

PROPRIETY AND PASSION: Images of the New Woman on the London Stage  
in the 1890s

by

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#### ABSTRACT

The emergence of the New Woman in the 1890s was the result of a broad spectrum of feminist demands: equal advantages with men in education, entrance into "male" professions, and a share in the government of the country. Women's desire for personal freedom led to the removal of conventional restrictions with regard to dress, manners, and modes of living and to a rebellion against inequalities in marriage and double standards of morality. Within the theatre community, bold new patterns of thought developed out of a growing discontent with outworn forms. The New Drama and the New Woman became inseparable in the public mind, and socially aware dramatists attempted to create a contemporary heroine who would reflect the way modern woman was perceived.

The first chapter, "Relics of the Past," documents legal and social changes in woman's status prior to 1900 and reveals how the 19th century woman was held back, not only by men claiming educational and political advantages by virtue of male superiority, but by other women who fought against any change to well-defined sex roles, and by her own reluctance to free herself from conventional patterns. The second chapter, "Removal of Ancient Landmarks," is concerned with women in the creative arts who seized the opportunities for female emancipation that life in the artistic community promised, particularly to those in the

theatre. The third chapter, "Treading on Dangerous Ground," links the impact of Ibsen on British drama with the new breed of actresses who were willing to represent the New Woman on stage and to replace the feminine ideal with their defiant portrayals of selfhood.

The next three chapters explore dramatic images of the New Woman as she was depicted in plays written for the London stage in the 1890s. In Chapter IV, "Shall We Forgive Her?," the former "fallen" woman of fiction and melodrama, now updated to the "woman with a past," demonstrates the extent to which prior sexual misdemeanours make her a social outcast, even if the playwright does not condemn her to an untimely death, insanity, or suicide. Chapter V, "New Lamps for Old," deals with the "advanced" woman who is either aggressive in courtship or chooses a career over marriage, overturns parental authority, engages in activities formerly reserved for males, and often talks and dresses like a man. By pushing against conventional boundaries which define woman's intellectual and moral territory, she seeks to overthrow the patriarchal system and to upset the double standard. In Chapter VI, "A Modern Eve," another aspect of the New Woman manifests in the married heroine who attempts to establish greater freedom for herself within the old patterns of respectability yet must face the psychological pressures which tend to keep women in their traditional place.

Throughout the decade, proponents of the New Drama allowed the heroine to express her own mind as a necessary step towards selfhood. Conservative playwrights clung to legal marriage and most assumed that a woman's role was decreed by Nature and was basically unchangeable.

More progressive playwrights advocated free union and accepted the premise that freedom is attained only when both sexes are released from bondage to old ideals.

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## INTRODUCTION

The last decade of the 19th century, popularly known as the fin-de-siècle, was a time for contemplating what the coming century might bring. Romanticism, impelled by the French Revolution, claimed freedom and equality for the individual. The extension of those rights to women was part of a gradual and fundamental shift in philosophical beliefs. But for a majority of women, the 1890s were marked by a continuing struggle against a dominant conservatism which reaffirmed traditional sex roles, although new laws gave impetus to women who were determined to break with old patterns.

The emergence of the New Woman in the 1890s has been seen as an ill-defined and undeveloped forerunner of the present century's "liberated" woman. But while a new role for women, or at least a new way of looking at commonly accepted roles, can be traced back to that particular period and the ongoing debate surrounding the "Woman Question," a deeper realization of personal selfhood was altering the lives of unique individuals. These "pioneers" typified the woman whose main concern was with her own creative activity as writer, actress, musician, or as worker in any profession previously dominated by men. Only a few were interested in shaping their personal philosophy into a polemic call for the universal emancipation of women. Yet to a degree, every woman who expanded the dimensions of her intellectual, emotional, and physical capacities in contradiction to the accepted norm was part of the feminist movement. By pushing against the restrictions which had

bound women since the onset of the Victorian era and the Industrial Revolution, she not only challenged herself, but society as a whole.

In order to create a composite of the New Woman, I have included actual as well as fictional women. The first three chapters are concerned with the social, political, and cultural backgrounds of those who laid the groundwork for women's liberties. The last three chapters document and analyze dramatic works which portrayed images of the New Woman on the London stage during the final decade of the 19th century. These plays reflect both male and female playwrights' attitudes towards woman's changing role. Under the influence of Ibsen, the "new" British dramatist was compelled to probe the psychological aspects of the New Woman in order to distinguish her from the old stereotype, a product of Victorian idealism which distinguished only between the "good" (pure, respectable, devoted, and domestic) and the "bad" (fallen, disreputable, wayward, or déclassée). These plays explore an assertion of feminine power and influence, with an emphasis on the way women help women, a recognition of and respect for female intellect, and the demand for sexual equality in marriage.

I have examined journals, letters, and periodicals which document the thoughts and actions of outstanding women of the mid- and late 19th century or which reflect current attitudes towards the changing status of women. The selection of plays was governed by contemporary reviews by leading drama critics. These reviews identified those works whose plot and characters were relevant to my topic. Two of the plays, Woman's Proper Place and The Bicycle Girl, were investigated solely because of their intriguing titles. The inclusion of Tommy Atkins was

prompted by Dr. David Mayer's remark that, in popular melodrama, the "fallen" heroine did not necessarily have to die. With the exception of the 1895 revival of The New Magdalen (1873), my choice of material has been deliberately restricted to original British plays written after Ibsen's impact on English audiences, and does not include adaptations of foreign productions. All the plays discussed were produced on the London stage during the 1890s with the exception of Mrs Warren's Profession and Mrs Daintree's Daughter which were not performed publicly until after the turn of the century. The contrast in approach by a male and a female writer using the same source material justifies their inclusion. An alphabetical listing of the plays is given in Appendix II.

The most interesting part of my research has been the study of little known plays by minor playwrights. The conservative approach taken by major dramatists, such as Wilde, Pinero, and Jones, reflects public tastes and proprieties as well as the theatre manager's concern for a good return at the box-office. But the obscure, lesser known, and less successful plays of the period, many of which remain unpublished, shine a different light on the controversial aspects of the Woman Question. Some dare to discuss topics like adultery, bigamy, and free union from the woman's standpoint. My comparison of male and female playwrights led to some surprising discoveries. Women writers were reluctant to allow their heroines to break completely with traditional role-playing. Among the male playwrights were those who were more than willing to free women from the restrictions of the past. Consequently, my thesis grew out of an examination of hitherto untouched material

rather than a reliance on well-known plays to support preconceived ideas about the New Woman as a popular stereotype. In most of the plays, conventional marriage provides the happy ending that audiences expected, and the double standard is still tolerated by writers of both sexes, but progressive playwrights suggest that a partnership of equals, preferably in free union, is the ideal relationship. Although such an alternative may have shocked theatre audiences, it was a fact of contemporary life. In her book entitled Parallel Lives: Five Victorian Marriages, Phyllis Rose notes that, of the five couples whose lives she studied, the most harmonious union was the 24-year common-law relationship of George Eliot and George Henry Lewes.

In drama, as in real life, the New Woman was torn between contradictory values. She sought dominion over her own life, but was hindered by social and psychological restraints. Not the least of these was a reluctance to free herself from the traditional "womanly" role. Women found champions in John Stuart Mill and Henrik Ibsen, both of whom advocated freedom for humanity as a whole. Bernard Shaw promoted the "unwomanly" woman but concluded that man was also in need of emancipation from traditional role-playing. Those new women and new men who did break from the restrictions of the past opened the door for others to follow into the 20th century.

## CHAPTER I

## "Relics of the Past"

Victorian Society and the New Woman

The term "New Woman" became something of a catch-phrase during the final decade of the 19th century, a period when "new" was attached to anything modern,<sup>1</sup> to imply a departure from the conservatism of the Victorian era.<sup>2</sup> However, as far back as the 1860s, a controversy had arisen between those who questioned the inequalities inherent in a woman's position in relationship to a man's, both legally and socially, and those who ardently defended the Victorian ideal of woman which pictured her as an exalted being even as it denied her privileges and freedoms. The "Woman Question" continued to engage the attention of law-makers, clergymen, scientists, doctors, journalists, novelists, critics, and playwrights who at times, treated it satirically, but more often with an earnestness which typified the Victorians' approach to any current issue. By the 1890s, the debate had reached a peak with the emergence of the New Woman herself in all her infinite variety.

In his backward glance after the turn of the century, Walter Besant celebrated the transformations that had occurred prior to 1900, and stressed the social importance of woman's improved status:

The younger folk are flying over the whole face of the country on bicycles; the girls have established their independence and come and go as they will; most of them have occupations of some sort: thousands are engaged in literature of various kinds, others in art (with all its countless branches), others again in science, in music, in archaeology, in journalism, in teaching, in medicine. The emancipation of women ...is perhaps the most important event in the history of the country....Nothing more important, considering the consequences that will follow, has ever happened to our race. What those consequences will be, it is impossible to say.

It was her fear of those possible consequences that had prompted Elizabeth Lynn Linton, in an article which appeared in the Saturday Review of March 14, 1868, to attack the "Girl of the Period,"<sup>4</sup> a shockingly unconventional young woman, forerunner of the New Woman. In the year following Mrs. Linton's appeal for a return to the "old English ideal," John Stuart Mill published "The Subjection of Women."<sup>5</sup> This treatise had actually been completed eight years earlier, but Mill had postponed publication until the time "when it should seem likely to be most useful."<sup>6</sup> By 1869, the moment had obviously arrived for his far-sighted and quite revolutionary projection of a new role for the Victorian woman. In contradistinction to Mrs. Linton's nostalgic longing for "the old time...when English girls were content to be what God and nature had made them," Mill advocates a new status for women which would forever free them from social subordination, "this relic of the past," and allow them to function in the world as man's equal.

Like most of her generation, Mrs. Linton had accepted the doctrine of separate spheres, a theory which glorified woman's role as

loving and nurturing helpmeet to the father or husband who returned after a workday spent in the harsh, impersonal world of public life to the peaceful refuge, the moral stability and innocent privacy of home. This ideal of woman as ministering angel, while it sought to deify her, kept her bound and subordinate to the male members of the family. In essence, Mill explodes the "separate spheres" theory and the notion of woman's "natural" role: "...what is now called the nature of women is an eminently artificial thing -- the result of forced repression in some directions, unnatural stimulation in others." He believed that "equality of rights would abate the exaggerated self-abnegation which is the present artificial ideal of feminine character" and he exposed the irony of the current custom to worship and degrade at the same time: "...we are perpetually told that women are better than men, by those who are totally opposed to treating them as if they were as good."<sup>7</sup>

Mill's advanced ideas, because they were considered revolutionary, hardly found universal acceptance. Before Woman could advance to the position she had achieved in Besant's account, there were three major areas of resistance to be overcome both in herself and in the way that society perceived her. She was not only hindered by Victorian idealism regarding woman's "natural" role, but by educational and professional limitations, and by a rigid marriage code. Each of these issues became prime targets for reformers, both male and female, who rallied in support of Mill's vision of sexual equality.

One "girl of the period" who refused to conform to the role which confined women exclusively to the domestic sphere was Millicent Garrett

Fawcett, one of the earliest women lecturers in England. She was 23 when Mill published "The Subjection of Women." A year later, she published a work of her own on political economy.<sup>8</sup> A loyal supporter of Mill's philosophy, she credited the growth of the women's movement to his "life-long advocacy and guidance." In her estimation, Mill's writings on social and political issues had "attacked the fortress of world-old custom and prejudice," had claimed for women "the fullest liberty in the practical affairs of life," and shown "the mischief, folly and misery of withholding from half the human race the opportunity of development..."<sup>9</sup> For Mrs. Fawcett, Mill's influence marked the beginning of an epoch. She dated the parliamentary history of the women's rights movement from May 1867 when he introduced an amendment changing the word "man" to "person" in a relevant clause of a current reform bill.

This small step in legal language was a giant one for Mrs. Fawcett and those who saw any gain in the recognition of the equality of women as significant. The next two years were marked by "the presence of ladies as speakers at public meetings on behalf of the enfranchisement of women," but they "had to endure an ordeal from foes and remonstrance from friends." A member of Parliament referred to the ladies who took to the public platform as having "disgraced themselves and their sex."<sup>10</sup> Feminine activists were condemned as much by other women as they were by men. Mrs. Linton chastised "The Shrieking Sisterhood" for the "hysterical parade they make about their wants and their intentions."<sup>11</sup> However, by the early 1880s, it had become a common occurrence for women to speak publicly.

The changing status of women was to shake the foundations of English society before the close of the 19th century. In retrospect, the emergence of the New Woman in the 1890s can be seen as a result of a broad spectrum of feminist demands: equal advantages with men in education, entrance into professions such as law and medicine, and a share in the government of the country. Women's desire for personal freedom led to the removal of conventional restrictions with regard to dress, manners, and modes of living and to a rebellion against inequalities in marriage and double standards of morality.

All classes of women were eventually to benefit from social reform, but the greatest urge towards change was felt among women in the leisured middle classes who rebelled against the narrowness and uselessness of their lives. On the other hand, the concerns of the average working-class woman were those arising from economic circumstances which forced her to work for low wages in deplorable conditions. Legislation passed between 1833 and 1887 gradually curbed the worst labour abuses, those involving women and children employed in the textile industry and in coal and iron mines, but young girls and women continued to be overworked in dressmaking establishments and factories. To escape severe working conditions, many turned to prostitution as an easier and more lucrative trade. An article in the Westminster Review in 1859 claimed that it was not seduction that accounted for the large number of prostitutes on the streets of London (an estimated 80,000 throughout the last half of the 19th century), but the desire of ordinary working women to escape from the drudgery of their lives. In the same vein, a pamphlet entitled "The Legalisation of

Female Slavery in England," written by Annie Besant in 1876, stated emphatically that "by far the greatest number of prostitutes are such for a living. Men are immoral for their amusement: women are immoral for bread."<sup>12</sup> Workers for women's rights saw two directions which could lead to an improvement in the status of women and allow them equal opportunities. One path led towards legal emancipation through improved laws designed to remedy present injustices. Another avenue lay in the area of improved education, a system of training for occupations which would pay a reasonable wage or, in the case of the middle classes, would develop their latent abilities and bring a sense of fulfilment to their empty lives. Yet a third route existed in the compulsion towards personal freedom that individual women were experiencing.

The suffragettes, as those who petitioned for voting privileges for women came to be called, became the target for ridicule and parody in many leading periodicals, particularly as their collective voice became louder and more insistent. Even though Mill had sounded a note of "practical good sense and moderation"<sup>13</sup> when he appealed in the House of Commons for women's enfranchisement on the grounds that it was a matter of expediency based on justice, his opponents felt they were being equally logical in denying women the vote, especially married women, because "by implication...man and wife is one mind, and a vote given to the wife will be only another given to the husband."<sup>14</sup> A more emotional reaction to female suffrage can be linked to the firmly implanted concept of sex roles. Mrs. Linton viewed the clamour for political rights not only as "the most destructive of home peace and conjugal union" but actually "woman's confession of sexual enmity."<sup>15</sup>

The passion with which Mrs. Linton debated the issue gives an inkling of the deep-rooted attitudes regarding the sexual passivity assigned to woman. Resistance to anything that disturbed those attitudes accounts for the forcefulness with which Victorians thwarted repeated attempts by women's groups to gain the franchise.

Those who championed the cause of universal education as a means of improving women's lot were more successful than the suffragettes and their supporters, even though this field, too, had always been a male prerogative and as jealously guarded as the political arena. Medical practitioners had proven to their own satisfaction that a woman's brain was substantially smaller than a man's, a fact of nature that foiled any attempt to develop her mental capacity. According to an eminent London physician, and the father of thirteen children, intellectual endeavour, especially during a girl's adolescent years, could affect her health and her ability to procreate:

I have very many times watched the careers of exceedingly studious girls who spent the great mass of their power in mental work, and in every case the pelvic power decreased in even pace with the expenditure of mental power.<sup>16</sup>

This theory was even supported by female educators who warned that any strain upon a girl's intellect could only lead to ill health. If she is not guarded from "over fatigue...cold and heat, and hours of study, ...she will probably develop some disease, which if not fatal, will, at any rate, be an injury to her for life."<sup>17</sup> John Ruskin took a romantic approach to a young girl's character and a boy's: "You may chisel a boy into shape....But you cannot hammer a girl into anything. She grows as a flower does."<sup>18</sup> This girlish blossoming, according to Ruskin, was

achieved by letting her loose in a library of classical books and by exposing her to the best in art and music. Thus, opposition to higher education for women came from doctors, educators, and idealists, all of whom expressed concern for the detrimental effect that mental activity would have on fragile woman, needful of protection.

But clear thinkers like Mill undermined such concepts by observing that if brain size is the criterion, "an elephant or a whale must prodigiously excel mankind."<sup>19</sup> Scientist Thomas Huxley was concerned that his daughters receive "the same training in physical science as their brothers": "They, at any rate, shall not be got up as man-traps for the matrimonial market."<sup>20</sup> By the 1870s, Girton [Women's] College, founded at Hitchin in 1869, had moved to Girton, Cambridge, and the University of London had a charter enabling it to confer degrees on women. At the end of Queen Victoria's reign [1901], there were twelve universities and colleges which educated women to degree level. Thus, in spite of those who upheld the "small brain" theory and the "separate spheres" ideology, more powerful influences were at work to help women achieve their educational goals.

However, at Cambridge and Oxford, where graduates automatically acquired a vote in the administration of university affairs, the ruling body refused to share this power with women. While they might take the same examinations as men, women were not awarded the degrees they had earned. In 1896, an article in the Nineteenth Century warned of the "degradation of learning" that would result if Cambridge women were granted degrees. They would then demand a voice in the running of the university, leading ultimately to the sweeping away of "whatever

vestiges remain of habit and convention."<sup>21</sup> Another commentator feared the terrible effects on the entire nation if women entered the administrative level of these male institutions [Oxford and Cambridge]:

Grant the B.A. and you will have to grant the M.A....There will come a claim for admission to Tutorships and Professorships....A female Vice-Chancellor would be shocking to our present sense of propriety, but the New Woman would be all the better pleased....the result must be the emasculation of the University system [which] could not fail to affect the national mind.<sup>22</sup>

Given this kind of resistance, it is not surprising that the growing numbers of women attending university in Britain attracted considerable derision. Singled out for particular ridicule was the Girton Girl who epitomized the "advanced" type. During the 1870s, Punch magazine treated the topic of academic women humorously, usually with mocking references to "courses" prescribed by the writer as suitable for women. These were "domestic" in nature with matriculation candidates required to gain proficiency in Cooking, Needlework, and Art, and to respond to questions such as, "What do you consider to be the 'Rights of Woman?'" with the acceptable reply: "She has but one right, which involves many duties -- the right to be the Sweetness and Light, the Grace and Queen of home."<sup>23</sup> The ability to satirize both sides of the Woman Question debate is in evidence here but, a decade later, an unstinted admiration for the emerging New Woman crept into Punch caricatures. A drawing in the July 2, 1887 issue features a lady wrangler, Agneta Frances Ramsay, about to enter a "First Class" railway carriage marked "For Ladies Only," while an obsequious Mr Punch stands by with head respectfully bowed and mortarboard in hand.<sup>24</sup> There

is also mixed humour and admiration in the drawing of a woman in academic cap and gown which appeared in Fun magazine on June 18, 1890 [Plate 1] with the caption: "Ladies First -- The Senior Wrangleress / A Worthy Daughter of a Worthy Sire / Miss Fawcett demonstrates the superiority of her sex, and defeated man takes a back seat." The background does indeed show a dejected male figure in university garb as well as an angelic winged figure blowing a trumpet and carrying a wreath labelled "suffrage." This personage, the "sire" mentioned in the caption, is Professor Henry Fawcett.<sup>25</sup> A poem accompanying the Fun cartoon stressed the importance to women generally of Miss Fawcett's achievement in taking the "Cambridge cake": "For they fancy the crowd / May believe in them now for her sake."<sup>26</sup>

It is ironic that the strongest opposition to women's higher education and professional training came from medical men, since medicine was the first exclusively male profession to be invaded by women. An example of perseverance had been set by Florence Nightingale who singlehandedly established the modern nursing profession. In rebellion against the stultifying life imposed on upper-class women, Miss Nightingale launched on ambitious studies which took her to nursing schools and training hospitals in Düsseldorf, Paris, and finally London. She became a national heroine during the Crimean War for her administrative work at army field hospitals. However, the trained nurses who followed in her footsteps were still met with prejudice from doctors who feared female hysterics.<sup>27</sup>

Women who wished to become doctors needed even more determination to overcome sexual barriers. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (sister of Mrs.

Fawcett) was barred from attending medical school, but studied privately and passed examinations held by the Apothecaries' Society and, in 1865, was registered as a legally qualified medical practitioner. Other women who attempted to emulate her were refused and had to study abroad in Zurich and Paris. Mrs. Anderson (then Miss Garrett) finally obtained the degree of M.D. by applying to Paris Medical School. In 1874, Miss Jex Blake, after repeated attempts to gain admittance to Edinburgh School and Hospital, started The London School of Medicine for Women. By 1893, six examining bodies, principally in Ireland and Scotland, were prepared to award diplomas to qualified women, and eight medical schools were willing to admit female students. By this time, there were about 45 qualified medical women practising in London and 144 listed on the Medical Register.<sup>28</sup> Despite these figures, the British Medical Association, to which Mrs. Anderson had been admitted in 1872, had passed a resolution in 1878 excluding women, and this was still in effect.

By the 1890s, countless women were filling positions as clerical workers in banks, businesses, and insurance companies. With the introduction of the typewriter and the adding machine in the 1880s, women quickly developed skills that male clerks were reluctant to master. These new functions not only contributed to a woman's earning power but were fundamental to her new status. Female workers were becoming more pervasive and even indispensable to the business community. As women gained more recognition in the public sphere, reactionaries like Mrs. Linton became more adamant in their demands for a return to the domestic ideal:

Soon, it seems to us, there will be no such thing as the old-fashioned home left in England. Women are swarming out at all doors; running hither and thither among the men; clamouring for arms that they may enter into the fray with them; anxious to lay aside their tenderness, their modesty, their womanliness... [to] enter on the manly professions and make themselves the rivals of their husbands and brothers.<sup>29</sup>

Those swarms of women who intruded on practically every male stronghold, including the place of business, educational institutions, and the professions, set new trends in every facet of the emancipated woman's existence. Unmarried girls in particular rushed to take advantage of that new-found freedom and the loosening of old restraints through innovations in dress, in physical activity, in manners, and in general mobility.

The life-style of the New Woman was reflected in her wearing apparel. As R.J. Cruikshank pointed out in Roaring Century, "The freeing of women from certain barbarisms of fashion is not the least notable of the social liberations."<sup>30</sup> The first campaign to free women from the confines of contraptions such as the cage crinoline was attempted by Mrs. Amelia Bloomer who arrived in London from America in 1851 to promote her new outfit which featured a pair of Turkish trousers. But "Bloomerism" was cruelly ridiculed in unflattering references to ladies' underwear or in risqué music-hall songs. "Normal" dress for women in the 1850s consisted of an amplitude of skirts supported by a circular frame composed of narrow bands of steel descending perpendicularly from the waist, with other bands at right angles forming the circumference. One woman, writing in 1893, recalled

the crinoline's disadvantages: "It had several drawbacks which nothing could obviate...the risk of fire, so that from time to time the papers chronicled, 'Deaths from burning, through wearing crinoline,'... [and its] awkward way of assuming, as it were, an independent existence from its wearer..."<sup>31</sup> Yet this voluminous garment could allow the more audacious of the sex a display of foot and ankle.

It was just this mixture of prudery and sensuousness that influenced fashion during the 1870s. Posterior adornment in the form of a bustle added a false protuberance behind while the front of the dress was drawn tightly across the hips to draw attention to the female torso. The first indication of changes to come was in 1875 when Arthur Liberty opened a shop which offered "aesthetic and rational dress for the Advanced Woman."<sup>32</sup> But, for the average woman, the fashions set by Paris couturiers and adopted by English society women like Lillie Langtry remained the vogue. When engaged in lady-like sports, such as riding, archery, and golf, the appropriate dress was haute couture. By the 1880s when lawn tennis came into vogue, the hobble-skirt had replaced long sweeping trains, but the new fashion, complete with little bonnet and high heels, made no adaptation for the movements that might be required to play the game. By the end of the 1880s, however, as women became more active physically and intellectually, the more daring developed a preference for plain tailoring and coarse fabrics. To counteract this trend towards masculinity, the Paris designers concentrated on wasp waists, the legendary norm being 18 inches with the aid of tight lacing. There is an obvious symbolism in the caging, hobbling, and corsetting of the female throughout the latter half of

the 19th century, the style of her dress accurately portraying the restraints with which society attempted to circumvent her. But by the 1890s, an important influence came about through the New Woman's active participation in sports such as hiking, rowing, roller-skating, grass hockey, cricket, and cycling.

The advent of the bicycle not only revolutionized her clothing, but more importantly, provided the young woman with the means of travelling unchaperoned. A fashion commentator, after describing a group of ladies in their cycling costumes, sounded a universal note for the free-wheeling New Woman: "Tight-lacing must be banished from the mind and body of the woman who would ride the iron steed..."<sup>33</sup> Divided skirts and knickerbockers, worn with loose-fitting jackets, collars and ties, and straw boaters to add a masculine touch, were the most practical attire for cycling and other outdoor sports. But women in trousers were still a shocking sight to the majority of Victorians. While any departure from the norm scandalized conventional society, surely the sight of a lady in long skirt attempting to ride a bicycle side-saddle, while pedalling with one foot, would have compelled the sane to give support to the Rational Dress movement.<sup>34</sup>

Like all aspects of the controversy surrounding the emancipation of women, cycling and its physical and mental benefits became a major topic for discussion in leading journals. Points of view ranged from advising against any form of muscular development in women, written by a woman physician, to a suggestion that neurotic women should "try and cultivate a sense of humour and to 'bike' in moderation."<sup>35</sup> Female health had been a concern in the late 1870s when Punch endorsed a paper

by Frances Power Cobbe which summarized all the causes of poor health in the typical female. These included "neglect of exercise," "tight-lacing," "lack of healthy occupation for mind and body," and confining the female form in "heavy, dragging skirts, high heels, and pull-backs."<sup>36</sup>

But when the New Woman broke free of these restrictions, she was condemned as "mannish" and "unwomanly." In 1890, Punch warned her that

as soon as a woman steps down of her own free will from the pedestal on which the chivalrous admiration of men has placed her, she abandons her claim to...the outward and visible signs of the spiritual grace which [men] assume as an attribute of all women.<sup>37</sup>

Her stepping-down launched a tirade against "modern women" which reached Shakespearean proportions in a poem published in Punch entitled, "The Seven Ages of Woman," whose last scene of all is "sheer unwomanliness, mere sex-negation, / Sans love, sans charm, sans grace, sans everything."<sup>38</sup> It was this feeling that women would essentially cease to be women which permeated the anti-feminist writings of the 1890s, as exemplified by lines from another poem headed "Seomania":

'When Adam delved and Eve span'  
No one need ask which was the man.  
Bicycling, footballing, scarce human,<sup>39</sup>  
All wonder now 'which is the woman?'

The Saturday Review was equally contemptuous of "manly women" who adopt "manly occupations, amusements, mode of conversation, sports... [and] imitations of the male garments."<sup>40</sup> Mrs. Linton's chief grudge against "these women of doubtful gender" who have "ceased to be women

and not learnt to be men" was that they had taken up "after-dinner oratory."<sup>41</sup> This "decline of reserve among women" was viewed with alarm by Katie Cowper. Her article in the Nineteenth Century expressed concern that women were "openly writing in reviews and newspapers" and "standing upon a public platform and addressing a public assembly."<sup>42</sup> (Ironically, the writer herself and Mrs. Linton both fall into the former category.) A male writer, T. Pilkington White, also condemned "modern mannish maidens" for "a kind of brusque audaciousness in a conversation with a souppçon of slangy chaff: an affectation of assuming to know more of what is what than their mothers and grandmothers were ever permitted or supposed to know." He considered their smoking tobacco to be "yet another development of woman's mania to masquerade as men." But his choice of metaphor to delineate the Victorian ideal is a shocking reminder that even in 1890, a large segment of society sought to keep women bound, refusing to contemplate future change:

...we desire to see women remain women, and not aspire to be poor imitations of men.... surely there is something akin to divinity -- inherent in woman...which would hedge her in, and keep her wholly woman in her thoughts and occupations.... The ancient well-trodden path of womanhood, fenced and guide-posted, is, we are sure, the best and safest; neither are the last years of this nineteenth century, nor any years yet to come, going to show us a more excellent way.<sup>43</sup>

But despite the resistance and ridicule which greeted any deviation from "the ancient well-trodden path," the New Woman continued to make headway in her struggle for recognition as man's equal in ways that did not necessarily deprive her of womanliness. Along with external changes in appearance, education, conversation, and occupation

came an internal change in her sense of self-worth. This was outwardly apparent in her new legal status which gave women more freedom within the bonds of matrimony. The pattern of reform had been set by John Stuart Mill in 1851 with his marriage to Harriet Taylor, his companion and collaborator for the previous 20 years.<sup>+4</sup> In keeping with their advanced views, the bridegroom drafted a personal declaration in which he stated that his wife

...retains in all respects whatever the same absolute freedom of action and freedom of disposal of herself and of all that does or may at any time belong to her, as if no such marriage had taken place, and I absolutely disclaim and repudiate all pretension to have acquired<sup>45</sup> any rights whatever by virtue of such marriage.

Under the English laws of 1851, when John Stuart Mill wrote this progressive declaration, a married woman had no legal identity apart from her husband. On marriage, a husband assumed legal possession or control of all his wife's property plus any property that she acquired during marriage. If they separated, the wife could not sue her husband for support since legally they were the same person. Moreover, if a wife left her husband, she could take nothing with her, not even her children. However, through a series of parliamentary reforms, woman's legal and personal status had improved considerably by the end of the century.

In 1870, the Married Woman's Property Act was passed which allowed a wife her "separate property," which included moneys acquired by her own work, from investments, or by inheritance. By 1882, she had acquired more privileges and more responsibilities. She could enter into contracts and dispose of property, but she could also be held

liable for the support of husband, children, and grandchildren. In 1878, laws governing custody of children eased somewhat so that a wife who left her husband had guardianship of her children under 10 years of age where previously she had to petition even for access. Other gains came with the passing of the Matrimonial Causes Act of 1878 which granted a separation order and ordered support payments to the wife whose husband was convicted of assaulting her. Widows benefited by new legislation in 1890 whereby they could legally receive up to £500 of a deceased husband's estate and make claims on any residue. Finally, after 1891, the more personal aspects of marriage came under legal jurisdiction when a court case decided that a husband had no right to forcibly detain his wife to obtain restitution of conjugal rights.

As might be expected, these legal changes were both applauded and condemned. True to her principles, Mrs. Linton called the ruling of 1891 not only a triumph of promiscuity but a blow at the foundation of social order. In her view, the law had literally abolished marriage when it allowed a wife to leave her husband who now had no legal power to compel her to fulfil her contract. Ironically, Mrs. Linton placed the deserted husband in the position formerly occupied by the subjugated wife:

Thus the woman wins all round.... Bound hand and foot, the humiliated slave at the triumph, the man will now be the true captive of the woman... She may prevent his having an heir to his estate -- a family to inherit his fortune and carry on his name -- and he can only bite his fingers, like an imprisoned giant looking through the bars of his iron cage at the free-skipping wife who, with the help of the law, has put him there, as unable to indemnify as to free himself.<sup>46</sup>

While acknowledging the wrongs done to women over the past century, traditionalists like Mrs. Linton feared the pendulum was swinging too far in the other direction: "...we begin to ask ourselves where we are going, and to look anxiously at the foundations of social order and morality."<sup>47</sup>

One result of questioning the institution of marriage, and its disadvantage to either or both parties, was "an increasing disinclination to marry, or rather a vague distaste of it...among the young of both sexes." Writing in the Saturday Review, a lady calling herself "A Woman of the Day," suggested that the remedy was to extend the facilities for divorce: "If the dissolution of marriage could be more easily effected, we should hear nothing more about the abolition of the contract."<sup>48</sup> At the time, a woman could be divorced for infidelity, but she could only obtain a divorce if her husband were proved guilty not only of adultery but an additional offense such as desertion, cruelty, rape, or incest. The "Woman of the Day" suggests that other reasons be accepted as sufficient grounds for divorce, quite apart from any breach of the seventh commandment. In her list of offenses she includes protracted drunkenness, insanity, or felony. Those who sought to preserve the double standard naturally argued against divorce reform, insisting that "the woman who clamours for divorce on the same grounds as men is surely lowering the standard of female purity."<sup>49</sup> The dissolution of marriage, which formerly had been obtainable only through a special Act of parliament for individuals who could afford it, became somewhat more accessible toward the end of the century. However, the divorced woman continued to be stigmatized. She

became "a nondescript, a déclassée" to those who continued to view marriage as an "indissoluble union."<sup>50</sup> But the old ways, formerly accepted without question, were rapidly losing ground.

In a series of articles dealing with "the Morality of Marriage," Mona Caird advocated the end of the patriarchal system and the "gigantic absurdities" on which the sacredness of marriage had rested for centuries. In her writings there is a sense of victory in that "the time has fully come to throw off the tyranny of surviving superstitions." Having come to the conclusion that "the present form of marriage -- exactly in proportion to its conformity with orthodox ideas -- is a failure," she endorses "free unions" between men and women who care only for "the real bond between them and [treat] as of quite minor importance the artificial or legal tie."<sup>51</sup> Although she was visualizing future possibilities "in a still distant condition of society," these words, written by Mrs. Caird in the late 1890s, found considerable support.

The idea of free union was not entirely new. In 1878, a pamphlet by Annie Besant pointed out the advantages in "unlegalized union" which a woman would automatically lose if she married: "She retains possession of all her natural rights; she is mistress of her own actions, of her body, of her property; she is able to legally defend herself against attack."<sup>52</sup> Moreover, an unmarried mother had absolute right to the custody of her own children for the law respected the maternal tie when no marriage ceremony had "legitimated" it. With many of the injustices imposed on married women being set right by various Acts of parliament between the time of Mrs. Besant's writings and the

publication of Mrs. Caird's essays in 1897, there appeared to be fewer disadvantages to the married state. But economic independence and general freedom in other areas gave women options other than marriage as a means of support. For the non-conformists, there was a certain attraction in the kind of union Mrs. Besant described when she wrote of "Marriage: As It Was, As It Is, and As It Should Be," that is, "a dignified and civilised substitute for the old brutal and savage traditions."<sup>53</sup>

Women who were already married also found a champion in Mona Caird when she not only attacked the old concepts of wifehood but denounced the sacred office of motherhood, at least as it was currently experienced by a multitude of women: "Women have been forced, partly by their physical constitution, but more by the tyranny of society, to expend their whole energies in maternal cares, and this...has destroyed the healthy balance of their nature...."<sup>54</sup> Her views were echoed in a Saturday Review article of 1895 which stated categorically that "the only woman at the present time who is willing to be regarded as a mere breeding machine is she who lacks the wit to adopt any other rôle." The writer defines the modern attitude towards unremitant child-bearing:

That the zenith of her youth should be spent in the meaningless production of children born into a country already over-populated, seems to the woman of to-day a sorry waste of vitality.... The daughter of this generation has discovered other uses for her womanhood.... She does not despise maternity...but the cultivation of her intellect has enlarged her sense of human responsibility.

The move to limit the size of families drew comment from all sides. So closely was this issue allied with the contradictory role of woman as the passionless bearer of children that it raised the question of female sexuality. It had been vigorously upheld by the medical profession, and therefore generally accepted, that women were incapable of sexual feelings and should consent unselfishly to sexual intercourse for the sake of male health, family harmony, and social stability. This attitude was directly linked to woman's idealized position as wife and mother. William Acton, a medical "expert," presented the British public with the following "facts":

...the majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feeling of any kind.... Many of the best mothers, wives, and managers of households, know little of or are careless about sexual indulgences. Love of home, of children, and of domestic duties are the only passions they feel.<sup>56</sup>

The effect of this and similar pronouncements on women was to produce the hysteria, neurasthenia, and complex anxiety which became the neurotic trademarks of the Victorian stereotype. Women were forced to deny feelings which were alleged to exist only in prostitutes and their fallen sisters. A survey of "Suicide Among Women" (1894) revealed the inevitable results for those women who "are too passionate and ardent" and encounter, often before marriage, "the rock on which their happiness goes to wreck":

They often in the heat of their passion, disregard the social laws and customs, and society punishes them so cruelly for it, exposing them to shame and disgrace, that not seldom they prefer death to such punishment and so commit suicide.<sup>57</sup>

But with the "separate spheres" ideology losing ground as women moved beyond the confines of secluded domesticity, the old-fashioned ideal of female purity was giving way to the more powerful image of the so-called "unwomanly" woman. Conservative factions feared uninhibited female sexuality and sought to subvert it by accusations that, by entering man's sphere, woman was actually de-sexing herself. (At the same time, sexlessness was the attribute most revered in the Victorian ideal of womanhood.) But Mrs. Roy Devereux in her book, The Ascent of Woman (1896), claimed that with the awakening of the intellect, "there has been a coincident awakening of the senses....Every problem in heaven and earth is brought to the edge of this newly-acquired consciousness, and the she-animal is abroad cursing man's monopoly of the joie-de-vivre."<sup>58</sup> Mrs. Linton aptly described this period of sliding values and shifting life-styles as "modern topsy-turveydom." She blamed this uncomfortable state of affairs on the spread of education and the increased facilities for locomotion and intercommunication which in turn had caused a "restlessness" in women and subsequently produced the "Advanced Woman."<sup>59</sup> Because of her present manner of life, the modern English girl was in danger of being associated with a class of women whom Mrs. Linton could not call by their proper -- or improper -- name. This blurring of the lines of moral demarkation which separated the "angel of the house" from the woman of the streets who was supposedly her diametric opposite gave a fascinating perspective to the New Woman.

The magazine industry especially was quick to take advantage of the topicality of the New Woman. Advertisements for food, beverages,

liniments, and cigarettes featured stylish women playing golf, cycling, skating, even smoking, while obviously enjoying the benefits of the manufacturer's product. Most blatantly commercial is an advertisement which pictures a young woman dressed in male garb, holding a cigarette, beside a testimonial which states in bold lettering: "A Startling Effect / Since taking Beecham's Pills I have been a New Woman / Thousands can say the same / Which proves that they are truly / Worth a Guinea a Box."<sup>60</sup> Young women were also featured in full vigour on posters and post cards, usually engaged in some "new" pursuit, such as playing cricket (formerly an exclusively male sport), holding a camera (a popular invention of the age), or posing beside an automobile (the latest development in transportation). But in keeping with general opinion, suffragists on comic post cards were presented from an unsympathetic standpoint as ugly, belligerent, and aggressive women.

Amidst the general exuberance of Jubilee year, Walter Besant wrote The Queen's Reign to celebrate the developments and improvements of the previous sixty years. One aspect of his study was a comparison of the young lady of 1837, who could not reason on any subject whatever because of her ignorance and seclusion from active and practical life, with the New Woman of the 1890s:

She is educated. Whatever things are taught to the young man are taught to the young woman.... She has invaded the professions.... She cannot become a priest, because the Oriental prejudice against women still prevails...she cannot enter the Law. Some day she will get over this restriction, but not yet....she can, and she does practice as a physician or a surgeon, generally the former.... In music, they compose...the acting of the best among them is equal to that of any living man...there are thousands of women who now make their livelihood by writing in all its

branches. As for the less common professions -- the accountants, architects, actuaries, agents -- they are rapidly being taken over by women.... Necessity or no necessity, they demand work, with independence and personal liberty.<sup>61</sup>

Besant cited "personal independence" as the keynote of the marriage question, but predicted that the average Englishwoman would eventually opt for marriage even though the prototype was wondering whether or not she should take on its duties and responsibilities.

The topic of marriage also concerned Annabella Dennehy whose article, "The Woman of the Future" appeared in 1899. Like Walter Besant, she noted that "the world has advanced":

...woman is no longer treated as a person of 'no importance.' She is now regarded as a responsible human being in this year of grace 1899. Women have been treated, even in the eye of the law, as morally and politically the equals of men. Women are now employed on School Boards...[and] as rate collectors. At the present moment there are nearly a million women voters for municipal and local government purposes.<sup>62</sup>

But Dennehy stressed that the great question of female independence was still unresolved. Conventional marriage remained suspect, "a mere piece of social mechanism," which made a woman "the physical and moral slave of man." Dennehy advocated that true morality would "abolish marriage, establish free union in which each sex would have an equal voice, and make love the only law regulating the relationship of the sexes." In her view moral rights took precedence over the enlargement of legal qualifications: "The franchise is really of secondary consequence as compared with individual freedom."<sup>63</sup>

In their overview of woman's advances prior to the turn of the century, both Besant and Dennehy recognized the compulsion towards personal independence which had driven women to break with sixty years and more of custom and convention. Since the 1860s, when the controversy over woman's role was first initiated, a moral and intellectual struggle had taken place but it was not just a battle between the sexes. The 19th-century woman was held back, not only by men claiming educational and political advantages by virtue of male superiority, but also by other women who fought against any change in well-defined sex roles, and by her own reluctance to free herself from conventional patterns. Curiously, the emerging New Woman met with as much resistance from her own sex as support from those men who put basic human rights above sexual distinctions. Despite obstacles, outstanding individuals took charge of their own lives and careers and, inspired by example, offered an overt challenge to the ancient rule of male authority. Others sought to express their womanhood within the framework of traditional social values. Perhaps the greatest challenge for the woman of the 1890s was to act to the highest vision of her own free spirit within the limits of a preconceived moral code. Bernard Shaw, who targeted the "Womanly Woman" as the greatest enemy of female emancipation, sensed that people cannot be freed from without: "They must free themselves."<sup>64</sup> A woman of the period, Juliette Adam, recognized the dilemma facing women when she attempted to define "Woman's Place in Modern Life":

The door of her cage is open, but she is still held in awe by the bars.<sup>65</sup>

The following chapter will examine the New Woman from the perspective of the artistic community which was generally more liberal in its views of the unorthodox and the revolutionary. It will also focus on women in the performing arts who saw beyond the bars of the cage.

## CHAPTER II

## "Removal of Ancient Landmarks"

Creative Arts and the New Woman

A decade before the New Woman of the 1890s, a Punch cartoon (Plate 2) addressed the ambitious pretensions of upper and middle-class women who dared to contemplate prospects for self-expression and financial independence. With a typically ambivalent attitude towards the Woman Question, Punch's portrayal of the "ancient" versus the "modern" mocked both extremes. Yet the caption: "Removal of Ancient Landmarks," surely encouraged those who were ready to seize the opportunities for female emancipation<sup>1</sup> which life in the artistic community promised.

In the cartoonist's drawing, the three daughters of an aristocratic household project professional careers for themselves, much to the horror of their strictly conventional governess. The eldest daughter, Lady Gwendoline, equipped with brush and palette, canvas and easel, announces: "Papa says I'm to be a great artist, and exhibit at the Royal Academy!" Her sister, Lady Yseulte, with the finger of one hand poised over a piano keyboard and her other hand resting defiantly on her hip, adds: "And Papa says I'm to be a great pianist, and play at the Monday Pops!" The third daughter, Lady Edelgitha, posed dramatically with one foot pointed forward and arms folded decisively across her chest, proclaims: "And I'm going to be a famous actress, and

act Ophelia, and cut out Miss Ellen Terry! Papa says I may -- that is, if I can, you know!" The governess, a scholastic stereotype, sits upright on a straight-backed chair, her hands folded primly in her lap, a plain bodice and long draped skirts concealing any hint of femininity. Her rejoinder encapsulates traditional 19th-century attitudes to a career in the arts:

Goodness gracious, young ladies! Is it possible his Grace can allow you even to think of such things! Why, my papa was only a poor half-pay officer, but the bare thought of my ever playing in public, or painting for hire, would have simply horrified him! -- and as for acting Ophelia -- or anything else -- gracious goodness, you take my breath away!

(Punch, 25 June 1881)

In conservative opinion, a lady of leisure could be taught painting or piano playing, but to earn one's living by such accomplishments placed one perilously amongst the "lower" working classes. Acting professionally on the stage was even more horrifying. In respectable minds, life on the "wicked" stage had always been associated with licentious behaviour and immoral practices, barely a step from prostitution and degeneracy.

Although English women had engaged in artistic pursuits on a professional level since the Restoration,<sup>2</sup> the Victorian woman who did so was apt to suffer the stigma which attached to any of her sex who ventured into public life. Because entry into the world of art, music, and theatre was, by its very nature, self-advertising and competitive, it was forbidden territory to the "angel in the house" whose principal virtue was modest self-effacement. Restricted to the domestic sphere, whether as daughter, wife, or mother, ingenious women often turned to

novel-writing as a means of self-dependency or as a release for her creative energies. The advantages of a writing career were twofold. A woman could work in the privacy of her own home, thus projecting a 'normal' role; more importantly, she could maintain her anonymity. The use of her husband's name (as in the case of Mrs. Gaskell, Mrs. Humphrey Ward, Mrs. Oliphant, and Mrs. Henry Wood) gave the Victorian matron who wrote for a living the stamp of respectability. Others adopted a masculine pseudonym to mask their female identity and ensure acceptance in the marketplace.<sup>3</sup>

However, the young ladies pictured in the Punch cartoon do not aspire to novel-writing, an occupation which would have been acceptable even to their prudish governess. They would have been dissuaded by the current image of the "lady novelist," a type exemplified by Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramée) whose vivid imagination scarcely overcame factual inaccuracies and a lack of literary skills, but whose prolific output was staggering; and by Marie Corelli, whose works Shaw described as "cheap victories of a profuse imagination over an apparently commonplace and carelessly cultivated mind."<sup>4</sup> They were part of the new wave of aspiring women novelists, emboldened by the prestigious example set by the Brontë sisters and George Eliot, who took advantage of the demand for light, entertaining fiction in an expanding market.<sup>5</sup> As their numbers grew, women writers were increasingly ridiculed and lampooned by the press.

Typical is Punch's warning "To a Would-Be Authoress":

Though, MAUD, I respect your ambition,  
I fear, to be brutally plain,  
No proud and exalted position  
Your stories are likely to gain.<sup>6</sup>

The threat of female competition<sup>7</sup> must have accounted, in many cases, for the chauvinistic attitudes towards the woman writer. A cartoon in Punch depicts a social gathering with men grouped around a lady with fan. Two other gentlemen stand at one side in conversation:

Jones: 'Who is that girl all the men seem so  
anxious to be introduced to?'  
Brown: 'O, that's Miss Pynk. Wonderful woman,  
Sir!'  
Jones: 'What has she done?'  
Brown: 'Never written a<sup>8</sup> novel, or contributed  
to a magazine!'

That "singular anomaly, the lady novelist" appears in W.S. Gilbert's lyrics for The Mikado (1885) among those whom Ko-Ko, the Lord High Executioner, lists as "society offenders who might well be underground" to which the Chorus gleefully concurs:

He's got her on the list -- he's got her on the  
list;  
And I don't think she'll be missed -- I'm sure  
she'll not be missed!

Again, the type is comically portrayed as Miss Prism in Oscar Wilde's The Importance of Being Earnest (1895). The prim governess, formerly a nurse-maid, had written a three-volume novel ("of more than usually revolting sentimentality") during her "few unoccupied hours." The work is mislaid "in a moment of mental abstraction" when she absent-mindedly places the manuscript in the baby's perambulator and the baby in her hand-bag.<sup>10</sup>

The literary novice who launched herself on the reading public invited criticism from her own sex as well. George Eliot had achieved recognition and prestige among male colleagues as essayist, novelist, editor, critic, and had demonstrated in her own career that the fact of

being a woman need not be a deterrent to success, but she had only scorn for the mediocre writings of unskilled and inexperienced amateurs, "ladies' silly novels...less the result of labour than of busy idleness." Eliot's condemnation is mainly of leisure-class women who "write in elegant boudoirs, with violet-coloured ink and a ruby pen" and who are "inexperienced in every form of poverty except poverty of brains." Though she is critical of female incompetency in any field, "in novel-writing there are no barriers for incapacity to stumble against."<sup>11</sup>

Even those who acknowledged gifted women writers drew the line when it came to admitting women into branches of the creative arts which took them outside their "natural" sphere. Dinah Mulock Craik claimed that in literature "we meet men on level ground" and "do often beat them in their own field."<sup>12</sup> But like Mrs. Gaskell and Mrs. Oliphant, she was outwardly a conformist to the Victorian ideal. All experienced internal conflict between creative compulsion and domestic necessity. In her novels, Mrs. Gaskell preached female dependence and submissiveness, but her letters reveal a deep-seated ambivalence: "... assuredly a blending of the two is desirable. (Home duties and the development of the individual I mean)...but the difficulty is where and when to make one set of duties subserve and give place to the other."<sup>13</sup> That revelation lends a certain irony to her daughter's comments after her death: "It was wonderful how her writing never interfered with her social or domestic duties."<sup>14</sup> Mrs. Oliphant complained: "I don't think I ever had two hours undisturbed (except at night when everybody was in bed) during my whole literary life."<sup>15</sup>

Forced to assume the role of breadwinner for her children and several male relatives, Mrs. Oliphant nevertheless adopted a tone of feminine subservience towards her publisher, John Blackwood, when she wondered "whether in your most manly and masculine of magazines a womanish story-teller like myself may not become wearisome."<sup>16</sup> Mrs. Craik proclaimed equality with men in the field of literature, but coyly observed that "since ambition is a quality far oftener deficient in us than in the other sex, its very successes are less sweet to women than to men."<sup>17</sup> Yet in private life, Mrs. Craik maintained the same independence she exhibited as a single woman when she went about freely in London society and had her own latchkey. Married at 39, she refused to accede to her husband's wish that she give up writing and, contrary to normal practice, continued to control her own finances.

Caught in a conflict of roles, these women veiled their interest in professional careers by outwardly denying that literature took precedence over the obligations of home. Mrs. Craik sought to glorify the domestic role, even for unmarried women, as "a more natural, and therefore, probably, a happier existence, than any 'woman of genius' that ever enlightened the world." Like the cartoon governess, she cautioned against "female professions" which took women into the public eye: "We may paint scores of pictures, write shelvesful of books...yet we ourselves sit as quiet by our chimney-corner...as any happy 'common woman' of them all."<sup>18</sup> The young ladies in the Punch cartoon represent those artistic women with an eye on fame and accomplishment who broke from this pattern of conformity to an old ideal.

The task facing the female artist who aspired to have her work displayed at the Royal Academy was not an easy one. Professional training was initially almost impossible to attain. In 1861, Laura Hereford gained entry to the Royal Academy school by submitting the required drawings with her initials only, so that the committee did not realize she was a woman. Since there was no specific rule excluding women, she was allowed to stay. In the ten years that followed, forty young women entered as probationers. By 1880, women students had carried off so many of the prizes that male students sought to have their numbers limited. Prejudice against women artists was of long standing. Formerly, those whose works were well received had often been denied the credit, the general assumption being that if it was worthwhile, it must have been painted by a man.<sup>19</sup> To avoid the critics' double standard, some simply signed their work with men's names: Rosarius (Rosa) Brett and Antonio (Antonia) Brandeis.

The criteria used to judge women's art was based on the male concept of purity, delicacy, and refinement associated with the feminine ideal. One critic expected to find "complete womanliness" in female artists' works because "no woman of abilities, how much soever she may try, will be able to borrow from men anything so invaluable to art as her own intuition and the prescient tenderness and grace of her nursery-nature."<sup>20</sup> Laura Knight was criticized by her instructors because they thought her work unfeminine and unladylike, "with those great thick lines," and asked, "Why do you draw like a man?"<sup>21</sup> As a female student, she was not provided with nude models and complained that endless copying from "life-size plaster casts of antique statuary"

gave a "woodenness, a dead look, to all my studies."<sup>22</sup> However, an editorial by Oscar Wilde indicates that, by the late 1880s, the artistic community had become more liberal:

Mrs. Jopling's life-classes for ladies have been such a success that a similar class has been started in Chelsea by Mr. Clegg Wilkinson at the Carlyle Studios, King's Road. Mr. Wilkinson (who is a very brilliant young painter) is strongly of [the] opinion that life should be studied from life itself, and not from that abstract presentation of life which we find in Greek marbles -- a position<sup>23</sup> which I have always held very strongly myself.

Despite external obstacles, a Women's International Exhibition eventually occurred in London in 1900. Internal obstacles were less easily surmounted. As Germaine Greer expresses it, "A woman knows that she is to be womanly and she also knows that for a drawing to be womanish is contemptible."<sup>24</sup> For the Victorian woman artist, the problem of expressing her ideas in her own language and imagery was intimately tied to her subconscious acceptance of her prescribed role. This was recognized by a writer of the time:

It is, indeed, the position of woman which has for so long a period set limits to her production of creations of the mind, and her position has had a distinct bearing on her inspiration.<sup>25</sup>

Decades later, Laura Knight shared the same view: "It cannot...be denied that a woman's ear is closed to the thunderbolts of fancy to be found on the limitless horizon of a man's imagination: from babyhood, the horizon of womankind has been confined to the four walls of a home."<sup>26</sup> Yet she herself eventually broke from those confines to become an Associate of the Royal Academy (the second woman to be so

honoured since 1769) and, symbolically, win renown for her studies of the nude figure in sunlight.

Laura Knight was able to combine a professional career with marriage, principally because both husband and wife were dedicated artists who allowed each other the freedom to develop artistic individuality. But, throughout the 19th century, it was more common for women in the performing arts to choose early retirement rather than be torn between public and personal commitments. Opera singer Henriette Sontag married a nobleman, Count Rossi, after three years of negotiation to secure permission from the King of Sardinia who then made Sontag's retirement from the stage a primary condition.<sup>27</sup> Adelaide Kemble, daughter of actor Charles Kemble, who sang Norma throughout Italy and was greatly admired by Liszt, retired into marriage after only four years of success. Marie Hall, a "most promising English violinist," achieved fame in her own country and abroad,<sup>28</sup> but was rarely heard in public after her marriage at 27. Pianist Kate Loder, who was instructed at the Royal Academy, emerged into public view in 1844 but withdrew a decade later after her marriage to an eminent surgeon, Henry Thompson.<sup>29</sup>

But other performers, married and single, put their careers ahead of traditional role-playing. Adelina Patti's marriage to the Marquis de Caux ended when they "found that there was scarcely a question upon which they were of one mind."<sup>30</sup> This would presumably include matters relating to her operatic career. Dame Ethel Smyth, England's most distinguished female opera composer, formed a close and lasting relationship with writer-librettist, Harry Brewster, whom she could

have married after his wife died. But she claimed that she did not "want a home, or more money, or a social position, or whatever women marry for" and certainly not children: "No marriage, no ties. I must be free."<sup>31</sup>

From the beginning, Ethel Smyth cared little for social conformity and systematically swept aside all the conventions which restricted women musicians. Parental disapproval of career-minded daughters was commonplace, yet the spark which emanated from this New Woman offered an indomitable resistance. When Ethel Smyth conceived a plan to study music in Leipzig, her father indicated that he would rather see her dead than living such a life. He finally relented after her unco-operative behaviour made his home life unbearable. In England, women were denied the musical training and career opportunities accorded to men. Reforms at Cambridge in 1878 opened music examinations to women but did not allow for a degree to be given. Even when, in 1885, Dublin University invited women to compete for musical degrees, Oxford and Cambridge resisted such change.

Although higher degrees were virtually impossible, a growing number of women used whatever private training they had acquired to become piano teachers. The rapid growth of music teaching as one of the few respectable occupations open to women, outside of domestic service, accounts for the trebling of their numbers in the profession between 1851 and 1881.<sup>32</sup> The predominance of teachers, as compared with those who became performers,<sup>33</sup> was undoubtedly due to the outspoken prejudice against women who attempted to compete with men on the concert stage. Mrs. Anderson, the first English woman to perform at the Philharmonic

Society's concerts (in 1822), received little appreciation: "Probably," said the Musical Times in July 1894, "the engagement of a female pianist was resented."<sup>34</sup>

Apart from the piano and the harp, few instruments had been "permitted" to women in the early years of the 19th century. The Spectator (14 April 1860) observed that "female violinists are rare, the violin being, we do not know why, deemed an unfeminine instrument.... Female violoncellists are rarer still, and we have never met one." The Choir (12 Sept. 1863), in answer to a correspondent, advised: "We do not think the violin a lady's instrument.... Better endeavour to excel on the piano or harp." Disturbed reaction towards women who ventured into what had formerly been an exclusively male domain either led to suggestions that "the average lady player is inferior to the average male player [because] according to physiologists, there is one muscle entirely absent from the female arm,"<sup>35</sup> or expressions of parental concern that violin practice might have an adverse affect on the figure of slight and growing girls, "supposing it to have a tendency to throw one (the right) shoulder down."<sup>36</sup> Yet despite male opposition, the violin became a fashionable instrument among "the fair sex." In 1872, the Royal Academy had at least one female violin student. Thirty-four years later, it had 72, the Royal College of Music had 88, and the Guildhall School of Music as many as 230.<sup>37</sup>

But training did not guarantee acceptance into an orchestra; women players would have taken jobs from men who had families to support. Moreover, for her own sake, an educated, refined, and

sensitive girl should be protected from the rough language and coarse associations of music halls and theatres.<sup>38</sup> Their virtual exclusion from conventional ensembles forced women players to seek employment in ladies' orchestras.<sup>39</sup> These groups earned critical approval: in 1894 the Musical Times praised Rev. E.H. Moberley's 100-piece orchestra made up entirely of women, declaring that the group "cannot be approached by any of our male amateur orchestras."<sup>40</sup>

Eventually, women began to take an increasingly prominent place in the orchestra of the Crystal Palace Handel Festival.<sup>41</sup> Joseph Bennett did not approve of this female invasion:

With all due respect to feminine executive talent, I have a rather poor opinion of woman as an orchestral player. She is not devoted enough to her task to keep from looking about her when attention should be absorbed by the music, and if she were she does not possess the power and promptitude in attack which, as a rule, the men display.<sup>42</sup>

But such argument gradually lost ground largely through the unbiased attitudes of conductors like Sir Henry Wood who valued women players highly:

I shall never conduct an orchestra without them in future, they do their work so well.... They are sincere, they do not drink, and they smoke less than men. In the Queen's Hall they have given a certain tone to our rehearsals, and a different spirit to our performances.<sup>43</sup>

On the other hand, female conductors, with the exception of those who formed their own all-women orchestras or became ladies' choir leaders, were extremely rare. The Philharmonic Society had existed for 97 years before a woman, Ethel Smyth, first conducted its orchestra in

two of her own songs in 1909. But it was as a composer that Ethel Smyth affected musical and social history. The scarcity of women composers was the subject of Dr. H.A. Harding's paper entitled "Woman as a Musician" which he read at the annual conference of the Incorporated Society of Musicians in 1900:

We are told that there are women novelists, women artists, and so on.... Why not women composers? I say emphatically that <sup>44</sup>there are women composers; they do actually exist.

Certainly Ethel Smyth was the foremost of these. She is the only one who made a name for herself in the field of opera but not without a struggle to overcome the stigma attached to women composers. Her Mass in D, performed by the Royal Choral Society in 1893, drew praise from the Times' music critic, but only because he perceived masculine qualities in her work:

The most striking thing about it is the entire absence of the qualities that are usually associated with feminine productions; throughout it is virile,<sup>45</sup> masterly in construction and workmanship...

In similar vein, conductor Hermann Levi stated, after seeing her score of the same work, "Never, never could I have believed that a woman had written this!"<sup>46</sup> But George Bernard Shaw defended female artists at large when he reviewed the composition:

Whenever I hear the dictum, 'Women cannot compose,' uttered by some male musician whose whole endowment, intellectual and artistic, might be generously estimated as equivalent to that of the little finger of Miss Braddon or Miss Broughton, I always chuckle and say to myself, 'Wait a bit, my lad, until they find out how much easier it is than literature.... Since women have succeeded conspicuously in Victor Hugo's

profession, I cannot see why they should not succeed equally <sup>in</sup> Liszt's if they turned their attention to it.

Thirty years later, Shaw wrote to Ethel Smyth to assure her: "You are totally and diametrically wrong in imagining that you have suffered from a prejudice against feminine music.... Your music is more masculine than Handel's." (Shaw, too, makes "masculine" a term of praise.) After watching her conduct the overture to her own opera, The Wreckers, Shaw admitted to having been cured for ever "of the old delusion that women could not do men's work in art and other things."<sup>48</sup>

Even though Ethel Smyth was proclaimed (by George Henschel) "the most remarkable and original woman composer in the history of music,"<sup>49</sup> the prejudices of opera syndicates and conductors blocked the performance of her major works. By contrast, a female opera singer of the same era was revered as a "queen" of song, a "priestess," and ultimately, a "diva" or goddess. However, the average singer without patronage or influential connections suffered the same restrictions as female instrumentalists barred from playing in orchestras. Objection to women in church choirs continued to the end of the 19th century and beyond. This often took the form of controversy over suitable attire for lady choristers who finally were allowed to sit in the back rows of the chancel, wear cassock and surplice, and "cover their defenceless heads with a cap of black silk."<sup>50</sup> Theatre chorus girls had no such restrictions placed on their public appearance in costume, but the pay was poor and the opportunity for advancement virtually non-existent. An 1891 article in Pick Me Up advises that even an inexperienced singer

"should on no account go into the chorus unless she has tried every means of being engaged as a 'principal.'"<sup>51</sup> Once in the chorus, the odds were that the girl would stay there.

While the chorus girl had to get by on a few shillings a week, a prima donna was paid exorbitant salaries.<sup>52</sup> At the height of her fame, Adelina Patti demanded £1000 for each appearance to be paid by 2:00 pm on the day of the performance. It was calculated that for one performance of Lucia she was paid 42½ cents for every note she sang, and, in the 1880s, her contract stipulated that the size of her name on the billings should be at least a third higher than anyone else's. The prima donna's image as a demanding, unpredictable, egocentric figure could well have evolved out of a need to protect herself against exploitation by managers and ambitious entrepreneurs who otherwise overtaxed her vocal powers for personal gain.

Such was her eminence that criticism of temperamental behaviour did little to minimize her popularity with opera house audiences. No other artistic calling offered a woman the same opportunity to achieve social status and respectability. Jenny Lind played on middle-class notions of morality to the extent that her private virtue, which included highly publicized charities and ecclesiastical connections, was as much praised as her vocal purity. From another standpoint, Adelina Patti's celebrity overcame any loss of social status after she eloped with a married French tenor, Ernest Nicolini, with whom she lived openly for several years before their eventual marriage. Nellie Melba used her vocal triumphs to climb socially, and "Melba Nights" at Covent Garden became major events on the fashionable calendar, on a par

with races and charity balls. With her "diva" status well established, Melba was heedless of social proprieties. After listening to a number of distinguished musicians perform at a royal command concert at Windsor Castle, she complained in a loud voice, "What a dreadful concert this would have been if I hadn't come."<sup>53</sup> Because of the charisma and mystique associated with the "diva," no other branch of music offered women anything like the social prestige, public adulation, and generous remuneration. In the performing arts, only a few leading actresses soared as high.

The theatrical equivalent of the "queen" of song was Ellen Terry. This most revered and adored actress was idolized by the cultural élite as well as the general public. Oscar Wilde dubbed her, "Our Lady of the Lyceum," and was so moved by her performances that he wrote three sonnets in celebration of her womanly beauty. George Bernard Shaw, recalling her influence on himself and others, wrote that "every famous man of the last quarter of the 19th century, provided he were a theatre-goer, had been in love with Ellen Terry."<sup>54</sup> Her stage career spanned seven decades, and for twenty-four of those years, she was Henry Irving's leading lady. Yet official recognition of her artistic contribution to British theatre did not arrive till 1925 when she was awarded a Dame Grand Cross, an honour equal to the knighthood bestowed on Irving thirty years before.

During her reign at the Lyceum Theatre, Ellen Terry was the highest paid actress on the British stage, earning £200 a week together with lump sums from benefit performances.<sup>55</sup> Indeed, a stage career offered advantages not available to women in other creative arts as

Madge Kendal, another leading actress, pointed out in her first-hand report written in 1890:

I do not think there is a thing in the world that a woman could be better than an actress; there is no other calling in which she can earn so much money, -- no other calling in which she can keep her own standard so high; no other calling in which she can set a better example and do more good...she holds a position which is <sup>56</sup>unique if she has the necessary qualifications...

To those with perseverance and talent, the profession promised, in Kendal's view, an adequate financial return and, more importantly, the added benefit of female self-dependency:

...there are a great many who can earn their £300 or £400 a year; and that is a very nice competence for a woman in the middle class of life, -- very much more than she would earn in almost any other career. Besides, she has the blessedness of independence; and that is a great thing <sup>57</sup>to a woman, and especially to a single woman.

In view of these possibilities, it is not surprising that, between 1861 and 1891, the number of actresses in England and Wales rose from an estimated 891 to 3,696.<sup>58</sup> By 1881, their number exceeded those of male actors.<sup>59</sup> Unlike the music profession, acting was an occupation open to women which did not encroach on male labour markets; actresses competed only with other women. Moreover, it was possible for an accomplished actress to become manager of her own company with authority over male colleagues.

Neither was an aspiring actress denied professional training because she was a woman. Ellen Terry was fortunate enough to be born into a theatrical family<sup>60</sup> and thus acquired acting skills at an early

age. Young women without this background could seek stage experience in a theatre stock company in the provinces. Later, with the coming of the railway, whole companies from London's West End were able to take their productions on tour and so the old provincial stock companies, as traditional training ground, virtually disappeared. Two alternatives opened up in the 1880s and 1890s: Sarah Thorne's dramatic school at Margate and Frank Benson's Shakespeare repertory company. But the existence of female roles guaranteed work for an actress and it was not unusual for a woman to enter the theatrical profession without training.

Such was the case for Stella Campbell, popularly known as "Mrs. Pat." Faced with the necessity of supporting herself and her two children after her husband left to seek his fortune abroad, Stella was basically untrained for any employment other than giving piano lessons for paltry wages. It was the success of her first amateur stage appearance with the Anomalies Dramatic Club in 1886 that decided her to become a professional actress. Her initial acting experience was gained in Ben Greet's touring company which presented Shakespeare in the provinces and in Regent's Park. With the physical strain of touring and the chills she caught during outdoor productions, Stella often found herself "simply shaking with fatigue on stage, her voice reduced almost to a whisper."<sup>61</sup> But she recognized that touring, despite its hardships, had probably taught her more about acting than she could have learned in playing small parts in town. Stella's first major role was with the actor-manager, George Alexander, in Pinero's The Second Mrs Tanqueray performed at the St. James's Theatre on May 27, 1893. In

its first London run of 227 performances, the play brought Alexander receipts of over £36,000 and put Stella at the head of her profession.

The prospect of achieving fame and fortune as an actress appealed to increasing numbers of women. But, as in other occupations which took them outside their "natural sphere," there were prejudices to be surmounted. The woman who went on stage was likely to lose her social standing because of the narrow-minded view which equated unconventional female conduct with sexual license. Seeking to retain her respectability in an unorthodox career, Stella chose "Mrs. Patrick Campbell" as her stage name, in imitation of those theatre wives whose husbands acted with them. Ellen Terry, as an established member of the theatrical community, naturally had the support and protection of her family. But after the failure of her marriage to the painter, G.F. Watts, a deed of separation allowed her £300 a year only "so long as she should lead a chaste life" and not return to the stage, in which case her allowance would drop to £200.<sup>62</sup>

Even reputable actresses were inescapably linked to immorality. An 1869 editorial in Echoes commented that although many actresses were undoubtedly virtuous, this did not prevent vice from flourishing to an alarming extent in the profession, and so there should be no surprise at the number of girls who regarded the stage as a means of arriving at "infamous luxury." This was no small wonder, the writer inferred, when the pantomime, formerly intended for the amusement of children, had become "a mere pretext for the display of legs more or less padded, and bosoms more or less uncovered."<sup>63</sup> At a time when the average woman's legs were hidden beneath several layers of crinolines, an actress could

gain immense popularity in a breeches role. Even more provocative was the introduction to English audiences of the French "can-can." The Times warned the fastidious who might be going to the St. James's to see Offenbach's Orpheus in the Underworld that they should leave after the third tableau in order to avoid the final "spectacle" (which probably was an inducement for many to stay).<sup>64</sup>

Victorian audiences seemingly found it difficult to distinguish between illusion and reality with the result that an actress' stage character was often taken as an accurate measure of her true personality. The popularity of Helen Faucit (Lady Martin) is credited to her appearance in roles which portrayed the conventional ideal of womanhood and which, in her view, represented "all that gives a woman her brightest charm, her most beneficent influence."<sup>65</sup> Similarly, the image of idealized womanhood which Ellen Terry was able to project throughout her career was in keeping with her own conception of the perfect female type: "I consider myself very happy and fortunate in having nearly always been called upon to act very noble, clear characters, since I prefer that kind of part..."<sup>66</sup> Bernard Shaw felt that Ellen Terry never needed to "perform any remarkable feat of impersonation....she had only to play a part 'straight,' as actor, say, to transfigure it into something much better than its raw self."<sup>67</sup> In private life, Ellen Terry was married three times, each union lasting only a short period and ending in separation and divorce; she also lived out of wedlock with Edward Godwin for six years and bore two illegitimate children. But it was her stage characterizations that dominated the consciousness of worshipful theatre-goers.

On the other hand, after Mrs. Pat portrayed Paula Tanqueray, it was assumed that she was a "fallen woman" herself. When questioned by American reporters as to whether she was really a "bad" woman, Stella replied, "Just because I have black hair, it doesn't follow I must be a sinner!"<sup>68</sup> Even before that, when playing the part of a gypsy girl,<sup>69</sup> her skirt accidentally dropped to her ankles, leaving her standing in full view of the audience in scanty drawers. Soon anonymous letters arrived, insinuating that Mrs. Patrick Campbell had arranged the incident to score certain notoriety. With a prudish public ready to believe the worst, actresses might well choose their roles with care.

But as leading actors and actresses achieved artistic eminence, they also gained social recognition which served to elevate the profession as a whole. In 1884, Madge Kendal, in a paper read to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, noted that "there is at last a recognized social position for the professional player.... The Theatrical Profession is [now] acknowledged to be a high and important one, and the society of the intelligent and cultivated actor is eagerly sought after."<sup>70</sup> Royalty led the way in acknowledging the acting profession: in 1882, the Prince of Wales gave a dinner at Marlborough House for leading actors; in 1887, a Royal Command performance was held, the first since the death of Prince Albert; Queen Victoria entertained the Bancrofts at Balmoral and received an actress (Madge Kendal) in her drawing room; in 1895, Henry Irving was knighted. It was he who did most to earn respectability for the theatre. More than one thousand of the most eminent and notable members of Victorian society and culture enjoyed Irving's hospitality at the famous

Beefsteak supper parties held at the Lyceum. Within the profession itself, the players were "at last surrounded by the conveniences and comforts which gentlemen and ladies have a right to expect,"<sup>71</sup> a practice begun at the Prince of Wales's theatre with improved backstage facilities.

As theatre folk became socially acceptable, the stage attracted upper-class amateurs. A precedent was set in 1882 by Lillie Langtry who launched her stage career with the Bancrofts for a three-month engagement. Because of her well-publicized looks and her connection with the Prince of Wales, she made large sums (£60,000 in the 1880s alone) and was able to go into management. Following her lead, drawing-room novices competed for walk-on parts, encouraged by theatre managers because their families and admirers bought large blocks of seats. Moreover, these wealthy amateurs were indifferent to salaries and could provide themselves with expensive costumes.

The young ladies in the Punch cartoon of 1881 illustrate the potential which existed for a woman to advance beyond the Victorian stereotype of the domestic ideal and, as artist, musician, or actress, provide a new role model for her sex. This was exemplified by Laura Knight, Ethel Smyth, and Ellen Terry, each in her own way. All were products of a society which sought to impose restrictions on female self-expression. (All were ultimately recognized for contributions made in their respective fields with the awarding of their country's highest honour: Dame of the British Empire.) But a career in the theatre offered the greatest opportunity for women to break from the old mould.

Ellen Terry's personal life was in many respects the ultimate in Bohemianism, beginning with a vagabond existence in a travelling theatre company, followed by her May/December marriage to Watts (she was 16, he was 47), her expulsion from his ménage of aesthetes and her elopement to a country retreat with Godwin. Even her adoption of looser wearing apparel<sup>72</sup> signalled her break with Victorian constrictions and a desire to be free of restraint. For years, she defied social conventions in private life, but then sought respectability by marrying an undistinguished actor, Charles Wardell, so that her illegitimate children would have a "name."<sup>73</sup> In this respect, Ellen Terry personified the conflict which identifies one of the New Woman's most distinguishing characteristics. The contrast between the theatre and home life contributed to this ambivalence in her nature. Throughout her adult years, she was the sole provider for her children and grandchildren, assuming responsibility as the head of the household. Yet in her relationship with Irving, she accepted the concept of female submissiveness to a dominant male figure. Moreover, the virtuous roles she preferred to play on stage were a contrast to the improprieties of her non-conforming life-style. Perhaps, like so many career-women, she longed for a stereotype that few Victorians could help (at least partially) admiring.

In the late 1870s, Bernard Shaw mistakenly conceived of Ellen Terry as "the woman for the new drama which was still in the womb of Time, waiting for Ibsen to impregnate it."<sup>74</sup> But Ellen Terry the actress had no use for "Hedda, Nora or any of those silly ladies" and considered Ibsen's avant-garde heroines to be "preposterously unreal --

untrue to nature!"<sup>75</sup> However, a new breed of actresses appeared who were more than willing to represent the New Woman on stage and to replace the feminine ideal with their defiant portrayals of selfhood.

## CHAPTER III

## "Treading on Dangerous Ground"

Ibsen and the New Woman

- BORKMAN: (indignantly) Oh, these women! They wreck and ruin life for us! Play the devil with our whole destiny -- our triumphal progress.
- FOLDAL: Not all of them!
- BORKMAN: Indeed? Can you tell me of a single one that is good for anything?
- FOLDAL: No, that's the trouble. The few that I know are good for nothing.
- BORKMAN: (with a snort of scorn) Well, then, what's the good of it? What's the good of such women existing -- if you never know them?
- FOLDAL: Yes, John Gabriel, there is good in it, I assure you. It is such a blessed, beneficent thought that here and there in the world, somewhere, far away -- the true woman exists after all.
- BORKMAN: Oh, do spare me that poetical nonsense!  
(John Gabriel Borkman, 1896)

By the time that John Gabriel Borkman reached London audiences in 1897 Ibsen's name had become a household word and, despite the irony behind the Borkman/Foldal dialogue (according to William Archer,<sup>1</sup> Ibsen was not identifying with either view), the Norwegian dramatist and the Woman Question were irrevocably linked.

In anticipation of the impact that Ibsen was to have on British drama, Oswald Crawford, writing in the Fortnightly Review (April 1890), had attacked the "falseness" and "exaggeration" which dominated the

past season's productions on the London stage: "We get real water, indeed, and real leaves on real trees, but the human beings are altogether unreal." Crawford saw hope for reform, not in Ibsenism but in public acceptance of Ibsenism in a form better suited to the English people's "complex social state." Although Crawford welcomed the advent of Ibsen in England, "it must be as the harbinger of better things to come, and a sign that the old order is about to change."<sup>2</sup>

The ambience of the 1890s was particularly conducive to audacious experiment. Within the theatre community, bold new patterns of thought developed out of a growing discontent with outworn forms which were, in Crawford's view, "a singularly long way removed from our ordinary English way of taking the facts of existence."<sup>3</sup> Along with the New Drama came the emergence of the New Woman and the two became inseparable in the public mind. Socially aware dramatists, grappling with the Woman Question, attempted to create a contemporary heroine who would reflect the way modern woman was perceived. At the same time, actresses were struggling to free themselves from traditional role-playing, both on the stage and off.

"A hope of escape from...the conditions of the existing Theatre"<sup>4</sup> became the motivating force for Elizabeth Robins, an American actress working in London. She deplored the entrenched actor-manager system which severely limited an actress' choice and interpretation of roles in deference to the male star. She was frustrated and humiliated to find that her stage career was "inextricably involved in the fact that she was a woman and that those who were masters of the theatre were men."<sup>5</sup> Consequently, she formed a joint-management with another

actress, Marion Lea, for the purpose of producing plays which focused on a central female character. Emboldened by the enthusiastic reception of their first production, Hedda Gabler, and the realization that "Ibsen made reputations,"<sup>6</sup> Elizabeth Robins sought the advice of William Archer as to the advisability of a Robins-Lea production of the more controversial play, Ghosts. Her own initial reaction to the play had been one of awe and revulsion, feelings which, at the time, had blinded her to its possibilities: "With all my perorating on the theme, No Great parts for Women -- when the great chance came my way I could not recognize it."<sup>7</sup> Even as Archer promised his interest and support to the proposed venture, he cautioned her: "...do you know, Miss Robins, you are treading on dangerous ground?"<sup>8</sup>

Certainly, Ibsen's themes and characters upset traditional notions about social propriety and woman's place. Even as advocates of the New Drama proclaimed the importance of Ibsen in dismantling a tradition of spectacular Shakespeare and French adaptations, there were (to quote Archer) "many good people who foam at the mouth when Ibsen is mentioned!"<sup>9</sup> The offering of an Ibsen play to London theatre-goers constituted a radical departure from the romantic, sentimental mix of the Old Drama, especially in the latter's concept of the feminine ideal. This is nowhere more evident than in the public's adulation of Ellen Terry, the actress most closely identified with Victorian theatre. The [London] Times (13 June 1906) paid her this tribute:

For half a century Ellen Terry has been appealing to our hearts. Whatever the anti-sentimentalists might say, that is the simple truth. She is no 'intellectual' actress. Nor is she a 'bundle of nerves.' Her way is and always has been the way

of heartiness. A creature of the rudimentary, full-blooded, naïve emotions, she excites...that simple, homely, yet all-powerful sentiment which the world is agreed to call love.<sup>10</sup>

Not only did the Old Drama govern an actress' choice of roles but also the way in which she was expected to play them. She was apt to be criticized if, in the act of inspiriting the stage character, she allowed her own personality to upset the stereotype. Ellen Terry was most admired when her instinct for "beauty" and "sincerity" transfigured a part "into something much better than its raw self."<sup>11</sup> She "naturally" reverted to a weak heroine even when playing the power-hungry Lady Macbeth. But Terry received adverse criticism, from Henry James among others when, as Portia, she became "too free and familiar"<sup>12</sup> in her relations with her favoured suitor, Bassanio. According to an article in Blackwood's, she had held him "caressingly by the hand, nay, almost in an embrace, with all the unrestrained fondness which is conceivable only after he had actually won her."<sup>13</sup> Ruskin was also disturbed by what he construed as Terry's misinterpretation of the role, a moral descent from Portia's "majestic humility." He suggested that the actress should keep "at least half a dozen yards between [herself] and Bassanio...with her eyes on the ground through most of her lines."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that Ellen Terry was "blighted" by these suggestions of "indelicacy" underscores the determination of Elizabeth Robins to attain stage freedom: "Not Ellen Terry herself, adorable and invaluable as she was, had any choice of parts, nor choice of how the parts chosen

for her should be played."<sup>15</sup> Robins was speaking for a new generation of actresses who clashed with the system whenever they attempted to infuse classical roles with a personal awareness, to whatever degree, of how an emancipated woman might function in the part. Stella Campbell unsettled male critics with her "modern" interpretation of Lady Macbeth, a role in which she substituted a "mysterious sensuous charm for the conventional domineering of a virago." A.B. Walkley admitted to his fascination with the type which he described as the "femme serpent" who influences her husband, not merely by a stronger over a weaker will, but "by the witchery of woman over man."<sup>16</sup> Clearly, as Robins and others realized, there was a need for dramatic roles which would permit the emergence of the New Woman. She eventually acknowledged Ibsen as "the man who was to transform the modern stage and leave his lasting imprint on men's minds." But it was women who owed him most of all.<sup>17</sup>

When Janet Achurch and her husband, Charles Charrington, decided to present A Doll's House to London audiences in 1889, the curtain rose on the New Drama and, coincidentally, on the first of many dramatic images of the New Woman. Ibsen's background notes for the play (dated Rome, 1878) form an unconscious connection with Elizabeth Robins' observations about the position of the actress in the British theatre before Ibsenism:

A woman cannot be herself in the society of the present day, which is an exclusively masculine society, with laws framed by men and with a judicial system that judges feminine conduct from a masculine point of view.<sup>18</sup>

Although Ibsen had little personal interest in "kvindesag" (the Woman's Cause in Norway),<sup>19</sup> his creation of Nora Helmer, the doll-wife who abandons her home in order to find her selfhood, made a powerful statement which questioned a woman's so-called "duty." An earlier English adaptation of A Doll's House entitled Breaking A Butterfly,<sup>20</sup> produced at the Princess's Theatre in 1884, had been drastically re-shaped to British prejudice, its plot rendered unrecognizable to conform with prevailing social and theatrical tastes. A repentant wife, after contemplating suicide to prevent her husband from taking the blame for her crime of forgery, is restored to the arms of her condescending spouse who proclaims that "Flossie" (Nora) is no longer a child but has become a woman. She accomplishes this amazing metamorphosis in the space of twenty-four hours; not through any act of moral courage, but by shrinking into wifely penitence before her husband's magnanimity. This watered-down version bore only the slightest resemblance to Ibsen's attack on patriarchal control.

Janet Achurch's portrayal of Ibsen's Nora was applauded by William Archer for bringing to light the role's "distinct plea for female emancipation," and revealing it as an "overwhelming part for an actress of genius."<sup>21</sup> But critic Oswald Crawford, in defence of the old ideal, accused Ibsen of an "unconscious misogyny" and condemned the play for its absurd plot and unprincipled heroine.<sup>22</sup> For the average Victorian, Ibsen's New Woman held little appeal. On the other hand, A Doll's House bears an astounding resemblance in both theme and characterization to lines written in 1847 by English novelist and feminist, Catherine Crowe, more than forty years before Janet Achurch

created Nora on the London stage:

If [a woman's] reason be less majestic, her insight is clearer; where man reasons, she sees. Nature, in short, gave her all that was needful to enable her to play a noble part in the world's history, if man would but let her play it out, and not treat her like a full-grown baby, to be flattered and spoilt on the one hand, and coerced and restricted on the other, vibrating between royal rule and slavish serfdom.<sup>23</sup>

When Nora finally slammed the door on her doll's life, she found a responsive echo in hearts throughout the nation while conservative theatre-goers, looking for a tidy ending, wondered "where Mrs. Helmer is going when she gets outside her own front door, and if she ever means to come home again."<sup>24</sup>

In response to an English audience's need for a comfortingly suitable ending and to ameliorate his distress over Nora's shocking behaviour, Walter Besant wrote his own sequel, "The Doll's House and After."<sup>25</sup> In it, Nora is cast as a heartless villainess who returns after twenty years (during which time she has made her fortune writing novels!) to find that her husband has turned to drink after losing his position; one son is a drunken profligate, the other a forger, and her daughter a friendless outcast. All these wrecked lives, and the unhappy girl's eventual suicide, are blamed on Nora's abandonment of family responsibilities. Paradoxically, the passage in which Besant judges the guilty woman carries an underlying note of victory for feminism that the author probably never intended:

...she went forth to find -- Herself....She threw aside...all the conventions, and openly, not secretly....she began to live the life of perfect freedom. She wrote novels also, which the old-fashioned regarded with horror. In them she

advocated the great principle of abolishing the family, and making love the sole rule of conduct.<sup>26</sup>

Almost as an ironic prediction of the impact that Ibsen's new style of heroine was to have on British Drama, Besant's projection of Nora foresees that "future ages will speak of her as among the first of those who liberated woman from the yoke laid upon her by all the ages...."<sup>27</sup>

Bernard Shaw overturned Besant's critique by writing a further sequel, "Still After The Doll's House,"<sup>28</sup> which celebrates Nora's escape ("I came out and found...something higher for myself"), exposes the hypocrisy of the double standard, and seeks to liberate men, too, from iron-clad domesticity: "...the man must walk out of the doll's house as well as the woman...the dolls are not all female."<sup>29</sup> In support of the Ibsen heroine, Shaw pointed out in his treatise, "The Womanly Woman," that "unless Woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law and to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself."<sup>30</sup> That this feminist document formed part of his The Quintessence of Ibsenism emphasizes the point that for a new generation of actresses Ibsen was not only the originator of the New Drama which would provide challenging female roles but was the champion of the New Woman herself. Henry Arthur Jones consciously linked the two "movements" by using feminine imagery to describe the birth of modern English drama which regrettably had become "entangled with another movement, got caught in the skirts of the sexual-pessimistic blizzard sweeping over North Europe..."<sup>31</sup>

Anticipating the possible effect of that blizzard on English family life, Punch (2 May 1891) satirized Nora's escape from oppressed wifehood in a cartoon captioned, "Ibsen in Brixton": an overbearing working-class matron, in the act of leaving her bewildered husband, exits triumphantly: "Yes, William, I've thought a deal about it, and I find I'm nothing but your doll and dickey-bird, and so I'm going!"<sup>32</sup> But to opponents of his brand of realism, Ibsen in England was no laughing matter. A Doll's House was followed by a flurry of Ibsen plays on the London stage. (See Appendix I) In 1891, there were productions of Rosmersholm (23 February), Ghosts (13 March), Hedda Gabler (20 April), and Lady from the Sea (11 May) as well as revivals of A Doll's House (27 January and 2 June). Most significant and notorious was Ghosts (produced by J.T. Grein's Independent Theatre) which precipitated a flood of incredible invective, notably from drama critic Clement Scott. He was aghast that censorship of the play by the Lord Chamberlain's office had been circumvented by restricting its showing to private subscribers.<sup>33</sup> This method of bypassing the strictures of the Licensing Act was the only recourse available to producers of such unusual fare.

E.F.S. Piggott's statement to the Select Committee of Theatres and Places of Entertainment indicates how closely the Woman Question was allied with decisions regarding censorship:

I have studied Ibsen's plays pretty carefully, and all the characters in Ibsen's plays appear to me morally deranged. All the heroines are dissatisfied spinsters who look on marriage as a monopoly, or dissatisfied married women in a chronic state of rebellion against not only the

conditions which nature has imposed upon their sex, but against all the duties and obligations of mothers and wives; and as for the men they are all rascals or imbeciles.<sup>34</sup>

Like the official Examiner of Plays, Clement Scott found it virtually impossible to divorce his blinkered, pristine views of morality from his theatrical criticism. He claimed that the "general public" would hiss Ghosts off the stage, not on moral but on artistic grounds. Yet he himself denounced the play on the grounds that it would "drive decent-minded women out of the playhouse." Furthermore, because Ghosts touched on "nasty subjects" (sexual promiscuity, venereal disease, incest, and imbecility), Scott considered it could not "possibly be discussed in all its morbid details in any mixed assembly of men and women."<sup>35</sup> However, theatre visionaries welcomed the growing trend in drama to bring to light hitherto unmentionable social issues which plagued Clement Scott's world no less than Ibsen's. A woman writer of the period, Blanche A. Crackenthorpe, noted Ibsen's influence on the trend towards a freer discussion of serious topics on the English stage, especially those concerned with human relationships:

What gives Ibsen his vogue to-day with the few, to be followed, as some of us believe, by the acclamation of the many to-morrow, is that he has contrived to get a firm grip of the human heart ....It holds his audience as in a vice....The secret is that he has taken them 'close to life.' ...the sex problem...in one form or other is as essential to [serious] drama as is the apple to the dumpling.<sup>36</sup>

Equally essential to innovative drama was the actress who could bring the New Woman and her problems to life on the stage without the

old style of traditional acting. Shaw condemned especially the "childishly egotistical character" of Sarah Bernhardt's star quality

which is not the art of making you think more highly or feel more deeply, but the art of making you admire her, pity her, champion her, weep with her, laugh at her jokes, follow her fortunes breathlessly, and applaud her wildly when the curtain falls.... And it is always Sarah Bernhardt in her own capacity who does this to you. The dress, the title of the play, the order of the words may vary; but the woman is always the same. She does not enter into the leading character: she substitutes herself for it.<sup>37</sup>

Bernhardt suffered by comparison with Eleanora Duse "whose every part is a separate creation." Shaw praised Duse's "highly intellectual" work and the reality of her unique impersonations, describing her performances as "the best modern acting I have ever seen."<sup>38</sup> In Duse, Shaw saw the model for the intensely realistic acting with psychological insight required for the new drama.

Even though Shaw extolled Ellen Terry's "ultramodern talent," her picturesque style of acting to portray a "moment of earnest life"<sup>39</sup> made her unsuitable, in his view, for Ibsen roles. For this reason, Shaw felt that it was safer to entrust "Ibsenian parts" to novices or juniors in the acting profession. His description of four actresses, Janet Achurch, Elizabeth Robins, Marion Lea, and Florence Farr, all of whom succeeded in Ibsen roles, bears this out:

All four were products of the modern movement for the higher education of women, literate, in touch with advanced thought, and coming by natural predilection on the stage from outside the theatrical class, in contradistinction to the senior generation of inveterately sentimental actresses, schooled in the old fashion...<sup>40</sup>

The actresses who staged the first public performances of Ibsen in England were willing to risk their careers, reputations, and worldly goods to promote his plays. Janet Achurch and her husband signed a two-year contract to tour Australasia, their future salaries mortgaged to finance the epoch-making A Doll's House. Their own household furnishings had provided the props, and the resourceful Janet had tricked Irving into contributing £100 on the pretext that it was for a production of Clever Alice. Forced to leave their London triumph behind, they reluctantly embarked on the rigorous tour. Janet fulfilled her part of the contract despite a pregnancy and the birth of a baby daughter, Nora.<sup>41</sup> But the physical and nervous exhaustion which she experienced on the tour (which introduced A Doll's House to audiences in Australia, New Zealand, India, and Egypt) led to Janet's reliance on alcohol and drugs, an addiction which eventually destroyed her health and career.

During the Charringtons' absence, Marion Lea persuaded Elizabeth Robins to play Hedda. Both actresses used jewellery and other treasures to secure £300 for a series of matinee performances at the Vaudeville Theatre. The Athenaeum's review of Hedda Gabler commended the "two clever, courageous and persevering young actresses" for "a gallant fight in the face of opposition scarcely short of persecution."<sup>42</sup> A storm of critical abuse followed the opening of the play, which nevertheless transferred to the evening bill for a month. Clement Scott acknowledged that "Miss Elizabeth Robins has done what no doubt she fully intended to do. She has made vice attractive by her art. She has almost ennobled crime. She has glorified an unwomanly woman."<sup>43</sup> The

critic of Truth also attacked Robins for making her art the "propagandist of faithlessness and lawlessness" in creating Hedda, "a revolting, abominable, heartless woman."<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Robins was scornful of male critics and theatre-goers who shuddered over her disturbing portrayal of the Ibsen heroine: "How should men understand Hedda on the stage when they didn't understand her in the persons of their wives, their daughters, their women friends?"<sup>45</sup>

Robins' continuing search for roles that would express woman's innermost needs no doubt grew out of her personal experience of this lack of understanding between the sexes. Her marriage to a young actor, from whom she lived apart, ended disastrously when he committed suicide.<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth had always been "concerned with...the woman question, and I mean her Question: not man's view of it....What was to be her attitude to Life?"<sup>47</sup> She explored the answers to these questions through Ibsen's female characters. When the final instalment of The Master Builder arrived in November 1892, the eager actress recognized that it was after all "a woman's play" and that Hilde Wangel was herself. Archer, who feared the play would "seriously bore as well as bewilder the average audience," did not foresee "the intense vitality" of Robins' portrayal of Hilde, "which enchained every eye and every mind...."<sup>48</sup> Shaw remarked that, "as the impetuous, imaginative New Woman," Robins had "succeeded heart and soul, rather by being the character than by understanding it."<sup>49</sup> Shaw's own failure to "understand" a woman like Elizabeth surfaced when her feminism rebelled against his wheedling flattery of her as a pretty woman rather than a respected professional.

On the other hand, Florence Farr epitomized the New Woman for Shaw both on stage and off. Like Elizabeth Robins, she spurned marriage after one early misadventure. (Her 4-year marriage to actor Edward Emery ended when he emigrated to America.) Florence had taken advantage of the opportunities open to women of her generation: she escaped a dreary family life, attended college, and pursued an acting career (though untrained). After her marriage failed, she involved herself with aesthetes and mystics, divorced her husband (so that he could not make legal claims against her), and experimented with Ibsen's drama. She created the role of Rebecca in her own production of Rosmersholm (23 February 1891) despite setbacks caused by London managers who refused to allow members of their companies to take part in the performance. As usual, Ibsen's controversial heroine caused a stir in the press: "These Ibsen creatures are neither men nor women, they are ghouls, vile, unlovable, unnatural, morbid monsters...."<sup>50</sup> But Florence, herself an "advanced" woman, found Rebecca "attractive just because she is so thoroughly womanly, and if she is not womanly then I give up my claim to womanhood and proclaim myself an abnormal development at the end of the century."<sup>51</sup> Critics like Clement Scott would have agreed with this latter assessment of the Ibsen character and the actress who portrayed her. Florence naturally found herself in sympathy with the ambitious, free-thinking Rebecca who eschewed wedlock in favour of a relationship of kindred spirits.

A rare moment came in November 1896 when the foremost "new" actresses appeared together in an English production of Little Eyolf. The cast included Elizabeth Robins (co-producer of the play with

William Archer) as Asta Allmers, Janet Achurch as Rita, and Mrs. Patrick Campbell as the Rat-Wife. This was a minor role for an actress of Stella Campbell's reputation, but her presence on stage was an enticement to anti-Ibsen factions who would otherwise have stayed away. (Besides, she had been indebted to Elizabeth Robins ever since the American actress had graciously given up the star-making role of Paula Tanqueray in her favour.) Florence Farr, hired as an understudy, took over the part of the Rat-Wife when Stella replaced Janet in the leading role.<sup>52</sup> The impact which the combined forces of their dramatic talents had on the London theatre scene can hardly be estimated, but these actresses did more than bring Ibsen heroines to life. In the process of "being" Nora, Hedda, Hilde, and Rebecca, they set the trend for New Woman roles on the London stage.

Soon British dramatists were writing parts with a particular actress in mind, or else were searching for a specific stage personality to "create" the female character they had imagined on paper. Arthur Wing Pinero's answer to Ibsen was The Second Mrs Tanqueray (1893), his personal conception of a contemporary woman's psychological problems. Actor-manager George Alexander, recalling Elizabeth Robins as Hedda, envisioned her as Pinero's neurotic, yet appealing heroine. But Pinero, after seeing Stella Campbell playing the villainess in an Adelphi melodrama, insisted on having her play Paula Tanqueray. Her success inspired Pinero to write The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (1895) especially for her. Even as a particular actress influenced the playwright's creation of a specific character, she could also exert a certain power over the success or failure of his play.

Stella Campbell so objected to certain lines and scenes in Henry Arthur Jones' Michael and His Lost Angel (1896) that she resigned from the play after two weeks of rehearsal with the excuse that she could "not enter right heartily into the part of Audrie."<sup>53</sup> Jones' refusal to cut objectionable lines and Stella's subsequent withdrawal no doubt accounted in part for the play's failure. A reference to Stella as a "Beardsley-type"<sup>54</sup> associates this beautiful, highly emotional actress with the sensual, provocative, slightly sinister woman of fin-de-siècle art. In an attempt to depict the New Woman, artists and writers alike created their own "types."

The distorted creatures of Aubrey Beardsley's bold black and white drawings helped to free the 1890s woman from the Victorian ideal of prim femininity and to expose latent fears of the sexually liberated woman. Artistic experimentation in the field of drama moved more cautiously, but replaced traditional stereotypes with new images which, to a degree, achieved the same end. Shaw credited himself with having done more than any other English-speaking male writer born in the 19th century to "knock Woman off her pedestal and plant her on the solid earth."<sup>55</sup> In an effort to explode the stereotypical "womanly woman," Shaw created his own ideal, a domineering, independent, "unwomanly" woman,<sup>56</sup> and then resorted to flattery and cajolery to persuade his current favourite actress to portray her on stage.<sup>57</sup> Florence Farr was cast as the volatile Blanche Sartorius in Widower's Houses (1892) and as the enterprising Louka in Arms and the Man (1894). Janet Achurch was intended for the role of Vivie Warren, the liberated modern woman in Mrs Warren's Profession (1894), but the play's outrageous subject

matter did not get past the censor. She later portrayed the central figure in Shaw's Candida (in 1897, on tour) and Lady Cicely Waynelete in Captain Brassbound's Conversion (1900), roles which were inspired by Shaw's infatuation for Ellen Terry, who also provided a model for the Strange Lady in The Man of Destiny (1896). Shaw claimed that Stella Campbell's personal charms evoked several Shavian temptresses, including Cleopatra.<sup>58</sup> Nor was Shaw above weaving his amorous exploits into his stage plots: in The Philanderer (1893), Florence Farr is represented by Grace Tranfield, one character in a real-life love-triangle. Elizabeth Robins questioned whether Shaw's female characters were really human beings or simply versions of Shaw's ambivalent feelings about women. Despite entreaties and blandishments, she could not be persuaded to perform the title role in his ill-fated Mrs. Warren's Profession. Instead, she wrote and starred in her own Ibsen-inspired play, Alan's Wife<sup>59</sup> (1893), which seeks to give heroic proportions to the central character and her life-and-death dilemma. (Details in Chapter V).

Shaw's projection of a new kind of theatre for the '90s went beyond creating stage roles for his favourite actresses or promoting plays written from the standpoint of women. There was "yet another momentous prospect" awaiting the actress who had till now been content to play "leading lady" to some actor-manager. A "higher artistic career" was only possible to those who, like Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins, had gone into management for themselves.<sup>60</sup> Florence Farr was encouraged, with Annie Horniman's secret patronage, to produce Arms and the Man (Avenue Theatre, 21 April 1894), the only one of

Shaw's plays to have a successful run on the commercial stage during the decade. Stella Campbell, never willing to be merely a foil for the male actor, quarrelled with George Alexander, then with Beerbohm Tree, and eventually broke with Forbes Robertson to form her own repertory company. Eager to experiment with new plays, her preference was for roles like Paula Tanqueray and Agnes Ebbsmith where she dominated the stage.

But Shaw's determination to "plant" his visionary New Woman on "solid ground" was thwarted by the dichotomy which existed in his "new" actresses as surely as in their less courageous sisters. Despite his advice in columns and letters (and to his great disappointment), Janet Achurch, Elizabeth Robins, Marion Lea, and Florence Farr yielded to conventional "role"-playing. After praising their special aptitude for the new drama in his 1891 Appendix to The Quintessence of Ibsenism, Shaw expunged their names from the 1913 edition. In the intervening years, each actress, in her own way, was torn between contradictory values. Janet Achurch was condemned by Shaw when she resorted to a Sarah Bernhardt-type of rhetoric as Shakespeare's Cleopatra ("no brains, no pains, none of the distinction and freshness of thoughtful, self controlled work")<sup>61</sup> which, to his dismay, carried over into her revival of Nora in an 1897 production of A Doll's House:

...you inflicted such torments on me with every syllable you uttered that my affection for you finally came out by the roots....It is all the fault of that cursed Cleopatra. You<sup>62</sup> have begun to act; and now it's all up with you.

Elizabeth Robins' assertion that Ibsen's Hilde Wangel was "herself" seems a disclaimer of her Puritanical background. As an Ibsen actress,

she represented the younger generation knocking at the door, but privately she would have eschewed Hilde's brash sexuality. Shaw taunted her with epithets like "St. Elizabeth" and "Holy Elizabeth" because she repulsed his advances and chose male friends cautiously, the safely married William Archer, the confirmed bachelor, Henry James. Even on stage, her sense of propriety forced her to omit references to Hedda Gabler's pregnancy, leading Shaw to bewail the "feminine problem" of women who are mad to play Ibsen heroines but who "recoil from the jar of the peculiarly Ibsenite passages."<sup>63</sup> When he was asked to write a play for Archer's New Century Theatre with Robins in the leading part, Shaw maliciously recommended that the actress' "American scheme of ethics" and Archer's "Sir Walter Scottish social consciousness" were better suited to "some correctly Ethical play (why not ask Mrs Humphrey Ward to write it?)."<sup>64</sup> To her credit, Robins was aware of her own ambivalence: "...mine was the problem of the woman bred under the old order who abandons that order, but does not for a moment intend to abandon its more valued advantages."<sup>65</sup> Her traditional side accepted the idea that limitations imposed by the old order had been framed for her protection. Her need to be "protected" accounts for the anonymity surrounding Alan's Wife and the sexually ambiguous nom-de-plume (C.E. Raimond) attached to her novels.

Marion Lea was "early lost to Ibsen and the English stage" when she married and left for America to act in her husband's plays. Elizabeth Robins regretted that her colleague's "unforced...true to life" acting was not fully appreciated in England: "Many of the critics and most of the managers mistook the self-discipline of the artist for

limited range." Paradoxically, Robins felt that if Shaw had been writing dramatic criticism at the time, he could have made Marion's "reputation."<sup>66</sup> Even for this talented actress, stage success on either side of the Atlantic depended on male patronage.

Shaw's promotion of Florence Farr, his New Woman par excellence, was thwarted when she, too, failed to live up to his expectations. She had allowed herself to be diverted by writing novels and treatises, chanting to the psaltery, composing music for plays, and delving into Egyptology and various mystical cults instead of developing her skills as an actress. After her disastrous portrayal of Lady Brandon in John Todhunter's A Comedy of Sighs (1894),<sup>67</sup> Shaw quickly gave the part of his "romantically beautiful" heroine, Raina (in Arms and the Man), originally intended for Florence, to another actress (Alma Murray) and Florence was cast as Louka, the servant. Although Florence wrote about the "Modern Woman" and exhibited all the traits associated with that image, she thought it "stupid" of the American dancer, Isadora Duncan, whom she greatly admired, "to keep speaking about her illegitimate children when society was trying to take her up."<sup>68</sup> Eventually, social proprieties enveloped Florence whose search for self-realization took her to Ceylon and the post of Lady Principal of Ramanthan College for Girls.

In fastening on Stella Campbell as the answer to a dramatist's prayer, Shaw recognized a quality that went beyond physical beauty:

...there are lots of beautiful people about; and some of them can perhaps even thread needles with their toes; but they cant take a filament of grey matter from their brains and thread it infallibly through that most elusive of eyelet holes in the

top of a dramatist's needle. Besides, that produces a new sort of beauty, compared to which natural beauty is a mere reach-me-down from Nature's patterns....You have picked the work of nature to pieces and remade it whole heavens finer. It is the power to do that that is the real gift.<sup>69</sup>

Beginning with Paula Tanqueray, Stella brought the modern, sexually alluring woman to life in characters whose attitudes and behaviour were intended to shock and titillate audiences accustomed to sentimental heroines. But the provocative actress could be surprisingly prudish when she was required to play scenes that offended her Victorian sensibilities. As the barmaid, Dulcie Larondie, in Henry Arthur Jones' The Masqueraders (1894), Stella disliked having to draw beer and sell her kiss to the highest bidder. She hated the church scene in Jones' Michael and his Lost Angel (1896) and wanted the playwright to cut lines she considered profane. The use of her husband's name throughout her career, even though he was abroad for much of their married life, emphasizes the enigmatic personality of a woman whose need for respectability masked a refusal to be bound.

All of Shaw's "new" actresses were hampered by an innate conventionality regardless of the fact that they were the proclaimed standard-bearers of the New Drama and, by association, the New Woman. Although they stood apart from others in their profession who were less daring in their choice of stage roles, each one exemplified the dichotomy which Juliette Adam noted in the modern woman. All were aware of the limits to self-expression symbolized by the bars of her cage: Elizabeth Robins welcomed them as a protection; Janet Achurch escaped

their reality through alcohol and morphia; Florence Farr, through various avenues which offered spiritual self-realization; "Mrs. Pat" resisted the domination of a male hierarchy but adopted its mantle of respectability. Sensing the conflict between what she yearned to express and what society allowed, each actress searched for "new" stage roles through which to explore and exert her caged but robust individualism.

The New Drama of the 1890s is a record of this exploration. The woman at the centre is allowed more psychological depth, although her image may be blurred by the dramatist's own attitudes. In most cases, the writer is sympathetic towards the heroine's frustration with social and moral restrictions. On the other hand, behaviour that goes against the norm is often seen as a denial of her essential womanhood rather than a manifestation of her true self. This occurs whenever the playwright is bound by the concept that woman's role is determined by "nature" (meaning familiar custom). In that light, objection to Nora Helmer's flight could be justified on the strength of Ruskin's feminine ideal: "enduringly, incorruptibly good," "instinctively, infallibly wise,...not for self-development, but for self-renunciation."<sup>70</sup> Recalling Oswald Crawford's prognostication, the advent of Ibsen on the London stage signalled a change in the old order. This is reflected in the innovative "New Woman" plays of the 1890s.

The former "fallen woman" of fiction and melodrama, now updated to the "woman-with-a-past," demonstrates the extent to which prior sexual misdemeanours make her a social outcast, even if the playwright does not condemn her to an untimely death, insanity, or suicide. The

new drama also deals with the "advanced" woman, the independent heroine who is either aggressive in courtship or chooses a career over marriage, overturns parental authority, engages in activities formerly reserved for males, and often talks and dresses like a man. By pushing against conventional boundaries which define woman's intellectual and moral territory, she seeks to overthrow the patriarchal system and to upset the double standard. Another aspect of the New Woman manifests itself in the married heroine who attempts to establish greater freedom for herself within the old patterns of respectability yet must face the psychological pressures which tend to keep women in their traditional place. She represents the clash between radical principles and the actualities of contemporary life arising out of the changing relationship between the sexes, a dichotomy which is evident in the roles assigned to actresses (by both men and women writers) as well as in the actresses themselves.

## CHAPTER IV

"Shall We Forgive Her?"<sup>1</sup>The Woman with a Past: Old Themes and New Images

Pamela: You men are a little too prone to imagine that when you withdraw the light of your countenance from the woman you have delighted to honour, that nothing remains for her but to cry her eyes out and jump into the Thames. Believe me, that's a delusion. That sort of woman is dying out -- the sex is learning sense.

(Grierson's Way, 1899)

In 1894, the critic, A. B. Walkley, pinpointed a change in attitude towards the "woman-with-a-past" when he suggested that Frank Harvey's play (see Note 1) should be re-titled, "Shall We Forgive Him?"<sup>2</sup> The "fallen" woman was a stereotype of the 19th-century novel, melodrama, and opera. Whether led astray by seduction or by her own volition, she invariably succumbed to "heroine's disease,"<sup>3</sup> and her sin against society's moral code had to be expunged in a finale that mixed remorse and repentance with a promise of heavenly redemption. By the 1890s, the double standard which castigated the woman who fell from the Victorian ideal, yet allowed her male partner any number of amorous adventures, was no longer unquestioningly accepted.

In Shall We Forgive Her? (1894), the central character, Grace West, attempts to hide her past from an adoring husband who regards her as an "angel." When Oliver West discovers his wife had previously lived

in the Colonies with a man who refused to marry her, beat her, and even attempted to murder her, he reacts violently, throws her out of the house, and denies her access to their child. Legally, Grace could have claimed her maternal rights since the baby was less than a year old, but "what she cannot get by love she will never take by law."<sup>4</sup> Through exemplary behaviour (she saves a man's life, ministers to the sick and needy, helps to support her household by writing articles for a woman's magazine, and courageously stands up to her former seducer), Grace elicits loyalty and affection from the play's "good" characters and gains the audience's sympathy. Oliver, whose failed eyesight seems an apt metaphor for his moral blindness, eventually agrees to let bygones be bygones: "God knows I love my wife, and always will."<sup>5</sup> The fact that the "fallen" heroine survives and is restored to her former position as wife and mother represents a departure from the usual climax of popular melodrama.

For example, the popularity of Mrs. Henry Wood's novel, East Lynne (1861), and its numerous stage adaptations, derives from the way an adulterous wife paid the price for her infidelity. Divorce, disgrace, an illegitimate child, family estrangement, and death were the cumulative disasters heaped on the misguided Lady Isabel whose story was intended as a warning to any woman who stepped beyond the norm. The Victorian sense of propriety was scandalized -- but intrigued -- by female sensuality and its effects on family life. Hence the public demand for a moralistic ending in novels and plays. As a character-type, Lady Isabel fascinated the Victorians, playing on their sympathy and their horror.

In the case of Mary Elizabeth Braddon's Lady Audley's Secret (1862), the novel allowed some psychological probing and hence some understanding of the impetuous heroine's motivation for committing bigamy and attempting to dispose of her first husband. Lady Audley gave a new flavour to the female who sinned: she was more than a victim; she was an adventuress. In the final pages, we read of her death, after a long illness, in a home for the dangerously insane. In the truncated stage version (1863) by Colin Henry Hazlewood, the theme of an abandoned wife who must somehow support herself and her child and still keep her respectability is subverted to show a crazed woman whose villainous deeds are the result of a basically evil nature. She dies gratuitously at centre stage, "scorned, loathed, and despised by all."<sup>6</sup> The shallow sensationalism of Lady Audley, as she was portrayed on stage, lost its appeal in the 1890s; it received only 18 performances at the Novelty Theatre in February and May of 1892. But East Lynne, with its sentimental themes of mother-love and final repentance continued to attract theatre-goers throughout the decade, playing a total of 947 times at various London venues.

Although the trend in new British drama, under the influence of Ibsenism, was towards a more realistic presentation of the woman-with-a-past, an elevated version of the fallen woman persisted in the opera house: her suffering for past indiscretions made glamorous by uplifting music. But even the familiar outline of opera, which traditionally featured a final death scene, yielded somewhat to Zolaesque naturalism and verismo, its Italian counterpart. The introduction of lower class characters and the inclusion of realistic

details, scenes with strong local colour and situations arising from the clash of fierce, even brutal passions, produced a new kind of operatic heroine who, far from being a pathetic victim of social and sexual inequalities, acts independently, deliberately flouts decorum, and is the author of her own destiny.

Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana (1889), based on a short story by Italian novelist Giovanni Verga, survives to this day as a manifesto of musical verismo. When Santuzza, a Sicilian village girl, discovers that Turiddu, to whom she is betrothed, has been visiting his former sweetheart, Lola (now a married woman), she confronts him in a public place and demands that he choose between them. He angrily throws her aside, and that further provokes her rage and jealousy. After cursing him, she tells Lola's husband, Alfio, of his wife's infidelity. The two men fight a duel in which Turiddu is killed. Santuzza and the slain man's mother are left to comfort each other. Here the man dies because of his immoral conduct. The heroine is devastated by the disaster that she herself has instigated, yet she survives.

Cavalleria Rusticana was first presented to English audiences at the Shattisbury Theatre on October 19, 1891 and marked the debut of soprano Emma Calvé in London. Praised for her "expressive singing" and the "tragic power and intensity"<sup>7</sup> of her acting, Calvé claimed to have modelled her interpretation of the abandoned Santuzza on that of Eleanora Duse, whose naturalistic style Calvé described as "the spark that set my art alight."<sup>8</sup> The singer broke many conventions of operatic decorum. Her costume had been bought from an Italian peasant woman, and her gestures were "spontaneous and apparently unstudied."<sup>9</sup>

But it was with the title role of Bizet's Carmen (1875)<sup>10</sup> that Calvé became most strongly identified. Her childhood fascination with gypsies no doubt contributed to her portrayal of the wild Spanish girl for whom freedom means more than life itself. Carmen's unruly passion and overt sexuality drew a shocked response from Shaw: "Calvé, an artist of genius, divested Carmen of the last rag of romance and respectability: it is not possible to describe in decent language what a rascalion she made of her."<sup>11</sup>

In the opera, Carmen's seduction of Don José takes place in full view of the audience. She differs from sentimental heroines like Violetta<sup>12</sup> and Manon<sup>13</sup> whose sexual exploits take place off-stage. Yet they are just as infamously promiscuous. Unlike those courtesans, Carmen never suffers the decline of "heroine's disease." She deliberately chooses death at the hand of her cast-off lover and thus frees herself from his soul-destroying possessiveness. In the end, her untamed spirit triumphs over Don José's bourgeois attitude towards life and love.

Carmen, especially in Calvé's portrayal, epitomized the sensual woman of the 1890s, a powerful image which reached its operatic climax after the turn of the century in Richard Strauss' Salomé (1905), based on Wilde's poetic expansion of the Biblical story. Originally published in French in 1893, the play was subsequently refused a license for performance on the London stage.<sup>14</sup> However, it became available in an English translation with provocative illustrations by Aubrey Beardsley. His stylized black and white drawings conveyed an overt picture of female eroticism guaranteed to offend Victorian propriety. Wilde's

play, though it might be read, was banned from the stage on religious and moral grounds, a form of censorship which Shaw described as "the obstacle that makes dramatic authorship intolerable in England."<sup>15</sup> It delayed the performance of his own play. Mrs Warren's Profession (written in 1893) until its private production in 1902.

Mrs. Warren, a woman-with-a-past, is unwilling to give up her profitable business in organized prostitution even to gain the approval of her strait-laced daughter whose Newnham education has been financed by that same ill-gotten fortune. Unlike Wilde's Salomé, Shaw's female protagonist is not motivated by sudden lust but by financial expediency. Shaw attacked a social system which forced women of all classes to sell themselves in order to survive: "The only way for a woman to provide for herself decently is for her to be good to some man that can afford to be good to her."<sup>16</sup> Shaw's grievance against the Lord Chamberlain's Examiner of Plays is elaborated upon in his Preface to a special edition printed in 1902. Whether as social or dramatic critic, Shaw's concern was to dismantle conventional attitudes:

I am convinced that fine art is the subtlest, the most seductive, the most effective instrument of moral propaganda in the world, excepting only the example of personal conduct; and I waive even this exception in favour of the art of the stage, because it works by exhibiting examples of personal conduct made intelligible and moving to crowds of unobservant unreflecting people to whom real life means nothing.<sup>17</sup>

He defends his own play, which he claims would hardly persuade young women to enter Mrs. Warren's profession, by attacking the stereotypes who are presently tolerated on the stage

only when they are beautiful, exquisitely dressed, and sumptuously lodged and fed; ...they shall, at the end of the play, die of consumption to the sympathetic tears of the whole audience, or step into the next room to commit suicide, or at least be turned out by their protectors, and passed on to be 'redeemed' by old and faithful lovers who have adored them in spite of all their levities.<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, Shaw's play was prohibited and the author himself "branded by implication," while successful playwrights such as Arthur Wing Pinero, Henry Arthur Jones, and Oscar Wilde acceded to current demands for a drama which focused on contemporary society yet remained rooted in Victorian convention. So the woman-with-a-past persisted, albeit in modern dress.

Pinero's The Second Mrs Tanqueray (1893) made an enormous impact because of its "astonishing advance in philosophical insight."<sup>19</sup> Mrs. Patrick Campbell's Paula seemed "almost perfect in its realism,"<sup>20</sup> and this no doubt contributed to the play's acceptance as British drama's answer to Ibsen. But the suicide of the "fallen" heroine follows the old formula. The injustice of woman's social ostracism, for sins which are natural in men, is driven home when Paula is shunned by respectable society (in the person of Mrs. Cortelyon) while Captain Ardale is accepted as an eligible suitor for the convent-reared Ellean, since his heroism in battle has wiped the slate clean. But for Paula, "the future is only the past again, entered through another gate."<sup>21</sup> Ironically, Paula ends her life moments before Ellean enters to make amends for her former coldness, a spontaneous and generous move which might have prevented that suicide. Paula had always felt that "the love of a nice

woman who believed me to be like herself would do me a world of good" (p.106). Whether or not Pinero himself fully understood the import of these words, the theme of women helping women surfaces in other plays to disrupt the cliché of women as the chief betrayers of their sex. Pinero's psychological probing of Paula's personality and his awareness that social forces can destroy added a new dimension to the fallen woman but retained the stereotype.

Henry Arthur Jones is more concerned with the adverse effect that a sensual woman has on a man's life and career. Such a view reinforces contemporary fears regarding female sensuality. In Jones' play, The Dancing Girl (1891), Drusilla Ives, alias Diana Valrose (in Quaker parlance, a "heathen name"), rebels against the imposed restrictions of her father's religious beliefs:

You brought me up as you thought best -- But your mean, narrow life stifled me, crushed me! I couldn't breathe in it! I wanted a larger, freer life -- I was perishing for want of it!.... I want to live, and live in every pulse of me! For every moment of my life -- and I will! I will be myself!<sup>22</sup>

Drusilla's attitude reveals the individualism of the New Woman, but goes against the "natural" role which Jones ascribed to the female sex. In asserting her right to live her own life, Drusilla deliberately chooses a path which in Jones' view can lead only to despair and, in this case, a mysterious form of self-destruction. Her lover, the Duke of Guiseberry, keeps "Diana" in elegant style in Mayfair but, like Paula, she dreads the prospect of growing old and losing her power over men:

I feel that I'm going to be cheated out of my youth and beauty and the homage that men owe me! Just when I long for more life, more pleasure, more empire! Oh! I hope I shall never live to grow old. (p.333)

Predictably, Drusilla dies at the age of twenty-five, only three days after dancing in public on a Sunday night in defiance of her estranged father whose final curse prophesies her downfall:

...may thy stubborn, rebellious heart be broken as thou has broken mine -- may thy beauty wither and canker thee -- may thy frame be racked... that thy soul may be gnawn with sorrow and despair -- that thy spirit may be humbled and thy proud neck bowed with agony to the dust. (p. 345)

Although Drusilla felt that her father's view of "righteousness" and "repentance" were "old-fashioned and out-worn" (p. 344), she falls victim to his religious piety.

Drusilla's "crime" is linked to the sensuality which finds expression in her heathenish dancing. The infamous Diana Valrose is labelled a "wanton" and a "betrayers of men," and her sudden death, from an undisclosed cause, suggests that she is being punished for her "sin."<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, Drusilla's libidinous consort, Guiseberry, is rescued by a May/December alliance with a suitable innocent young girl. Even Drusilla's father forgives Guiseberry when he discovers that the Duke had at one time proposed marriage to his wayward daughter, a gesture that magically sanctifies any previous wrongdoing. To strengthen the concept of a different moral code for the male characters, the Quaker villager, John Christison, another victim of Drusilla's seductive spell, is united with a "good" woman, Faith Ives,

who has remained faithful during his amorous fling, with her "wicked" sister. While The Dancing Girl might question religious extremism and the double standard, Jones' uncompromising attitude towards the woman who strays is never in doubt.

The conviction that either death or social ostracism are the natural consequences when a woman betrays her true self led to Jones' conventional treatment of Audrie Lesden in Michael and His Lost Angel (1896) and Lucy Dane in Mrs Dane's Defence (1900). Led by her passion for Reverend Michael Feversham, Audrie precipitates his moral downfall but she also is morally torn between her old self, the half that is "still worthless, silly, capricious, hollow, worldly, and bad,"<sup>24</sup> and her changed self, the "new Audrie Lesden," who must be sacrificed in order to nullify the old. She fears that "the old Audrie will come back again, and live the old weary, dry, empty life -- and grow old and wrinkled and heartless" (p.42). In an effort to escape that fate and her grief over losing Michael (because of the unexpected return of a husband, presumed dead), Audrie turns to extravagant Mayfair partying, "a [race] through [her] life to get to the end of it" (p.72). Like Verdi's Violetta, she succumbs to a debilitating "illness" and dies in her lover's arms. Consequently, Michael seeks refuge in a Catholic monastery, trusting this act of penitence will ensure their reunion in a heavenly after-life. Audrie's redemptive death, which Archer viewed as "genuinely pathetic,"<sup>25</sup> was wasted on Bernard Shaw who noted only a "humorous piteousness in the dying woman" who leaves the world "conscious of having no sincere conviction of sin."<sup>26</sup> But with his own convictions firmly in place, Jones dooms his heroine in the

conventional manner.

Even when Jones allows his heroine to survive, she must pay the price for contravening the "natural" law.<sup>27</sup> Social censure is the fate assigned to Lucy Dane whose "sin" is assuming the identity of a deceased relative in order to cover her lurid past. As a young governess, she was seduced by her middle-aged employer and bore his illegitimate child. The scandal assumed horrendous proportions when the man's wife committed suicide and he went mad. Lucy's attempt to regain a place in respectable society is prevented when details of her past are brought to light under Sir Daniel Carteret's ruthless cross-examination and she is persuaded that marriage to his adopted son, Lionel, would ruin the young man's future:

Dare you marry him, knowing that day by day he must help you deceive, till disclosure comes; and then, day by day, he must endure social isolation with you, disorder and failure in his career for you -- dare you marry him?<sup>28</sup>

Victimized and then judged by male authority, Lucy reflects that "the world is very hard on a woman," but she remains unconvinced of sin. She reasons that her mistake was not in breaking society's "law," but in being "found out" (pp. 271-72). From a woman's standpoint, losing love is far worse than losing reputation, but Jones would not agree. Thus, Lucy joins the ranks of sullied heroines who deserve either death or social ostracism.

Oscar Wilde satirized fashionable society but demonstrated that social acceptance was the saving grace for any woman with a past. In Lady Windermere's Fan (1892), Mrs. Erlynne tries blackmail and deception to achieve her goal, but it is an act of self-sacrifice

to save her daughter's reputation that elevates this outwardly despicable woman. A clever falsehood restores Mrs. Erlynne in Lord Augustus' eyes and their subsequent marriage will ensure her social position, but the esteem of another woman is an important factor in her restoration. This is true also for Mrs. Arbuthnot in Wilde's A Woman of No Importance (1893). When the facts of her past become known, her illegitimate son, Gerald, to save her honour, insists that his mother should marry the libertine who wronged her more than twenty years before. However, Hester Worsley, a young woman of Puritan background, who had previously condemned women who sinned, applauds her refusal to become Lord Illingworth's legal wife: "That would be real dishonour....That would be real disgrace."<sup>29</sup> Hester's liberated attitude earns her the label of a "fin-de-siècle" person and Mrs. Arbuthnot, supported by the younger generation, lives down her shameful past. This kind of help from another female character was crucial to social rehabilitation as Paula Tanqueray recognized.

But Wilde's perception of woman's inner needs is blurred by his conformity to the Victorian notion of sexual inequality, especially when he allows Lord Goring, a character in An Ideal Husband (1895) to say: "A man's life is of more value than a woman's. It has larger issues, wider scope, greater ambitions."<sup>30</sup> Fortunate indeed was the woman whose reputation was intact and who was married to a man whose life gave meaning (and social respectability) to her own. Pinero, Jones, and Wilde all bowed to social forces which they felt determined the course of a woman's life based on her past indiscretions. But there were other voices which spoke against the old concepts.

Those in the theatre community, as already noted in the case of Ellen Terry, broke through barriers of prejudice for themselves and their associates. Henry Irving refused to acknowledge a moral code which would have barred William Terriss' mistress (Jessie Millward) from attending the actor's funeral.<sup>31</sup> Irving's offer to escort her won him renewed respect from his colleagues. The gesture was commended by Shaw who had defended Wilde against public scorn during the playwright's trial and incarceration. More liberal attitudes off-stage were bound to affect the way that unorthodox conduct was treated dramatically. In Mrs Warren's Profession, Shaw advanced an image of the "fallen" woman which placed the blame for her degradation where it belonged, on society as a whole.

When women playwrights approached the same theme, their ambivalence was like that of the "new" actresses who demanded freedom to control their lives and careers, yet could not cross the moral boundaries imposed by centuries of sexism. Their explorations of the woman with a past are intuitive, discerning, and empathetic, but these writers cannot envision a future for their heroines entirely free from guilt, shame, and some form of retribution. Janet Achurch's play, Mrs Daintree's Daughter (1894), based on the same source as Shaw's more innovative work,<sup>32</sup> reflects a moral tone in keeping with public sentiment. In her watered-down version of debauchery, Achurch sidesteps the forbidden subject of sexuality-for-sale. Instead, her woman with a past uses feminine wiles to lure young men into gambling for her own profit. Moreover, Achurch makes it abundantly clear that Mrs. Daintree's daughter is legitimate (while Vivie Warren was born out of

wedlock), and the mother, an attractive widow, admits only to the crimes of gambling and usury: "It--was--only--that--with--me."<sup>33</sup> Her mercenary actions, admittedly committed in the interests of her daughter's well-being, eventually culminate in ruined lives and suicide, but these facts are couched in the conventional staginess of the play's resolution. The playwright's intent is to fasten a lesser "crime" on her fallen heroine and thus avoid the subject of sexual impurity.

Like Mrs. Warren, Leila Daintree is devastated when her past is suddenly exposed to her unsuspecting daughter whom she shielded from the "real" world. While Vivie Warren is repulsed by her mother's life-style, Violet Daintree is attracted by the opulence, excitement, and frivolities of London society, a welcome escape from the rural boredom in which her over-protective mother has secluded her. In one final coup before her retirement from the "business," Mrs. Daintree brings financial disaster to one of her "dupes," Kentwood, whose gambling losses and the dishonour that results force him to take his own life. Following this disaster, she discovers to her horror that her unscrupulous partner, Howarth, has lured her own daughter, Violet, to London. Leila sees that her fall and its bitter consequences are about to be re-enacted in the life of the one person she most wants to protect.

The dénouement of Achurch's play is accomplished in the sensational style of melodrama. This follows swiftly after Mrs. Daintree's final bid to save Violet from Howarth's clutches by marrying her to a dependable older man (Sothern) from the Australian outback.

But Violet will not be persuaded until a fatal error (she inadvertently gives her mother a dose of morphia in place of quinine) shocks her into obedience:

Violet: I'll do anything you tell me, mother,  
 always - always, only don't - ah!  
 (throwing herself into Sothern's arms)  
 I can't look at her.  
 Sothern: (half sternly, turning her towards  
Leila) Look - and learn.  
 Leila: Take her Sothern - I wasn't fit - teach  
 her to live - and love.  
 Sothern: I'll try. (p. 98)

Although Achurch avoids the usual methods of disposing of a misguided woman, she still relies on stage death, rather than rehabilitation, to resolve her heroine's dilemma. The actress who boldly introduced Ibsen's Nora to British audiences was strangely reluctant to free her own heroine from the restrictions of Victorian conservatism and stage convention. Ironically, Janet Achurch was Shaw's choice to play Mrs. Warren had his play passed the censor. The innocuous Mrs Daintree's Daughter, which did obtain a license, failed to interest a London producer, however. Shaw thought this was because smart West End audiences were beginning to weary of stage poisonings.<sup>34</sup>

Yet a number of women playwrights were convinced that the death of the heroine could provide the most fitting conclusion to a life that held little hope of social rehabilitation. Neither Moyra Delacourt, the heroine of Estelle Burney's Settled Out of Court (1897), nor Gladys Forbes, the leading character of Mrs Lessingham (1894), written by "George Fleming" (the pseudonym of Julia Constance Fletcher), manage to survive unfortunate circumstances which were not entirely of their own making. Both writers fall into a trap set by their predecessors. In

accepting a "victim" state for their leading character, they are unable to break free from the stereotype.

Burney's woman-with-a-past is reminiscent of the repentant heroine of melodrama, haunted by a guilty conscience which can only be alleviated by murder and suicide. To outward appearances, Moyra Delacourt is reclaimed socially by marrying the man with whom she had shared an adulterous relationship. She is accepted as respectable, a doer of good works ("clothing ragged imps and comforting rheumatic old women"), and is regarded with "chivalrous idolatry" by the play's male characters. In her accepted role as "angel of the house," she is diametrically opposed to Mr. Alleyn, Gerald Delacourt's former mistress, who leads him on "with the sole object of endangering [his] domestic peace."<sup>35</sup> Moyra is driven to despair by her husband's philandering, the last in a series of devastating events which began when her first husband died in a train wreck at the very hour that she planned to elope with Gerald. This was followed by the death of her daughter, Guen, the child she was prepared to abandon. Such misfortune would seem to be punishment enough for past sins: "That was the beginning, but it was not the end.... I've been a false wife and a bad mother and the price is still unpaid" (p. 54).

Moyra's problems had begun three years earlier when, as Mrs. Winter, she turned to Gerald Delacourt who boasts to his friend, Lord Mottram, of the way he can charm an unhappy woman:

If she has found her master don't waste your time, but if her eyes look your way the question in them is unvarying. 'Would you understand, I wonder, he doesn't, and I so long for love and sympathy.'  
(p. 8)

Delacourt admits to tossing away such creatures after shattering their ideals, but absolves them of guilt: "There are few bad women in the world, most of 'em lose their way looking for what isn't to be found" (p. 9). However, the sophisticated Delacourt is overwhelmed by Moyra's declaration of love and her imprudent courage in coming to his rooms. She confesses that she cannot face her husband now that she and Delacourt have become lovers. Her sense of guilt persists even after she marries Delacourt. Troubled by her ambivalent feelings, she is uncharitable to Mrs. Alleyn, preventing her marriage to Hon. Robert Haigh, with the aid of the bridegroom's aunt, Lady Helena: "...he shan't complicate [his future] by marrying a lady with a past while I am his Auntie!" (p. 35). The hypocrisy of Moyra's judgement of the other woman clashes with her own shameful past. Her psychological dilemma is intensified by the adulation she inspires in Mottram who regards her as an angel. The chivalrous Mottram upholds the feminine ideal but reinforces the double standard when he begs her to overlook her husband's infidelity: "Try and understand Gerald and you may yet forgive him" (p. 80). These moral imbalances contribute to Moyra's eventual breakdown.

The play ends as Moyra, whose mind has "given way," prepares to be judged by a higher court: "I heard him my husband -- the real one not Gerald -- send up my name to God's throne for justice" (p. 84). Convinced that Delacourt is equally to blame, she stabs him and then herself: "Neither pardon nor pity for I, the murderer! -- you, the victim! And so...I make it certain" (p. 91). On the other hand, the mischief-making Mrs. Alleyn, "as self absorbed as an Ibsen heroine"

(p. 86), suffers no remorse for past or present misdeeds and so escapes. Her survival hints at the "modern" message to be found in a play which mixes Old Testament vengeance with the morbid sensationalism of revenge tragedy. It lies in the way Burney probes the feminine psyche to illumine the conflict that results when propriety masks a deep-rooted conviction of guilt and shame.

George Fleming's Mrs Lessingham marks an important change in attitude from a feminist standpoint. Controversial ideas about free union and the double standard, as well as the way women help each other, are juxtaposed with the more or less commonplace poisoning of the central character. In the original production, the title role was played by Elizabeth Robins whose performance, according to William Archer, was "beautifully acted" with "sincerity, simplicity, and penetrating, unconventional pathos."<sup>36</sup> Archer's description suggests that the "new" actress and the "new" British drama had been merged successfully in the work of a woman playwright (who used a male pseudonym!). Archer indicated that the play pre-dated The Second Mrs Tanqueray by at least a year. (A note on the original manuscript shows that it was licensed by the Lord Chamberlain's office in June, 1890).

The modern aspects of this drama derive from the relationship between two women, one with a past, the other "advanced" in her thinking and actions. Anne Beaton is about to marry Walter Forbes when Gladys Lessingham, a woman with whom he had previously shared a common-law arrangement, re-appears after five years to announce that Mr. L. has died and she and Walter can now legalize their union: "I came now because I am free. Because...now I am your wife before men as

I have been your wife, before God, for all these years and years."<sup>37</sup>  
 With this statement, Fleming's heroine pre-figures the women who, in later plays, openly espouse free union over legal marriage.<sup>38</sup> Her rival, Anne Beaton, is inclined to agree with her.

Major Edward Hardy, a friend of Walter's, who represents the masculine stereotype, is sympathetic to all women, whether "good" or "bad," whom he sees as weak creatures needful of a man's protection: "...without love -- real love -- to guide you, you are like rudderless boats; -- drifting; ungovernable; at the mercy of every accident" (p.35). His immediate reaction is to prevent the two women from meeting, since the pure, unblemished Anne must be protected from association with the "fallen" and therefore tainted Gladys. Anne disdains the double standard which shuns the adulterous woman while it allows the man to form another attachment with impunity:

Anne: Ah, -- I know what you would say! I ought not to be here. I ought not to be in the same house with -- her. I ought not to mention her name; to breathe the air of the room she lives in. But, naturally you can see no sort of objection to my marrying Walter! (p.36)

In line with her principles, Anne insists that Forbes break their engagement in order to marry the woman whom she feels has a prior right to be his wife. This may proclaim her an advanced woman, but her manipulation of other people's lives causes disaster. After a year has passed, Anne discovers that Mrs. Lessingham (whom nobody, not even her own husband, quite thinks of as "Mrs. Forbes") has been made desperately unhappy because Walter married her, not out of love, but to clear himself in Anne's eyes. Anne becomes disillusioned with Forbes

and begins to doubt the efficacy of her personal sacrifice. Only Gladys comprehends the extent of that sacrifice: "...she thought that she could take her own happiness out of her own life, and give it to me" (p.48). By committing suicide, Mrs. Lessingham thinks to free Walter so that he can marry Anne. Ironically, her martyrdom is purposeless. Anne turns at the last, not to Forbes, but to Hardy:

Anne: Will you take care of me? -- Major Hardy, I  
 can't help myself, I am not strong enough.  
 Will you tell me what to do? And help me --  
 I -- I want your help! I want it -- always.  
 (p.71)

Although she has shown herself to be remarkably advanced in attitude and action, she is finally frightened of standing on her own. Hardy's view of female weakness is confirmed as Anne diminishes into his ideal. This conformity to stereotypes on Fleming's part in no way detracts from her effective treatment of Gladys' death, which Archer felt to be "such a natural outcome of her character, that we lose the sense of conventionality in that of inevitableness."<sup>39</sup> For Gladys, as for many women in real life, suicide offered the only way out of an intolerable situation.<sup>40</sup>

While the 1890s continued to offer dramatic images of women as victims of an unforgiving social code, there was a gradual shift towards the sort of understanding Mrs. Lessingham longed for: "...if God only gave women a second chance" (p.19). The secret assimilation of fallen women appears in other plays of the period. Mercy Merrick, the heroine of Wilkie Collins' The New Magdalen (1873), a popular melodrama revived in 1895,<sup>41</sup> attempts to recover her place in society by taking the name and station of a woman she believes to be dead. As the title

suggests, Mercy, who is technically a liar, an impostor, and a prostitute, is forgiven (her noble character far outweighs her past fallibilities) and ultimately reclaimed by marriage to a clergyman who promises that they "will find a home among new people in a new world" (New Magdalen, p.80). Mercy receives her "second chance" but only by moving to a place where her past can be successfully hidden.

In Dorothy Leighton's Thyrza Fleming (1895), the heroine's survival does not depend on marriage but a name change glosses the past. Thyrza Fleming (formerly Theresa Heron) escapes from a constricting marriage, achieves renown as an actress, and enters into free union with Hugh Rivers, the man who helped her to survive and to succeed. With his help, Thyrza builds a new life for herself with no regrets; that is, until circumstances involve her in the marital affairs of her headstrong daughter.

When the newly married Pamela Rivers, aged 20, discovers that her middle-aged bridegroom, Hugh, has a past which included an intimate relationship with another woman, she leaves him on their wedding night. In her naiveté, she is shocked to find a 42-year-old man's past is not as unblemished as her own. Ironically, the woman in his past is her mother (unknown to Pamela) who had severed her own domestic ties when Pamela was still a baby. But whereas Pamela's action springs from a narrow view of the world, Thyrza's reasons for deserting her husband can be justified:

I simply left him to be free. He had hideous ideas of woman's duty, and he thought because he owned my person he possessed my soul. He wanted to [restrict] my very action, my books, my friends, my pursuits. He thought Art wrong, and all Beauty and Joy immoral. I left him to live.<sup>42</sup>

Now, twenty years later, Thyrza is torn between love for Hugh Rivers, who turns to her for solace after his impetuous young wife leaves him, and maternal concern for her daughter who seems bent on throwing away future happiness. Hugh is aghast to find that his new wife is a "mere prude" and not his ideal of what a "loving, sympathetic, understanding woman can be" (Act II), the attributes he observes in Thyrza. In a spirit of self-sacrifice, Thyrza determines to save Hugh's marriage: "I would die to purchase an hour's happiness for him to whom I owe my very life!" (Act III). She advises Pamela to love Hugh for better or for worse, because "there isn't any quality in a woman so valuable to a man as steadfastness (sic)" (Act III).

This volte-face affects Thyrza's attitude to her past: "I begin to see dimly that the true self of a woman can never be developed at the expense of those who look to her for love and tenderness, and that self-development is generally an excuse for self-indulgence" (Act IV). That change suggests that the playwright is unable to resolve a moral conundrum: It is wrong to stay in a marriage that deprives the wife of her own sense of self (as Ibsen's Nora demonstrated), but it is equally reprehensible to run away from family responsibilities in order to discover selfhood.

The fact that Pamela's father clings to outmoded ideas with respect to woman's role further confuses the issues which the play raises. John Heron has only contempt for his son-in-law for allowing Pamela to leave, and disdain for his daughter's prudishness: "She's his wife and she should stick to him and swallow her own absurd prejudices" (Act III). His reinforcing of the double standard is tied to his

conviction that women are naturally subordinate, an opinion that hardens when he finds he cannot legally claim £30,000 inherited by his ex-wife. Demoralized by John Heron's curses, the once independent Thyrza yields to his moral prejudices, especially when Pamela rejects the rationale behind her long-term relationship with Hugh. Like the old-style "woman-with-a-past", Thyrza contemplates suicide, but is dissuaded when Pamela, finally reconciled to a forgiving and forgiven husband, calls her "Mother!" That restores Thyrza to a sense of self-worth and brings the drama to a more or less satisfactory conclusion. Pamela, having learned from her mother's experiences, adopts a largeness of spirit which makes her more tolerant. On the other hand, Thyrza has to confront her past, while Hugh is allowed to rest easy with his.

Both Mrs. Lessingham and Thyrza Fleming ultimately accept the "fallen" image of themselves despite their previous courage and dignity. They believe free union to be a stronger bond than legal marriage, yet can be convinced by people and circumstances that acting on this belief makes them socially abnormal. The split between old and new values is symptomatic of women playwrights of the decade. It remained for two male dramatists (other than Shaw) to create a new pattern which freed a woman from past indiscretions and from personal and public censure.

John-a-Dreams (1894)<sup>43</sup> by [Charles] Haddon Chambers features a reformed prostitute, Kate Cloud, whose climb to respectability rescues others from degradation, including Harold Wynn, an opium addict with whom she falls in love. She wins the hearts of all the other characters

despite their sensing a hidden secret:

Mrs [Wanklyn]: Now that is what I call an  
interesting woman.... She has  
worked and struggled and suffered  
and done something in the world.  
There are memories behind her deep  
eyes. She, I am sure, has a past  
-- which always makes a woman  
interesting to men. (r. 12)

Kate has indeed attracted the attentions of both Harold Wynn, the dreamy poet of the play's title, and his friend from Oxford days, Sir Hubert Garlinge. Kate is naturally inclined towards Harold, despite his sense of inadequacy and unworthiness which affects his ability to write down the poetry that takes shape in his head: "I fear the inevitable failure to approach one's ideal" (p. 18). Sir Hubert, rather a melodramatic villain, is more aggressive in his pursuit of Kate. He twists her arm, demands to know if she loves someone else, and almost kills a Greek sailor for leering at her. When he discovers that Harold is his rival, Hubert foreswears their "Oxford compact," tricks him into drinking laudanum in order to render him comatose, and almost succeeds in abducting Kate. Thwarted in that attempt, he is last seen rowing out to sea, never to return.

However, there are realistic aspects to the play which surface in a crucial scene between Kate and Harold's father, a clergyman whose Christian principles clash with his social prejudices when she reveals the details of her past:

Kate: My mother belonged to the unrescued....  
    Shortly before she died, she was in great  
    want, and -- she had fed and clothed me...  
Wynn: And?  
Kate: I fed and clothed her.

Wynn: You have conquered the past. You are  
 successful, distinguished, respected.  
 You are courted by society. (pp.47-48)

At this point, the Christ-like Rev. Wynn offers unconditional absolution to this modern-day Magdalen who, it appears, had turned to prostitution only to provide for a dying mother. Since being rehabilitated, she has devoted herself to rescuing other young women in like circumstances. When Kate confides that she wishes to marry, Wynn exudes beneficence: "I hope you will choose one worthy of being intrusted (sic) with your future" (p.48). But despite his hearty encouragement that she should tell her husband-to-be about her past, he involuntarily shows repugnance when she tells him that it is his own son whom she plans to marry.

Critics who attended the 1894 production of John-a-Dreams were particularly impressed with this scene, described by William Archer as "strong, dignified, tactful"; in his view, it guaranteed Haddon Chambers "a place in the little group of our serious playwrights."<sup>44</sup> A French theatre critic, Augustin Filon, writing in 1897, recalled the scene's "utmost simplicity, the restrained and sober emotion of which contrasts curiously with the fine phrases a situation such as it contains would inspire in an author of a quarter of a century ago."<sup>45</sup> Filon's description gives some indication of the scene's emotional subtext:

Harold's father gives a gesture of anguish and horror, of physical recoil and inexpressible confusion. Then he stammers, tries to recover himself, seeks to call to his aid the merciful

doctrine of the sacred Book which he has all his life upon his lips, and which he thought he had within his heart. But Kate does not give him time. A gesture has decided her future; she holds herself bound by this instinctive display of a social prejudice which has become his second nature, his second conscience...<sup>40</sup>

The problem which the play addresses is this pull between subjective reaction, based on conventional morality, and the individual's professed ethics.

That tension is resolved when Rev. Wynn, made aware of Harold's dissolute habits, concurs with his son's decision to marry Kate, because "angels, my dear boy, are rare" (p.59). Harold, whose addiction can be blamed on heredity (several family members were heavy drinkers and grand-uncle Hugh died in an opium den), looks to Kate for help in overcoming his weakness:

Harold: I ask you who having seen the light have come out of the darkness, to give your hand to one who is still in the darkness and only reaches the light through you. Your past was one sacrifice, my life has been one of endless self indulgence. If you must mate with a sinner, mate with me. (p.32)

The play thus goes beyond mere social acceptance of a reformed woman and elevates her to a position of moral superiority, epitomized in Rev. Wynn's final remark: "We have need of you Kate" (p.82).

In Grierson's Way (1899), H.V. Esmond's new woman, Pamela Grierson, insists that a love-alliance is morally superior to a legal marriage bond formed out of expediency. The play explores the psychological aspects of adultery, an embarrassing pregnancy, and two

love-triangles from a female as well as a male viewpoint. Jim Grierson envisions only one "way" to rescue Pamela Ball from social degradation when she becomes pregnant following a brief affair with a married officer who has since been posted abroad. Like Anne Beaton, who manipulates the lives of those she desires to help, Grierson thinks he can ensure the legitimacy of Pamela's unborn child. But, as in Mrs Lessingham, a woman's past cannot always be erased by a hastily engineered marriage. With the best of intentions, Grierson's tactics lead to unhappiness and disaster. Moreover, Pamela comes to reject her formal marriage vows in favour of the sacred union which, she believes, only comes from true love.

Pamela's failure to live up to the prescribed ideal of feminine purity affects all the men in her life. Grierson sees her as an object of pity, but Philip Keen, a disillusioned and embittered young man, whose obsessive love leads him to spy on her and to intercept her letters, regards her with scorn: "Oh, God! All women are alike -- beasts, beasts, beasts!"<sup>47</sup> Even Captain Murray, her soldier-lover, who returns to England after his wife dies, denounces her when he discovers that, torn between passion for him and duty towards her husband, she has destroyed his letters unread:

My God! And it is for you that I've been through  
the tortures of the damned....And it's the woman  
that the world pities....I sinned for you -- with  
you. (pp.69-70)

Interestingly, the seducer reveals that committing adultery has made him more guilt-ridden than the woman he has wronged.

Despite the pressures exerted on her by the male characters, the woman at the centre of the drama never loses sight of what matters most to her: a life based on love and honesty. She forces Grierson to acknowledge that their life together makes both of them miserable:

Our marriage -- it seemed a good thing then. You did it for the best, I know, but -- but oh! it's failed, Jim, dear -- it's failed horribly, hasn't it. (p.87)

And when Murray is about to go out of her life forever, Pamela blurts out the secret that has guaranteed her social respectability:

Murray: [bitterly] I'll think of you always as I see you now -- happy in your home, with your husband and your boy.  
 Pamela: [Doesn't look at him. She stands rigid, her eyes dilated, her face pale as death, and says chokingly.] Your boy!  
 (p.71)

The news that he is the father of Pamela's child puts an entirely different aspect on their relationship, and Murray arranges to return the next day. When Grierson enters, she repulses him and, "as all the pent up passion in her heart breaks forth," declares that Murray is "My love! my life! my husband! ... Who dares deny it? Don't come near me -- you!" (p. 72). Pamela makes it clear to Grierson that her love alliance with the father of her child goes beyond a strictly legal marriage such as theirs.

Pamela's strength lies in her refusal to be manipulated by others, especially Philip Keen who sees himself as a "playwright" who has devised the "ending" he wants if the characters in his drama will only do as he tells them. Although he cannot control Pamela, his cynicism works on Grierson whose misgivings, sense of failure, and

inability to make the woman he loves happy render him vulnerable. Keen argues that Pamela and Murray would be free to marry if her husband were out of the way:

Keen: You've blundered -- a great black shadow --  
 into a love story.... Be a man, Grierson;  
 take away your shadow and let the sunlight  
 in.... Dead, you will speak to her, and  
 she will listen to you then.

(pp.81-82,84)

When Grierson commits suicide, Keen feels he has also triumphed over Pamela: "The dead man wins.... Jim's wife -- at last" (p. 91). But a madman's ravings are not likely to affect this heroine. Although she is momentarily overwhelmed by Jim's death, Pamela has demonstrated her determination to choose her own "way." Her next move is open to speculation, but Murray's ringing of the doorbell during the final moments of the play presumably signals a brighter future.<sup>48</sup>

Grierson's Way represents an important departure in the way the "fallen" woman viewed her situation. Traditionally, it was she who resorted to suicide to solve the problem of a relationship gone sour and the public humiliation that inevitably followed. But, for Pamela Grierson and others of her generation, "that sort of woman is dying out -- the sex is learning sense" (p. 67). The concern of progressive playwrights was to break with dramatic convention perpetuated by society's stern judgment, and so eliminate the stereotype.

Positive changes result wherever a new image replaces the cliché. Some plays deal with the tendency for a pattern of behaviour to be repeated from mother to daughter (Lady Windermere, Violet Daintree, and Pamela Rivers) but, in each case, this is forestalled. Mothers are

re-united with abandoned daughters and, by helping them, heal some of the anguish they felt when leaving their child behind to escape an unhappy marriage. A new generation of "advanced" women (Anne Beaton and Hester Worsley) adopt a tolerant attitude towards those whom society would normally condemn. While the double standard is still accepted by most playwrights, male and female, it is held up for scrutiny. An outspoken woman, Estelle Burney, attacks the double standard with a vengeance (the man dies too!), but at least two male playwrights, Haddon Chambers and H. V. Esmond, dare to overturn it and place equal liability on either sex.

Women playwrights empathized with their heroines' inability to break free from the sexual impositions of several generations. These limitations are reflected in the writer's own acceptance of male traditionalism. On the other hand, men with vision were able to push beyond those limits to shed new light on male/female relationships. Writers of both sexes address the problems that accrue for women who mate unwisely, but generally speaking, a woman's guarantee of social status depended on a man waiting in the wings.

## CHAPTER V

## "New Lamps for Old"

The 'Advanced' Woman: Dethroning the Ideal

Algernon: Ah, what a woman she was. So sensible -- so manly. I never met a woman with more advanced views -- or who had more to say on everything.

Edwin: Give me your sweet regular womanly woman -- affectionate and not too clever.

Algernon: These domesticated women are all very well for cooking and buttons, but they don't help forward the growth of your mind. They don't stir you up.

Edwin: Give me your gentle feminine woman.

Algernon: No -- give me your advanced woman -- your woman of mind.

(New Lamps for Old, 1890)

In his preface to The Theatrical 'World' of 1894,<sup>1</sup> Bernard Shaw observed that "it is not possible to put the new woman seriously on the stage in her relation to modern society, without stirring up, both on the stage and in the auditorium, the struggle to keep her in her old place."<sup>2</sup> The dialogue between two male characters in Jerome K. Jerome's farce, New Lamps for Old, is an amusing record of the controversy that surrounded the appearance of the New Woman in plays of the period. The individual who upset the ideal of Victorian femininity with unorthodox behaviour and independent thought ran the risk of being labelled a "fin-de-siècle," "advanced," or "unwomanly" woman. Conventional playwrights reflected society's disapproval of her by creating a

predictable stereotype: She is "educated" (often knowing more than a lady should), she is "masculine" in dress and mannerisms, she rejects parental control, and she either avoids marriage altogether or finds a man she can dominate. Despised and satirized by the play's "normal" characters, the presence of an "advanced" woman in the action became a useful propaganda tool designed to reaffirm woman's "proper" place. Even the liberal-minded, who openly admired the modern girl's lively intellect and exuberance, cast her as a minor character. Women playwrights were fascinated by the New Woman, yet hesitated to show her unrestricted freedom.

Because the "advanced" woman was often relegated to the position of a secondary character, either to provide an amusing diversion in serious drama or to elevate the "womanly" heroine by way of contrast, there were those like Augustin Lilou who looked in vain on the English stage for the New Woman, "this obsessing phantom of which everyone speaks and which so few have seen."<sup>3</sup> He did not find her in Sydney Grundy's 1894 play with the promising title, The New Woman, whose sentimental dramatization of marital misalliance reinforces the playwright's image of the feminine ideal (Margery, the simple-hearted, forgiving wife) while it abases her intellectual rival (Mrs. Sylvester). Nor can Agnes Sylvester be construed as "new," any more than her three companions who wear mannish clothes, condemn marriage, smoke cigarettes like amateurs, and write books with provocative titles ("Man, the Betrayer," "Ye Foolish Virgins," "Naked and Unashamed," and "The Physiology of the Sexes"). All are simply caricatures which mock "modern" women. Agnes collaborates with Gerald Cazenove (Margery's

husband) on a work entitled, "The Ethics of Marriage," but both are unethical in their treatment of their own marriage partners. In pursuit of Gerald and her own career, Agnes neglects her husband's domestic comforts (he is forced to dine alone on cold mutton) and then complains: "Husbands are all alike. The ancient regarded his wife as a slave, the modern regards her as a cook."<sup>5</sup> Gerald complains to Agnes that he can no longer bear "the hourly friction -- the continual jar" of marriage to a "hopeless" clown like Margery. Agnes is ready to take advantage of his discontent to further her own claims on him. As Archer observed, Agnes Sylvester is not a 'new woman' at all, nor is her conduct conditioned by the 'new morality': "She is any woman of brains pitted against any woman of beauty....So far as her relation to Gerald goes, she might be a woman of fifty or a hundred years ago."<sup>4</sup> In the final scene, the playwright makes it clear that Margery is the winner in the sex game, not because she is "new," but because she is "only" a woman. Gerald chooses Margery's unsophisticated love over Agnes' more compatible intellect:

Gerald: My wife again!

Margery: But, Gerald, remember I am nothing more.

I don't think I shall ever be a lady.

Gerald: Always in my eyes!

Margery: No, not even there. Only a woman.

Gerald: I want you to be nothing less or more --  
only a woman! (p.[104])

The New Woman fared better in the novels of the period, especially those by feminist authors. Because her innermost thoughts and sensations could be shared in the privacy of the reader's library or boudoir, the New Woman of popular fiction engendered public sympathy as a thinking, sentient being. The heroines of George Egerton's

Keynotes (1893)<sup>6</sup> and Discords (1894)<sup>7</sup> read Ibsen, Tolstoy, Strindberg, and Nietzsche, and sweep aside Victorian prudishness in a frank acknowledgment of their innate sensuality. In an echo of Shaw's Quintessence, they object to the sexual inequality of conventional marriage: "...no wife is bound to set aside the demands of her individual soul for the sake of imbecile obedience!" (Discords, p.155). On the other hand, maternal instincts are honoured: a career woman adopts a baby; other women yearn for a child without the necessity of a permanent husband-wife relationship. A chapter from Discords entitled "The Regeneration of Two" idealizes the perfect relationship between a man and a woman. In this instance, the self-willed heroine leaves off her corset, exercises, becomes stronger physically, mentally, and spiritually, and eventually persuades the man she loves, who is somewhat in awe of her new womanhood, to join her in a union of two free individuals.

George Egerton (born Mary Chavelita Dunne) was typical of the New Woman she sought to convey in her writings. She eloped with a man who had two wives living, resided with him in Norway where she absorbed the ideas of Ibsen, and eventually returned to England and legal marriage to a Newfoundlander, George Egerton Clairmonte. They later divorced, but from his name she had already coined her male nom-de-plume, possibly in imitation of George Eliot, but also in accordance with common practice. However, it was from a woman's viewpoint that Mary Chavelita explored the female psyche, glamourizing her own sexual experiences into a literature which merged reality with imagination. Her male pseudonym misled one literary critic, who wrote "man-to-man"

to the author of Keynotes (published under the Yellow Book banner with a provocative cover by Aubrey Beardsley), chastising "him" for inviting the public "a little too far inside" the character's bedroom: "Has a third party or reader any business being present at such intimacies?". The public obviously enjoyed the vicarious experience.

Keynotes had immediate success in England, Germany, Scandinavia, and America. In April 1894, Egerton was the subject of a Punch cartoon (Plate 3) which featured an "advanced" woman holding a key above her head with a copy of the Yellow Book beside her and volumes of Ibsen, Tolstoy, and Mona Caird strewn at her feet. In the background, a female Don Quixote tilts at a windmill labelled "Marriage laws," a second woman holds a banner proclaiming the "divided skirt" as she confronts a dragon called "Decorum," while a third attacks "Cerberus," a monstrous dog with three heads: Mrs. Grundy, Mamma, and Chaperone. Unlike her stage counterpart, Egerton's New Woman was not the type to be kept in her old place. According to Terence de Vere White (Egerton's nephew and biographer), it was the first time in English literature that the heroine, an emancipated, cosmopolitan woman, "admit[ted] to sexual feeling."<sup>8</sup>

The characters created by Sarah Grand (the nom-de-plume of Frances C. McFall) caused a similar sensation. For example, Evadne, the outspoken heroine of The Heavenly Twins (1893), refuses to consummate an arranged marriage to a man-with-a-past for fear of contacting a social disease. The title itself alludes to an authorial debate over the different upbringing prescribed for a young girl (Angelica) as compared to her twin brother's more worldly education. As Angelica

explains: "I hope to live...to see it allowed that a woman has no more right to bury her talents than a man has; in which days the man without brains will be taught to cook and clean, while the clever woman will be doing the work of the world."<sup>9</sup> The novel's daring concepts of female independence, which nonetheless converge into familiar paths leading to romantic attachment with the opposite sex (both Evadne and Angelica eventually succumb), probably accounts for its instant popularity among women readers. Twenty thousand copies were sold during the first week following publication. Only three years before, Frances McFall had left an unhappy marriage to create a different persona for herself in London, and "Sarah Grand," a name chosen to reflect her new image as matriarch, female prophet, and woman of genius, was born.

Novelists knew that the scandal caused by their revelations of outrageous womankind would sell copies, but conservative playwrights, anxious not to offend the censor or theatre audiences, trod a safer path. On the stage, reaction to the defiant message contained in The Heavenly Twins led to the affirmation of traditional values in plays which downplayed the New Woman in favour of the old stereotype. Dorothy Leighton's Thyrza Fleming (1895) was seen as "a counterblast"<sup>10</sup> to Grand's novel since the play's heroine leaves her husband on their wedding night because of his past but presently returns repentant to confess she was wrong to do so. Leighton's way of resolving the same situation shows the playwright's reluctance to carry all the way through with her attack on the double standard. Unlike Sarah Grand, she lacked the courage to break entirely with convention. Grant Allen's novel, The Woman Who Did (1895), features a revolutionary feminist,

Herminia Barton, who demands sexual freedom without marriage which she sees as "an assertion of man's supremacy over woman."<sup>11</sup> But Allen's free love, anti-marriage polemic actually undermined the image of the New Woman through its "feeble and silly" portrayal<sup>12</sup> which did little to advance her cause but rather inspired a wave of satirical commentary under headings such as: "The Woman Who Wouldn't Do" (Punch, 30 March 1895, p. 153). Conservative male playwrights used similar tactics to subvert the New Woman whose unnatural behaviour was viewed as a denial of true womanhood.

If Henry Arthur Jones felt that association with a sexually provocative woman (projected in Drusilla Ives and Audrie Lesden) threatened a man's career and reputation, he was no less discomforted by women who negated their femininity. The character of Sophie Jopp (Judah) is a travesty of extrovert tendencies in modern young women: "a dogmatic, supercilious, incisive young lady, with eye-glass and short hair....speaks in a metallic, confident voice; a girl who could never blush"<sup>13</sup> (Judah, p. 206). True to most parodies of the educated woman, Sophie is unsentimental about courtship and marriage and remains unmoved and indifferent during her suitor's proposal. Typically, Sophie will not tolerate interference from a male parent in her choice of a husband, the equally obnoxious Juxon Prall. Stripped of romance and likeable qualities, Sophie is a character purposely designed to alienate the audience.

Jones' dislike of the mannish, socially disruptive female surfaces again in Elaine Shrimpton (The Case of Rebellious Susan, 1894) who epitomizes the anti-feminist satire of the period, "a raw,

self-assertive modern young lady, with brusque and decided manner." She goes through the formality of asking her guardian's consent to her marriage, but "at the same time, we feel that we have duties and responsibilities that we shall allow no worm-eaten conventionalities of society to interfere with."<sup>14</sup> As progressive as this speech may appear, Jones later shows how destructive to the social fabric those "duties and responsibilities" can be. From Elaine's skewed perspective, they do not include the domestic obligations traditionally associated with wifehood: "No man shall receive dinner from me while the present inequalities between the sexes remain unaddressed" (p. 349). Predictably, Elaine pays the price for refusing to conform to the feminine ideal upheld by the play's raisonneur, Sir Richard Kato: "Nature's darling woman is a stay-at-home woman"...who wants to be a good wife and a good mother, and cares very little for anything else" (p. 350). After engaging in a public demonstration in support of a strike by telegraph girls and shop girls in Clapham,<sup>15</sup> Elaine faces a five-year prison term. To leave no doubt as to where his sympathies lie, Jones suggests that Elaine's husband and other male residents of Clapham can return to a more peaceful existence with Elaine behind bars. (Woman in a cage is a symbol that recurs in other plays of the decade). Jones' point is that women should remain true to their nature which makes them "naturally" subservient to men. It is ironic that both Sophie and Elaine are coupled with timid, nervous, ineffectual males. Could this be their reward for "unwomanliness"?

The unattractive female stereotype who is ultimately defeated was tailored to conventional tastes like those of Clement Scott who

applauded Jones' putdown of Elaine Shrimpton, this "specimen of the advanced modern woman." According to Scott, the audience also received Kato's speech "ridiculing the pretensions of the 'new woman'" with a "chorus of applause."<sup>16</sup> Like Sophie Jopp, Elaine's distorted image reflects Jones' horrified reaction to changes in woman's traditional role.<sup>17</sup>

Pinero also created stereotypes to satirize women whose concern for independence clashed with his assumptions of their natural role. In The Weaker Sex (written in 1884; produced in 1889), unattractive female characters with hair worn "straight and short" and dressed in "severe, dowdy and ungainly" costumes are deliberately overshadowed by their graceful, more womanly colleague (Lady Vivash) who abandons the cause (the "Union of Independent Women") when the sudden return of an old beau makes a trip to the dressmaker more expedient. In The Times (1891), Pinero caricatures lady novelists and educated women. Kate Gazelet, the proprietress of a little daily newspaper, used to write realistic novels until "realism was exhausted, Mudie alienated, and Smith shocked." Women who indulge in "this journalistic craze" are dismissed broadly along with other weaknesses of their sex: "Oh, morphia, brandy, or ink -- all uneradicable habits in a woman."<sup>18</sup> Kate's niece, Lucy Tuck, is the pale, sad-looking, bespectacled result of higher education: "Poor Lucy has broken down wofully (sic) at Newnham. Her feminine intellect has drawn the line at Latin Prose, and left her rubbing menthol into her brows from morning to night" (p. 29).

In The Amazons (1893), Pinero is more indulgent of the modern tendencies in young women to assert their sexual equality, but still

insists on their eventual return to tradition. The play's farcical elements allow for a harmless departure from the social norm but this serves ultimately to reaffirm the values shared by the theatre audience. The three daughters of Lady Castlejordan (who wishes they had been sons) are physically and mentally educated in a manner normally reserved for boys. Outwardly, they conform to their mother's eccentric demands by adopting male dress, speech, and pastimes: Noel, Will, and Thom address each other as "brother" and "good man," wear "clothes fashioned after the style of a man's shooting suit, corduroy coats and waist-coats, tweed knickerbockers, shoes, and gaiters" and carry guns.<sup>19</sup> But when, as Noeline, Wilhelmina, and Thomasin, they are courted by the opposite sex, they revert to their feminine natures. The eldest, Noeline, is the first to express her womanliness: "I'm a girl! I don't want to be anything else!" (p. 138). She persuades her mother that "after all, your children are nothing but ordinary, weak, affectionate, chicken-hearted young women!" (p. 181). Henceforth all three girls will appear only in "frocks."

When Pinero seriously addresses the Woman Question in The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (1895), his heroine is still hampered by social and moral boundaries. Agnes Ebbsmith is a feminist crusader who takes to the public platform in support of downtrodden women after several years of marriage to a man who treated her at first "like a woman in a harem" and later "like a beast of burden."<sup>20</sup> From the vantage point of her new-age living arrangement with Lucas Cleeve (the man she nursed back to health after he fled from an unsympathetic wife), Agnes espouses free union:

We cry out to all people, 'Look at us! Man and woman who are in the bondage of neither law nor ritual! Linked simply by mutual trust! Man and wife, but something better than man and wife!  
(p. 51)

Agnes becomes disillusioned when Lucas' selfish egotism, so at odds with her lofty ideals, is confirmed in a tête-à-tête with his long-suffering wife for whom "patience became exhausted at the mere contemplation of a man so thoroughly, greedily self-absorbed" (p. 213). Agnes realizes she has been untrue to herself (even to the point of exchanging dowdy clothes for alluringly feminine attire to maintain her hold on Lucas) and to her cause:

I - I was to lead women! I was to show them...  
how laws -- laws made and laws that are natural  
-- may be set aside or slighted; how men and  
women may live independent and noble lives  
without rule, or guidance, or sacrament. I was to  
be the example -- the figure set up for others to  
observe and imitate. (p. 222)

Pinero's uncomplicated "amazons" can become the young ladies that Nature ordained simply by changing costume. But for Agnes, adopting the outer garb of womanliness to attract and keep a man is a devastating denial of her convictions. At this point, her ambivalence should have led to a realistic re-assessment of basic values. Instead, she undergoes a pseudo-religious conversion<sup>21</sup> and retires to rural isolation in her friends' Yorkshire rectory.

Stella Campbell, for whom the part of Agnes Ebbsmith was written, was ecstatic over the role but later confessed that the last act broke her heart:

I knew that such an Agnes in life could not have drifted into the Bible-reading inertia of the woman she became in the last act; for her earlier vitality, with its mental and emotional activity, gave the lie to it....That rounding off of plays to make the audience<sup>22</sup> feel comfortable is a regrettable weakness.

The actress' disappointment was in finding that Pinero's daringly "advanced" woman was, after all, shaped to the audience's prejudices. That a strong-willed woman like Agnes Ebbsmith might transcend her painful experiences and return with renewed vigour to political life had not occurred to Pinero, although it did to Shaw<sup>23</sup> whose review of The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith noted "the unreality of the chief female character, who is fully as artificial as Mrs. Tanqueray herself."<sup>24</sup>

To free the new woman of the period from old strictures, Shaw promoted his own ideal, the antithesis of the "womanly" woman, outdated in his view since Nora Helmer (as portrayed in London by Janet Achurch) burst on the scene, or rather slammed off it, in 1889:

...we have the sweet home, the womanly woman, the happy family life of the idealist's dream ....[Nora] sees that their whole family life has been a fiction: their home a mere doll's house in which they have been playing at ideal husband and father, wife and mother. So she leaves him then and there and goes out into the real world to find out its reality for herself, and to gain<sup>25</sup> some position not fundamentally false.

When Shaw turned to playwriting in 1892, he established his own "unwomanly" ideal but, in so doing, created the Shavian stereotype. His contemporaries were as critical of Shaw's female characters as he was of Pinero's. J. T. Grein complained that they had "no inner life" and

that whatever vitality they possessed was "not their own, but Mr Shaw's."<sup>26</sup> Max Beerbohm similarly deplored "the unrealness of [Shaw's] characters" especially the women who were "mere secretion[s] of Shawism."<sup>27</sup> As mouthpieces for his ideas, Shaw's creations succeeded in destroying the old ideal, but they did little to promote the New Woman as a character of real substance.

Plagued by censorship, nervous theatre managers, and unsatisfactory casting, Shaw had little success in gaining a theatre audience for his plays during the 1890s and contented himself with publishing them for the reading public.<sup>28</sup> Mrs Warren's Profession (1893) was banned from production until 1902; Widowers' Houses (1892) had only two matinee performances during the decade, The Philanderer (1893) waited until 1907, and You Never Can Tell (1897) was withdrawn by Shaw after two weeks' rehearsal and did not surface again until 1899 (in matinees). At the time they were first conceived, Shaw's imaginary "new" women, as projected through the characters of Vivie Warren, Blanche Sartorius, Grace Tranfield, and Gloria Clandon, were known only through the printed word. Only Arms and the Man (1894) had an extended run (75 performances), its theme of anti-romanticism not fully comprehended, and therefore tolerated. But again, the character-types are a reflection of Shaw's ideas, Raina herself demonstrating the shift from romantic idealism to practical realism which the playwright advocated.

Between the two extremes defined by the stereotypical "advanced" woman as she was satirized and subdued by Jones and Pinero, and Shaw's "unwomanly" creations who failed to materialize on the stage, images of

the New Woman did appear in lesser known works by male and female playwrights. Because she was of current topical interest, the New Woman provided material for an interesting new character-type unlike any found in traditional drama. While the scorners wove her into their plots only to deride her for the threat she posed to a rapidly fading, century-old feminine ideal, a number of playwrights openly admired the self-motivated woman of the 1890s. Some even attempted to lift her to heroic proportions. Her image on the English stage was not quite so elusive as Filon suggested but, as in real life, she was never completely free of her conventional setting.

In New Lamps for Old (1890), the standard trappings of farce make the New Woman more palatable than Jones or Pinero had conceived her. Octavia is a handsome young woman of the "dashingly 'advanced' type" who dresses like a man and wears her hair cut short. But she is ultra-modern and aggressive in other ways. Her "modern" marriage to Algernon Postlethwayte, "a sort of partnership agreement terminable by a month's notice,"<sup>29</sup> had lasted only a month. Now her affair with a married man, Edwin Honeyton, is also foundering. She claims that her love for him is "the result of calm reasoning -- of elaborate calculation" but, if he should fail to show up at an appointed rendezvous, she will show his wife "some very charming letters" and afterwards, "take the earliest opportunity of horse-whipping [him] in public" (p. 49). Edwin admits (in an aside) that Octavia "doesn't fascinate me somehow like she used to," but meekly agrees to a clandestine meeting at 'The Grand Hotel.' Coincidentally, Octavia's husband and Edwin's wife, who are similarly involved in an extramarital

intrigue, are bound for the same destination. Against a background of risky encounters, "new" and "old" relationships are explored from an 1890 perspective.

As an "advanced" woman, Octavia preaches anti-marriage propaganda to her unwed servant, Jemima ("Men are snarers who woo us with sweet calls merely to cage and enslave us"), and to Elvira, whom she takes to be a newlywed: "Now to begin with, you must leave your husband" (pp. 60, 90). But Elvira needs no lecture on the realities of marriage: "I thought my life was going to be a romance" [with Edwin] but with "his carpet slippers, his shaving and his snoring....I found it turning out like a mere realistic novel" (p. 93). Neither does the alternative -- a servantless existence in a country retreat with Algernon -- hold much promise for Elvira (he will write poetry while she does the housework). In the end, both couples settle for their own brand of conformity. Elvira ("your sweet regular womanly woman -- affectionate and not too clever") returns to comfortable domesticity with "everyday" Edwin. Octavia ("your advanced woman -- your woman of mind") patches things up with "aesthetic" Algernon, the study of other men having shown his "comparative unobjectionableness," and proclaims that they will "have a fresh agreement drawn up at once and never part again for 7, 14, or 21 years" (p. 132). This marital loophole is part of Octavia's image, a satirical blend of Mona Caird and Ibsenism, and indirectly pokes fun at the "new morality." Within a farcical setting, the *New Woman* does not seriously upset the status quo. And while Jerome presents a tolerable image of the "new", there is no real danger of it displacing the "old."

Similarly, a short musical entitled The Bicycle Girl (1896)<sup>30</sup> which featured a chorus of female cyclists allows the New Woman to excel beyond the usual "womanly" limitations, but encourages laughter. The athletic heroine, Atalanta Granville,<sup>31</sup> sees cycling as a symbol of female independence: "Some women like to lecture, some want to vote, but figuratively, they all ride their bike" (p. 16). Like her male counterpart in the cavalry, Atalanta speaks of parking her bicycle as taking "my horse to the stable." The metaphor becomes even more ludicrous when, in a burlesque of action drama in which the hero saves the day with a gallant ride on horseback, Atalanta astride her two-wheeler races against time and an express train and wins. This display of female prowess antagonizes Atalanta's military boy-friend who insists that "a woman has her own sphere and should leave man his sports." Because they obviously "ride" on different tracks, she spurns his marriage proposal: "I prefer to run single and choose my own speed" (p. 25). The light-hearted ambience of the genre allowed more tolerance of the woman who competed with man on his own territory.

The athletic, Girton-educated girl who sings about her new-found freedom had already appeared in Gilbert and Sullivan's Utopia, Limited (1893) as a necessary component in the Anglicization of a remote island in the Pacific. Princess Zara, fresh from exposure to modern English society, encourages her younger sisters, brought up to be "extremely modest" and "demurely coy" as good young ladies ought to be, "to model themselves on "the bright and beautiful English girl."<sup>32</sup> This phenomenal creature rides, follows the hounds, cycles, punts, and plays cricket, golf, and lawn tennis. The two younger princesses celebrate

their release from "musty, fusty rules" in song:

Neckaya: When happy I, with laughter glad  
 I'll wake the echoes fairly,  
 And only sigh when I am sad --  
 And that will be but rarely!  
 Kalyba: I'll row and fish and gallop, soon --  
 No longer be a prim one --  
 And when I wish to hum a tune,  
 It needn't be a hymn one? (pp. 138-39)

In this musical, Gilbert has accepted the emancipated young women of England (and Utopia) as a fact of modern progress. They are not pictured as grotesques, neither are they ridiculed as harshly as the lady novelist had been. (But see Chapter II, Note #9). In popular entertainment, the New Woman's unconventionality was amusing and easily assimilated into the plot along with other comic stereotypes.

In Sunlight and Shadow (1890), R.C. Carton [Richard Claude Critchett] yields to the demand for stage realism while still dependent on the clichés of melodrama (music, a discovery scene, and romantic stereotypes). Carton's "new woman," Maud Latimer, is witty and lively. She outshines her bland sister, Helen, a sentimental heroine whose sheltered world erupts when her future husband's secret ex-wife (whom he supposed to be dead) arrives just as he is about to celebrate his engagement to Helen. The lovers go through a painful parting, but ultimately all is resolved by the convenient death of the first wife. In contrast, Maud cheerily enjoys life: she plays lawn-tennis off-stage, and on-stage indulges in the current vogue of home dressmaking (from paper patterns in "Queen's" magazine), and entertains visitors with smart talk ("Tea is within measurable distance"). As a socially advanced woman, she takes the initiative in courtship. Her

fiancé, Mr. Bamfield, values Maud for her intelligence and he also dispenses with the usual pre-nuptial formalities: "I have enough money for both, and she has enough brains for both, and so it's all right" [that she does not have a dowry].<sup>33</sup> He takes it in good humour when Maud makes fun of his ineptness, his absentmindedness, and even his name, Adolphus. After their horse and carriage go astray, Maud "[takes] the reins, figuratively speaking" (p.56), a gesture that typifies her freedom from conventional role-playing. While Carton allows his New Woman more latitude, he did not not feel secure enough from public opinion to put her at the centre of his drama.

Charles Hadson Chambers' drama, The Idler (1891),<sup>34</sup> is similarly enlivened by the inclusion of Kate Merryweather, an unreserved young woman who is the one saving grace in a hackneyed story which incorporates most of the components of popular drama: a heroine married to a man with a past (which threatens to destroy his present happiness), an unintentional homicide, the victim's vengeful relative, a seduction scene, a faithful wife caught in a compromising situation, a duel of honour, and a risky Polar expedition guaranteed to prove a doubtful hero's worth. Because the standard plot revolves around men (their life-style, their motivations, and their honour), the female characters, whether dutiful, desirable, or dangerous, are merely there to serve men's needs. Kate is an important exception. Mischievous and unabashed, she wants her father (upholder of the hypocritical double standard) to see her being embraced and kissed by an admirer. Avoiding usual false modesty, she admits to her suitor during his marriage proposal that she was already thinking she would like to marry him. Her

outspokenness, always a source of aggravation to her father ("...you have an active mind, which finds unremitting expression"), is valued by her husband-to-be. Again, the New Woman adds dimension to an old-style plot, but she is denied centre-stage.

By the end of the decade, when he wrote The Tyranny of Tears (1899), Haddon Chambers had developed more subtlety in his handling of plot and character.<sup>35</sup> Although she must eventually be seen as a failed New Woman, Hyacinth Woodward is a believable study of the late 19th-century working girl. In spite of her minor role, she is an effective pawn in the marriage game being played out by her employer, Mr. Parbury, and his demanding wife who uses her "womanliness" in the form of unremitting weeping to assert her power over her husband and to disrupt both his professional and social life. The Parburys' marital disharmony also threatens Hyacinth who stands to lose a secretarial position which allows her to be self-dependent and to escape the fate of her sisters back home:

I'm the thirteenth daughter of a parson....My eldest sister married my father's curate....Two other of my sisters run a Kindergarten, and one other is a governess. Personally I would rather be a domestic servant. The others remain at home, help in the house, and await husbands. I fear they will wait in vain, because there are so many women in our part of the country and so few men. For my part I seized an early opportunity of learning shorthand and typewriting --

(pp.425, 426)

Her dread of returning home to almost certain spinsterhood allows her to stand up to Mrs. Parbury and her jealous accusations, but she too descends to the level of "tears" when confronted with Parbury's more sympathetic advice to leave his household for the sake of propriety.

Finally, the New Woman completely dissolves into the Old when Hyacinth accepts a proposal of marriage from Parbury's friend, Gunning, and agrees with his opinion that "perhaps she wants a master" (p.472). By the century's close, the working girl had gained stature, but it is apparent that, in the minds of many, her career was simply a stepping-stone to marriage.

While Gaskell and Chambers openly admired the aggressiveness and ambition of the modern woman, they saw marriage as the natural outcome and the most desirable fulfilment of feminine enterprise. Even an acknowledged progressive like John Todhunter, after contemplating other possibilities besides submissive wifehood, compromised. Constance Denham and Blanche Tremaine, in The Black Cat (1893), abandon their ideals for the conventional certainties derived from possessing or being possessed by a man. Todhunter returns to the trite formula of a stage poisoning, but injects genuine pathos in the suicidal woman's inability to live up to advanced concepts of love and marriage. However, her tragic predicament did little to promote her public acceptance, as Todhunter discovered when his play found disfavour with critics who objected to its characters' neurotic personalities and their unhappy outcome. Most theatre managers "fought shy of a piece in which the 'new hysteria' was studied, and which ended badly, or at least sadly."<sup>36</sup> (The play was given only one performance by the Independent Theatre Society). But Todhunter defends his play in a preface to the published edition: "Given the characters and the circumstances, the end is the absolutely right one."<sup>37</sup> By giving the heroine a psychological dimension, he tries to justify her

self-destruction.

Constance Denham, a self-pitying neurotic, and her artist-husband, Arthur, share a cynical view of marriage as "either a superfluous bond or the consecration of a mistake," in this case, their daughter, Undine. All three are victims of the bond: Constance becomes morbidly jealous when she discovers that Arthur is in love with Blanche Tremaine, an attractive woman who sits for his portraits. Arthur, putting duty ahead of passion, chooses to remain loyal to the wife who, according to Blanche, "has drained you of your manhood like a vampire, made you the limp coward that you are" (p.94). The nine-year-old Undine, physically and verbally abused by her tormented mother, runs away from home and almost succeeds in drowning herself in the Thames. Constance's death (she drinks poison on stage) becomes merely a melodramatic touch since it leads to no self-realization in the other characters. Rather than freeing Arthur from bondage, his wife's suicide binds him even closer to her.

Because the focus is on domesticity at its worst, the play undermines the validity of legal marriage ties and so supports the unorthodox views of Blanche Tremaine, the "other woman," symbolized by the black cat that Constance wished to be rid of. Twice married and wary of legalized commitment, Blanche would prefer free union, despite social prejudice: "I fear there are still difficulties. But after all, one can do -- well, almost anything; if one does it from conscientious motives -- and knows one's way about" (p.52). Put off by Denham's duty to "that internal Mrs. Grundy we call conscience," to "the thing called Society" and to "the sacred bond of marriage" (p.95), she furthers her

plans to become a concert singer. Her independent spirit is a threat to the unstable Denham ménage. With supernormal strength, she deals with life's cruelties, offering comfort to the distraught Denham when they are suddenly confronted with his wife's corpse: "You know, dear, I am yours always. Oh, don't hate me! I dare say it in this presence (She kisses his hand. He shrinks from her.)" (p.97). Knowing that Denham lacks her moral courage, Blanche defends their relationship in a final bid to bind him to her. But Constance, the weaker of the two, achieves greater power over Denham by forfeiting her life. Both women put dependency on a man ahead of their principles. Both are rendered powerless by the pull of convention.

Female playwrights were just as reluctant to allow the "advanced" woman to emerge triumphant. Conservative women deplored extremes in dress and behaviour as much as men did, so the "modern" characters they created were either comical or grotesque. Gertrude Warden's comic sketch, Woman's Proper Place (1896) (written with Wilton Jones), shows a contemporary wife moving beyond the domestic role and satirizes the effects on a man when he is married to a "lady journalist" with a "'mission,' and a brain, and a grievance," who is also an active member of the "Hatchet" Club.<sup>38</sup> Reversal of sexual stereotype is lampooned from the outset as Mrs. Montagu Robinson expresses annoyance with Mr. M-R for bothering her with minor household problems (the butcher has overcharged on their meat order):

Have you the least idea, I wonder, how it tires a woman when she comes home, thrilling with excitement from the clash and conflict of mind against mind, to be dragged down to earth by silly little domestic details? (p. 3)

Mrs. M-R is more concerned with the Club's report that "some degraded brute of a man, with the mind of a bricklayer, has had the insolence to write a book [which] advises: 'Woman's proper place is in her own home, by her own fireside. Hers it is to cheer, to console, to help, to comfort'..." (pp. 3, 15). Ironically, royalties from the book (written anonymously by Mr. M-R) are used to pay off Mrs. M-R's bad business investments. Discovering that, she gratefully agrees to make amends, resigns from the "Hatchet" Club, and promises to reform: "I'll learn to sew on buttons....I'll learn to cook....I'll do just what you like in everything" (p. 15). Marital equilibrium is thus restored with the pseudo-modern woman reverting to the "old" type who fulfils her domestic obligations. As a Victorian version of the battle of the sexes, the duologue resembles a Punch cartoon intended to inspire laughter on both sides of the battle lines. But it is the woman who succumbs to male authority.

Just as Woman's Proper Place illustrates the incongruity of life outside the norm, Dorothy Leighton's inclusion of Theophila Falkland in Thyrza Fleming indicates the "unnaturalness" of a woman who seeks to upset traditional role-playing. Theophila is described as "masculine," with close-cropped hair, manly attire (a divided skirt), who moves "in bustling breezy fashion" and greets male relatives with a slap on the back. She belongs to the Anti-Marriage Society which investigates the backgrounds of potential husbands:

It's part of our new system...for marrying girls to proper husbands. Of course a certain percentage must marry, but we have instituted the most perfect system of enquiry into the antecedents of all the men who are eligible from

our point of view. This saves all subsequent misery in marriage... (Thyrza Fleming, Act III)

The Society's aim is to protect innocent girls, like Pamela Rivers, against a man with a past (Hugh Rivers). But Leighton is deliberately ambiguous in her judgment of the double standard. Pamela refuses to be rescued by Theophila and wants only to be "Hugh's wife." Theophila demeans her own husband, Bobby, who is forced to obey without question, compelled to read a paper at the Women's Reform Club, and is denied his own latchkey. Outwardly he does her bidding, but privately he "hates" the "ugly" members of the A.M.S. The audience is invited to agree with him. From Leighton's standpoint, Theophila's attempt to reverse natural roles only makes her grotesque.

Both Janet Achurch and Elizabeth Robins, who crossed new thresholds in their creation of Ibsen's female characters, were inspired to write for the stage. But despite Ibsen's (and Shaw's) influence, Achurch yielded to social and dramatic convention, voicing her objection to the advanced woman in the character of Dr. Edith Keighley (Mrs Daintree's Daughter), an "unnatural" type to be despised. Dr. Keighley (her title signifies that she is "educated") is "dark, rather masculine looking about 35, with cropped hair, and dress as manly as it can be; smokes." She is a minor character whose uncomely appearance immediately contrasts her to the "womanly" ideal. Robins allowed herself to be more directly influenced by Ibsen, drawing on both Mrs. Alving (Ghosts) and Hedda Gabler to create a contemporary English heroine in a tragic situation. Like them, Jean Greyke,

the central character in Alan's Wife (1893), is a woman driven to extremities by an inability to equate concepts of perfection with actual fact. Robins was unique in attributing a spirit of martyrdom to the modern woman who acts outside the norm.

This view was substantiated by William Archer who, in describing a character who "had nothing of the New Woman in her" (Cèsarine in Dumas' La Femme de Claude), pointed to characteristics which, for him, defined the type: "...an enlightened champion...[or] even a blind avenger of her sex...[reacting] against wrongs done either to womanhood in general or to herself in particular."<sup>39</sup> Accordingly, in his review of Alan's Wife, Archer defended the actions of the heroine in a situation "where it seems equally impossible, equally inhuman, to act or to refrain."<sup>40</sup> J.T. Grein was also impressed by the tragic elements of the play which he described as "one of the truest tragedies ever written by a modern Englishman."<sup>41</sup> (At the time, neither Archer nor Grein were aware that Alan's Wife, produced anonymously, had been written by Elizabeth Robins and Mrs. Hugh Bell).

Jean Creyke is married to the "best husband a girl ever had... and the handsomest, and the strongest."<sup>42</sup> She anticipates that her unborn child will be the image of his father. Her world collapses when Alan is fatally mutilated in an industrial accident and her baby is born crippled and deformed. Jean, who has always despised physical debility, kills her child in order to "save" him from "a long martyrdom" in this "hard place -- this world down here" (pp. 35-36). To ensure that her infant son will "wake up in heaven," Jean performs a ceremony of baptism before suffocating him with a quilt. She willingly

faces the death penalty even though she does not see her act of "courage" as a crime: "I showed him the only true mercy" (p. 48).

Although there were protests against the play's exhibition of such horrors, Elizabeth Robins in the title role was commended for bringing a naturalness and reasonableness to the actions of the distraught mother. Jean's self-sacrificing motives link her with Mrs. Alving, but her power to choose her own destiny is more like Hedda's. Robins recognized these characteristics as vital aspects of the self-willed woman of her time. In explaining Hedda's suicide, Robins commented: "It is perhaps curious Ibsen should have known that a good many women have found it possible to get through life by help of the knowledge that they have power to end it rather than accept certain slaveries."<sup>43</sup> A contemporary study corroborates the actions of both Mrs. Alving and Jean Creyke:

It may be strangely paradoxical, and yet it is psychologically quite true, that these mothers kill their children just because they love them....The act of these mothers is horrible, but the sentiment leading to it is noble, profound.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of the late 19th century, the play challenged conventional attitudes to female sexuality and motherhood. But the modern woman of 1893 would have a problem connecting the "tragic" heroine of a working-class rural community with contemporary appeals for female emancipation. While Robins might long to portray a strong woman at the centre of an intense dramatic situation, she could not envision a New Woman who succeeds in overthrowing traditional concepts under normal circumstances. Not until 1907 when Robins wrote an overtly polemical play, Votes for Women!, did she achieve this goal.

However, Mabel Collins' A Modern Hypatia (1895) (described as "A Drama of To-day") was more directly propagandist in its attack on social inequalities. Her contemporary heroine becomes a martyr, as did her ancient namesake,<sup>45</sup> to a cause she believes in. Marcia Royal, a "brilliant" and "intellectual" lecturer who speaks publicly in the cause of oppressed women, is pitted against the entire patriarchal order. The husband she left (her crime of leaving him was "trivial" compared with his "infamies") refuses to call her his wife:

No, no, I will not call her that, though it is true in law. That outcast, that rebel, whose every act and word burn with anarchy against the morals and rules of social existence...<sup>46</sup>

Even her male admirer, Dr. Vane Tylden, is less than supportive of this "modern Hypatia" who wants to re-arrange society to the advantage of her own sex; "She won't succeed of course! Man is the stronger animal" (p. 2). Marcia's greatest adversary, Lewin Alexis, "one of the biggest scoundrels in London," threatens to discredit her (by giving her a reputation that will put an end to her career) if she tries to prevent his marriage to Rose, Marcia's convent-reared daughter. Rose herself, "full of delusions, brought up in the old superstitions," sides with the enemy by rejecting her mother's warning against marrying a disreputable man.

Although Marcia's purpose in life is to educate inexperienced women about the risks of marriage and the inadequacy of divorce laws, she is unable to rescue her own daughter from a fate similar to her own. A conspiracy to implicate Marcia in a crime committed by Alexis

succeeds and she is unjustly arrested. This unusual outcome works deliberately against the play's polemic:

...the world is changing and...women are no longer to be blessed or bann'd, received or ostracized by the mere word of a man...Woman is becoming free. My public -- my own friends -- are real women -- they would rally round me. 'The old order changeth' and it is no longer permitted for man to go free and honored while woman bears all the burden and all the punishment.

(pp.37-38)

Clearly, the old order still needed to change. The play's ironic injustice shows Marcia, a martyr to the cause, being led away to prison while the wicked men go free. As predicted, she is cheered on by female supporters:

...be a woman, and more than a woman, Hypatia! husband and child have left you, but Humanity is yours still! Remember your work and the women you have saved and raised and ennobled, who rise up to call you blessed....We shall love you to the end and worship you in your martyrdom. (p.74)

Collins thus makes a direct appeal to the women in the audience, just as Marcia Royal did in her lectures: "What is the use of my talking to men? My mission is with women" (p. 39). By making her heroine suffer for men's crimes, the playwright substantiates her claims of sexual inequality. However, the British public at large was not disposed to a heroine who was at war with the entire male sex. (The play achieved only one matinee performance). And while she could preach about female emancipation, Collins could not actually visualize it any more than Robins could. Significantly, both of their heroines end up behind bars like Elaine Shrimpton (Jones' artificial stereotype).

The existence of the New Woman was an established fact by the 1890s. Conservative playwrights, both male and female, by giving a stage character certain external characteristics, were able to create a grotesque or comic stereotype dressed up to look "new." More progressive playwrights like Carton, Haddon Chambers, and Todhunter, who admired the New Woman for her independence, wit, and intelligence, went beyond the stereotype. Placed apart from the main action, she is neither ridiculed nor satirized for breaking from the conventional pattern set by the sentimental heroine. But although Maud Latimer, Kate Merryweather, Hyacinth Woodward, and Blanche Tremaine oppose the feminine ideal, they end up predictably in a "happily-ever-after" marriage or, in Blanche's case, seeking its equivalent. In this sense, they demonstrate a capacity for "real" emotion which advances them beyond the stereotype but returns them nonetheless to a traditional role. The politically active women who are not merely grotesque caricatures, namely Agnes Ebbsmith, Mrs. Montague Robinson, and Marcia Royal, are ultimately removed from public life.

Of the female playwrights, only Robins and Collins showed woman in ascendancy over extreme circumstances. But by making her a martyr, they removed her from the norm and thus failed to create a role-model that real women might emulate. As Shaw observed at the time, there were factions in society which opposed a serious portrayal of the New Woman on stage. Much of that opposition came from women themselves who felt so constrained by tradition that they found it impossible to relinquish their "old place" and so could not envision freedom for the characters they created. The New Woman was still held back by the bars of her

cage.

Robins described these internal barriers as woman's "attitude towards what seemed, and largely was, the single source of power, of success, of happiness -- man." Robins agreed that "Hedda is all of us,"<sup>47</sup> and recognized that Hedda's only personal power lay in her drastic "escape" from men's control. Torn between a need to please, and a fear of being disadvantaged by men, Robins had a "subconscious sense" that letting down the "old barriers" would involve loss of social approval: "To keep them up, to prevent their even being challenged was a part of woman's Art of survival as a respect-worthy person." Even an "advanced" woman could not come free of the cage completely.

## CHAPTER VI

## "A Modern Eve"

Marriage and the New Woman: Passion versus Duty

CARMEN: Modern woman has begun to think about things; we have grown very cautious, calculating, avaricious, yes, avaricious of our possessions, our lives, ourselves -- all that we can coin into happiness...

(A Comedy of Sighs, 1894)

Of all aspects of the Woman Question, marriage was the most pressing topic for public discussion since the family and the nation depended on its preservation. In the same issue of The Westminster Review (July 1899) in which Annabella Dennehy advocated free union based on the law of love,<sup>1</sup> another woman, Effie Johnson, argued for monogamous marriage based on mutual co-operation: "Let but Monogamy aim at securing an embodiment of equality and voluntariness in marriage law, and she will have little to fear...from her Free Love rival!"<sup>2</sup> These opposing viewpoints were symptomatic of the conflict in those individuals who sought personal freedom within the confines of traditional social values. Dennehy emphasized passion whereas Johnson affirmed duty as the true basis for male/female relationships, but both recognized the need to change a system which made woman "the physical and moral slave of man."

At the beginning of the decade, inspired by Ibsen, Shaw had questioned prevailing attitudes towards woman's role:

If we have come to think that the nursery and the kitchen are the natural sphere of a woman, we have done so exactly as English children come to think that a cage is the natural sphere of a parrot: because they have never seen one anywhere else....Still, the only parrot a free-souled person can sympathize with is the one that insists on being let out as the first condition of making itself agreeable.

During the remainder of the decade, marriage became a major topic in the new drama. In his epilogue to The Theatrical 'World' of 1895, William Archer noted that while the "age-old formula" always ended with the marriage of one or two pairs of lovers, "the new drama is much more apt to take marriage (if not the Divorce Court) for its starting-point." Not only had the dramatists' province been extended to include the inner workings of marital life, but "every form and phase of the relationship between man and woman."<sup>4</sup>

Following the 1893 production of The Second Mrs Tanqueray, there were many new plays which began, rather than ended, with marriage. In particular, the New Woman was examined from the perspective of a wife faced with issues like incompatibility, infidelity, bigamy, and divorce. Both male and female playwrights were sensitive to the conflict between bondage and freedom which had somehow to be resolved before the final curtain. Paula Tanqueray's story showed that while marriage might bring social status and a certain respectability, it did not necessarily provide her with the "coin" of happiness.

Dulcie Larondie, the heroine of Jones' The Masqueraders (1894), discovers this after four years of marriage to Lord Skene, a

hard-drinking, card-playing profligate who had given her title and position, but destroyed her illusions:

Marriage is a physical, mystical, ideal, moral game. Oh, I hate these words, moral, ideal....Is there anything under God's sun so immoral...as to be married to a man one hates!...It isn't moral ...It isn't ideal! It<sup>5</sup> isn't mystical! It's hateful! It's martyrdom!

To rid Dulcie of the monster she has married, David Remon challenges Skene to play for stakes he cannot resist: David's entire fortune against Skene's wife and child. When David wins, the way is seemingly clear for Dulcie and David to be united. But the former barmaid, who had once flirted so provocatively with customers at the local tavern, draws the line at free love. She is held back by moral convictions such as those of her puritanical sister, Nell, a sort of female raisonneur who knows instinctively that "the woman who gives herself to another man while her husband is alive betrays her sex, and is a bad woman" (p. 268). David is persuaded to "make this one last sacrifice" to keep Dulcie "pure" for her child. With his departure for the "deadliest place" on the West Coast of Africa, the two are unlikely to meet and match in this life and can only dream of eternal union on "that little star in Andromeda." The play's emphasis on duty and honour, to the exclusion of the individual, led one critic to invent a happier ending since Skene would naturally drink himself to death.<sup>6</sup> But for Jones, marriage ties remained indissoluble regardless of circumstances.

Dulcie's tirade against the so-called "morality" of marriage which linked her to a brutal libertine but whose immutable law she accepted without question infected society at large, as Shaw would

point out in Man and Superman (1903): "The confusion of marriage with morality has done more to destroy the conscience of the human race than any other single error."<sup>7</sup> The characters in Jones' The Liars (1897) are so convinced of the inseparability of marriage and morality that they go to any lengths to avoid upsetting one for fear of losing the other.<sup>8</sup> Lady Jessica Nepean exemplifies the inner conflict in a woman who is "the best of wives," yet welcomes any respite from her tedious marriage to a man "who doesn't understand a joke -- not even when it's explained to him."<sup>9</sup> Despite the risks involved, she pushes the limits of marital fidelity as far as possible but, because she could never "give up my world, my friends," she accepts the "morality" that even an inharmonious marriage guarantees.

Similarly, Lady Susan in Jones' The Case of Rebellious Susan (1894) strains the bonds of marriage when she retaliates against her husband's infidelity by deciding to "pay him back in his own coin."<sup>10</sup> She meets with as much opposition from other women as from men, all of whom agree that "men are men, and they are led away, and the rest of it" (p. 276). Susan realizes that her retaliation against male promiscuity has failed when her jealous husband feels less remorse for his own transgressions than he does for hers. The prospect of James Harrabin mending his ways is as likely as Gilbert Nepean suddenly developing a sense of humour. A reformed husband is never a factor in Jones' resolutions. What Shaw described as Jones' "affectionate contempt for women"<sup>11</sup> limits his ability to free them from a conventional mould. Lady Jessica is promised "the very best dinner that London can provide," and Lady Susan is bribed back to wifely obedience

with promises of a villa in Cannes, expensive jewellery, and a shopping spree in Bond Street. While Jones allowed his rebels a romantic fling or a burst of independent thought, they were governed by his conviction that woman's role is decreed by Nature and is basically unchangeable.

Strict social guide-lines also limit the modern woman in Pinero's The Benefit of the Doubt (1895),<sup>12</sup> but this dramatist does push beyond the usual patterns to explore possibilities besides marital rehabilitation or divorce. Although the topic of divorce was discussed on the Victorian stage as a fact of modern life, it was usually treated either as a subject of humour<sup>13</sup> or as a breach of social ethics to be avoided at any cost. Theo Fraser's complicity in a judicial separation brought against her friend, Jack Allingham, by his wife casts "doubt" on Theo's reputation.<sup>14</sup> To win back her good name, she and her husband must be seen together in London society in order to "convince people" that he believes in her innocence. Marriage to Alec Fraser, "a cold dry mummy of a man," has been cheerless, but his refusal to face it out denies her the chance to redeem herself. Her flight to Jack Allingham, "who would not treat a woman so like dirt" (p. 87), complicates her life even more, but moves her along the path to self-discovery. Giddy from champagne, she unleashes her feelings about "the world, your wife, my husband" (p. 210). This emotional outburst, followed by the discovery that Mrs. Allingham has overheard everything, ends in Theo's collapse but, in retrospect, her experience is cathartic, restorative, and illuminating: "It was myself, the dregs of myself, that came to the top last night!" (p. 244).

Pinero avoids the usual, trite reconciliation scene and allows his heroine to hold on to her new self-knowledge. Theo is offered reinstatement into society by both Alec Fraser and Mrs. Allingham (the condition for that lady's husband taking her back). Instead, she chooses to reside in London with Aunt Harriet who happens to be married to the prestigious Bishop of St. Olpherts, in the assurance that there will not be many who will "wag evil tongues against Mrs. Fraser a few months hence" (p. 283). The Benefit of the Doubt has no pat ending: Theo is not returned to her husband's arms, taken to dinner, or banished to a country retreat. But Mr. Fraser has visiting privileges for the next year, and there are hints that the couple will be reunited. Pinero postpones the final resolution, but predictably it will be a socially acceptable one because Mrs. Fraser, like her creator, cares about what people think.

While the leading playwrights of the New Drama concerned themselves with keeping marriages and reputations intact, others experimented with situations that questioned the rigidity of marriage laws and their adverse effect on men and women trapped in extraordinary circumstances. If the modern woman had grown "cautious" and "calculating" about the marriage bond, it was because of the risk involved in a legal commitment that was difficult to discount. On the other hand, the status of married women had measurably improved. Under the Women's Property Act, they were allowed ownership and control of their assets. Thyrza Fleming, the runaway wife in Dorothy Leighton's play, returns to claim an inheritance despite the curses of her frustrated husband. Blanche Tremaine (The Black Cat) "managed to keep

[her] little pittance" (p. 38) from her gambling husband's grasp. In cases of marital disharmony, divorce was more accessible and affordable, provided that grounds could be proved in a court of law, but public scandal and loss of reputation still attached to both parties, and especially to women. In R.C. Carton's play, Wheels Within Wheels (1899), Lady Curtoys engages in flirtations outside marriage ("an over-rated institution") but avoids "fuss and row and scandal":

A divorce case is rather amusing when one is able to book a seat on the judge's bench before hand, it's rather like a new comedy that hasn't been submitted to the Lord Chamberlain, but I never intended to play a leading part.<sup>15</sup>

The limitations of the divorce law created problems (such as the difficulty of ridding oneself of a first wife where adultery was not a factor) which might lead a man to commit bigamy, a practice which affected the innocent second "wife" more disastrously than her guilty "husband." He might receive a short prison term, but she would be condemned forever as a "fallen" woman, her reputation irrevocably damaged, regardless of the fact that she was a victim of his deception.

More liberal attitudes surface in Tommy Atkins (1895),<sup>16</sup> a social drama billed as "Domestic, Military, and Spectacular," which features a blameless heroine, Ruth Raymond, who is secretly married to a cavalry officer, Captain Richard Maitland. When Ruth hints that the secret must soon be told, we guess she is expecting a child. Then Maitland's first wife, Margaret, appears on the scene "to be [his] scourge and terror" (p. 27) and to discredit him to Ruth's father and to the Colonel of his Regiment. She articulates the status of an abandoned wife whose husband is frustrated by restrictive divorce laws:

See how my hand trembles, drink did that...his cruelty and neglect had sown the first seeds of intemperance in my nature; he might easily have checked it, but it suited his purpose better to encourage me in the evil habit...then on the plea of my drunkenness (sic) to sue for divorce! but the excuse was too palpable and seeing he was bound to fail in it, he dropped the suit...

(pp. 22, 23)

A final confrontation has all the elements of spectacular melodrama, but with a modern twist. Margaret had intended to commit suicide but decides to live on and reveal Maitland for the scoundrel he is. He threatens to kill her with her own revolver and call it self-defense and, in a struggle for the weapon, Margaret is fatally wounded. As Ruth rushes in, the dying woman has time to expose the bigamist ("...he wanted to get rid of me -- because I am his wife!) and to curse him for the shame he has brought "upon this helpless girl" (p. 28). Ruth also denounces Maitland who "slinks off [as] RUTH sobbing, flings HERSELF across the dead body" (p. 29). Ordinarily, the drama might end there, but a second tableau follows the first curtain which rises again to reveal "the stage filled with SOLDIERS of the Guard" who raise Ruth to her knees and, symbolically, lift her from shame. The implication is that the goodhearted privates<sup>17</sup> of the 42nd (one of whom had been nursed back to health by Ruth) do not regard her as socially demeaned because of her betrayal by a man. To complete Ruth's reclamation, the poor but honourable young curate (Harold Wilson) who had earlier professed his love for Ruth, is certain to offer the sanctity of lawful matrimony. Although he does not appear in the final scene, he surely waits in the wings.

Bigamy and its consequences received lighter treatment in A Matchmaker (1896), a comedy written by two women, Clo[thilde] Graves and Gertrude Kingston. But it is their conviction also that only male intervention (and a speedy marriage) can rescue a woman from social disaster. Chaos ensues when Margaretta Ridout (a young woman on the rebound from a broken love affair) allows Mrs. Lane, "a sort of Matrimonial Missionary to Society at large," to arrange a match with Lord Westbourne (a "dissipated-looking man" of 35). The groom's first wife, a German maid called Wilhelmina, whom he supposed dead, appears on the scene but cannot be bribed to hold her tongue: "I am your lawful wife. I haf a right to half vat you haf got."<sup>18</sup> Westbourne suggests to Margaretta that they can remarry as soon as his lawyer arranges a divorce from Wilhelmina, but Margaretta refuses. Mrs. Lane calls her decision "social suicide": "Society will give you the cold shoulder -- or, worse...pity you" (Act IV, p. 23). Even the prospect of becoming a governess at her old boarding-school seems unlikely for, according to Margaretta's sister, Georgiana, "a governess must be either married or single, and you're both!....The pupils at Miss Pinnock's would call you an improper person" (Act IV, p. 23). Since Margaretta's fall from legal wifehood has made her a "mere nobody," only the return from Burma of her former suitor, Archibald Rolles, can save her from infamy. Mrs. Lane, though retired from the business of playing "battledore and shuttlecock with other people's lives" (Act IV, p. 23), brings the lovers together.

Both Tommy Atkins and The Matchmaker demonstrate the way society branded a woman for a crime committed by her partner, yet envisioned

her rescue by another man's benevolence. In contrast, A.W. Gattie's The Transgressor (1894) not only sympathizes with the bigamist but goes beyond the usual prejudice towards the innocent woman. The antiquated divorce law which kept a man bound to a woman who was his wife "in name only" leads to the secret marriage of Eric Langley and Sylvia Woodville. Langley has another wife, "rendered a hopeless lunatic by a blow on the head in a railway accident" and confined to a mental asylum for the past 20 years. Gattie's thoughtful look at current divorce laws includes legal, scientific, religious, and moral aspects of the question.

The legal argument is represented by Sir Thomas Horncliffe, a court justice who reminds Langley that bigamy is a crime in England: "...you must abide by the laws of your country." But Langley refuses to acknowledge "a law which for no fault condemns me to a loveless life ... [and puts] an unpitying gulf between me and womankind."<sup>19</sup> A medical doctor, Gerald Hurst (author of "Mental Disease in its relation to Heredity"), offers a coldly scientific approach: "I would not only allow Lunacy as a plea for divorce, but in the interests of posterity, I would insist as far as possible upon nullity of marriage wherever the tendency manifested itself" (p. 31). The Reverend Henry Meredith condemns an unlawful second marriage on religious grounds, but, seeking to gain a personal advantage, tries to force Sylvia into marrying him in exchange for keeping silent. However, his self-serving bigotry cannot stand against her honesty: "You say I have no husband, but my heart tells me that I am a wife" (p. 72).

A truly "modern" woman, Sylvia not only condones bigamy but embraces contemporary ideas about female emancipation and free union. When her uncle threatens to take her out of Langley's house, her response is adamant:

I will not move, uncle, the days when a woman could be given as a prize in a foot race or a wrestling match are gone for ever. I am not a bale of goods for one to claim and another to resign, I am a living breathing woman, and I claim my freedom. (p. 77)

Sylvia's determination to stand by Langley is uncompromising: "I cannot be your legal wife, but I can be your wife in spirit -- and I will" (p. 76). This means waiting for him to serve a prison term for bigamy, since he has decided to make his a "test" case and accept the decision of the Court. Scorning public opinion, Sylvia speaks eloquently of the spiritual aspects of their love relationship: "I will so coil myself -- so interweave my life with his that our unity will be a holiness mere law-linked lives can never know" (p. 94). Far from regarding herself as a victim, Gattie's heroine overturns old concepts about female propriety. The idea of a couple living together "without benefit of clergy" posed no serious moral problem for Sylvia Woodville.

The New Woman who was willing to be guided by passion rather than duty captured the imaginations of two other playwrights, Sydney Grundy and Henry Vernon Esmond, and shaped the actions of Ruth Egerton in Grundy's Slaves of the Ring (1894) and of Lois Humeden in Esmond's The Divided Way (1895). But in both cases, man's code of honour proved stronger than woman's desire to free both partners from conformity.

As its title suggests, Slaves of the Ring equates the loss of personal freedom for a woman, especially in a loveless marriage, with the enslavement of one human being by another. The author's mouthpiece, Captain Jack Douglas, establishes the play's polemic early in the action:

Marriage for money -- marriage for position --  
 marriage to save a parent from disgrace --  
 marriage to spare a fellow creature pain --  
 marriage for anything in the world but love --  
 what are they all but slavery? <sup>20</sup>Slaves of the  
 ring! Theirs is the only bondage.

Although Harold Dundas and Ruth Egerton love each other, Harold is pledged to Ruth's sister, Gipsy, and, rather than cause her pain, he acts against Douglas' advice to "renounce this marriage." Ruth's forthcoming marriage to George Delamere, "a coronet with a princely income and estates in half-a-dozen counties," has been engineered by Ruth's mother. Douglas encourages her to break it off: "No priest -- no ring -- no vows can make a marriage" (p. 30). But when Delamere loses his inheritance and is willing to release Ruth from their engagement, she succumbs to her parent's view that she must either honour the commitment or be accused of inconstancy.

A year later, when Harold is reported missing in action following a South African military campaign, Ruth collapses and, in a state of delirium, reveals to Gipsy that she loves her sister's "dead" husband. After Harold miraculously returns,<sup>21</sup> Ruth believes she has died and is united with Harold in heaven. In a symbolic gesture, she flings away her wedding ring: "Whenever I rub that ring, the great black witch comes up and sits by me. I am its slave, and she's its guardian"

(p. 56). The figure in that fantasy is actually Gipsy who now bears only malice towards the two lovers: "I only want one thing...to find them out -- to brand them publicly..." (p. 74). Finally, all parties are forced to confront the deceitful nature of both marriages.

Shaw observed that Slaves of the Ring was inspired by the "burning conviction in Mr. Grundy that our law and custom of making marriage indissoluble and irrevocable, except by the disgrace of either party, is a cruel social evil."<sup>22</sup> Although Douglas, as the play's raisonneur, predicted the fiasco which results when people marry for reasons other than love, he becomes the champion of duty once the act of enslavement is an established fact. He advises Harold to go away: "You've thrown away the blossom, wear the thorn; and if it pricks you, keep it to yourself. There's only one thing to be done -- your duty" (p. 87). The suggested alternative, living in "sin" with Ruth, is dismissed by Douglas, because "no woman's strong enough to bear the load....it soils or crushes her" (p. 87). Ruth is not happy but, Douglas insists, she has "a home, a good name, and a proud position" (p. 87). Without a word said on her own behalf, Ruth is condemned once more to "slavery": "remember you are your husband's wife" and "deserve his magnanimity" (p. 91). Despite his willingness to consider marriage reform, Grundy settles for a conventional resolution.

In The Divided Way, H.V. Esmond devised a more drastic outcome of an illicit love-triangle. His heroine, Lois, marries Jack Humeden in the belief that the man she loves, his brother Gaunt, has died in Africa. When Gaunt returns, he is dismayed to find Lois married to his brother, but he conceals his feelings. Lois compares her loveless

marriage to her mother's: "...she married someone she didn't love -- just like me -- it seems like fate."<sup>23</sup> Lois envies the passion flowers ("What right have they to grow free?") yet arranges them "respectably in a conventional vase" (p. 8). But she has no qualms about breaking the marriage tie under the right circumstances: "If he [Gaunt] cared for me the least little bit in the world I should go to him and ask him to take me away somewhere, anywhere, where we could hide ourselves and be together always -- always" (p. 12). However, she underestimates Gaunt's idealism.

Rather than endanger his brother's marriage, Gaunt plans to give up his philanthropic mission (a colony of "little English cripples") and return to Egypt. Jack thinks this kind of sacrifice is "absurd," not realizing that the "married woman" whom Gaunt professes to love is his own wife. Ironically, he suggests that the woman's husband would surely divorce his errant wife, and that would leave her free to marry Gaunt.<sup>24</sup> But when Lois appears at the Lodge where Gaunt is staying, he insists that she return to her husband. Lois scorns his allegiance to "duty":

Oh, it's right after winning a woman's love to run away and leave her to bear all the pain alone. It's your duty to make both of us miserable for the rest of our lives.... You talk a great deal of duty, but only the duty you owe to the world, to society. Don't you think you owe a duty to me, to my love? (p. 82)

When Jack arrives on the scene and discovers the truth, the two brothers actually console each other, unmindful of Lois: "Not a word for me -- not a word. And yet -- I have suffered too" (p. 91). Overcome by self-pity, Lois takes poison. Like the passion flowers she can not

bear to see growing free, Lois withers in a conventional setting, trapped by masculine honour and duty.

In keeping with its title, The Divided Way indicates the rift between a man's and a woman's moral sensibilities which might lead to extreme female behaviour in an age which denied woman a voice in her own affairs. As Elizabeth Robins observed with regard to stage suicides,

Certainly the particular humiliations and enslavements that threaten women do not threaten men. Such enslavements may seem so<sup>25</sup> unreal to decent men as to appear as melodrama.

This observation from a woman justifies Esmond's use of an apparently melodramatic ending to highlight his heroine's dilemma. On reflection, it speaks more eloquently for the New Woman than Grundy's earnest preaching against inadequate marriage laws.

In A Comedy of Sighs (1894), John Todhunter tests current ideas regarding the "new" morality which threatened to overthrow conventional marriage altogether. The reconciliation of husband and wife did little to compensate for the anti-marriage propaganda which incensed its first-night audience. William Butler Yeats witnessed that frenzied response:

For two hours and a half, pit and gallery drowned the voices of the players with boos and jeers that were meant to be bitter to the author...and to the actress [Florence Farr] struggling bravely through her weary part.<sup>26</sup>

Later, Todhunter admitted that his play "was really an experiment on the taste of the British public"<sup>27</sup> who nonetheless reacted predictably to Lady Brandon's anarchic dialogue which embodied Florence Farr's own

distaste for marriage. Even William Archer, an exponent of the "new drama," observed that "this modern and George-Egertonian shrew is remarkably tamed; but one could almost wish that Dr. Todhunter had reserved for her some of the poison which seemed so out of place in The Black Cat."<sup>28</sup>

The anti-marriage views held by Sir Geoffrey Brandon's wife, Carmèn, surface in her disgust with the sexual submissiveness advocated by her friend, Mrs. Chillingworth:

MRS. C.: ...there are things that are rather -- well, trying to a young girl. Men are so different from what one imagines. One has to shut one's eyes, as it were, but one thinks of one's duty as a wife...

CARMÈN: I have never learned<sup>29</sup> that trick of shutting my eyes.

The Chillingworths' marriage reflects the hypocrisies of contemporary family life. Mrs. C. scolds her husband for being "idiotic enough to carry on your amours in public" (Act III, p. 19) but admits that "flirtation is the most intellectual amusement going" (p. 21) and is willing to smooth away his amorous pursuits. Moreover, she considers that the way Carmèn snubbed his advances is "insolent."

Carmèn is neither outraged nor tempted by Major Chillingworth's attempts at seduction. When he offers to free this "caged creature" and carry her off to Venice, she remains practical:

I fear we can't manage our little excursion. And, believe me, it would not be worth your while to give up your wife, and how many children? three, I think, besides other more important things, for my sake. (Act II, pp. 32-33)

More important to the "cautious" and "calculating" Carmèn is a woman's integrity: "our lives, ourselves" (Act II, p. 31). Sir Geoffrey is dismayed by such "cold-blooded wantonness," but Carmèn further dismantles his concept of wifehood as a "sacred" office by claiming she is not "the angel in the house": "I'm a...the other thing" (Act IV, p. 19).

The pressures on a woman of Carmèn's passionate temperament intensify when she is required to choose between "the duties of a wife" or a "separate maintenance." The former involves a journey to Persia on a secret assignment (his duty). Carmèn is torn between pragmatism and sensuality:

Sometimes -- not here, not in a house -- away by myself, in the woods, by the sea, or on a mountain in a thunderstorm, I feel my whole body, my whole spirit vibrating with love. I stretch out my arms to something -- I feel lifted up.  
(Act II, p. 6)

She envisions love as "the god in yourself meeting the god in someone else," rather than the kind of love which "goes about in England like an old organ-grinder, always playing the same tune: 'Home, sweet home'" (Act II, p. 7). In the end, though, she yields to Sir Geoffrey's persuasiveness which she describes in ironic terms: "He's been wooing me in the key of D major...He's been saying: Damn, and Devil, and Despise, and Disgust, and all sorts of lovely things..." (Act IV, p. 23). Actually, the only "D"-word that her husband used was "duty." But although she accedes, Carmèn's decision carries a subversive threat:

...there's something foolish in us that keeps us whirling round that quintessence of dust, a man.

If it were not for that we should dethrone the  
 gods, and make new worlds as easily as dumplings.  
 (Act IV, p. 26)

With such speeches ringing in their ears, the play's first-night audience was not likely to be placated by Carmèn's sudden transformation into a dutiful wife. Her final speech is a travesty of feminine conformity. First her grammar goes, then her sense of identity, as she deliberately de-humanizes herself:

I'm afraid I'm losing my eccentricity. I'm afraid  
 I'm going to be good -- or at least gooder than  
 I've been being....If you'll give the creature  
 house-room. It wants such a lot of room.  
 (Act IV, pp. 27, 30)

The added inducement of a gift of the Brandon rubies (symbol of traditional values) and the promise of a "romantic" gondola ride in Venice (on their way to Persia) supposedly represents the final turn of the lock as Carmèn resigns herself to life in a cage, albeit a roomier one. But even though she appears to be "remarkably tamed" (as Archer suggested), one senses that this is not the end!

In The Canary (1899), "George Fleming" [Julia Constance Fletcher] arrived at a similarly ironic ending to a play that subverted the stereotypes male playwrights had invented, from "caged bird" to "fallen woman" to "repentant wife." She achieved this by writing a "sentimental farce" which asked to be treated in the spirit of serious comedy rather than burlesque, which would detract from the essential contrast between the characters' language and action.<sup>30</sup> This explains the irony that lies behind such moments as Sybil Temple-Martin's conversation with

Oliver Glendenning, a friend who (unknown to her) is happily married:

SYBIL: Spending the rest of your life with a person who has ceased to interest you -- that's marriage.

GLEN.: So it is; worse luck! -- but --

SYBIL: (Scornfully) What does any man know about marriage?...It's the woman who makes the marriage. It's the woman who is the soul of the house. The wife who stays at home--  
(Act I, pp. 6-7)

Sybil compares her domestic captivity to her canary's, "stifling in his cage" (Act I, p. 13). That image is reinforced when her husband, James, suggests that a wife only needs food and shelter: "Look at the books people write about 'em! Rot! Look at their women problem plays -- Rot! I tell you, all rot...there's nothing easier in this wide world than to please and satisfy a married woman" (Act I, p. 29). While Sybil "taps her foot" and "bites her lip," James gives advice to his bachelor friend, Percy (ironically, his wife's admirer):

What you want is a nice bright simple little girl -- who bicycles and doesn't want to play the piano --. Never talk over anything with a woman, it only unsettles her mind -- But <sup>31</sup>marry her. Give her something to be grateful for. (Act I, p.30)

Her reaction to her husband's narrow viewpoint is to uncage her bird and then herself.

But, like her canary, Sybil is used to being looked after, and is really one of those "tamed birds" who want a secure cage. Mrs. Glendenning, Sybil's confidante, carries the analogy even further: "...half the time you'll see the little fools beating their wings to try and get out -- not because they want to be free, or are fit to be free -- but because they see the real wild birds flying past and envy

'em" (Act III, p. 10). The return of the pet canary to its cage signals the end of Sybil's flight for freedom.

Like the wayward wife of conventional drama, Sybil arrives at Percy's rooms dressed in "yellow with touches of black" (a flamboyant caricature of the Beardsley prototype) to declare she has left her husband and "shall be no poor crouching victim -- like the people in the plays -- but a real woman" (Act II, p. 16) But Sybil's actions belie her words. When a male friend of Percy's enters, she makes elaborate excuses for being found there, and her indiscretion weighs heavily on her:

Probably -- I shall die soon. Can a wife who has been guilty -- even like myself only in intention -- but (Clasping her hands) -- can a guilty woman live!...I shall die, Percy. I shall fade away. (Touches her eyes with a handkerchief) Of a misunderstanding -- and a cough -- (Coughs very slightly)...Hundreds of other women have managed to do it. (Act III, p. 35-36)

After impersonating the dying heroine of melodrama, Sybil acts the penitent wife. She sees her husband in a different light when Mrs. Glendenning, formerly "Nelly Sparrow of the Queen's Music Hall," recognizes James from the days when he was a friend and protector of the girls in the chorus. Their warm friendship reveals a human side to James that his wife had never recognized. Now ready to return to her cage, Sybil expounds on ideal marriage, as though she herself had experienced that kind of relationship, but her sudden volte-face is suspect:

It is -- making allowances for one another....It is -- never to expect the impossible. Never to quarrel with things as they are -- merely because they are so. It is -- to think no evil and to do

none. To be true in a world full of disappointments. To learn to give without measuring, and to receive without counting over. It is, to stand fast, hand in hand in very slippery places. To refer your pleasure to your husband's pleasure. To defer your -- (Her voice trembles and breaks down). (Act III, pp. 43-44)

In actuality, this rhapsody is more applicable to the Glendenning's amiable union, despite its apparent incongruities. Oliver circulates in upper-class society, ostensibly to gather material for his plays and short stories, but passes himself off as a bachelor because he cannot take his wife into those social circles. Nelly stays comfortably at home in St. John's Wood, caring for the "twins." The ex-chorus girl takes a pragmatic approach to marital strife: "When it comes to situations of strong domestic irritations I ain't on in that scene" (Act III, p. 6).

The Glendenings communicate and empathize. Nelly, with her theatre background, can appreciate Oliver's account of a confrontation with "him," the un-named actor-manager who explained the kind of drama he looks for:

This theatre wants something new. Something true -- none of your Norwegian conundrums or your French answers to 'em! None of your emotionalised men and women working out their lives....The Public wants a play a man can choke with laughter over, after dinner; and come again another night and bring his wife, and always go home from that theatre (With solemnity) a better, wiser, nobler Englishman. Virtue, in strong situations, leading up to a quick good curtain: that is what they're asking for. Domestic virtue is what they want ... and, by hell, we mean to give it to 'em.

(Act III, pp. 12-13)

The playwright's frustration with traditional tastes provides another clue to the fact that Fleming's play is meant to satirize the kind of theatrical fare that both the public and theatre managers approved.

In his critique of The Canary, Max Beerbohm underplays that intent:

Miss Fletcher is to be congratulated on having been content to accept the limitations of her sex, to write lightly and slyly and prettily, without attempting to be grim or strong or in any way terrible.<sup>32</sup>

Deliberately side-stepping the play's satire with jibes of his own, Beerbohm approves the sentimental ending. After breaking down during her high-flown speech about marriage, Sybil throws her arms around her husband's neck: "O Jim. How good -- how wonderful -- O Jim -- how beautiful you are" (Act III, p. 44). The canary is happy to be back in its cage under the care of a kind master. So, tongue in check, Fleming gives her audience "domestic virtue" and "a quick good curtain."<sup>33</sup> She also provides an insightful commentary on the reluctance in many women to risk the dangers of independent flight while envying those who are free.

Both Todhunter and Fleming probe the marriage question, yet their plays put the married woman back in her cage. While the majority of "new" dramatists were willing to portray the effects on the wife when a marriage turns sour, few tackled the subject of free union. One exception was A.W. Gattie (The Transgressor) who promoted a common-law arrangement as a practical alternative when one partner could not divorce. It is a solution offered after the fact, once the act of bigamy has been discovered, but the play is exemplary in allowing a

woman to dictate her own future. Two other plays elevated love above legal marriage ties and featured a New Woman who successfully freed herself from internal as well as external restrictions: Frank Harris' Mr and Mrs Daventry (produced in 1900, but based on a scenario written in 1894 by Oscar Wilde)<sup>34</sup> and Malcolm C. Salaman's A Modern Eve (1894). In both cases, the wife's choice is clear cut: one relationship means bondage, the other freedom. Through her, morality is re-defined in terms of personal values rather than social convention.

It was this aspect of the New Woman in Mr and Mrs Daventry that J.T. Grein feared would displease audiences: "...in the race between marriage and liaison the illegitimate relationship proves stronger than the sanctified institution of the marriage shackles."<sup>35</sup> But while its press notices were hostile, the play drew crowds of people to what Clement Scott described as "a drama of the dust-bin." Scenes of shocking impropriety contrasting with others of genuine devotion accounted for the play's long run.<sup>36</sup> Another factor was Stella Campbell's life-like performance which, for Grein, was "the truest woman in her gallery [of roles], truer than Magda, greater than Paula Tanqueray."<sup>37</sup> In a letter to Shaw, Harris professed that although the New Woman who demands affection was not new, he was "the first to put opposite this new woman the old conventional view of sexual morality...[i.e.] the husband's view"<sup>38</sup>

Throughout the play, Hilda Daventry sets her own morality against society's standards represented not only by her husband but by other women who unquestioningly accept double standards. As her mother advises, "Bear and forbear. Just say it over and over to yourself...it

always did me good."<sup>39</sup> Hilda's friend, Lady Hallingdon, also feels that while "most men behave vilely...that is not a sufficient reason to leave one's home....whatever you do the world will punish you" (pp. 85, 86). When Hilda decides to go away with Gerald Ashurst, he reminds her that her own sex will react harshly: "...women can be very cruel to women, horrid to another woman, and a man can't prevent them" (p. 100).

When Hilda accidentally witnesses her husband's affair with another woman, she decides to leave him. Dick Daventry wrongly assumes she will return because "she couldn't stand a life of disdain," and besides, "women are made to live with one man, just as men are made to run after a number of women" (pp. 94, 95). But after Hilda and Gerald set up housekeeping in Monte Carlo, she can only feel "profound contempt" for Dick's attitude. Moreover, she is convinced that "people are beginning to see that no single mistake -- not even marriage -- should be allowed to ruin a whole life. We have a sort of second chance now and most of us need it" (p. 100). Her sense of the new morality is lost on Daventry. He does not deny his past, but claims that now he has even more to forgive her. His beliefs collapse when he learns that Hilda is going to have Gerald's child and that she will never return to him, even if he succeeded in killing his rival.

Daventry's suicide is more than a reversal of the literary convention which condemned the fallen woman to death. In this modern treatment of an old theme, his self-destruction symbolizes the death of man-made rules. As Frank Harris explained to Shaw, "I maintain the old convention dies of its own falseness, kills itself, in fact, and that is what Daventry does."<sup>40</sup> Hilda's ideal of free union remains intact:

"perfect love can cast out [traditional] remorse" (p. [114]).

Because of its exposé of the hypocrisy of "respectable" marriage and its insistence on the merits of unlegalized union, Mr and Mrs Daventry was labelled "the most daring and naturalistic production of the modern English stage" (The Athenaeum, 3 November 1900). On the other hand, Archer described a play with similar subject matter, A Modern Eve, as "the ablest play of its kind...since The Second Mrs Tanqueray" because its author [Salaman] "has depicted life as he sees it, not merely as he thinks the public would like to see it."<sup>41</sup> The "public" had little opportunity to see A Modern Eve (only one matinée performance is listed in Wearing's London Stage) but its heroine surely stands as the decade's quintessential image of the New Woman as she struggles to gain sovereignty over her own life.

A Modern Eve portrays a possible future for a runaway wife after she returns to her husband. Like Hilda Daventry and Theo Fraser, Vivien Hereford might question whether a husband, despite his assurances, can ever truly "let bygones be bygones." Eardley Hereford "would give all he possesses to avoid dragging his wife's dishonour before the [divorce] court"<sup>42</sup> but, in taking his wife back, he is driven by his fear of public shame rather than genuine forgiveness: "...only tell me your wretched madness is over, and you will honestly try to live this thing out of memory" (Act I, p. 21). One year after their reconciliation, Eardley is still jealous, suspicious, and unforgiving, and Vivien is oppressed and stifled: "The air is so heavy with reproach and distrust that I can't breathe freely" (Act III, p. 17).

Eardley's unrelenting judgment is supported by Sir Gerald Raeburn, the play's authority-figure, who assures him that he has "done all that a good man could do to save a bad woman" (Act III, p. 27). Vivien blames her own distaste for marriage on her mother: "...it was the humiliating picture day by day of your weak submission to my father's brutal temper and caprices through my childhood and girlhood sowed the first seeds of rebellion and horrible discontent in me" (Act I, p. 8). A form of compromise, advanced by Vivien's friend, Mrs. Meryon, is the "New Matrimony," an arrangement which allows a wife or husband to indulge in extramarital affairs without interference from the other and avoids the divorce court: "He has a perfect genius for being there when I want him, and never when I don't" (Act II, p. 9). But Vivien feels such "superficial cynicism" is as "conventional as the morality of our grandmothers" (Act II, p. 10).

Led by her "individual impulses," rather than by the examples set by the other women, Vivien had left her husband ("he seemed to think that kisses and housekeeping mean all a woman's life") and run away with a man named Deverill who promised "fresh ideals, fresh experiences" (Act I, pp. 9, 10). But within twenty-fours she discovered that Deverill, whom she imagined would rescue her from the "dreary existence" of marriage, is interested only in sex: "...men are all alike, they may seem to soar, but the flesh keeps them down..." (Act I, p. 10). Although she returns to her husband, Vivien remains cold and undemonstrative, a condition attributable to her mother's hatred of her father which "infected the child, and warped its natural affections" (Act I, p. 20). The key to her emotional release lies in the

"mysterious experience" touched briefly in Confessional (Deverill had introduced her to Roman Catholic ritual) which began to explore hidden depths in her psyche: "...exposing one's inner self to a perfect stranger produced a curious sensation of privileged immodesty -- like bathing for the first time at Dieppe" (Act I, p. 12). Her cry is that of all "new" women in the '90s: "I must beat against the bars of my life till I am free" (Act III, p. 9).

Her friendship with Kenyon Wargrave offers Vivien another opportunity for escape but it is threatened by scandal-mongers: "Mrs. Grundy and her gossips survive even the end of the century" (Act II, p. 19). Wargrave himself seems bound by convention. His image of Vivien as pure and passionless crumbles when he learns of her past: "After all, only like the rest" (Act II, p. 25). But, unlike Eardley, he is finally able to relinquish his illusions and to love her "not for the angel but for the woman": "Don't you see that you have come down to me from the stars? No longer above me -- but here on the warm earth, on my own human level..." (Act III, p. 23).<sup>43</sup> Only Wargrave recognizes the "true woman" in Vivien that has hitherto been "stunted and unexpressed":

And now that you have found the courage to live your life freely, all the suppressed emotions of your nature are coming full cry to the surface -- ...your whole being is awake with longings that cry to mine for answer. (Act III, p. 24)

Wargrave's appeal to her innate sensuality spells the end of her repressive marriage to Eardley. The final scene of the play reverses the "fallen woman" cliché and, as in Mr and Mrs Daventry, it is rigid conventionality, not a repentant heroine, that is doomed. When Eardley

refers to Vivien as his "sinful wife" and demands that she go down on her knees to beg for pardon (he has found her in private conversation with Wargrave), she refuses. Instead she follows Wargrave out of the house, her "individual impulses" having finally broken through both psychological and social barriers: "I must go to him. I must go to him!" (Act III, p. 27).

Salaman's heroine is a direct descendant of Ibsen's Nora. The play ends with a slammed door as a wife walks away from an unequal and imprisoning marriage. But in the case of this modern "Eve," the audience is left in no doubt about her future. The New Woman has been joined by the New Man who consciously removes her from a pedestal and acknowledges that now they are equals. Wargrave is not bound (because she is legally another man's wife) by old-fashioned ideas of honour and duty. Nor do the two men discuss these issues to the exclusion of the woman. Wargrave leaves Vivien to confront her husband on her own as final proof of her emergence. He perceives her desire to know the mystery of life (in imitation of the Biblical Eve) not as her "temptation" but as a means of self-discovery. Finally, Vivien Hereford encompasses all classifications of the New Woman. She is an unremorseful "woman-with-a-past"; she has advanced ideas about female emancipation; she successfully challenges the marriage bond.

Throughout the decade, proponents of the New Drama allowed the heroine to express her own mind as a necessary step towards selfhood. But the extent of her emancipation seemed to depend on whether she could find a man with liberal views (like those Shaw proclaimed in The Quintessence). Conservative playwrights clung to legal marriage. Most

assumed that a woman's role was decreed by Nature and was basically unchangeable. A daring playwright, like Todhunter (A Comedy of Sighs), might argue for a woman's right to choose her own destiny, but nevertheless settled for an ironic ending which returned the woman to her "cage." Open-minded dramatists, like Gattie and Salaman, advocated free union as a valid alternative. They accepted Shaw's premise that freedom is attained only when both sexes are released from bondage to old ideals: "...the man must walk out of the doll's house as well as the woman...the dolls are not all female."<sup>44</sup> Significantly, the loss of male autonomy was a common denominator in a majority of the plays, a first step towards sexual equality for the New Woman, and a sign that "the door of her cage is open." Sylvia Woodville asserts that she is a living, breathing woman and "claims" her freedom; Vivien Hereford voices her determination "to beat against the bars" of her life till she is "free," but that freedom depends on a free man.

Women playwrights relied on comedy (A Matchmaker) and parody (The Canary) to cloak their subversive attack on convention. That subterfuge reached the limits on any writer for the stage, but it also reflected a tendency to accept conventional limitations on their sex. In an earlier play, George Fleming had advanced beyond the stereotypical "woman-with-a-past" (Mrs. Lessingham) and "advanced" woman (Anne Beaton), to see free union and the double standard as debatable issues. But she hid behind a male pseudonym and enclosed herself and her heroines in the security of the familiar cage. These two aspects of her personality link Fleming with the actress, Elizabeth Robins, and with the novelist, Mary Chavelita Dunne (another "George"). All three

represent a self-conflict which kept them "whirling around that quintessence" called man, or at least the old pattern ordained by men, even as they tried to "make new worlds."

Ever since the emergence of the New Woman, there had been men like John Stuart Mill and Bernard Shaw who supported woman's emancipation, just as there had been women like Mrs. Linton who opposed it. The plays of the 1890s reflect those contradictory attitudes towards women and also reveal a tension within the individual woman who suddenly found herself at centre stage. But as the door to the 20th century opened, the onus fell on each New Woman (on both sides of the curtain) to "un-parrot" herself and escape the bars of her cage, with the help of modern Adam.

## NOTES

Chapter I: "Relics of the Past"

<sup>1</sup> Holbrook Jackson in The Eighteen Nineties ((1913) points out that the adjective "new," like the equally popular phrase, "fin-de-siècle," was commonly used to denote extreme modernity: "The range of the adjective gradually spread until it embraced the ideas of the whole period, and we find innumerable references to the 'New Spirit,' the 'New Humour,' the 'New Realism,' the 'New Hedonism,' the 'New Drama,' the 'New Unionism,' the 'New Party,' and the 'New Woman'" (London: J. Cape [1931]), pp. 21-22.

<sup>2</sup> The historical period known as the Victorian Age spans the 64-year reign (1837-1901) of England's venerable monarch, Queen Victoria. This period, which began in the age of steam and ended in the age of electricity, featured such innovations as the telegraph, the camera, the typewriter, the bicycle, and the first automobile. The term "Victorian," when used in the pejorative sense, refers to a climate of opinion, conventions, and morals reflected in the prudery, hypocrisy, snobbery, and fussiness of English society in the 19th century.

<sup>3</sup> Walter Besant, London in the Nineteenth Century (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), p. 36.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Girl of the Period," Saturday Review, 14 March 1868, pp. 339-40.

<sup>5</sup> John Stuart Mill, "The Subjection of Women," in Essays on Sex Equality, ed. Alice S. Rossi (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

<sup>6</sup> John Stuart Mill, Autobiography of John Stuart Mill, ed. John Jacob Cross (New York: Columbia University Press, 1924), p. 186. Quoted in Rossi, Essays on Sex Equality, p. 4.

<sup>7</sup> Rossi, p. 171.

<sup>8</sup> "Political Economy for Beginners" (1870). Mrs. Fawcett had developed an interest in the subject from reading to her blind husband, a member of Parliament and a professor of political economy.

<sup>9</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Women's Suffrage Movement," in The Woman Question in Europe, ed. Theodore Stanton (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1884), pp. 1-3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Shrieking Sisterhood," in The Girl of the Period and other Social Essays, Vol. I (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1883), pp. 65-66.

<sup>12</sup> Annie Besant, A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, 1970), p. 7. Originally published in The National Reformer, 4 June 1876.

<sup>13</sup> Stanton, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Punch, 16 April 1870, p. 155. This opinion was stated in an open letter to "Mrs Professor Fawcett" from "Mr Punch."

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Wild Women, No. 1, As Politicians," Nineteenth Century 30 (July 1891), p. 79.

<sup>16</sup> From an advice manual by James Compton Burnett entitled Delicate, Backward, Puny, and Stunted Children (1895). Reprinted in Victorian Women: A Documentary Account ..., eds. Erna Olafson Hellerstein et al (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1981), p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Missing Sewell, "Principles of Education, Drawn from Nature and Revelation, and Applied to Female Education in the Upper Classes" (1865). See Hellerstein, pp. 69-70.

<sup>18</sup> John Ruskin, "Of Queen's Gardens," in Sesame and Lilies (New York: Merrill & Baker, Publishers, 1920), p. 94.

<sup>19</sup> Rossi, pp. 198-99.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Henry Huxley, Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley, Vol. I (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1901), p. 228.

<sup>21</sup> Charles Whibley, "The Encrcachment of Women," Nineteenth Century 39 (March 1896), pp. 495-501.

<sup>22</sup> "University Degrees for Women," Saturday Review 81 (18 April 1896), pp. 392-93.

<sup>23</sup> Punch (20 March 1875), p. 123.

<sup>24</sup> The term "wrangler" applied to the Cambridge University person who attained a first class in the Honours examination for the B.A. degree. Miss Ramsay had won the Classical Tripos at Cambridge in June 1887. Reported in Saturday Review 63 (25 June 1887), p. 896.

<sup>25</sup> Henry Fawcett was a member of Parliament and held the post of Postmaster General in the 1880s as well as a professorship at the University of Cambridge. (See also Note #8). Phillipa Fawcett's achievement obviously inspired Shaw's creation of Vivie Warren (Mrs Warren's Profession) whose academic career was urged on by newspaper

reports of the fictitious "Phillipa Summers" who had beaten the senior wrangler at Cambridge.

<sup>26</sup> Fun (18 June 1890), p. 266.

<sup>27</sup> Priscilla Robertson, An Experience of Women ... (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982), pp. 513-14.

<sup>28</sup> Elizabeth Garrett Anderson, "The History of a Movement," Fortnightly Review 59 (March 1893), pp. 404-17.

<sup>29</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "Womanliness" in The Girl of the Period and Other Social Essays, Vol. II (London: Richard Bentley & Son, 1883), pp. 113-14.

<sup>30</sup> R.J. Cruikshank, Roaring Century 1846-1946 (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1946), p. 218.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Jeune, "In Defence of the Crinoline," New Review 8 (February 1893), pp. 190-200.

<sup>32</sup> Madeleine Ginsburg, Victorian Dress in Photographs (London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1982), p. 82.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>34</sup> The Rational Dress Society was formed in June, 1881 under the Presidency of Viscountess Harberton and continued for several years. Their recommendations included the adoption of a "dual garmenture" or "divided skirt," and other modifications to women's clothing for sporting activities. For cartoon of lady riding side-saddle on a "velocipede," an early form of bicycle, see Victorian England as seen by Punch (London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1978), p. 119; and young ladies playing tennis in hobble-skirts and hats, Ibid., p. 134.

<sup>35</sup> E.M. Stutfield, "The Psychology of Feminism," Blackwood's Magazine 161 (January 1897), pp. 104-117.

<sup>36</sup> "Cobbe to the Rescue," Punch 73 (22 December 1877), p. 285.

<sup>37</sup> Punch 99 (6 December 1890), p. 265.

<sup>38</sup> Punch 102 (14 May 1892), p. 230.

<sup>39</sup> Punch 108 (27 April 1895), p. 203.

<sup>40</sup> Saturday Review 67 (22 June 1889), pp. 756-57.

<sup>41</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Epicene Sex," in The Girl of the Period and other Social Essays, Vol. II, pp. 236-37.

<sup>42</sup> Katie Cowper, "The Decline of Reserve Among Women," Nineteenth Century 27 (January 1890), p. 69.

<sup>43</sup> T. Pilkington White, "Modern Mannish Maidens." Blackwood's Magazine 147 (February 1890), p. 264.

<sup>44</sup> Harriet was the central figure in Mill's intellectual and personal life. Their 28-year relationship began when she was the wife of John Taylor. For 20 years they collaborated on essays dealing primarily with the status of women. During this period, Harriet retained the external formality of her marriage to John Taylor. After his death, she and Mill married.

<sup>45</sup> Rossi, p. 46.

<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "The Judicial Shock to Marriage," Nineteenth Century 171 (May 1891), p. 694.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., p. 697.

<sup>48</sup> "The Practice of Marriage," Saturday Review (1 June 1895), pp. 721-22.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., "A Rejoinder," p. 722.

<sup>50</sup> "The Future of Marriage," Saturday Review, (28 March 1891), p. 370.

<sup>51</sup> Mona Caird, The Morality of Marriage: and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Woman (London: George Redway, 1897), pp. 57, 59, 108, 125.

<sup>52</sup> Annie Besant, "Marriage: As It Was, As It Is, and As It Should Be," A Selection of the Social and Political Pamphlets of Annie Besant (1970), p. 33.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 36.

<sup>54</sup> Mona Caird, "A Defence of the So-Called 'Wild Women,'" Nineteenth Century 31 (May 1892), p. 819.

<sup>55</sup> "Maternal Instinct," Saturday Review (8 June 1895), pp. 752-53.

<sup>56</sup> William Acton, "The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs" (1857). Repr. in Victorian Women: A Documentary Account ..., ed. Hellerstein, et al, pp. 177-79.

<sup>57</sup> William Ferrero, "Suicide Among Women," New Review 67 (December 1894), pp. [637]-646.

- <sup>58</sup> Mrs. Roy Devereux, Ascent of Woman (1896). Quoted in "The Psychology of Feminism," Blackwood's Magazine 161 (January 1897), pp. 106-7.
- <sup>59</sup> Elizabeth Lynn Linton, "Modern Topsy-Turveydom," New Review 3 (November 1890), pp. [427]-437.
- <sup>60</sup> Reproduced in Advertising in Victorian England 1837-1901 by Diana Hindley and Geoffrey Hindley (London: Wayland Publishers, 1972), Plate 5.4.
- <sup>61</sup> Walter Besant, "From The Queen's Reign [1897]," The Norton Anthology of English Literature, 4th edn., Vol. II (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1962), pp. 1668-669.
- <sup>62</sup> Annabella Dennehy, "The Woman of the Future," Westminster Review Vol. 152, No. 1 (July 1899), pp. [99]-100.
- <sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 100.
- <sup>64</sup> G.B. Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism [1913] (New York: Hill and Wang, 1957), p. 99.
- <sup>65</sup> Juliette Adam, "Woman's Place in Modern Life," Fortnightly Review 57 (1892), pp. [522]-529.

#### Chapter II: "Removal of Ancient Landmarks"

<sup>1</sup> The lure of personal income and independence to be gained from professional employment attracted the daughters of the leisured classes as well as the cultured gentlewoman forced by circumstances to work for a living. However, women in the poorer classes did not regard work as an instrument of freedom. As Ray Strachey indicates, "They did not look upon themselves as lifelong workers, still less as careerists, and they did not seek or find any self-fulfilment in their toil." [See Chapter III: "Changes in Employment" in Our Freedom and Its Results, Ray Strachey, ed. (London: Hogarth Press, 1936)].

<sup>2</sup> Aphra Behn (1640-1689) earned her living by writing plays and novels. Her first plays were anonymous because she felt that they would be more readily acceptable if it were thought that a man had produced them. But in 1681, her name appeared on the title-page of a play. She became best known for her novel, Oroonoko or The Royal Slave, written at the request of Charles II. Restoration society also permitted women to earn their livings on the stage. Mrs. Coleman, the wife of Dr. Coleman, a successful teacher of music and singing, has the distinction of being the first woman to appear professionally upon the English

stage. She took part with her husband in Davenant's The Seige of Rhodes in 1656. Pepys records that he himself first saw women acting on the stage on 3 January 1661.

<sup>3</sup> This practice began earlier in the 19th century with the Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, who initially wrote under the names: Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. The most notable example is Mary Ann Evans whose nom-de-plume, George Eliot, still identifies her writings. The trend was continued by later writers: John Oliver Hobbes, Vernon Lee, Holme Lee, and George Egerton among others.

<sup>4</sup> G.B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. III (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1932), p. 16. Of 'Ouida,' Max Beerbohm wrote: "I am staggered when I think of that lurid sequence of books and short stories and essays which she has poured forth so swiftly.... Every page is a riot of unpolished epigrams and unpolished poetry of vision, with a hundred discursions and redundancies" (Saturday Review, 3 July 1897, p. 9).

<sup>5</sup> The demand for new fiction aimed to satisfy a growing population whose literacy rate was steadily increasing. Reading as a national pastime had spread with the railway. Travellers could purchase cheap novels or "yellow-backs" at W.H. Smith book stalls along major railway lines. Mudie's Select Library, numbering 7½ million books, loaned new publications to readers throughout the nation. The Penny Weekly magazines provided a steady fare of sensational stories to the less educated.

<sup>6</sup> Punch, 25 August 1894, p. 93.

<sup>7</sup> Charles Reade complained of difficulties in the distribution of his books because the circulating libraries were against him: "They will only take in ladies' novels. Mrs. Henry Wood, 'Ouida,' Miss Braddon -- these are their gods." [Quoted in Elaine Showalter, A Literature of Their Own (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), p. 157]

<sup>8</sup> Punch, 23 January 1875, p. 40.

<sup>9</sup> W.S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, The Mikado, Act I, lines 240-1, 259-62. First performed at London's Savoy Theatre in 1885. Later revivals of the operetta substituted various topical allusions, such as: "the lovely suffragist," "the critic dramatist," "the scorching bicyclist," or "the scorching motorist."

<sup>10</sup> Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest in Plays[:]Oscar Wilde (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1954; repr. 1981), pp. 309-10.

<sup>11</sup> George Eliot, "Silly Novels by Lady Novelists," Westminster Review LXVI (October 1856): 442-461. [Reprinted in Essays of George Eliot, edited by Thomas Pinney (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 323.]

<sup>12</sup> Dinah Mulock Craik, "Female Professions," A Woman's Thoughts about Women (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1858), p. 50.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Victorian Women's Fiction by Shirley Foster (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1985), p. 140.

<sup>14</sup> Quoted by Edna Lyall in "Mrs. Gaskell," Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign (1897). (London: The Folcroft Press, Inc. Repr. 1969), pp. 142-43.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in O Those Extraordinary Women by Seon Manley and Susan Belcher (Philadelphia: Chilton Book Co., 1972), pp. 201-202.

<sup>16</sup> Quoted in Showalter, p. 21.

<sup>17</sup> Craik, p. 54.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-56, 58.

<sup>19</sup> Léonce Bénédite, in a discussion of European women artists, refers to "the accusation so often levelled against women painters that their work is not their own" and cites several examples. See Women Painters of the World, edited by Walter Shaw Sparrow (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1905) pp. 175-76, 179.

<sup>20</sup> Sparrow, Women Painters of the World, p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Quoted by Margaret Cole in Women of Today [1938] (Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Free Press, Inc., 1968), p. 172. In 1927, Laura Knight (1877-1970) was elected an Associate of the Royal Academy, the second woman to be so honoured since 1769.

<sup>22</sup> Laura Knight, The Magic of a Line (London: William Kimber, 1965), p. 77.

<sup>23</sup> Oscar Wilde, Essays, Criticisms and Reviews (Privately published, London, 1901) p. 175.

<sup>24</sup> Germaine Greer, The Obstacle Race (London: Secker & Warburg, 1979), p. 325.

<sup>25</sup> Léonce Bénédite, "Of Women Painters in France," trans. Edgar Preston. In Sparrow, Women Painters of the World, p. 167.

26 Knight, p. 307.

27 After her marriage, Sontag made only private or charity appearances. The mother of seven children, she moved in court circles, studied composition and wrote a cantata for herself and chorus. She resumed her singing career after 20 years' retirement.

28 Musical Times of March 1903 reports Marie Hall's sensational appearance at Queen's Hall when she "was recalled six times after Tchaikovsky's Concerto, and at the conclusion of Wieniawski's 'Faust' Fantasia had to return no less than nine times to the platform." The following month Musical Times reports a recital in the St. James Hall, with "five hundred people turned disappointedly away." Quoted in Percy Scholes, The Mirror of Music 1844-1944, Vol. I, pp. 343-44.

29 As Lady Thompson, she gave only private concerts in her drawing room; in 1871, with Cipriani Potter (a pupil of Beethoven), she accompanied the first British performance of Brahms' German Requiem in a pianoforte duet arrangement. Cyril Ehrlich puts a different interpretation on the talented girl who "could most effectively escape to prosperous security by means of a 'good' marriage" and cites the example of Cecilia Maria Barthelemon (1770-11.1827) who "allowed an auspicious career to fade into calm domesticity." He adds, however, that she continued to write music, publishing six sonatas (one dedicated to Haydn) and some vocal works. See The Music Profession in Britain since the 18th Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p.16.

30 Quoted by Rupert Christiansen in Prima Donna: A History (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), p. 113.

31 Ethel Smyth, in a letter written in 1894 to her friend and patron, Lady Ponsonby. Quoted by Louise Collis in Impetuous Heart: The Story of Ethel Smyth (London: William Kimber & Co. Ltd., 1984), p.72.

32 Cyril Ehrlich, The Music Profession in Britain since the 18th Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 105.

33 Ehrlich reports that in 1861 the ratio of male to female musicians was 7800 to 600. See Ehrlich, p.53.

34 Quoted by Percy Scholes in The Mirror of Music 1844-1944, Vol. I (London: Novello [1947]), p.309.

35 Walter Sutcliffe, from an article in the London Gazette. In a subsequent article, Sutcliffe admitted he was mistaken about the missing muscle but was adamant in his stand to keep women out of orchestras. Quoted in Ehrlich, p.158.

36 Letter to the Musical Times signed "Paterfamilias." Quoted in Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. I, p.343.

<sup>37</sup> Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. I, p.343.

<sup>38</sup> The idea of limiting orchestra personnel to men only for seemingly moral reasons continued to be upheld well into the 20th century. Richard Czerwonky, writing in the Musical Times of May, 1923, gives one reason: "Women orchestra players are not popular with conductors mainly because the conductors do not feel at liberty to swear as occasion demands before them, as they do before a lot of men" (Percy Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. II, p.732). Sir Thomas Beecham disliked women players and responded flippantly when asked the reason: "If they are pretty, they upset the men; if they are ugly, they upset me" (St. John, Ethel Smyth: A Biography, p.192). In 1920 when all the women members of the Hallé orchestra were fired (after having filled in during the war), one of its backers explained: "This has always been a man's show, and we mean to keep it for men as long as we can" (Ibid., p.191).

<sup>39</sup> The Dundee Ladies' String Orchestra, the first formed in Britain, started with amateurs in 1882, as did Lady Radner's 72-string orchestra whose performances raised funds for the Royal College of Music. In August 1894, the latter group gave a performance of "Lady Radner's Suite" which Parry had just composed for it. There were several professional women's groups formed by the end of the century. A 38-piece orchestra, including brass and woodwind, played at the Earl's Court Exhibition in 1901.

<sup>40</sup> Percy Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. II (London: Novello [1947]), pp.731-32.

<sup>41</sup> There were in 1891 only eight, but by 1900, the figure had risen to 68 (including two clarinettists). By 1903, they numbered 110 (including three double-bass players).

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. II, p.732.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted by Christopher St. John in Ethel Smyth (London: Longmans, Green & Co. Ltd., 1959), p.192.

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. II, p.734. Dr. Harding stated their number to be 489. Although this figure cannot be confirmed, Scholes lists 36 women composers of the 19th and early 20th centuries whose names were well-known in British musical circles.

<sup>45</sup> J.A. Fuller-Maitland, quoted in St. John, Ethel Smyth, p.86.

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in St. John, Ethel Smyth, p.88.

<sup>47</sup> G.B.Shaw, quoted in St. John, Ethel Smyth, p.187.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.185.

49 Quoted in Collis, The Impetuous Heart, p. 81.

50 Quoted in Scholes, The Mirror of Music, Vol. II, pp. 539-40.

51 Stinger, "Plain Papers [:] Chorus-Girls," Pick Me Up, Vol. 7 (28 Nov. 1891).

52 In 1808, Angelica Catalini (1780-1849) is said to have received £5,250 plus the proceeds from two benefits for a season of seven months, two performances a week. Malibran was paid £2,375 for 19 nights in 1835; seven extra performances brought her a total of £3,463 for 26 performances, and the impresario presented her with a bracelet and ring of diamonds and rubies. (Ehrlich, p.45) Figures from the Metropolitan Opera archives show Melba received \$1,650 for a single performance. (Christiansen, p.207)

53 Quoted in Christiansen, p. 123.

54 Quoted by Richard Findlater, The Player Queens (London: George Weidenfeld & Nicolson Ltd., 1976), p. 132.

55 This was in the 1890s when Ellen Terry was Irving's leading lady. The amount was paid regardless of the size of her role or the number of performances. Stella Campbell was receiving £100 a week during the same period.

56 Madge Kendal, Dramatic Opinions (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1890; repr. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986), p. 79.

57 Ibid., p. 80.

58 Michael Baker, "The Position of the Actress," The Rise of the Victorian Actor (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1978), pp. 95-108.

59 Tracy C. Davis reports that in 1851, the gender ratio was 2.17 actors to each actress; by 1881, the total number of actresses had quadrupled and the gender ratio had changed to 1.08 actresses to each actor. ("Victorian Charity and Self-Help for Women Performers," Theatre Notebook, Vol. XLI, No. 3 (1987), p. 114)

60 Theatrical families like the Kembles and the Terrys extended over many generations. Seven of the Kemble children went on stage: four became famous. Ellen Terry's parents and their six offspring were all employed in the theatre. Others who benefited from family connections were Charles Kean (son of Edmund Kean), Madge Robertson, Marie Wilton, and Helen Faucit.

61 Margot Peters, Mrs. Pat: The Life of Mrs. Patrick Campbell (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), p. 49.

62 Elizabeth Longford, Eminent Victorian Women (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1981), p. 163. Ellen did return to the stage, however, at her family's insistence, but abandoned it shortly after to enter a common-law relationship with Edward Godwin.

63 Duncan Crow, The Victorian Woman (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1971) p. 207.

64 ibid., p. 208.

65 Baker, p. 104.

66 From an interview in Madame (6 December 1902), quoted in Findlater, The Player Queens, p.134.

67 Roger Manvell, Ellen Terry (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1968), pp. 130-31.

68 Peters, Mrs. Pat, p. 214. Stella Campbell is here alluding to stock characters in melodrama, in which the "good" heroine was fair-haired and the villainess was dark.

69 The part of Astrea in George R. Sims' and Robert Buchanan's The Trumpet Call at the Adelphi theatre on August 1, 1891.

70 Madge Kendal, "The Drama" (A Paper read at the Congress of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Birmingham, September 1884). (London: David Bogue; repr. New York: Garland Publishing Inc., 1986), p. 9.

71 ibid., p. 7.

72 A photograph of Ellen Terry shows her in an informal "tea-gown" which consisted of an overdress and a loose undertunic which, unwaisted, did not need to be worn over a corset. Author Ginsburg states: "Ellen Terry, though fashion conscious, was unconventional and preferred the less fitting lines of clothes advocated by the Dress Reform Movement." See Madeleine Ginsburg, Victorian Dress in Photographs (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1982), p. 83.

73 Lewis Carroll (pseudonym of Charles Dodgson), in a letter to ... mother written in 1894, reveals the prevailing social attitudes towards Ellen while she was living with Godwin and after her marriage to Wardell made her "respectable": "At this time I held no communication with her. I felt that she had so entirely sacrificed her social position that I had no desire but to drop the acquaintance. Then an actor offered her marriage and they were married. It was a most generous act, I think, to marry a woman with such a history and a great addition to this generosity was his allowing the children to assume his surname....This second marriage put her, in the eyes of Society, once

more in the position of a respectable woman....And I went and called on her and her husband." Quoted in Nina Auerbach, Ellen Terry: Player in Her Time (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987) p. 128.

<sup>74</sup> Bernard Shaw, Introduction to Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence, ed. Christopher St. John (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1932) p. xx.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Auerbach, p. 223.

### Chapter III: "Treading on Dangerous Ground"

<sup>1</sup> William Archer was one of the earliest translators of Ibsen and the leading British exponent of his works. He not only translated but supervised, directed, and reviewed productions of Ibsen's plays in England. For his interpretation of the Borkman/Foldal scene, see William Archer on Ibsen, ed. Thomas Postlewait (Westport, Conn.: The Greenwood Press, 1984), pp. 89-90.

<sup>2</sup> Oswald Crawford, "The London Stage," Fortnightly Review 53 (April 1890), pp. 499-516.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 499.

<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth Robins, Theatre and Friendship (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., pp. 33-34.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain (London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1940), p. 258.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 263.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Nina Auerbach, Ellen Terry, Player in Her Time (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1987), p. 342.

<sup>11</sup> G. B. Shaw, Preface to Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence, ed. Christopher St. John (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1932), p. xiv.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Auerbach, p. 173.

- 13 Quoted in Roger Manvell, Ellen Terry, p. 130.
- 14 ibid., p. 131.
- 15 Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 250.
- 16 Quoted in Mrs. Patrick Campbell, My Life and Some Letters (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), pp. 143-44.
- 17 Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 197.
- 18 Quoted in Toby Cole, Playwrights on Playwriting (New York: Hill and Wang [1960]), p. 151.
- 19 In 1898, addressing the Norwegian Women's Rights League at a banquet in his honour, Ibsen denied having worked consciously for their cause: "To me it has seemed a problem of humanity in general." Quoted in Ian Britain, "A Transplanted Doll's House: Ibsenism, Feminism and Socialism in Late-Victorian and Edwardian England," Transformations in Modern European Drama, ed. Ian Donaldson (London: Macmillan, 1983), pp. 14-54. Ibsen went on to suggest that motherhood was the first of woman's rights and the greatest of woman's privileges. (William Archer on Ibsen, p. 89).
- 20 Henry A. Jones and Henry Herman, Breaking a Butterfly (Unpublished; British Museum copy: 29 No. 94). Jones claims to have re-worked Ibsen's play from a rough translation of the German version. He was encouraged to turn it into a "sympathetic" play and, knowing nothing of Ibsen, modelled it after the sentimental melodrama currently in vogue. Years later, he wrote: "I pray it may be forgotten from this time, or remembered only with leniency amongst other transgressions of my dramatic youth and ignorance." (Henry Arthur Jones, Introduction to The English Stage by Augustin Filon, p.13).
- 21 William Archer, Fortnightly Review (July 1889). Reprinted in Victorian Dramatic Criticism, edited by George Rowell (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1971) p. 287.
- 22 Oswald Crawford, "The Ibsen Question," Fortnightly Review 55 (May 1891), pp. 725-40.
- 23 Quoted in Margaret Oliphant, et al, Women Novelists of Queen Victoria's Reign [1897]. (London: The Folcroft Press, Inc., 1969), p.151.
- 24 Crawford, "The Ibsen Question," Fortnightly Review 55 (May 1891), p. 736.
- 25 Walter Besant, "The Doll's House and After" in Verbena Camellia Stephanotis... (London: Chatto and Windus, 1892), pp. 317-338.

- 26 Ibid., p. 327.
- 27 Ibid., p. 332.
- 28 G.B. Shaw, "Still After the Doll's House" [1890]. Repr. in Short Stories, Scraps and Shavings (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1934), pp. 125-139.
- 29 Ibid., p. 136.
- 30 G.B. Shaw, "The Womanly Woman" in The Quintessence of Ibsenism (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1929), pp. 29-43.
- 31 Henry A. Jones, Introduction to The English Stage, p. 17.
- 32 Reproduced in Jenkins, The Making of Victorian Drama, p. 233.
- 33 Clement Scott, "Ghosts," The Illustrated London News, 21 March 1891. Repr. Victorian Dramatic Criticism, pp. 291-3.
- 34 E.F.S. Pigott, "Report from the Select Committee on Theatres and Places of Entertainment," Reports from Committees, 1892, vol. 8, para. 5227. Quoted in Samuel Hynes, The Edwardian Turn of Mind (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968) pp. 308-9.
- 35 Scott, "Ghosts," Victorian Dramatic Criticism, pp. 291-3.
- 36 Blanche A. Crackanthorpe, "Sex in Modern Literature," Nineteenth Century 37 (April 1895), pp. 607-16.
- 37 G.B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. I (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1932), p. 150.
- 38 Ibid., pp. 144-48.
- 39 G.B. Shaw, "The Art of Ellen Terry," Shaw's Dramatic Criticism (1895-98): A Selection by John F. Mathews (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1959), pp. 248-49.
- 40 G.B. Shaw, Shaw on Theatre, ed. E.J. West (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), pp. 4-5.
- 41 Nora Charrington, named for Ibsen's heroine, seemed destined to live out her fictional namesake's destiny. Her marriage to Edward Levetus ended after only three years. After the birth of a son, she too slammed the door on both husband and child.
- 42 Quoted in Margot Peters, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., 1980), p. 79.
- 43 Quoted in William Archer on Ibsen, p. 41.

- 44 ibid., p. 45.
- 45 Elizabeth Robins, Ibsen and the Actress (London: the Hogarth Press, 1928), p. 18.
- 46 In 1887, Robins' husband, George Richmond Parks, threw himself into the Charles River in Boston clad in a full suit of stage armour.
- 47 Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 170.
- 48 William Archer, The Theatrical 'World' for 1893 (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1969), p. 65.
- 49 G.B. Shaw, quoted in Victorian Dramatic Criticism, p. 302.
- 50 Quoted in William Archer on Ibsen, p. 38.
- 51 Florence Farr, quoted in Josephine Johnson, Florence Farr: Bernard Shaw's 'New Woman' (Gerrards Cross, Bucks.: Colin Smythe Ltd., 1975), p. 48.
- 52 Janet Achurch lost the part of Rita after she went behind Elizabeth Robins' back to negotiate her own salary with the syndicate about to take over the play's financial operation. In retaliation, Elizabeth encouraged Stella to underbid Janet for the lead.
- 53 Stella Campbell, Letter to H.A. Jones. Quoted in Peters, Mrs. Pat., p. 123.
- 54 According to A.B. Walkley, this description of Stella originated with the theatrical critic of The Leader. Quoted in Campbell, My Life and Some Letters, pp. 143-44.
- 55 G.B. Shaw, Preface to Ellen Terry and Bernard Shaw: A Correspondence, p. x.
- 56 Shaw deplored "the horrible artificiality of that impudent sham the Victorian womanly woman" (Shaw, An Autobiography, p. 267). Quoted in Julie Holledge, Innocent Flowers: Women in the Edwardian Theatre (London: Virago Press Ltd., 1981), p. 29. Unfortunately, Shaw's "unwomanly" woman came to mean not liberated but unsexed.
- 57 Shaw-the-playwright admitted (in a letter to Stella Campbell, dated 8 November 1912) that he used actresses for his own ends: "He cares for nothing really but his mission, as he calls it, and his work. He is treacherous as only an Irishman can be: he adores you with one eye and sees you with the other as a calculated utility" (Campbell, My Life and Some Letters, p. 254).
- 58 Besides Cleopatra, in Caesar and Cleopatra, Stella is said to have inspired Mrs. Juno in Overruled, Hesione Hushabye, the Serpent in

Back to Methuselah, and Orinthia in The Apple Cart.

59 The play, Alan's Wife, produced anonymously by Grein's Independent Theatre, was written by Elizabeth Robins and Mrs. Hugh Bell but its authorship was generally unknown for several years. Robins' suffrage play, Votes for Women, was produced at the Court Theatre in 1907. During the 1890s, she wrote novels under the pseudonym, C.E. Raimond.

60 G.B. Shaw, Preface to The Theatrical 'World' of 1894. Reprinted in Shaw on Theatre, pp. 41-53.

61 Janet Achurch's appearance in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra (which opened at the Olympic on May 24, 1897) drew forth this stinging criticism in a letter from Shaw dated 20 May 1897, Bernard Shaw[:] Collected Letters, Vol. I, ed. Dan H. Laurence (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1965) pp. 765-66.

62 G.B. Shaw, Letter to Janet Achurch dated 1 November 1897, Collected Letters, Vol. I, pp. 819-21.]

63 G.B. Shaw, Letter to William Archer dated 23 April 1891, Laurence, Collected Letters, Vol. I, pp. 294-95. Shaw comments on "the very poor specimens of the moral courage of the stage hero and heroine" and points to Mrs. Theodore Wright (who played Mrs. Alving in Ghosts) as "by far the pluckiest of the lot." Yet even this gallant lady shirked from speaking aloud the lines that Shaw assigned to Mrs. Warren.

64 G.B. Shaw, Letter to William Archer dated 24 January 1900, Bernard Shaw [:] Collected Letters, Vol. II, ed. Dan H. Laurence (London: Max Reinhardt, 1972), pp. 136-39.

65 Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 169.

66 Robins, Ibsen and the Actress, pp. 34-35.

67 G.B. Shaw, in a letter to Elizabeth Robins dated 28 March 1894, expressed his reaction to Farr's performance:

Oh my Saint Elizabeth, holy and consoling, have you ever seen so horrible a portent on the stage as this transformation of an amiable, clever sort of woman into a nightmare, a Medusa, a cold, loathly, terrifying, grey, callous, sexless devil?....Had she been able to give full effect to herself, the audience would have torn her to pieces. I lay under harrows of red hot steel... (Quoted in Peters, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses, p. 126).

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Johnson, Florence Farr: Bernard Shaw's 'New Woman', p. 113.

<sup>69</sup> G.B. Shaw, Bernard Shaw and Mrs. Patrick Campbell: Their Correspondence, ed. Alan Dent (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd., 1952), pp. 15-16.

<sup>70</sup> John Ruskin, "Of Queen's Gardens," Sesame and Lilies (New York: Merrill and Baker, Publishers, 1920), p. 87.

#### Chapter IV: "Shall We Forgive Her?"

<sup>1</sup> The title of a play by Frank Harvey which opened at the Adelphi Theatre, 20 June 1894.

<sup>2</sup> A.B. Walkley, quoted in Theatrical World of 1894, p. 180.

<sup>3</sup> Phrase coined by Robertson Davies in a lecture entitled The Mirror of Nature: The Alexander Lectures 1982 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

<sup>4</sup> Frank Harvey, Shall We Forgive Her? in English and American Drama of the 19th Century 1801-1900, edited by Allardyce Nicoll and George Freedley (New York: NYPL Readex Microprint), p.37.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p.50.

<sup>6</sup> C.H. Hazlewood, Lady Audley's Secret (1863) in Nineteenth Century Plays, 2nd. edn. edited by George Rowell (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Two Centuries of Opera at Covent Garden by Harold Rosenthal (London: Putnam & Co. Ltd., 1958), p.250.

<sup>8</sup> From Calvé's memoirs quoted in Prima Donna: A History by Rupert Christiansen (London: The Bodley Head, 1984), p.270.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p.272.

<sup>10</sup> First performed in Paris, 1875; first London performance was 22 June 1878 at Her Majesty's Theatre.

<sup>11</sup> G.B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. II (London: Constable & Co. Ltd., 1931), p.15+. In his musical review of May 30, 1894, Shaw reports being "shocked...beyond measure" by Calvé's Carmen.

12 Central character in Verdi's La Traviata (1853) based on Dumas' La Dame aux Caméllias. First performance of the opera in London was 24 May 1856. Because of the controversial nature of its theme (the attempted rehabilitation of a prostitute who practised her trade amongst the aristocracy), this opera was never attended by Queen Victoria. On the other hand, the monarch openly admired Carmen and Cavalleria Rusticana in which the heroines are exotic and lower class.

13 The title character in Puccini's Manon Lescaut (1893) based on Abbé Prevost's novel. First performed in London at Covent Garden on May 14th, 1894. Massenet's Manon (Paris, 1884), is a French opera based on the same text.

14 Although it was banned in England, Wilde's play was produced in Paris in 1896 by Sarah Bernhardt. It was first seen in London in 1905 at a private showing by the New Stage Club under the management of Florence Farr.

15 G.B. Shaw, Preface to Plays Unpleasant (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1946; repr. 1980), p. 14.

16 G.B. Shaw, Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays Unpleasant (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1946; repr. 1980), p. 251.

17 Shaw, Preface to Mrs Warren's Profession in Plays Unpleasant, p. 185.

18 Ibid., p. 186.

19 William Archer, Theatrical World for 1893, p. 131.

20 Ibid., p. 131.

21 A.W. Pinero, The Second Mrs Tanqueray in Three Plays (London: Methuen London Ltd., 1985), p. 149. Page numbers refer to this edition.

22 H.A. Jones, The Dancing Girl in Representative Plays by Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. I (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 344. Page numbers refer to this edition.

23 One could speculate that Drusilla/Diana was a victim of "heroine's disease," although Jones gives no indication of this. Studies show that in Victorian England mortality among women aged 15 to 35 was most often attributed to consumption (tuberculosis). Accepted explanations centered on the dangers of corsetting and an indoor sedentary life, but prolonged states of depression and anxiety, especially in sensitive and creative individuals, were also believed to trigger the disease and affect the woman's chances of surviving. (See "Sex and Death in Victorian England: An Examination of Age- and Sex-Specific Death Rates, 1840-1910" by Sheila Ryan Johansson in A Widening Sphere, ed. Martha Vicinus, pp. 163-81).

- 24 H.A. Jones, Michael and His Lost Angel in Representative Plays by Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. III (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 41. Page numbers refer to this edition.
- 25 Archer, Theatrical World of 1896, p. 25. Marion Terry played the role of Audrie, replacing Mrs. Patrick Campbell who quarrelled with Jones over lines in the play which she found offensive.
- 26 G.B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. II, p. 17.
- 27 Anthony Jenkins discusses this trait in Jones' plays in a chapter entitled "Terrible leanings towards respectability" in The Making of Victorian Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 131-61.
- 28 H.A. Jones, Mrs Dane's Defence in Representative Plays, Vol. III, p. 270-77. Page numbers refer to this edition.
- 29 Oscar Wilde, A Woman of No Importance in Oscar Wilde [:] Plays (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1954; repr. 1981), p. 136. Page numbers refer to this edition.
- 30 Oscar Wilde, An Ideal Husband in Oscar Wilde [:] Plays (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1954; repr. 1981), p. 239. Page numbers refer to this edition.
- 31 Actor William Terriss was stabbed to death outside the stage door of a London theatre and died in Jessie Millward's arms "like a hero from one of his own melodramas" (Peters, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses, p. 232).
- 32 Both Shaw and Achurch borrowed from the plot of Guy de Maupassant's Yvette, a story about a brothel-keeper whose innocent daughter is powerless to escape the disreputable life to which she was born and raised.
- 33 Janet Achurch, Mrs Daintree's Daughter (British Library, Lord Chamberlain's Plays #53542), p. 13. Page numbers refer to this typescript.
- 34 Peters, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses, p. 144. Peters' description of Achurch's play is misleading in that Mrs. Daintree did not wilfully commit suicide.
- 35 Estelle Burney, Settled Out of Court (British Library, LCP #53630), p. 71. Page numbers refer to this typescript.
- 36 Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1894, p. 101.
- 37 George Fleming [Julia Constance Fletcher], Mrs Lessingham (London: J. Mills & Co., 1894), p. 19. Published for private

circulation. Copy in British Library, LCP #53546. Page numbers refer to this publication.

<sup>38</sup> Sylvia Woodville (The Transgressors), Hilda Daventry (Mr and Mrs Daventry), and Vivien Hereford (A Modern Eve) are discussed in Chapter VI.

<sup>39</sup> Archer, The Theatrical 'World' for 1894, p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> One notable example is Eleanor Marx (translator and exponent of Ibsen's plays in England) who swallowed prussic acid on March 31, 1898, after a final betrayal by her common-law husband, Edward Aveling, who had secretly married a younger woman.

<sup>41</sup> Wilkie Collins, The New Magdalen (London: Published by author, 1873). In English and American Drama of the 19th Century 1801-1900 (New York: NYPL Readex Microprint), p. 37. Page numbers refer to this edition. First produced at the Olympic Theatre, 19 May 1873. The revival at the Metropole Theatre in suburban Camberwell on 28 October 1895 was reviewed by Shaw who noted that Achurch "as might be expected from an actress who became famous as Nora Helmer in A Doll's House, presents Mercy Merrick as rebel rather than victim" (Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. I, pp. 230-37).

<sup>42</sup> Dorothy Leighton, Thyrza Fleming (British Library LCP #53565), Act II, n.p. Page numbers not available. Act numbers refer to this typescript. Leighton's married name was Mrs. G.C. Ashton Johnson. She was co-founder with Grein of the Independent Theatre Society.

<sup>43</sup> The name of Haddon Chambers' play as it appears in critical reviews of the time and as it probably appeared on the playbill. The original typescript is entitled: John o' Dreams. (British Library, LCP #53560). Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>44</sup> Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1894, p. 304.

<sup>45</sup> Augustin Filon, The English Stage, translated from the French by Frederic Whyte (London: J. Milnc, 1897), p. 302.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 303-304.

<sup>47</sup> H.V. Esmond, Grierson's Way (Privately printed, 1899). In English and American Drama of the 19th Century 1801-1900 (NYPL Readex Microprint), p. 22. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>48</sup> Max Beerbohm, in his review of the play (Around Theatres, pp. 19-23), gives this optimistic interpretation of the ending. [London: Rupert Hart-Davis, Ltd., 1953.]

Chapter V: 'New Lamps for Old'

<sup>1</sup> A collection of the year's dramatic criticism written by William Archer (London: Walter Scott, Ltd., 1895).

<sup>2</sup> G.B. Shaw, Shaw on Theatre, edited by E.J. West (New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Augustin Filon, The English Stage (1897), p. 231.

<sup>4</sup> Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1894, p. 230.

<sup>5</sup> Sydney Grundy, The New Woman (London: The Chiswick Press, 1894), p. 17. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>6</sup> George Egerton, Keynotes (London: Elkin Mathews and John Lane, 1894).

<sup>7</sup> George Egerton, Di \_\_\_\_\_s (London: John Lane, 1894).

<sup>8</sup> Terence de Vere White, ed. A Leaf from the Yellow Book: The Correspondence of George Egerton (London: The Richards Press, 1958), p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Sarah Grand, The Heavenly Twins (London: William Heinemann, 1893; repr. 1894), p. 453.

<sup>10</sup> Shaw compared Leighton's play with Grand's novel in a review of Thyrza Fleming, 4 January 1895. (Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. I, pp. 20-21).

<sup>11</sup> Grant Allen, The Woman Who Did (London: John Lane, 1895), p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, "The Woman Who Did," Contemporary Review 67 (May 1895), [625]-631.

<sup>13</sup> H.A. Jones, Judah in Representative Plays of Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. I (London: Macmillan Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 206.

<sup>14</sup> H.A. Jones, The Case of Rebellious Susan in Representative Plays of Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. II (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1926), pp. 293, 294. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>15</sup> In 1895, the Women's Protective League backed a strike at a weaving mill in Glasgow. In that incident, women supporters rioted and boycotted in public demonstration; similar to those urged on by Elaine (Rebellious Susan, pp. 345-346). However, in Jones' play, social

activism is treated comically: "The Clapham postmaster, put to flight, takes refuge in a coal cellar" and Elaine is accused of having used "a great deal of brute force" (pp. 347, 348).

<sup>16</sup> Clement Scott, The Drama of Yesterday and Today, Vol. II (London: Macmillan and Co. Ltd., 1899), pp. 373-74.

<sup>17</sup> To quote from Anthony Jenkins' The Making of Victorian Drama: "the New Woman...personifies the fear of those [like Jones] who saw the Woman's Rights movement and the reforms which had been won since the seventies as blows to the foundation of society" (p. 145).

<sup>18</sup> A. W. Pinero, The Times (London: Ballantyne, Hanson & Co., 1891) p. 33, 34. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>19</sup> A. W. Pinero, The Amazons (Boston: Walter H. Baker & Co., 1895), p. 67. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>20</sup> A.W. Pinero, The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith (London: William Heinemann, 1895), p. 33. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>21</sup> Both Archer and Shaw objected to the scene in which Agnes throws the Bible into the fire and plucks it out again. Archer blamed the episode on Pinero's "preconceived 'view' of feminine character" (Theatrical 'World of 1895, p. 92). Shaw said he had never witnessed "a less sensible and less courageous stage effect" (Saturday Review, 16 March 1895).

<sup>22</sup> Quoted in Peters, Mrs. Pat, p. 105.

<sup>23</sup> G.B. Shaw, Shaw's Dramatic Criticism (1895-98): A Selection by John F. Matthews (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1959), p. 67. Shaw's facetious suggestion was that Pinero's play should "possibly" finish, though on this he did not insist, "with Agnes' return to the political platform as the Radical Duchess of St. Olpherts."

<sup>24</sup> Shaw, Shaw's Dramatic Criticism, pp. 25.

<sup>25</sup> Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, pp. 84, 86.

<sup>26</sup> J.T. Grein, "Mrs Warren's Profession" in Victorian Dramatic Criticism, comp. George Rowell (London: Methuen [1971]), pp. 311-13.

<sup>27</sup> Max Beerbohm, More Theatres 1898-1903 (London: Rupert Hart-Davis Ltd., 1969), pp. 24, 25.

<sup>28</sup> Two collections of Shaw's plays appeared as: Plays Unpleasant and Plays Pleasant (1898).

<sup>29</sup> Jerome K. Jerome, New Lamps for Old (British Library, LCP #53444), p. 83. Handwritten MS. Page numbers refer to this manuscript.

<sup>30</sup> This two-act musical (British Library, LCP #53615), subtitled The Scorcher (slang expression meaning "a fine specimen of its kind"), was written by Charles Osborne and E. M. Stuart. It was produced at the Brixton Theatre. Page numbers refer to this manuscript.

<sup>31</sup> The name is significant. Atalanta was a mythological heroine whose courage and capabilities as a hunter and runner were equal to any man's.

<sup>32</sup> W. S. Gilbert and Arthur Sullivan, Utopia Limited, or The Flowers of Progress (London: Chappell & Co., 1893), pp. 21, 22, 132. Page numbers refer to this edition. Gilbert, despite his lighthearted treatment of the emancipated English girl, did not care for the "New Woman." He made fun of suffragettes who chained themselves to railings in Downing Street and shouted "Votes for Women!" by remarking: "I shall follow suit. I shall chain myself to the railings outside Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital and yell 'Beds for Men.'" (Quoted in Hesketh Pearson's Gilbert & Sullivan: A Biography (1935), p. 285)

<sup>33</sup> R. C. Carton, Sunlight and Shadow (London: Samuel French Ltd., 1900), p. 32. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>34</sup> Charles Haddon Chambers, The Idler (London: Samuel French Ltd., 1902).

<sup>35</sup> See Michael Booth, Preface to The Tyranny of Tears in English Plays of the 19th Century III: Comedies (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1973), pp. [397]-399. Page numbers refer to this edition of the play.

<sup>36</sup> John Todhunter, Preface to The Black Cat (London: Henry & Co., 1895), p. vii. Page numbers refer to this edition of the play.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. vi.

<sup>38</sup> J. Wilton Jones and Gertrude Warden, Woman's Proper Place (British Library, LCP #53612), p. 2. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>39</sup> Archer, Theatrical World of 1895, p. 189.

<sup>40</sup> Archer, Theatrical World for 1893, p. 118.

<sup>41</sup> J. T. Grein, Preface to Alan's Wife in The Independent Theatre Series of Plays # 2, edited by J. T. Grein (London: Henry & Co., 1893), p. viii.

<sup>42</sup> [Mrs. Hugh Eell and Elizabeth Robins], Alan's Wife (London: Henry & Co., 1893), p. 6. Published anonymously. NYPL Readex Microprint. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>43</sup> Robins, Ibsen and the Actress, p. 30.

<sup>44</sup> William Ferrero, "Suicide Among Women," New Review, Vol. XI, No. 37 (December 1894), p. 643.

<sup>45</sup> Hypatia (d. 415), a pagan and a representative of Alexandrian Neoplatonism, was the daughter of Theon. Noted for her mathematical and astronomical commentaries, she occupied the chair of Platonic philosophy at Alexandria where she lectured on Plato, Aristotle, and other philosophers. She was cruelly murdered by a Christian mob during a riot.

<sup>46</sup> Mabel Collins, A Modern Hypatia (British Library, LCP #53542), p. 16. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>47</sup> A comment made by a lady of Robins' acquaintance, "married and not noticeably unhappy" (Ibsen and the Actress, p. 18).

<sup>48</sup> Robins, Both Sides of the Curtain, p. 171.

#### Chapter VI: "A Modern Eve"

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter I, page 29 and Note #62.

<sup>2</sup> Effie Johnson, "Marriage or Free Love," Westminster Review, Vol. 152, No. 1 (July 1899): [91]-98.

<sup>3</sup> G. B. Shaw, The Quintessence of Ibsenism, 3rd Edn. (New York: Hill and Wang, Inc., 1957), p. 55, 56.

<sup>4</sup> Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1895, pp. 386-87.

<sup>5</sup> H. A. Jones, The Masqueraders in Representative Plays by Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. II (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 201. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>6</sup> William Archer, in his review, "The Masqueraders," stated: "In my own unregenerate heart I hope, and even believe, that Dulcie and David ultimately foregather somewhere on this side of Andromeda. David, of course, must go to West Africa; a hero of romance cannot desert his post, but if he will only take care and quinine he may very likely come back safe and sound, to find that Sir Brice [Skene] has drunk himself to death. And, failing that desirable consummation, Dulcie may possibly, in the meantime, have carried her reflections on marriage to their logical conclusion" (Theatrical 'World' of 1894, p. 135).

<sup>7</sup> G. B. Shaw, Man and Superman (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd., 1946; repr. 1980), p. 156.

<sup>8</sup> For a plot description and comprehensive analysis of The Liars, see The Making of Victorian Drama (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 155-58.

<sup>9</sup> H. A. Jones, The Liars in Representative Plays by Henry Arthur Jones, Vol. III (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 100. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>10</sup> H. A. Jones, The Case of Rebellious Susar in Representative Plays, Vol. II (London: Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1926), p. 276. Page numbers refer to this edition. For Susan's rebellion and its aftermath, see The Making of Victorian Drama, pp. 150-55.

<sup>11</sup> G. B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. III, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> A. W. Pinero, The Benefit of the Doubt (London: William Heinemann, 1895). Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>13</sup> For example, in The Matchmaker (See Note #18), Bingley Bligh, an M.P. twice divorced, is a comic character who asks, "How can I rise as [a] Representative -- to take up the cudgels in defence of that Bulwark of the British Constitution -- the Domestic Hearth -- when my own has been -- not once, but twice -- publicly swept up in the Divorce Court?" (Act I, p. 17).

<sup>14</sup> For the circumstances surrounding the case of Allingham versus Allingham and its effect on Theo's family, see The Making of Victorian Drama, pp. 184-88.

<sup>15</sup> R. C. Carton (pseud. for Richard Claude Critchett), Wheels Within Wheels. Typescript. (NYPL Microprint, 1967), Act II, p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> A popular melodrama by Benjamin Landeck and Arthur Shirley (British Library, LCP #53575). Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>17</sup> The play's title derives from a term commonly applied to the British private soldier.

<sup>18</sup> Cio[thilde] Graves and Gertrude Kingston, The Matchmaker (British Library, LCP #53601), Act III, p. 16. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>19</sup> A. W. Gattie, The Transgressor (British Library, LCP #53542), p. 12. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>20</sup> Sydney Grundy, Slaves of the Ring (London: The Chiswick Press, 1894), p. 15. [British Library, LCP #53564]. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>21</sup> A common ploy in 19th-century social drama. In Caste (1867) and War (1871) by T.W. Robertson, a wife must be carefully prepared

against the overwhelming shock of her "dead" husband's sudden return.

22 G.B. Shaw, Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. 1, p. 4.

23 Henry Vernon Esmond, The Divided Way (British Library, LCP #53581) p. 11. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

24 In his review of The Divided Way, Shaw suggested that this solution had worked in real life, citing the example of Wagner, Hans von Bulow, and Liszt's daughter, Cosima von Bulow. (Our Theatres in the Nineties, Vol. 1, p. 258)

25 Robins, Ibsen and the Actress, p. 30.

26 William Butler Yeats. Quoted in Margot Peters, Bernard Shaw and the Actresses (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1980), p. 125. Actress/manager Florence Farr had chosen Todhunter's play to open the season at the Avenue Theatre.

27 John Todhunter, Preface to The Black Cat, p. vii.

28 Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1894, pp. 92-94.

29 John Todhunter, A Comedy of Sighs (British Library, LCP #53545), Act I, p. 26. Handwritten MS. Page numbers refer to this manuscript.

30 "George Fleming" [Julia Constance Fletcher], Note to The Canary (New York: Z. & L. Rosenfeld [1900]). NYPL Microprint. Page numbers refer to this edition.

31 The foot-tapping and nail-biting, as well as the reference to piano-playing, could be an oblique shot at Paula Tanqueray as originally portrayed by Mrs. Pat Campbell who also starred as Sybil Temple-Martin in this play.

32 Max Beerbohm, More Theatres, p. 212. Beerbohm's favourable comparison of this author with other women playwrights probably alludes to Elizabeth Robins (Alan's Wife) and others, like Mabel Collins (A Modern Hypatia) and Dorothy Leighton Thyrza Fleming), whose attempts at stage realism were grim, strong, and terrible.

33 But the ending is enigmatic and subject to interpretation. According to the stage direction, the married couple embraces, but Jim's back is to the viewer while Sybil stares over his shoulder into the audience.

34 The details of Harris' collaboration with Wilde and the genesis of this version of the play, including a plot analysis, are to be found in The Making of Victorian Drama, pp. 224-28. My synopsis uses much of this material.

<sup>35</sup> J.T. Grein, quoted from The Sunday Special (28 October 1900), in H. Montgomery Hyde's "Introduction" to Mr and Mrs Daventry (London: Richards Press, 1956), p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> Mr and Mrs Daventry's extended run of 6 months was interrupted by Queen Victoria's death which closed theatres for two weeks.

<sup>37</sup> J. T. Grein, quoted in "Introduction" to Mr and Mrs Daventry, p. 27. "Magda" is the leading character in Hermann Sudermann's Heimat.

<sup>38</sup> Frank Harris, Letter to G.B. Shaw, 27 November 1900. Quoted in Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, Vol. II, p. 196.

<sup>39</sup> Frank Harris, Mr and Mrs Daventry (London: Richards Press, 1956), p. 60. Page numbers refer to this edition.

<sup>40</sup> Frank Harris, Letter to G.B. Shaw, 27 November 1900. Quoted in Bernard Shaw, Collected Letters 1898-1910, Vol. II, p. 196.

<sup>41</sup> Archer, The Theatrical 'World' of 1894, p. 199.

<sup>42</sup> Malcolm C. Salaman, A Modern Eve (British Library, LCP #53551) Act I, p. 3. Page numbers refer to this typescript.

<sup>43</sup> Playwright Salaman uses the character of Wargrave to express his own views. This speech is almost identical to Salaman's "Preamble" in his book, Woman through a Man's Eyeglass (London: William Heinemann, 1892), pp. [1]-2):

When I contemplate woman in the abstract, with all her divine gentleness and sympathy, and her essential spirituality, I feel that I must kneel and worship her from afar; but when I regard her in the concrete...then I feel that she is near to me, that we can meet on a common plane of humanity, and that the privilege of loving her is not beyond my reach.

<sup>44</sup> G. B. Shaw, Short Stories, Scraps and Shavings, p. 136.

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Warden, Gertrude and J. Wilton Jones. Woman's Proper Place (1896).  
LCP #53612.

## APPENDIX I

## PRODUCTIONS OF IBSEN PLAYS ON THE LONDON STAGE DURING THE 1890S

Date	Title	No. of perf.	Leading Actresses
27 Jan. 1891	A Doll's House	1	Marie Fraser
23 Feb. 1891	Rosmersholm	2	Florence Farr
13 Mar. 1891	Ghosts	1	Mrs. Theodore Wright
20 Apr. 1891	Hedda Gabler	1	Elizabeth Robins
11 May 1891	The Lady from the Sea	5	Rose Mellor
2 June 1891	A Doll's House	1	Rose Norreys
19 Apr. 1892	A Doll's House	30	Janet Achurch
20 Feb. 1893	The Master Builder	31	Elizabeth Robins
11 Mar. 1893	A Doll's House	14	Janet Achurch
29 May 1893	Hedda Gabler	4	Elizabeth Robins
31 May 1893	Rosmersholm	4	Elizabeth Robins
2 June 1893	The Master Builder	4	Elizabeth Robins
9 June 1893	A Doll's House	3	Eleanora Duse
14 June 1893	An Enemy of the People	7	Mrs. Theodore Wright
4 May 1894	The Wild Duck	3	Winifred Fraser
20 July 1894	An Enemy of the People	1	Mrs. Theodore Wright
23 Nov. 1896	Little Eyolf	25	Janet A./Mrs. Pat E. Robins/F. Farr
3 May 1897	John Gabriel Borkman	5	Elizabeth Robins
10 May 1897	A Doll's House	5	Mary Stuart
17 May 1897	The Wild Duck	5	Winifred Fraser

[This list does not include 2 French productions (Rosmersholm and The Master Builder) staged in 1895]

APPENDIX II

PLAY LIST : IMAGES OF THE "NEW WOMAN" ON THE LONDON STAGE DURING THE 1890S

Title	Playwright	First production	Theatre	No. of perf. in decade	Female Characters (and Actresses)
Alan's Wife	Mrs. Hugh Bell & Elizabeth Robins	28 Apr. 1893	Terry's (I.T.S.)	2 matinees	Jean Greyke (Elizabeth Robins)
The Amazons	A. W. Pinero	7 Mar. 1893	Court	111	Will (Ellaline Terriss) Thom (Pattie Browne) Noel (Lily Hanbury)
Arms and the Man	G. B. Shaw	21 Apr. 1894	Avenue	75	Raina (Alma Murray) Louka (Florence Farr)
The Benefit of the Doubt	A. W. Pinero	16 Oct. 1895	Comedy	74	Theo Fraser (Winifred Emery)
The Black Cat	John Todhunter	8 Dec. 1893	Opéra-Comique (I.T.S.)	1	Constance Denham (Hall Caine) Blanche Tremaine (Mary H. Keegan)
The Bicycle Girl	Charles Osborne & E.M. Stuart	[Nov./Dec.] 1896	Brixton	?	Atalanta Granville ( ? )
The Canary	"George Fleming" [Julia Constance Fletcher]	15 Nov. 1899	Prince of Wales's	50	Sybil Temple-Martin (Mrs. Pat Campbell)

The Case of Rebellious Susan	H. A. Jones	3 Oct. 1894	Criterion	164	Elaine Shrimpton (Nina Boucicault) Susan Harrabin (Mary Moore)
A Comedy of Sighs	John Todhunter	29 Mar. 1894	Avenue	16	Lady Brandon (Florence Farr)
The Dancing Girl	H. A. Jones	15 Jan. 1891 [19 Jan. 1899]	Haymarket [Her Majesty's]	266 1 matinee	Drusilla Ives (Julia Neilson)
The Divided Way	H. V. Esmond	23 Nov. 1895	St. James's	20	Lois Humeden (Evelyn Millard)
Grierson's Way	H. V. Esmond	7 Feb. 1899	Haymarket (New Cent. Th. Soc.)	4 matinees	Pamela Grierson (Lena Ashwell)
The Idler	C. Haddon Chambers	26 Feb. 1891 [4 July 1895] [30 Nov. 1897]	St. James's " "	173 6 1 matinee	Kate Merryweather (Maude Millett) (Irene Vanbrugh) (Mrs. Archie Keen)
John-a-Dreams	C. Haddon Chambers	8 Nov. 1894	Haymarket	71	Kate Cloud (Mrs. Pat Campbell)
Judah	H. A. Jones	21 May 1890 [30 Jan. 1892]	Shaftesbury Avenue	122 22	Sophie Jopp (Gertrude Warden)
Lady Windermere's Fan	Oscar Wilde	20 Feb. 1892	St. James's	197	Mrs. Erlynne (Marion Terry) Lady Windermere (Lily Hanbury)

The Liars	H. A. Jones	6 Oct. 1897	Criterion	328	Lady Jessica Nepean (Mary Moore)
The Masqueraders	H. A. Jones	28 Apr. 1894	St. James's	139	Dulcie Larondie (Mrs. Pat Campbell/ Evelyn Millard)
A Matchmaker	Clo Graves & Gertrude Kingston	9 May 1896	Shaftesbury	12	Margaretta Ridout (Lena Ashwell)
Michael and His Lost Angel	H. A. Jones	15 Jan. 1896	Lyceum	10	Audrie Lesden (Marion Terry)
A Modern Eve	Malcolm C. Salaman	2 July 1894	Haymarket	1 matinee	Vivien Hereford (Mrs. H.B. Tree)
A Modern Hypatia	Mabel Collins	17 June 1895	Terry's	1 matinee	Marcia Royal (Mrs. Theodore Wright)
Mr and Mrs Daventry	Frank Harris [Wilde]	25 Oct. 1900	Royalty	116*	Hilda Daventry (Mrs. Pat Campbell)
Mrs Daintree's Daughter (c. 1894)	Janet Achurch	[Manchester] 1903		0	Leila Daintree
Mrs Dane's Defence	H. A. Jones	9 Oct. 1900	Wyndham's	207*	Lucy Dane (Lena Ashwell)
Mrs Lessingham	"George Fleming" [Julia Constance Fletcher]	7 Apr. 1894	Garrick	33	Mrs. Lessingham (Elizabeth Robins) Anne Beaton (Kate Rorke)
* Produced after turn of the century					

Mrs Warren's Profession	G.B. Shaw	5 Jan. 1902*	New Lyric Club (Stage Society)	0	Mrs. Warren (Fanny Brough) Vivie Warren (Madge McIntosh)
New Lamps for Old	Jerome K. Jerome	8 Feb. 1890	Terry's	160	Octavia (Gertrude Kingston)
The New Magdalen (1873)	Wilkie Collins	28 Oct. 1895 [Revival]	Metropole (Camberwell)	?	Mercy Merrick (Janet Achurch)
The New Woman	Sydney Grundy	1 Sept. 1894	Comedy	173	Agnes Sylvester (Alma Murray)
The Notorious Mrs Ebbsmith	A. W. Pinero	13 Mar. 1895	Garrick	86	Agnes Ebbsmith (Mrs. Pat Campbell)
The Second Mrs Tanqueray	A. W. Pinero	27 May 1893 (Revival 1895)	St. James's	223 (13)	Paula Tanqueray (Mrs. Pat Campbell)
Settled Out of Court	Estelle Burney	3 June 1897	Globe	1 matinee	Moyra Delacourt (Janette Steer)
Shall We Forgive Her?	Frank Harvey	20 June 1894 26 Jan. 1895	Adelphi Olympic	52 24	Grace West (Julia Neilson) (Mrs. Frank Harvey)
Slaves of the Ring	Sydney Grundy	29 Dec. 1894	Garrick	16	Ruth Egerton (Eleanor Calhoun)

\* Produced after turn of the century

Sunlight and Shadow	R. C. Carton	1 Nov. 1890	Avenue	111	Maud Latimer (Maude Millett)
Thyrza Fleming	Dorothy Leighton	4 Jan. 1895	Terry's (I.T.S.)	7	Thyrza Fleming (Esther Palliser) Theophila Falkland (Agnes Hill)
The Times	A. W. Pinero	24 Oct. 1891	Terry's	157	Kate Cazelet (Helena Dacre) Lucy Tuck (Hetty Dene)
Tommy Atkins	Benjamin Landeck & Arthur Shirley	16 Sept. 1895 23 Dec. 1895 31 July 1897	Pavilion Duke of York's Princess's	56 9 56	Ruth Raymond (Gertrude Kingston) Margaret Maitland (Geraldine Olliffe)
The Transgressor	A. W. Gattie	27 Jan. 1894	Court	66	Sylvia Woodville (Olga Nethersole)
The Tyranny of Tears	C. Haddon Chambers	6 Apr. 1899	Criterion	115	Hyacinth Woodward (Maude Millett)
Utopia Limited or, The Flowers of Progress	W. S. Gilbert & Arthur Sullivan	7 Oct. 1893	Savoy	245	Princess Zara (Nancy McIntosh) Kalyba (Florence Perry) Nekaya (Emmie Owen)

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A Woman of No Importance	Oscar Wilde	19 Apr.1893	Haymarket	113	Mrs. Arbuthnot (Mrs. Bernard Beere) Hester Worsley (Julia Neilson)
Woman's Proper Place	J. Wilton Jones & Gertrude Warden	29 June 1896 21 Oct. 1896	St. James's Hall* Terry's	1 53	Mrs. Montagu Robinson (Gertrude Warden) (Beatrice Ferrar)

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\* Note on manuscript: "Royal Birmingham Theatre"

I.T.S. = Independent Theatre Society

PLATE 1



LADIES FIRST—THE SENIOR WRANGLERESS.



PLATE 2

**REMOVAL OF ANCIENT LANDMARKS.**

*Lady Guendoline.* "PAPA SAYS I'M TO BE A GREAT ARTIST, AND EXHIBIT AT THE ROYAL ACADEMY!"

*Lady Yseulle.* "AND PAPA SAYS I'M TO BE A GREAT PIANIST, AND PLAY AT THE MONDAY POPS!"

*Lady Edelgitha.* "AND I'M GOING TO BE A FAMOUS ACTRESS, AND ACT *OPHELIA*, AND CUT OUT MISS ELIEN TERRY! PAPA SAYS I MAY—THAT IS, IF I CAN, YOU KNOW!"

*The New Governess.* "GOODNESS GRACIOUS, YOUNG LADIES! IS IT POSSIBLE HIS GRACE CAN ALLOW YOU EVEN TO THINK OF SUCH THINGS! WHY, MY PAPA WAS ONLY A POOR HALF-PAY OFFICER, BUT THE BARE THOUGHT OF MY EVER PLAYING IN PUBLIC, OR PAINTING FOR HIRE, WOULD HAVE SIMPLY HORRIFIED HIM!—AND AS FOR ACTING *OPHELIA*—OR ANYTHING ELSE—GRACIOUS GOODNESS, YOU TAKE MY BREATH AWAY!"

PLATE 3



DONNA QUIXOTE

PUNCH April 28, 1894 (194)