, the new New Woman is better looking that her Victorian ancestors. She is healthier, lives longer and is better dressed. She takes a job, plays expertly at sports, does almost everything as well as a man--or better. She regards Man as her Partner, not Oppressor, marries for love and admits it. She doesn't shout 'Treason' anymore--but let no mortal dare to urge a counterrevolution.[56]

With the above understanding of women's status, Ladies Home Journal portrayed sexuality as a part of women that should be healthy and well-understood for marriage. The Journal's "new New Woman's" sexuality did not belong to her--it belonged to the men and women who interpreted it and recreated it for popular consumption.

In a 1972 study of twentieth-century gynecology textbooks, Diane Scully and Pauline Bart examined the effect of scientifically assessed data about sex on the practices and conceptions of medical practitioners.[57] Scully and

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[56] "The New (?) Woman," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 69-1, April 1952, pp. 54-55.

[57] Diane Scully and Pauline Bart, "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Orifice," American Journal of Sociology, Vol. 78-4, 1972, pp. 1045-1049.

Bart concluded that "gynecology appears to be another of the forces committed to maintaining traditional sex-role stereotypes."[58] In their study, Scully and Bart divided their research into three categories:

(1) Pre-Kinsey, 1943-1953.

(2) Post-Kinsey, Pre-Masters and Johnson, 1953-1962.

(3) Post-Masters and Johnson, 1963.

Of the first period, Scully and Bart found little "empirical data about female sexuality."[59] Instead they found more theoretical "answers" to questions about women's sexuality. One example from a textbook they use is, "'The fundamental biologic factor in women is the urge of motherhood balanced by the fact that sexual pleasure is entirely secondary or absent.' (Cooke, 1943, pp. 59-60)."[60] This conceptualization of women's sexuality corresponds with the late forties (pre-Kinsey) dominance of Freudian images of women and their sexuality; women were to be mothers; otherwise, they were practically asexual.

Scully and Bart's findings in the second period of years again support my argument. They found that:

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58 Ibid, p. 1045.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

> For the most part, these texts used Kinsey's report selectively; findings which reinforced old stereotypes were repeated, but the revolutionary findings significant for women were ignored.[61]

Thus, in many respects, the Kinsey Report was not taken seriously during the fifties. Images in the popular culture warped the possibility of a liberated sexuality for women. The threat of the Kinsey Report actually spurned the pornography industry; magazines like Playboy sought to limit and control women's sexuality through portraying the "playmates." Playboy's concession to Kinsey was that the "playmate" represented the sexuality of everywoman; yet the value of acknowledging everywoman's sexuality was undercut by its pornographic presentation.

The refusal to see women's sexuality in a positive, powerful light persisted beyond the decade of the fifties. Scully and Bart insist that the Master's and Johnson study (1962) had as little effect on practitioner's ideas about women as did Kinsey. They concluded:

> Traditional views of female sexuality and personality are presented generally unsullied by the findings of Kinsey and Masters and Johnson, though the latter resulted in some changes in rhetoric.[62]

Although the established views of gynecologists and practitioners may have been untouched by the Kinsey data,

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[61] Ibid, p. 1047.

[62] Ibid, p. 1048.

society as a whole reacted in a way that perhaps worsened concepts of female sexuality. Sex in women was seen as threatening unless it could be controlled and objectified by men. Scully and Bart wrote that "the gynecologist's self-image as helpful to women combined with unbelievable condescension epitomized in this remark":

> If like all human beings, he [the gynecologist] is made in the image of the Almighty, and if he is kind, then his kindness and concern for his patient may provide her with a glimpse of God's image. (Scott, 1968, p. 25).[63]

Men, therefore, were to exert their authority from knowledge over women's sexuality and, as a result, let her glimpse God's image.

The arrival into the public arena of Kinsey and his data had less than positive effects for the status of women. While questions can be raised about the effects of scientifically studying sex in any time, suffice it to say that the 1953 objective data about female sexuality threatened an unusually insecure nation. The images in the post-Kinsey years reflected the idea that the sexual woman (and according to the data, _everywoman_) was potentially dangerous.

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63 Ibid.

CHAPTER 4

Isolation and the Decline of the Female Image

The reaffirmation of the nuclear family in America's post-World War II years was a need created by memories of the depression years and of distanced and separated loved ones during the war. The anxieties that threatened Americans as they turned homeward put pressure on the establishment of American institutions. There was a sense that potential existed for creating the new or better; in terms of the American family, the potential was realized only in the reiteration of traditional values and mores. For women, the potential for change was a reversion to previous roles as mother and wife, but with emphasis on perfection and professionalism. The status that women had experienced in the war years as workers and heads of families was the exception.

The popular culture's images of women in the postwar years reflected the importance placed on traditional family roles and went even further: the image simplified, narrowed, and became more extreme. While the extreme images of women were often derogatory, they did indeed indicate the social malaise that resulted from postwar separation of function. Looking back on the postwar years, Beatrice Hofstadter wrote:

> Refurbished domesticity--'togetherness'--is once again a central value in American life. Once again girls go directly from their parents' homes to their husbands', no sooner cease being children than they become parents. An independent life, or even postponement of marriage and motherhood to gain some experience of the larger world, get less and less sanction from our popular writers. They are no longer occupied with the restraints of authority but with the dangers of freedom. On the level of the popular novel, at least, we seem no nearer that we were a hundred years ago to finding a working answer for women's opposing needs--fulfillment as women and as autonomous individuals.[1]

Whether done consciously or not, the projection of past values on a society that had experienced many changes at home during the war years resulted in problems for American women. The women who had worked in the war industries during war years never lost the idea that they could and would work as well as American men. In fact, very few actually left the work force for good. They shifted into a different work category: one that consisted of jobs with lower pay and less social status.

The ideology that was involved in this projection of past ideas about women onto a society that had the potential for rapid change was damaging in and of itself. In _The Fifties_, Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak write that "the whole domesticating impulse of the fifties took its cues from nineteenth-century paternalism. Freud had

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[1] Beatrice Hofstadter, "Popular Culture and the Romantic Heroine," _American Scholar_, Vol. 30, Winter 1960-61, p.116.

conveniently packaged it; functionalism approved it."[2] As I discussed in the previous chapter, popular Freudian interpretations of the American woman were ultimately limiting. The separation of function that is evidenced in the isolation of suburban women from men and, through popular images, from the reality of women in the work force also had damaging effects. The re-emphasis on the American nuclear family after World War II and its accompanying ideologies were equally limiting.

Female isolation in a geographic sense accompanied the isolating ideology of separation of function because American society in the postwar years experienced an unprecedented growth of suburbia. As Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak record in _The Fifties_, "between 1950 and 1960 about 1.5 million" people moved into suburban communities from "New York alone."[3] For women, this movement into communities of strangers and (physically) away from the working world led to increasing isolation. Furthermore, as Miller and Nowak note, the suburban communities were geared to the well-being of children.[4] Women were expected to remain happy and productive in this unreal setting of suburbia and the American home.

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[2] Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak, _The Fifties_, op. cit., p. 152.

[3] Miller and Nowak, _The Fifties_, p. 134.

[4] Ibid, p. 137.

Dorothy Thompson, editor for the Ladies Home Journal during the postwar years, addressed the phenomenon of the home in many of her editorial articles. In 1947 she wrote:

> Home is a tangible place. . .a man's home is still his castle, or no real home. It is the place where he lives his most intimate life, where he gathers about him his most beloved. . . .The ambition of nine-tenths of Americans is to own a home.[5]

For men, then, the home was a direct contrast to the intangibility of their increasingly specialized work. Men could come home at the end of what seemed a meaningless day at work and revel in a tangible, visible, carefully acquired possession. The home became the representation of one's work--here was proof that a man's eight hour days and five-day weeks had paid off.

However, for women, the home became increasingly associated with the intangible. It was an ideal to be achieved through a professional approach to decorating, cooking, cleaning, entertaining, and child-rearing. The ideal role that was created through the ideology of separation of function for women in the 1950s left no room for alternatives or incrementation. Of women in the home, Dorothy Thompson wrote in 1948:

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[5] Dorothy Thompson, "Be It Ever So Humble" Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-2, August 1947, p. 11.

> If the first century of women's progress has accomplished--as it has--a revolution in the status of women, we may hope that the second century of women's progress will find them competing less with men and aping less the values of men, but introducing with more strength, firmness and calm confidence their own values into the pattern of organized society. Equality of rights never has and never can mean identity of function. On that rock many a democracy has split. The basic unit of human society is and will remain the family.[6]

Here Thompson asserted that there was no possibility for women to have "functions" similar to men's. Women were to fit set patterns in an organized society, for the question of equality between men and women would endanger democracy. The separation of function that Thompson and others advocated was to prevent the idea of equality of right from "splitting" democracy.

The functional woman who fit into the patterns of society became the organization woman: the "ideal helpmate" of David Riesman's organization man.[7] Yet as the ideology of separation of function ideally proposed a role that would supplement and enhance that of the man's role, the popular images of woman's role distorted the ideal and perhaps offered a glimpse into real anxieties women faced. For example, television's situation comedies often portrayed women as trouble-making housewives: women who were

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[6] Dorothy Thompson, "Century of Women's Progress," Ladies Home Journal, vol. 65-2, August 1948, p. 12.

[7] Miller and Nowak, The Fifties, p. 131.

in some natural opposition to the male role. Television's first popular situation comedy, "I Love Lucy," was one such series.

In "I Love Lucy," the television audience of the 1950s saw two neighboring couples, the Ricardos and the Mertzes, struggling to get through hilarious situations together. Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz are the conspiring housewives who interfere with their husbands' lives only with the best of intentions. Usually Lucy was the instigator; she was "a wacky wife making life difficult for a loving but perpetually irritated husband."[8] Lucy's husband, Ricky, was first employed in the "Tropicana Club" with a professional band. Many of the shows centered on the attempts by Lucy to prove to Ricardo that she, too, could be in show business. Thus, Lucy's husband "spent much of his time trying to keep Lucy off the nightclub's stage. Ricky just wanted her to be a simple housewife."[9]

Another popular situation comedy, "The Honeymooners," focused more on a husband named Ralph, a New York City bus driver, than on his wife, Alice. Ralph Kramden's best friend, Ed Norton, joins him in get-rich quick schemes, but:

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[8] Tim Brooks and Earle Marsh, The Complete Directory to Prime Time Network Television Shows, 1946-present, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1979), p. 279.

[9] Ibid.

> Their schemes never worked out usually causing friction between Ralph and his more practical wife, Alice. Ralph's reaction, whenever Alice proved him wrong or disapproved of one of his great ideas, was to threaten to belt her, with such lines as 'To the Moon, Alice,' or 'One of these days, Alice, _one of these days_. . . Pow! Right in the kisser!' But Alice understood Ralph, and in the end, at the final curtain, he would beam and admit, "Alice. . .you're the greatest.[10]

Although in this popular situation comedy, it is the husband who instigates the crazy schemes, Alice is similar to Lucy Ricardo in that she is portrayed as interfering. The two females are housewives who overstep their given role. Lucy Ricardo is plotting and scheming, but always through some mistake or misunderstanding she is found out and scolded (in Spanish) by her husband. Alice Kramden watches Ralph join in ridiculous schemes, but when she attempts to advise him, she is threatened: "Pow! Right in the kisser."[11]

Other examples of the limitations that popular images of women placed on the role of housewife are found in popular magazines. Short stories such as "You'll Marry Me at Noon," "This Side of Innocence," "Dinner for Two," "Brazen Halo," and "Buttons and Beaux" made one reader of the _Ladies Home Journal_ comment:

> The _Journal_ is not sociologically realistic. I

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[10] Ibid. p. 271.

[11] Ibid.

> bemoan the fictional dribble that you perpetrate each month which takes away from the worthwhile non-fiction that I enjoy. You seem to think you know what 'the women' want in literature, else you would not buy stories which have the depth of a sidewalk puddle.[12]

While this man "bemoaned" the "fictional dribble" in the Ladies Home Journal, the magazine was indeed responding to what it thought women would and should want to read. Soon after the war's end, Ladies Home Journal increased its fictional and advice content in response to readers' demands. For example, in 1948, one woman wrote:

> What has happened to your magazine? The average woman wants fiction, fashions, food and homemaking ideas, but not things like Possible Presidents, French Art, Women and Children in the USSR. Those articles belong in news magazines. Why can't we have things women like in our magazine and leave other things for the men.[13]

This reader made it clear that women were not interested in news and that news was something to be left to "the men." As a result, magazines and popular writers responded to the dictates of the average woman.

In the 1950s, there developed a way to write for women's magazines according to certain advice-givers. In the February 1955 issue of The Writer, Sheila Sibley

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[12] Edwin C. Range, "Fiction Not for Him," in "Our Readers Write Us," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 69-1, February 1952, pp. 5-6.

[13] Mrs. J. W. Porter, "Are Women People?" in "Our Readers Write Us," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 65-2, May 1948, pp. 6-8.

explained how she gave advice to new writers:

> Once I spoke out clear and bold, and I lost a lot of friends that way. Now, I've learnt to say, you write too well for the market.' . . . Don't write down to them, because no one likes being patronized; and don't aim above their heads, because no one likes being puzzled. You're writing for women--not brilliant women, but not morons either--and whether you approve or no, their main interest is love.[14]

The audience was the average woman, and the writers wrote in terms of this audience. The average woman made simple demands on writers; therefore, they produced very average stories. The result was an increase of stories in which women tended toward an ideal housewife role, or, through the portrayal of an opposite (the career woman) role, enforced the fact that roles other than the ideal were wrong.

What happened, then, to women as a result of this increase in images of the ideal or average housewife? What happens when a society creates an ideal that is unattainable in reality? In the 1950s there was a growing dissatisfaction among the women who attempted to abide by society's dictates. It was an inevitable reaction caused by limiting the potential of American women. William Lynch, author of The Image Industries, wrote in 1959:

> Fantasy can begin with rhythms and end in a bril-

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[14] Sheila Sibley, "Accent on Love," The Writer, Vol 68, February 1955, pp. 45-47.

> liant dream. Its materials will never withstand the inspection of the light of day: your Ford or your Chevrolet can never be as dazzling as the model which in television commercials is ushered into glory by song and the co-presence of beautiful women. . . .The need in all of us for the dream is being exploited by the production of as much fantasy as possible out of as little reality as possible. The unconscious intention of the artist is to reduce us to the condition of children. Freud was not wrong. What is involved is the return to the perfect society of the womb with the minimum of effort.[15]

In retrospect Lynch's generalization about artists' intentions seems a little unwarranted. Yet his most important statement concerns examining the fantasy in "the light of day." Upon examination during and after the fifties, the image of the ideal housewife began to crumble. Moreover, as the years went by, the images themselves began to portray a certain female malaise and frustration with other's expectations for them.

For instance, the soap opera was increasingly geared toward a female audience during the 1950s. Television and (less so) radio were sure of an audience during the daytime when a great number of women were at home in the suburbs. These soap operas depicted women as beings that constantly face trauma in their day-to-day life. In 1954, Life magazine reviewed the soaps with a pictorial his-

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[15] William Lynch, The Image Industries, (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1959), p. 26.

tory.[16] One photo showed a woman watch another woman make advances on her boyfriend, another woman experiences a nervous breakdown, another [tells off] her "neurotic" sister, yet another is shown as she hears over the phone the date for her annulment.[17] Further, in portraying CBS' "The Brighter Day," Life chose to show a photo in which a woman has gone to her psychiatrist for help. The "shrink" tells her, "a kitchen is the warmest place in the house. . .perhaps the warmest in the world."[18] Thus, from soap operas' portrayals of women as troubled, neurotic, or nervous there was a sense that the housewife image wasn't enough. Images began to present another aspect of women's lives; they weren't simply angel-like and good-willed, but they were distorted in various ways.

Speaking for the soap opera audience, one soap viewer said:

> Our day--or at least my day, which is not just about the same thing, but exactly the same thing--is not a maiden's dream. . .I concede that I am slower, clumsier and generally unhandier than almost any other housewife not congenitally idiotic or semiparalytic; but on the other hand, almost any other woman has more children, a lazier husband and standards immeasurably higher.[19]

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[16] "Soap Opera Wails and Woes," Life, Vol. 36, April 5, 1954, p. 119.

[17] Ibid.

[18] Ibid, p. 120.

[19] Aloise B. Heath, "A Housewife Looks at Soap Opera," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 64-1, April 1947,

The viewer went on to say that women like herself welcomed the arrival of the soap and its presentation of others' emotional lives in a world of cooking, cleaning and child-rearing. The tasks for housewives were so prescribed that they required "utter mindlessness."[20] She went on:

> The housewife, if only by that silence so becoming to a woman, is demonstrating her complete and lasting loyalty to the only form of entertainment possible during the pursuit of a career which gives one more mental leisure than any other career in the world--housework.[21]

If housework was dull and mindless, then radio and television's drama programs would liven it up. But the images of women offered were less than encouraging; they were merely nonsensical or funny, and they filled up the gap between William Lynch's fantasy and reality. The emotional qualities acted out by soap opera or television drama stars were grasped at by women who attempted to achieve the ideal role as housewife but inevitably became disillusioned with society's expectations.

The dissatisfaction with society's prescribed roles eventually became evident in the popular images of housewives during the 1950s. Not only do a few comically

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p.23.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.

dizzy images (Lucy Ricardo or Alice Kramden) from television's situation comedies suggest the true limitations on women's potential, but images of women in film passed into another stage. As Brandon French writes:

> On the surface, fifties films promoted women's domesticity and inequality and sought easy, optimistic conclusions to any problems their fictions treated. But a significant number of movies simultaneously reflected, unconsciously or otherwise, the malaise of domesticity and the untenably narrow boundaries of the female role. By providing a double text, which contradicted itself without acknowledging a contradiction--that is, by imitating the culture's schizoid 'double-think'--they documented the practical, sexual and emotional transition women were undergoing beneath the threshold of the contemporary audience's conscious awareness.[22]

French's theory maintains that images of women often let the movie audience get a glimpse of a second side to the ideal housewife role. Women in films were increasingly portrayed as unhappy and as seeking fulfillment from means other than their prescribed role as housewife and mother.

For instance, many images of fictional women who could not live up to others' expectations also presented a sense of ill-health. Those women who aberrated from the housewife norm were, in the popular media, portrayed as mentally deficient. An early example (1948) is the film The Snakepit. The film was a realistic portrayal of a

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[22] Brandon French, On The Verge of Revolt: Films of the Fifties, (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1977), p. xxi.

mental health institute; the featured heroine was Olivia de Havilland as "Virginia." At the time critics praised the film for its realism in portraying Virginia's case study: an Electra complex with her father.[23] However, in retrospect the film clearly equated femininity with mental fitness and marriage with normalcy. In a more recent criticism, Leslie Fishbein concludes:

> While 'The Snake Pit' won public acclaim for its realistic treatment of mental illness, its more central concern was the crisis in modern womanhood which popularized Freudianism had promised to solve by its paralleled equation of femininity and mental health.[24]

Virginia, while in the institute, is treated and released through psychoanalysis. Fishbein notes that only two inmates (Virginia and Margaret) leave the institute, "both of whom are portrayed as willing and able to resume their conjugal responsibilities."[25] Thus, The Snakepit presented an extreme view of the female malaise: one that is resolved when the heroine returns to marriage.

In 1953 the movie version of James Jones' novel, From Here to Eternity,[26] presented the character of Karen Holmes as a troubled woman whose problems are resolved by

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[23] Ibid, p. 650.

[24] Ibid, p. 665.

[25] Ibid, p. 661.

[26] James Jones, From Here to Eternity, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951).

her returning to her home and role as mother. As with Virginia in The Snakepit, marriage and motherhood are the solutions to Karen Holmes dilemma. Yet the problems that Karen Holmes faces are somewhat different from the Freudian-originated problems that Virginia confronted. Karen Holmes in From Here to Eternity exemplifies a movement from mere Freudian analysis of women's problems to a recognition of women's sexuality. As I argued in the previous chapter, the arrival of the Kinsey Report in 1953 brought to light the potentials of female sexuality, but the response to the report distorted the potential. Of the post-Kinsey years in film, Brandon French writes:

> In films made from 1953 to 1956, the most politically reactionary and socially conformist phase of the fifties, women's unhappiness is treated not as a measure of enforced inequality or relegation to an opposed role, but of loneliness, and sexual starvation. The acknowledgement of women's sexual needs, and the concomitant escape from the sexual double standard, is an advance. But the fifties reveal how sex and love was often misused to obscure or resolve deeper sources of female dissatisfaction.[27]

Thus, films like From Here to Eternity might acknowledge women's sexuality, but they exaggerated it by suggesting that too much sex or a lack of sex made women neurotic or unhappy.

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[27] Brandon French, op. cit., p. xxii.

Jones' novel centered on Private Robert E. Lee Prewitt to demonstrate his theme: that emotional, irrational man cannot exist freely within the hierarchical system of the military. Jones' portrayal of Karen Holmes, wife to Company G Captain Dana Holmes and mother to his very similar son, was secondary. Thirty pages into the novel, Jones introduces Karen Holmes to the reader as she arrives at the Orderly Room of G Company. A Sargeant Warden and his assistant watch her from a window, and Warden comments:

> He watched the tight skirt under which, over her hip, passed a thin bulge that was the hem of her panties, fading out of sight. Framing the volute power of her life that no woman will acknowledge, he thought. Warden had a theory about women: for years he had been asking them to sleep with him. . . .and they were always shocked, even the rummy barflies. Of course, they always did, but that was only later, after he had fulfilled the proper requirements of approach. . . . It wasn't in them to be that honest.[28]

Warden's philosophy centers on an idea that women didn't have the honesty to acknowledge the "volute power of [their] life": their sexuality.

For the men in From Here to Eternity women's sexuality is a source of some danger. Their attitudes about women suggest that they fear the possibility of a more complicated female than that of their expectations. Jones

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[28] James Jones, op. cit., p. 31.

suggests in the novel that part of man's growing up involves an acknowledgement that women are potentially dangerous. For example, the hero's uncle tells him:

> Women run the world, boy. God dealt them all the cards between their legs. They don't have to gamble, like us men, and we mights well admit 'er.[29]

Women exist because of their sexuality; they are dangerous to men because sex or even love will pull men from their goals. After speaking on the phone with Karen Holmes, Warden comments:

> And they called them the weaker sex! that was prone to crack up and cry at every crisis! Like hell. The women ran this world; and nobody knew it better than a man in love. Sometimes he thought they did it deliberately, all this conspiracy stuff, just to satisfy some ancient racial love of intrigue inherited from the generations of conspiring to play the role of being dominated.[30]

Here, women are seen as merely playing a role if they appear to be dominated. Warden's fears about Karen Holmes center on an acknowledgement of her sexuality--one that is subversive and conspiratorial, hidden underneath her role as housewife, mate, and mother.

Finally, it is through the character of Karen Holmes that we see a dissatisfaction with her role as housewife and mate to the Captain of Company G. The men in Jones'

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[29] Ibid, p. 229.

[30] Ibid, p. 604.

novel see the results of Karen Holmes' dissatisfaction; with her character the origins of that dissatisfaction become clear. Before her involvement with Warden, Karen Holmes thought,

> There must be more, there must be, something told her, someplace, somewhere, there must be another reason, above, beyond somewhere another Equation beside this virgin + marriage + mother + grandmother = honor, justification, death. There must be another language, forgotten, unheard, unspoken, than the owning of an American' Homey Kitchen complete with dinette, breakfast nook, and fluorescent lighting. . . .Among the broken bathroom fixtures and the sticky brightly colored rain-washed labels on the empty cans, Karen Holmes was searching through the city dump of civilization, desperately hunting for her life, and the muck she got upon her fingers didn't matter.[31]

This woman, unsatisfied with the "equation" she must fit into, gets her "fingers" covered with "muck" in the course of the novel. Her sexual exploits are portrayed as an escape from her expected role; to the men they present a dangerous power that presents another side to the existence of women. The solution to Karen Holmes dissatisfaction was not to escape the roles of housewife and mother, but to re-evaluate the meaning of them. Her maternal instincts come to the fore at the end of the novel; she reaches an understanding and acceptance of her designated role as housewife and mother.

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[31] Ibid, p. 66.

Throughout the films of the fifties and into the sixties, the resolution to an acknowledged dissatisfaction on the part of a woman was for that particular woman to go through some journey to discover that women indeed are to be appropriated a role as housewife and mother. With Virginia in _The Snakepit_ it was through psychoanalysis that she returned to her marriage. With Karen Holmes, it was a series of affairs and sexual experiences that led her to resolve her dissatisfaction. In _Peyton Place_, a film of the later fifties, the heroine, Constance MacKenzie, has a career and an illegitimate child. She finds that through her rejection of marriage and adult sexuality, through her mistake of having an illegitimate child, she is finally led to the discovery that she wants to be married.

The author of _Peyton Place_, Grace Metalious, describes Constance MacKenzie as a sexually repressed, unhappy, single mother. It is only when a dark, handsome stranger comes to her town and seduces her that she finds happiness. In Metalious' words,

> The truth of the matter was that Constance enjoyed her life alone. . . .She repeated silently, over and over, that life with her daughter Allison was entirely satisfactory and all she wanted. Men were not necessary, for they were unreliable at best, and nothing but creators of trouble. As for love, she knew well the tragic results of not loving a man. What more terrible consequence might come from allowing herself to love another? No, Constance often told herself, she was better off as she was, doing the best she knew how, and waiting for Allison to grow up. If at times she felt

> a vague restlessness within herself, she told herself sharply that this was <u>not</u> sex, but perhaps a touch of indigestion.[32]

Constance MacKenzie may think she loves her lonely life in _Peyton Place_, but those touches "of indigestion" present a different story. She is unhappy because she won't admit that she needs love. In fact, the dark, handsome stranger must force her to this conclusion; after one of their dates he carries her into her home and rapes her, "slapping her a stunning blow across the mouth with the back of his hand."[33] Constance and the dark stranger are married; she leaves her job and finds the sexual fulfillment that previously had barred her from married life.

Thus, from Freudian frustrations to the dangers of Kinsey's reported sexuality, the dissatisfaction or "malaise" that women experienced began to emerge in the popular images of women. Another side of the efficient, ideal housewife image was becoming visible; it was the result of limitations on women's potential through the creation of the ideal. How were these images of frustration or malaise accepted by the society? Where was women's frustrated potential channelled? Society had an answer for that; it created the professional housewife and

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[32] Grace Metalious, _Peyton Place_, (New York: Julian Messner, Inc., 1956), p. 17.

[33] Ibid, p. 150.

mother.

In March of 1949, Dorothy Thompson wrote an editorial for Ladies Home Journal. It was entitled "Occupation--Housewife."[34] The subject matter focused on Thompson's advice to a friend who found she was ashamed in calling herself a "housewife." Thompson wrote:

> The trouble with you is that you have to find one word to cover a dozen occupations all of which you follow expertly and all more or less simultaneously. You might write: nurse, chaffeur, dressmaker, interior decorator, secretary'--or just put down a mind trained to concentration, to tackling and solving problems, weighing alternative policies, and planning the use of time, this woman could never have done what she has.[35]

Thompson encouraged her "friend" to keep in mind the many occupations the contemporary woman was responsible for. Thus, the responsibilities of a housewife was something a woman was "trained" for; the role became a profession that required a professional attitude.

Television responded to the creation of a professional housewife or mother with various new advice shows for women. In 1954 Ellen Pennell wrote a book entitled Women on Television in which she praised "television teaching" for women.[36] The values of having a television

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[34] Dorothy Thompson, "Occupation--Housewife," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 66-1, March 1949, pp. 11-12.

[35] Ibid.

[36] Ellen Pennell, Women on TV, (Minneapolis, Minnesota:

were limitless for women in Pennell's view, and she contrasted the woman who owned a television with the one who did not in the following way:

> My friends who watch television seem to live in a world of their own--they speak with such authority!' This innocent remark of a non-viewer is far more significant than she realized. . . .This impact explains the wide acceptance of television teaching, the triple and quadrupled sales figures of television promoted products and the better informed public.[37]

The non-viewer's remark suggests that her friends are authorities on housework and other matters. They lived in a "world of their own" in which this non-viewer does not belong. It was a television world where viewers had access to information that had become essential to maintaining the perfect home in a professional manner.

Television shows like NBC's "Home" show offered "expert" advice to homemakers. A Ladies Home Journal ad for the program read:

> From the moment you switch off your alarm clock each morning, until you wind it up again at night, friends--into your home. The disarming lady is Arlene Francis, hostess and editor-in-chief of NBC's 'electronic magazine of the air.' Home's staff and guests are the nation's experts on vital things to America's women.[38]

Burgess Pub. Co., 1954).

[37] Ibid, p. 7.

[38] "NBC," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 72-1, February 1955, p. 95.

Thus, through television shows, magazine articles, advertisements, and how-to books, women were advised exactly how and why they were to be housewives. The job was not one of emptiness but it became a "career" in and of itself, requiring professionals to carry it through.

Society had answers for women dissatisfied with motherhood as well as the role of housewife. It acknowledged the problems of women in recognizing and achieving their "function" as a mother, but offered no solution. In 1946 Dorothy Thompson editorialized about the problems facing young girls who idolize the Hollywood life:

> An economy in which a housemaid expects to earn more than a public-school teacher will by and by have no devoted teachers. And a society in which the ideal of our girls is a Hollywood star with four divorces before the age of thirty will eventually cease to produce good mothers. And that is the real beginning of the end. For at the root of everything is the mother. She creates the pattern which the son seeks to see repeated in his wife. She sets the standards of behavior for society, by setting them where society begins--in the family.[39]

Writers like Dorothy Thompson were concerned that women, faced with the role of mother versus the role of the "Hollywood star," would refuse their duty to bear and raise children. Yet even though Dorothy Thompson expressed concern for the status of American motherhood, she recognized

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[39] Dorothy Thompson, "'Progress and Decline," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 63-2, June 1946, p. 70.

problems involved with the role.

Three years after the above editorial appeared in Ladies Home Journal, Dorothy Thompson wrote a fictional story about a mother-daughter relationship. The story focused on a business man who had remembered his wife's silver wedding anniversary. He thinks of his love for his wife and compares her to their daughter who is a career woman. This man's (and Dorothy Thompson's) vision of women becomes clear when he compares his situation to that of his partner's:

> Funny. . .it's sometimes that way. Take my partner, Tim Mathews, and his daughter Helen. Just puts her mother in the shade with Tim: 'Henry, I want to introduce you to my daughter!' Helen, coming down to the office to lunch with her father, he tucking her arm under his and saying, Mary, Tim's wife, never showed up. Went in for clubwork he heard, and looked rather drab.[40]

The beautiful daughter who has time to go to lunch with her Dad by far outshadows her drab mother who is busy with clubwork. By playing mother and daughter against one another, Thompson indicates that these women compete for men's attention; yet the loser is ultimately the drab career woman. Thompson's story ends when the male narrator forces his aggressive, career-minded daughter to stay at home while his wife goes out with him. Thompson's view

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[40] Dorothy Thompson, "Silver Wedding," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 66-2, June 1949, p. 178.

of motherhood is clear; it not only was being threatened by "careerism," but it was even vulnerable to careerist attitudes within one's own family.

Other expressions of the "malaise" that mother faced during the postwar years appeared in varying forms. One male reader, tired with complaints from women, wrote:

> Let me tell you, I'm getting pretty darned fed up with these whining, self-pitying characters (women or mothers simply don't fit) who write of their hatred for their children. They are bored because they are bored with themselves. They would be whether they had ten kids or none. The 'net' they are caught in, upon closer examination, proves to be woven of old dance programs, hair ribbons and tooting convertible horns. A vicious little trap but not necessarily fatal if faced by an adult. God knows we need a lot of adults around these days.[41]

This male reader was essentially calling women childish because they were caught in a net from their past and couldn't accept their role as mother. But there was more to it than being caught in romantic revery, as a woman Ladies Home Journal reader wrote a few years later. Not only was the average age for marriage much lower than before the fifties, but there were problems of motherhood that stemmed from not being able to fulfill the ideal mother image: the professional with perfect children.

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[41] "Our Readers Write Us," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 69-1, February 1952, pp. 5-6.

In 1952 a woman from Denver, Colorado wrote:

> I am so sick and tired of the life I live that sometimes I just can't see any future. My husband feels the same way. We used to have so much fun before our son was born. But. . .life seems to be one long battle. We fight over the bath, getting dressed and at mealtime. Then there is the nap-time fight. Most of the day I am ranting, raving and screaming over something. . . .How can you keep calm when you see muddy feet crawling across freshly laundered bedspread, or a handful of dirt thrown in the door on a recently swept rug? I have tried spanking and not spanking. Of the two, spanking is a little more effective. The effect on me is terrific. My husband says we might as well give up everything and just sit home and wait until the child grows up, marries and leaves home.[42]

The ideal mother and housewife was not allowed to let her child dirty her immaculate home. The function of the housewife or mother was so limiting that it actually became impossible. Moreover, not only were women to prevent children from dirtying their home in a literal sense, there existed an increasing fear that even members of one's own family could be infiltrators. There was an increasing sense that even members of one's family could be infiltrators.

One's children were especially subject to the threat of Communist infiltration, and mothers were warned through example of what to watch for. In 1953, Dorothy Thompson wrote a "Report on the American Communist" for Ladies Home

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[42] "Our Readers Write Us," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 69-1, January 1952, pp. 4-5.

Journal, in which she defined for mothers the traits of the Communist:

> Communism recruits from youths who are emotionally and spiritually rather than economically afflicted; from girls who are wallflowers; from boys who have been unhappy at home and don't get on well with the run of other boys. . . .Many girls. . .actually like the 'donkey work' allotted to the rank and file. . . .These characteristics have been observable to people, like myself, who have attended communist rallies: the singular pulchritude of the many young female progressives attending it.[43]

Thus, the responsibility was on the American mother to ensure her child's normalcy and happiness. Advertisers made them feel guilty about it; society repeated it again and again. Moreover, the Communist recruitment was not an obvious phenomenon. Even the most beautiful girl was likely to be recruited; appearances were poor indicators of communist affiliation.

The American home of the postwar years became an increasingly isolated institution. Not only was the woman within the American home separated geographically, she was isolated by the ideology of separation of function. If separation wasn't enough, this isolation that suburban women experienced and that others experienced perhaps less vividly was further complicated by the era's anxieties.

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[43] Dorothy Thompson, "Report on the American Communist," Ladies Home Journal, Vol. 70-1, January 1953, pp. 11-12, 87.

The American home in suburbia had become a citadel that was to prevent the infiltration of juvenile delinquency or moral degeneracy, of germs on the mere level of cleanliness, and even of the Communist or Socialist ideology.

CONCLUSIONS

The increasing sense of isolation that women experienced through geographical or ideological separation in the post-World War II years is, perhaps, the final turning point for images of women in American popular culture. Toward the end of the 1950s, American society was in what Douglas Miller and Marion Nowak call the "Time of National Reassessment."[44] Women were indeed questioning traditional roles; it was a questioning that resulted in the origins of the 1960's' Women's Movement.

However, images of women failed to respond to this social reassessment in a positive way. The images of women became increasingly fragmented and oppressive; they were further distorted by the influence of Cold War anxieties and fears. Not only were postwar women told to guard against Communism on a public level, the expectation that they were to protect their isolated, pristine home against the infiltration of germs, disease, and immorality was distorted in its popular expression. In a most extreme form, Cold War anxieties were expressed in the suggestion by advertisers that even a woman's children would be watching her if she didn't fulfill her duties properly. Or, as Dorothy Thompson suggested in her 1949 story "Silver Wedding," the presence of one's own

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[44] Miller and Nowak, The Fifties, p. 13.

careerist daughter was apt to subvert the status of the American mother in the eyes of one's own husband. Moreover, the suggestion that Communism would "recruit youths" who were spiritually or emotionally deficient was a direct reference to the expectation that American women were to properly raise their children. Even the concept of female sexuality was equated with Communist subversion by reviewers of the 1953 Kinsey Report. Female sexuality came to be portrayed as an unseen but everpresent threat to the everywoman image of housewife and mother.

The problems with the separation of function between American men and women is evidenced in the increasing deterioration of women's images in the postwar years. The reflection of a female malaise or dissatisfaction within popular images of women indicates the result of the discrepancy between women's real existence and the culture's popular projection onto female images. Ultimately, the anxieties and fears of the postwar years led to images of women that offered security and tradition, but they also limited, objectified, and fragmented female identity at the expense of the postwar female experience.

What is the value of this project's understanding of how and why the postwar images of women were projected by

society? Betty Chmaj perhaps expresses the answer to this question most effectively. In her article "Some Paradox! Some Irony! Changing Images of the American Career Woman, 1930-1974" Chmaj writes:

> The question is not how to rid ourselves of myths and stereotypes and substitute but rather how to identify the dominant myths and images that have shaped our lives and told us who we are and ought to be, comparing these to the 'social, political, and economic' realities of that same time and place, seeking then to explain whatever disparities are found--however 'paradoxical' or 'ironical' such disparities may seem.[45]

The establishment of <u>why</u> American society in the postwar years projected images of women that were limiting, objectifying, and fragmenting is valuable for studies of other decades as well as for the years after World War II. What this particular project indicates is that in times of anxiety (whether it be an anxiety attributed to problems of the American economy, or problems on a social or political level) the reaffirmation of tradition is done at the expense of women.

Indeed, as Ruth S. Cowan points out in a study of women between World Wars I and II, what Betty Friedan called the "feminine mystique" of the fifties had previ-

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[45] Betty Chmaj, "Some Paradox! Some Irony!," in Luedtke, Luther S., (ed) <u>Study of American Culture, Contemporary Conflicts</u>. (Deland, Florida: Everett/Edwards, 1977), p. 125.

ously existed for women in the post-World War I years.[46] Just as Cold War Anxieties and fears led Americans to reaffirm traditional roles for women in the years after World War II, the increased growth of technology in the post-World War I years led to the social ideology of a feminine mystique. It was not, as Betty Friedan writes, that women had "outgrown the housewife role,"[47] but rather that the role as it existed in the post-World War I years and, in a more extreme form during the post-World War II years, was never realistically fulfilling for American women. Women in America today are left with the legacy of the post-World War II reaffirmation of tradition in the form of images that are limiting and oppressive.

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[46] Ruth S. Cowan, "Two Washes in the Morning and a Bridge Party at Night," Women's Studies, Vol. 3, 1976, pp. 147-172.

[47] Betty Friedan, The Feminine Mystique, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1963), p. 296.

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