A KIND OF ALASKA: THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN
IN THE PLAYS OF
EUGENE O'NEILL, HAROLD PINTER, AND SAM SHEPARD

DISSERTATION

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By

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To Madeline, Roy, Irene, Louis, Bob, Steve, and Tym
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PUBLICATIONS

"Educating Reader: Chaucer's Use of Proverbs in Troilus and

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REVIEWS

A Raisin in the Sun and The Sign in Sydney Brustein's Window, an
anniversary edition of these classic Lorraine Hansberry plays

Playbook, a collection of plays by Maxine Klein, Lydia Sargent, and

Adam's Task: Calling Animals By Name, a philosophical look at
animal training, in The Columbus Dispatch October 12, 1986.

The Lover of Horses, a collection of short stories by Tess
Gallagher, in The Columbus Dispatch September 14, 1986.

Naked To Naked Goes, a collection of short stories by Robert
Flanagan, for The Morning Edition, WOSU-RADIO 820 AM, July
1986.
Stones of the Abbey by Ferdinand Pouillon and translated by Edward Gillott, a novel about the trials of a Cistercian architect, in The Ohio Journal 10 [1] (Spring 1986), 30.

PRESENTATIONS


"High Anxiety: Women in Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh," The Ohio State University Graduate Student Conference, October 1987.


"A Jungian Interpretation of Lord Randal, or 'What Is Worse Than a Woman Was?"' The American Folklore Society Conference, Nashville, Tennessee, October 1983.

"The Sacred Images of Edvard Munch," The Ohio Area Student Symposium, Cincinnati, April 1981.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................ iii
VITA .................................................... iv
INTRODUCTION ........................................... 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I.  AN ENDLESS HALL OF MOTHERS: WOMEN IN EUGENE O’NEILL’S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE ICEMAN COMETH, LONG DAY’S JOURNEY INTO NIGHT, AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A MOON FOR THE MISBEGOTTEN</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction  ...........................................................................</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Iceman Cometh  ...................................................................</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Day’s Journey Into Night ..................................................</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Moon for the Misbegotten .....................................................</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. THINGS THAT TICK IN THE NIGHT: WOMEN IN HAROLD PINTER’S</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THE HOMECOMING, NO MAN’S LAND, AND A KIND OF ALASKA</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction  ...........................................................................</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Homecoming  .......................................................................</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Man’s Land  .........................................................................</td>
<td>104</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Kind of Alaska  ......................................................................</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. I GO OUT WALKIN’ AFTER MIDNIGHT SEARCHIN’ FOR ME: WOMEN IN</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAM SHEPARD’S BURIED CHILD, TRUE WEST, AND</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A LIE OF THE MIND  ..................................................................</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction  ...........................................................................</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buried Child  ..........................................................................</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>True West  ...............................................................................</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Lie of the Mind  .....................................................................</td>
<td>169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONCLUSION</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

The road is now covered in snow and, inside the coach, the sombre lady wrapped in furs feels bored. Suddenly she calls out the name of one of the girls in her train. The girl is brought to her: the Countess bites her frantically and sticks needles in her flesh. A while later the procession abandons the wounded girl in the snow. The girl tries to run away. She is pursued, captured and pulled back into the coach. A little further along the road they halt: the Countess has ordered cold water. Now the girl is naked, standing in the snow. Night has fallen. A circle of torches surrounds her, held out by impassive footmen. They pour water over her body and the water turns to ice. (The Countess observes this from the coach.) The girl attempts one last slight gesture, trying to move closer to the torches—the only source of warmth. More water is poured over her, and there she remains, for ever standing, upright, dead.

--Alejandra Pizarnik

Everything is mirror! --Octavio Paz

Turning to the French is a form of suicide for the American who loves literature—or, as the joke might go, it is at least a cry for help.

--Anne Dillard

The fascination with the frozen, female form persists throughout many literary genres and historical periods. The texts of the Americans Henry James, Edgar Allen Poe, William Faulkner, and Edith Wharton, for example, are littered with female corpses. Leslie Fiedler explains that in the case of American men, at least, any relationship with the opposite sex signals disaster: "it is maturity above all things the American writer fears, and marriage
seems to him its essential sign" (338). Responsibilities, limitations on personal freedom, and even death may become synonymous with femininity. If females appear at all, their passing is momentary--long enough to establish the hero's ability to love, but not long enough to hinder seriously the hero's quest. A dead woman poses no threat--the hero avoids the danger of domestication completely. In European literature, when a woman appears, she is often depicted as a version of the Madonna, a statue to whom one prays for favors or forgiveness: Lear carries on the dead Cordelia, and Othello kills but then enshrines his Desdemona. Even the Grimm brothers' version of the fairy tale "Brier Rose [Sleeping Beauty]," portrays a woman in suspended animation. The dead woman ghoulishly haunts many Western masterpieces, the precursors to the spectral portrayal of women in the works of Eugene O'Neill, Harold Pinter, and Sam Shepard.

Though the majority of plays by these three playwrights are not riddled with dead women, all three authors seem to have difficulty creating fully developed female characters. The women in their plays are, in some way--either emotionally, physically, or psychologically--absent. They may make an appearance, play the part, but their efforts seem half-hearted: "something" is missing. In Long Day's Journey Into Night (1956), for example, despite the male Tyrones' desperate attempts and desires, they cannot transform Mary Tyrone into a "happy housewife." She may take on the role, but her heart is just not in the performance, ostensibly due to her morphine addiction. Through the course of the play, she
disintegrates, withdrawing from the audience and her family into her
world of dreams. In effect, she becomes a ghost.

In other instances, female characters who do not appear on
stage or in the text manage to "haunt" the action of the plays to
the same degree that the physically present characters influence the
action of their plays. Like the absent fathers in Henrick Ibsen's
Hedda Gabler (1890) and Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie
(1944), these women may be gone, but they are far from forgotten.
Some even exist with a vengeance. Evelyn Hickman in O’Neill's The
Iceman Cometh (1936), for instance, plagues her husband Hickey
before and after her death, so much so that her presence suffocates
Hickey. In a more comic way, the mother in Sam Shepard's True West
(1981), who has been absent throughout most of the play because she
has been vacationing in Alaska, appears "more real" as a memory than
when she actually appears on stage.

For many readers, authorial inadequacies cause weak female
characterization. Women characters become embarrassing flaws in the
works of dramatic geniuses. While many chastise the authors for
this oversight, others wince and continue to read the plays under
cover, in the margins of feminist discourse. Most assume that
though these writers may be adept at establishing "universal"
conflicts, they have no skills when it comes to creating women. In
particular, they depict women only as mothers or whores. No "real"
women ever appear, only "virtue" or "sin" personified.¹
Though the concept of a "real" woman in either fiction or the "real" world is as problematic a question as the nature of existence, these critics have a point—the women in these plays, as well as many others in the modern dramatic canon, frequently appear to fulfill the two traditional and extreme categories of female representation. Recent theoretical discussions concerning the nature of language and its relationship to gender indicate that the representation of women is always problematic, regardless of the author's identity or sex. Language, as an inherently masculine means of expression, is the culprit for the inadequate female representation. Theorists such as Jacques Derrida and Jacques Lacan argue that signification does not occur through mankind's attempts to create signs which correspond to a knowable reality or a transcendental signified. That is, language is not merely a tool in the hands of men with which to communicate. Instead, the play of those symbols, those signifiers, generates signification and even subjectivity, the human subject—existence. Language also affects and to some degree creates its users.

Further, as a result of the phallocentric nature of language, signification requires a power struggle, namely the exclusion of one term to create the existence of the other, more dominant term. When it comes to sexual difference and its representation, then, masculinity is defined by its exclusion of femininity. Females are objectified, alienated to the realm of the "other," because they are "not men." Consequently, female representation or her participation in the polarized discourse of patriarchy is
troublesome at best:

Woman's social inferiority is reinforced and complicated by the fact that woman does not have access to language, except through recourse to "masculine" systems of representation which disappropriate her from her relation to herself and to other women. (Irigaray Not One, 85)

The need for an origin, a center at which life began is also at the heart of the myth of autonomy, at the center of phallocentrism. Jacques Derrida's critique of many philosophers is based upon this phalacy (Of Grammatology). In "Structure, Sign, and Play," Derrida argues that a center or an origin of structures and culture itself has been the organizing principle of Western philosophy. In addition, however, the principle limited "what we might call the play of the structure" (278). The center, however, "is not the center. The concept of centered structure--although it represents coherence itself, the condition of the episteme as philosophy or science--is contradictorily coherent. And as always, coherence in contradiction expresses the force of desire" (279). There is never really an origin, only the desire.

In her "conversation" with Freud, Luce Irigaray demonstrates the problem with female representation in terms of the female's place of origin, a castrated man, a mother:

In fact this desire for re-presentation, for representing oneself, and for representing oneself in desire is in some ways taken away from woman at the outset as a result of of the radical devalorization of her "beginning"
that she is inculcated with, subjected to—and to which she subjects herself; is she not born of a castrated mother who could only give birth to a castrated child, even though she prefers (to herself) those who bear the penis? This shameful beginning must therefore be forgotten, "repressed"... (83-84)

The problematic relationship between the feminine and representation, then, stems from the psycho-sexual relationship to language. Simone de Beauvoir makes the similar point in terms of social and political inconsistencies: "representation of the world, like the world itself, is the work of men; they describe it from their own point of view, which they confuse with absolute truth" (161).

According to these theorists, female representation is like "sleeping beauty": she slumbers mutely, but when she stirs, disturbing the fairy world, she is quickly married off, reappropriated by the handsome, phallocentric prince. If we grant these assumptions, then, any text, no matter how feminist or "female," would be prone to masculine modes of expression. Furthermore, since women are "not-men" or "other," their attempts to express themselves or establish female discourse would always be limited; there would always be "something" missing, "something" left "unsaid":

There is no such thing as The woman, where the definite article stands for the universal. There is no such thing as The woman since of her essence—having already risked
the term... of her essence, she is not all... which forbids our speaking of The woman. (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 144)

Given these theoretical constraints, the absent/present characteristic of the female characters in O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard are yet another manifestation of the female position in patriarchy--absent, silent, "a bit off." Language itself--not the playwrights--causes the fragmentation and splintering of these characters as it does for all females. By virtue of being in a male world, women are separated from themselves, shattered: "there is only woman as excluded by the nature of things which is the nature of words" (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 144). If a woman's place is silence and alterity, any discussions concerning the representation of such a being appear doomed at the outset.

Yet female characters do exist, and the female voice is heard or expressed within the constraints of patriarchal discourse. Renegade Lacanian, Luce Irigaray, for example, presents a feminist critique of Lacan, Freud, and patriarchy on their own terms. She interrogates patriarchy on the basis of patriarchy, a tactic which disturbs, disrupts, and challenges phallocentricism. She argues that because women are commodities in a male market place, any resistance creates anxiety on the sexual stock exchange--when the object, previously assumed mute, speaks, there is trouble and, perhaps, change:

Woman has functioned most often by far as what is at stake in a transaction, usually rivalrous between two men,
her passage from father to husband included. She has functioned as merchandise. . . . Of course, commodities should never speak, and certainly should not go to market alone. For such actions turn out to be totally subversive to the economy of exchange among subjects. (Not One 157-8)

Female difference and female expression somehow occurs in the gaps of phallocentric discourse; there is no "other" language, language for the "other": "The woman cannot transform codes; she can only transgress them, make trouble, provoke, pervert, turn the representation into a trap" (de Lauretis 35). To create anxiety, to create a "stir," is the quest, the end of female discourse.

In the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Harold Pinter, and Sam Shepard, the female characters often appear in the gaps of the dramatic discourse. Their odd manner of characterization, their absence/presence, is a means of "making trouble" or "transgressing" the other characters' and the audiences' expectations concerning characterization as well as female behavior. More importantly, however, the plays actually emphasize female difference. By focusing our attention on the objectification of the women, the plays heighten the anxiety female representation generally produces. For instance, many of the works by these authors are set in the home or in some other domestic situation. Since the home is the cite or the "birth place" of female roles, such settings raise many expectations regarding the traditional roles of women, as well as their affects on men. Women are generally thought to thrive in such an atmosphere. When the absent-present females wither under
these conditions, the expectations are not fulfilled, leaving disappointment and desire for the audience and their male counterparts.

In this way, the plays expose rather than endorse the roles that confine the feminine. By examining representative plays from the works of O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard, plays which present the artists' most fully developed skills and female characters, the seemingly inadequate portrayal of the feminine will become an accurate depiction of the female's place in patriarchical discourse--"other," an outcast. The plays call attention to the feminine by frequently presenting men who attempt to subdue feminine difference. They also illustrate the price such oppression exacts from both the male and the female characters.

Harold Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska* (1981), offers an appropriate metaphor for the absent/present method of female characterization. The phrase, of course, is taken from his play, a modern version of "Sleeping Beauty." In this well-known story, a disgruntled witch casts a spell upon a young princess, a curse which eventually puts the princess and her entire kingdom to sleep for one hundred years. Later, a handsome prince appears, wakes the princess with a kiss, indirectly wakes the kingdom, marries the beauty, and all live happily ever after.

In his up-to-date variation, Pinter's princess, Deborah, falls asleep not as a result of a curse from an uninvited female guest, but because she has been afflicted with an illness akin to Parkinson's disease. Inspired by Dr. Oliver Sacks's work with such
somnambulants and l-dopamine, the "cure" for the disease, Pinter chose to dramatize the awakening of one of the many thousands who were afflicted with this illness after the second world war. The discovery of the "appropriate fluid" enables Hornby, the play's doctor, to return Deborah to consciousness with an injection, not a kiss.

Upon her awakening, Hornby assures us and Deborah that this sleep did not damage her in any way; instead, Deborah's mind merely "took up temporary habitation . . . in a kind of Alaska" (34). From Deborah's point-of-view, the rest of the play serves as a kind of psychological and emotional decompression chamber through which she learns and perhaps accepts her loss of life. As a matter of fact, throughout the play, Deborah comes to learn she is a "woman," thereby inscribing her inscription into patriarchy—we witness the birth of a "woman."

Because Deborah's period of sleep—a twenty-nine year sabbatical from consciousness—is such an extreme version of the absent/present female quality, the play focuses our attention on Deborah at all times, both during and after her sleep. As a result of this emphasis, the play at once positions the female in "a kind of Alaska"—there and not there—and illustrates the process by which females take up residence in this icy region. As a result of this emphasis, the play offers an expansive and accurate metaphor for the position of the female in these plays, as well as the position of females in patriarchy as outlined by various psychoanalytic and feminist critics.
By opening the play with Deborah's awakening, Pinter takes up where the Grimm brothers left off. What is important about Pinter's reworking is that we hear what "it was like" to be asleep for so many years. Unlike "Sleeping Beauty," Deborah speaks, and it is, perhaps, her verbal prowess which prohibits her from attaining the "happily-ever-after" conclusion afforded the silent, and therefore "marriageable," fairy-tale princess. Furthermore, since Deborah fell asleep at sixteen and awoke at forty-five, she has slept through her reproductive years, years that still bring a high price in the sexual marketplace. Under these conditions, as a speaking and menopausal object, Deborah is "damaged goods." Her period of rest was not much better:

I'll tell you what it [her comatose state] is. It's a vast series of halls. With enormous interior windows masquerading as walls. The windows are mirrors, you see. And so glass reflects glass. For ever and ever. (Pause) You can't imagine how still it is. So silent I hear my eyes move. (Silence) I'm lying in bed. People bend over me, speak to me. I want to say hullo, to have a chat, to make some inquiries. But you can't do that if you're in a vast hall of glass with a tap dripping. (39)

To some extent, Deborah describes the place of the feminine in the patriarchy or phallocentric thought—confined, other, silent, and even a bit tortured. Luce Irigaray's retelling of patriarchy's admonitions, another bed-time tale that all women hear, is akin to Deborah's description of her "Alaska":
Indifferent one, keep still. When you stir, you disturb their order. You upset everything. You break the circle of their habits, the circularity of their exchanges, their knowledge, their desire. Their world. Indifferent one, you mustn't move, or be moved, unless they call you. If they say "come," then you may go ahead. Barely. Adapting yourself to whatever they have, or don't have, for the presence of their own image. (Not One 207-08)

Deborah, however, moves, even in her coma: she tells Hornby and her sister, Pauline, that she danced in "narrow spaces" (25). Deborah survives in the "gaps" of her sleep, and she will eventually need to learn how to survive in the gaps of patriarchy.

Until she is awakened, Deborah's "kind of Alaska" is this period of sleep. She is physically present but otherwise absent. She is frozen, a quiet body on a bed. She is a "sleeping beauty." As she mentions, however, she has some life beyond this frozen form, a life behind and beyond the ice, in a world, ironically, made of mirrors, glass-ice.

Upon awakening, Deborah appears to gain complete freedom--gone are the mirrors and the faucets; she no longer inhabits "a kind of Alaska." She thinks she has been asleep for only one night, so she discusses mundane matters, her dog and her knowledge of French. Hornby, however, quickly silences her by interposing, "I would like you to listen to me" (7). Admittedly, he is her doctor, so his interruptions may be motivated by purely medical concerns, namely the health of his patient. But we soon learn, that though he may
have begun his research as a detached observer, he is now Deborah’s brother-in-law and her lover: “Your sister Pauline was twelve when you were left for dead. When she was twenty I married her. She is a widow. I have lived with you” (35). Surprisingly, Hornby chooses a “sleeping beauty” as a love object, not a walking, talking woman.

The work of psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan, the focus of whose work is on desire, may offer some explanations for Hornby’s choice, as well as the general tendency among males to impose “traditional” expectations upon their female counterparts. Briefly, according to Lacan all human subjects are constituted by lack: “something” is always missing. Contrary to most Western philosophy, exemplified by Descartes’ cogito, human beings are not “whole” or “complete,” just because they, for example, “think”:

It is not a question of knowing whether I speak of myself in a way that conforms to what I am, but rather of knowing whether I am the same as that of which I speak... It is nonetheless true that the philosophical cogito [Descartes’ formulation: I think, therefore I am] is at the centre of the mirage that renders modern man so sure of himself even in his uncertainties about himself, and even in the mistrust he has learned to practise against the traps of self-love. (Lacan, Écrits 165)

In Plato’s Symposium, Aristophanes anticipates Lacan, for he, too, argues that the subject is divided.4 Lacan, however, does not project the happy ending Aristophanes outlines in which the human subject falls in love with his other half and the “two become one.”
For Lacan, the gap is never filled by a "missing link," a member of the opposite sex. Autonomy, self-reliance, or romantic completion are myths. The human subject always lacks. Only a misunderstanding, a misreading creates the illusion of autonomy or "oneness."

Lacan names the missing component the Other (L'Autre) which is an almost mystical entity promising fulfillment and satisfaction. Union with the Other is, finally, unattainable, but as human subjects who generally misperceive their surroundings, many objects may appear to be the Other. Such an object is the petit objet a, a "small other," an object which appears to promise fulfillment but in the end cannot deliver. Under this system, Lacan casts women into the role of the petit object a, objects of desire who have a limited relationship to language. Not surprisingly, women, as objects, are separated from themselves. They exist to fulfill male desire which is, paradoxically, the wish to attain autonomy. Almost as a "bonus," women do not participate in the myth of autonomy as fully as their male counterparts. They possess an awareness of their "separateness" and "divided nature," an awareness which brings nothing in the patriarchal system, but which may finally redeem or rejuvenate that system. 5

Female pleasure is non-existent, "unless her pleasure comes from being chosen as an object of consumption or of desire by masculine 'subjects'" (Irigaray, Not One 84). The petit objet a, moreover, cannot completely satisfy for long. It is a lure, a "line," a deception. When the masculine subject discovers this
"lie," however, rather than facing his own essential lack or fragmentation, he turns to yet an "other" object. 6

The relationship between Pauline and Hornby appears to reflect this Lacanian scenario. Hornby initially marries Pauline, grows disappointed, and then turns to Deborah, an "other" woman. 7 His new choice is a comatose patient. With a sphinx as a love-object, Hornby not only avoids confronting his own lack or fragmentation, but he also avoids facing the practical responsibilities of his marriage. While Deborah sleeps, then, Hornby enters his own "kind of Alaska," an icy region in which he may entertain any sort of fantasy. Even Deborah's physical posture offers Hornby a perfect looking glass, for like the glass, she is flat, silent, and smooth as sheets.

Casting the female in the role of the mirror is an accurate image for the general objectification of women. As mirrors, women may always be subdued, but they need not always "look the same." Instead, they may fulfill a number of male desires through taking many forms. The glass is ready to reflect no matter what the change in the desire. In this way, women may retain their status as the petit objet a, perhaps longer than "others."

Lacan's formulations concerning the mirror stage, an addition to the Freudian stages of development, may explain the important function women serve as mirrors. The stage itself is akin to one of the Freudian stages of development (oral, anal, oedipal,), and like those stages it should not be used too literally. At this
time, the subject identifies with an image, and this image becomes the "Ideal-I" when the I is "precipitated in a primordial form":

But the important point is that this form situates the agency of the ego, before its social determination, in a fictional direction, which will always remain irreducible for the individual alone, or rather, which will only rejoin the coming-into-being (le devenir) or the subject asymptptomatically, whatever the success of the dialectical syntheses by which he must resolve as I his discordance with his own reality.

The fact that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as Gestalt, that is to say in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted, but in which it appears to him above all in a contrasting size (un relief de stature) that fixes it and in a symmetry that inverts it, in contrast with the turbulent movements that the subject feels are animating him. Thus this Gestalt ... by these two aspects of its appearance, symbolizes the mental permanence of the I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destiny. (Ecrits 2)

The subject perceives the Ideal-I—that which is permanent, "larger-than-life," autonomous—and misperceives himself as that image. This "misunderstanding" is the fantasy of self-reliance. But at the same time, this image is "outside" of himself, not "him," an ideal
towards which the subject unsuccessfully strives. Consequently, there are ambivalent emotions associated with this image: the subject "loves the coherent identity which the mirror provides. However, because the image remains external to it, it also hates that image" (Silverman 158). By placing women in this role as mirror, men may once again experience the comfort of coherency, but they also experience the ambivalence toward the mirror/woman. Rather than rewarding the mirror for her compliance, many experience ambivalence toward the mirror which "holds" the complete image men desperately seek.

With Deborah's awakening, Hornby's mirror is shattered, but rather than turning to yet another woman, Hornby educates Deborah on the rules of the patriarchy and the role of the mirror. When, for example, the sight of Pauline's breasts frightens Deborah, both Pauline and Hornby tell Deborah that she is a grown woman. But because Hornby has previously admonished Pauline to tell lies and truth, the statement concerning Deborah's womanhood does not appear "truthful" until Hornby reechoes Pauline's assessment. Like Oedipus and the sphinx, Hornby has all the answers. He is not particularly villainous, but he does gain power over his personal Thebes where he passes occasional verdicts: "You see, you [Deborah] have been nowhere, absent, indifferent. It is we who have suffered" (34).
Guilt intact, Deborah is now a productive, female member of society. By the end of the play, her refreshing adolescent curiosity has diminished. She no longer simply obeys "the law of the body" (14); instead, she obeys the law of the father. Deborah now obeys the law of the word, a new "kind of Alaska":

You say I have been asleep. You say I am now awake. You say I have not awoken from the dead. You say I was not dreaming then and am not dreaming now. You say I have always been alive and am alive now. You say I am a woman. . . . I think I have the matter in proportion. (Pause)

Thank you. (40)

Deborah's entrance into consciousness is not without its price. She is no longer "sleeping beauty," but she is a woman, and certain rules apply.

Deborah's "kind of Alaska" takes two forms throughout the course of the drama. At first, she is physically present but otherwise absent. Her illness literally "ices" her over, making her body a mirror upon which Hornby may gaze, projecting any image he can possibly concoct in order to insure his comfortable, personal, coherence. By avoiding his wife, Hornby need not face his weaknesses. With Deborah's awakening, he appears to lose his mirror, until, that is, she has been properly trained in the art of womanhood--its mimicry and its mirroring. His expectations concerning female behavior "ice over" Deborah once again. Her difference as a woman, a difference which threatens Hornby and other men, is denied. Though she may dance "in narrow spaces" again, just
as she did during her illness, Deborah's silence indicates that she has entered another "kind of Alaska."

Hornby also inhabits his own wasteland, his own "Alaska." For him, however, it is the fragmented fate of the masculine subject. Unlike the women who are "iced over" by masculine expectations, men impose those expectations to fulfill their own lack. Their "Alaska" is their division. This lack, however, does not make men like Hornby accountable for their behavior, but rather, makes their world look just as tormented as Deborah's hall of mirrors, if not worse. Unlike Deborah, who now knows she is split from herself, Hornby, who is unaware, blindly blunders.

In the plays of O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard, many men impose traditional expectations upon the female characters, usually dividing women into the two opposing categories: mothers and whores. While such oppositions are common in phallocentric discourse—a discourse which divides and polarizes differences—these playwrights expose rather than embrace this process of female stereotyping. Throughout most of their plays, male expectations attempt to "ice over" feminine difference in order to deactivate any anxiety the female may produce. They attempt to create female mirrors upon which they may reflect and see themselves as secure and complete.

Though not every play written by O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard demonstrates the role of the feminine mirror, the selections here indicate a tendency on the part of all three playwrights to depict women as the source of security for their male counterparts. All
selections demonstrate each playwrights' mature artistic abilities, as well as their most fully developed female characters. The works which I will focus on in this study include the following: Eugene O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* (1936), *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956), and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1947); Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming* (1965), *No Man's Land* (1978), and *A Kind of Alaska* (1981); and finally, Sam Shepard's *Buried Child* (1979), *True West* (1981), and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985).

In O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956) and *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (1947), the male characters look to mother figures for sustenance with varying degrees of success. In the end, their search paradoxically results in the destruction of their goal, the shattering of the maternal mirror, and therefore, the means by which they attain a sense of security. In other words, the men and the mother are intricately intertwined: when she deteriorates, so do the men.

With Pinter’s *A Kind of Alaska* (1981) and *The Homecoming* (1965) the women inhabit a "kind of oasis" on the other side of the mirror, a place in which the feminine thrives. The men still look to the women as a source of comfort through the security of the mirror, but rather than merely forcing the women to "ice over" their difference, many of Pinter's males seek to understand and participate in that difference. Without it, the world becomes a "no man's land," a masculine wasteland.

While many of the men in Sam Shepard’s *Buried Child* (1979) and *A Lie of the Mind* (1985) do not appreciate females, let alone
feminine difference, the audience may begin to by virtue of "bad example." The female characters still inhabit some "kind of Alaska," but their absence often has little effect on the plays and the men who seem content to destroy each other in bouts designed to accentuate machismo. At other times, however, the women come to some conclusions concerning their relationships to these men, discovering that life in "Alaska" is much better than life in the American male desert.

Works like O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh (1936), Pinter's No Man's Land (1978), and Shepard's True West (1981) illustrate worlds in which men exist predominantly without women. While women rarely appear on the scene, they are still a vital presence in these plays. In these cases, the men find substitute mirrors: their memories, their male counterparts, or their liquor, the liquid mirror.

Despite the attempts of the male characters to overcome, silence, and subdue women, they are not entirely successful. Female difference somehow persists; like Deborah, it, too, dances in "narrow spaces." Many of the women in the plays resist the role of mirror, and their "Alaska" looks like a paradise, a retreat from the roles imposed upon them by their male counterparts. Others may crumble under the pressure, shattering the glass, splintering the mirror. In all the plays, however, the detrimental effects of such classification of women is emphasized and usually indicted. The oppression of women, through traditional expectations, in order to attain the illusion of autonomy is not only limited but is also
ludicrous. The polarization of differences in general, especially simple and biased sexual divisions, neutralizes life. The absent/present quality of female characterization, however, may produce enough anxiety in their audiences that they will see and respect feminine difference, not fear and thwart female difference and its expression.
CHAPTER I

AN ENDLESS HALL OF MOTHERS: Women in Eugene O’Neill’s

The Iceman Cometh, Long Day’s Journey Into Night, and

A Moon for the Misbegotten

The "kind of Alaska" Eugene O’Neill’s characters inhabit parallels "the kind of Alaska" O’Neill himself occupied. According to one famous account, the playwright frequently checked his appearance in mirrors, windows, and almost anything else that would reflect his image. George Cram Cook, Susan Glaspell’s husband, once confronted him on this narcissistic habit saying, "You’re the most conceited man I’ve ever known, you’re always looking at yourself." O’Neill denied the charges by replying, "No, I just want to be sure I am here" (Sheaffer 240). Like O’Neill, his male characters participate in this myth of the complete self—the pursuit of "self-reliance." In order to feel "whole," however, the men actually need an external object to reassure their perfect image—a mirror, the petit objet a.

In his three later plays, The Iceman Cometh (1946), Long Day’s Journey Into Night (completed in 1941, not published until 1956),
and *A Moon For the Misbegotten* (1947), most of the male characters in the plays behave as O'Neill himself did—they, too, desire reassurance by way of reflection. Though they might pursue the myth in various ways, most hope to attain this illusive, unified sense of self. Rather than facing their divided nature, the men run to the image of a unified self, an image which is as misleading as a siren's call. Paradoxically, by looking to the image for security, the men run from themselves, a flight which may lead to rocky conclusions. Like Hornby in Pinter's *A Kind of Alaska*, O'Neill's men attempt to impose order, structure, and meaning onto their personal chaos—and their women—with little success. For men such as these, their attempts to attain security results in the creation of a male wasteland, a desert-like existence in which nothing changes and nothing is created.

In the plays and perhaps O'Neill's own life, mirrors do not provide the oasis or the necessary reassurance many men seek, so they turn to the next best thing—their female companions. In O'Neill's works and others, women often provide suitable means of reflection because "within the context of a phallocentric system of representation . . . the woman is reduced to mirroring the man" (Berg 17). Women are "other," outside the male realm but simultaneously active participants in this realm, upholding the male reflection and his complete sense of self: "represented as the negative term of sexual differentiation, spectacle-fetish or specular image, in any case, ob-scene, woman is constituted as the
ground of representation, the looking-glass held up to men" (De Lauretis 15). Like Pinter's Deborah, many of O'Neill's women are born into a world which defines them as "women" but finally denies femininity because it assigns women to roles based on masculine desires.

While women may be encased in male expectations, the men wander through the frozen wasteland of their own making. In this way, the difference between the male and female "kind of Alaska" revolves around awareness. The men are not conscious of the myth of completeness, so they often pursue it passionately, oblivious to its consequences. In the process, however, they consciously and systematically force women to function as mirrors in order to mask their "lack," their fragmentation. The women, on the other hand, are familiar with their "lack" or their difference, since they are often devalued in the sexual economy. Because they are forced to behave according to the dictates of masculine desires, they are divorced from themselves, from their own identity as women:

on the sexual exchange market—especially or exemplarily, the market of sexual exchange—woman would also have to preserve and maintain what is called femininity. The value a woman would accrue to her from her maternal role, and, in addition, from her "femininity." But in fact that "femininity" is a role, an image, a value, imposed upon women by male systems of representation. In this masquerade of femininity, the woman loses herself by playing on her femininity. The fact remains that this
masquerade requires effort on her part for which she is not compensated. Unless her pleasure comes simply from being chosen as an object of consumption or of desire by masculine "subjects." (Irigaray, Not One 84)

Female responses to the denial of desire vary. Some hide behind the mirror, finding an oasis of their own, as does Josie in A Moon For the Misbegotten. Others, like Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night, shatter, succumbing to the pressures around them and their families. On rare occasions, however, a woman revels in the reflection, playing the role perfectly. Josie, for instance, sacrifices her sexual desires for Jamie in order to offer him absolution by playing the role of the Madonna. Evelyn Hickman in The Iceman Cometh, on the other hand, tortures her husband, Hickey, by playing the Madonna role perfectly.

In all of O'Neill's plays, though, the process of denying female desire takes its toll on both genders. O'Neill's men have a particularly difficult time accepting women who possess the qualities of both mothers and whores, women who violate their simple perception of femininity. Long Day's Journey Into Night, for example, illustrates the deterioration of Mary, the maternal mirror and the effects of this disintegration on the males who desperately seek a traditional wife and mother. The men in The Iceman Cometh manipulate their memories of women in order to attain existential certitude. When those memories fail, other objects serve the purpose: liquor, the liquid mirror, and even their male counterparts. In the end, it appears that by ignoring women, these
men have missed their opportunity to live. With A Moon for the Misbegotten, Josie "saves" Jamie by taking on the role of Madonna, rather than destroying him through that role as his mother apparently did. Despite her participation in the roles, it seems that she does not succumb to the pressure of the men in the play when she takes this part, but rather, takes it upon herself in order to relieve another person's suffering. By playing "mother," she comforts the shattered Jamie, not because he forces her to, but because this is now her desire. Josie may not live up to Jamie's expectations or her father's, but she does live up to O'Neill's, who seems to offer some sort of solution to the battle of the sexes through this, his final play. Josie is a woman who voluntarily plays her role, learns something during the performance, and becomes a wiser, stronger woman. Whether we admire Josie's sacrifice or not, O'Neill presents the world with a woman who takes care of herself first and only then offers others assistance and compassion. Though Josie cannot finally save Jamie, she offers him strength and absolution. She is the only oasis in his wasteland, but he arrives too late.

The Iceman Cometh

With The Iceman Cometh, Eugene O'Neill creates an urban, male wasteland. Most of the occupants of Harry Hope's saloon have lost their women in some way or another, and after meeting these men, it is not difficult to understand why their women have gone. The men
are dirty, drunk, and destitute. Their hobbies include joking with one another, drinking, and waiting the arrival of Hickey, a second-rate salesman who usually brings better booze and a few more jokes. Judging from what the men say about their women, however, the females were not much better. The women from their pasts are demons, mothers, whores, or some odd combination of all three characteristics—a triad which may lead readers to recall O'Neill’s own mother or his third wife, Carlotta Monterey O’Neill. The women of their present are not only "tarts," they are stale tarts, whores who "arouse no one to lust" (Bogard 416).

This urban wasteland, however, appears to be a patriarchal paradise—lots of booze, a few tarts, and no wives to give the men a difficult time. Despite this masculine "bliss," the men create the feminine for themselves either through drink, each other, or their pipe dreams, O’Neill’s phrase for their fantasies of the past, present, and future. In effect, the male response to a world without women is to manufacture various versions of women, admittedly often idealized versions. Without women actually present, the men create females as they would like them to be—mothers or whores, perfect mirrors. Even with this great degree of control over their females, however, women continue to haunt the men in the saloon, creating the anxiety the men try to wash away through cheap liquor. In this way, The Iceman Cometh exposes the limitations and futility of each man’s attempt to coerce and control either the woman in his life or her image.
Most of the men in the play are "one-timers," has-beens with drinking problems, and O'Neill revels in placing us and them in one of the most dismal settings in the history of American theatre. Deteriorating sandwiches decorate decrepit tables. Light makes the bar look dingier. And later in Act II when attempts are made to clean the saloon in honor of Hickey's birthday, the scene looks especially macabre: "even the walls show evidence of having been washed, although the result is only to heighten their splotchy, leprous look" (93). Ironically, the bar may even appear womb-like--no light, few distractions, and enough fluid to keep the men alive.

Hope's is no Hilton, but a sense of camaraderie among the inmates persists. According to Travis Bogard, it is precisely because the men have left "the world" that such qualities exist: the dreamers have come to Hope's because, ostensibly, they are failures in the outside world, but their typicality makes it impossible to read their communal condition in terms of individual weakness. What lies outside is a world without value, a hostile society to which no man can possibly belong, and from which they must take refuge... . the menace in the street is real (414-15).¹

The inhabitants of Harry Hope's are not social misfits; they are just regular guys who have been treated badly by the wasteland outside their door. If we follow this line of reasoning, the play becomes a grim commentary on the "real" world, outside the saloon: if the bar is an "oasis," imagine how terrible is the dessert. As
the play progresses, however, the distinction between inside and outside diminishes: the bar is not a retreat from the world; it is its reflection. Because Harry Hope's and its inhabitants have been stripped bare, however, the play uncovers many issues which might otherwise remain hidden, particularly the relationship between men and women and the myth of masculine autonomy.

The characters' need for illusions, personal pipe dreams or fantasies, may also indicate that they are exceptional, not "normal." The play even caters to the audience's tendency to distance itself from the characters, by at first demonstrating humorous and absurd pipe dreams, notably Harry's view of his wife, Bessie. Then it uncovers the extent to which these dreams affect the characters' lives, thereby exposing the seriousness of these illusions.

Further, the more the fantasies are adhered to, the greater the fellowship: "these people are closest to one another when most comforted by their illusions and farthest from one another when they are most insecure about their illusions" (Manheim 150). Illusions are the foundation of community and the contributing factors to personal peace. Larry Slade explains to Parritt,

Don't you notice the beautiful calm in the atmosphere? That's because it's the last harbor. No one here has to worry about where they're going next, because there's no farther they can go. It's a great comfort to them. Although even here they keep up the appearances of life
with a few harmless pipe dream about their yesterdays and
tomorrows. (25)

What Larry does not realize, at this point, however, is that it is
precisely these illusions which actually bring the peace, not the
"pure" relationship with reality Hickey later tries to sell to the
bar's occupants. The illusions are necessary:

in this community, the price of mutual toleration is
mutual silence. Actually this community is almost
Utopian. Before Hickey comes, the men live in relative
harmony together by adhering to a single doctrine--the
doctrine of Tomorrow--keeping hope alive through the
anticipation of significant action on a day which never
comes. (Brustein 342)

For the dreamers, the assumption which underlies this "doctrine
of tomorrow" is the fact that they are capable of fulfilling their
dreams. Harry, for example, firmly believes that he has the power
to rejuvenate his defunct political career of twenty years. And Joe
Mott believes that he has overcome racial prejudice: white people
will and do accept him without reservations. Implicit in these
dreams is the assumption that everyone has personal and complete
power. To some extent all adhere to the Emersonian version of the
American dream--self-reliance. As the play progresses, however, it
becomes clear that not only are the characters fragmented and frail,
but they "know at least unconsciously, the truth about themselves
and each other" (Falk, Tragic Tension 158).
Traditionally, women function as the means by which men attain and retain their fantasies. Like the relationships among the bar's inhabitants, male-female relationships also require a system of silence, not the mutual silence exhibited by and among the male characters in the play, but the silence of the female. A woman generally waits for the man in order to "move in accordance with his needs and desires" (Irigaray, Speculum 297). Silence and mimicry characterize female behavior; women are "the same" as men. Though the consequences of this "old dream of symmetry" are numerous, in most of O'Neill's plays the men attain their mirrors by upholding two versions of femininity--mothers and whores. These stereotypes imprison women; they are "iced over," placed in their own "kind of Alaska." Men may gaze upon the women and see themselves complete, the "masters of their fates."

Because so many of the female characters are denied access to the bar, The Iceman Cometh accentuates the "kind of Alaska" the women inhabit. We never hear them speak or hear their "side" of the story. The men control their memories, so they apparently control the women in their personal histories. And this control generally results in classifying and stereotyping women. Because the men support one another's pipe dreams so well, however, they do not even need females to function as mirrors. They play the feminine role for each other, rarely disturbing the smooth surface of their dreams. As Larry satirically tells Parritt,
They manage to get drunk, by hook or crook, and keep their pipe dreams, and that's all they ask of life. I've never known more contented men. It isn't often that men attain the true goal of their heart's desire. (36)

When their women or their memories do not help the men feel secure, whiskey or their friends keep the pipe dreams alive. As a matter of fact, the matronly memories often do not cooperate. The female may shatter the mirror or leave her Alaska momentarily to disturb the male. In the end, those men who ignore this disturbance, who cannot face the female, are destined to return to their old way of life, their wasteland. Because Larry, who is "condemned to see all the sides of a question," sees the complexities of women, the play presents the possibility of some sort of relationship between the sexes which does not require this female imprisonment.

Since the only women who enter the bar are whores, the men need not face the female difference "live and in person." Like most of the inhabitants, the prostitutes function as mirrors among themselves and the other occupants of the bar. They, too, have their dreams, and they, too, pay for those dreams through mutual tolerance and silence. More importantly, they, too, expect that women should fulfill traditional roles. Cora, for example, wants to settle down on a farm, become a wife, raising kids and cows.

All three women demand to be known not as "whores," but as "tarts," unsexed, innocent, fun-loving women. Harry makes it clear that this is the only way he could allow them into the bar at all.
Never thought I'd see the day when Harry Hope's would have tarts rooming in it. What'd Bessie think? But I don't let 'em use my rooms for business. And they're good kids. Good as anyone else. (62)

In the bar, the tarts are just like "anyone else"--full of pipe dreams, not sexual desire or the promise of its fulfillment. They pose no threat, no problems. As "tarts", they do not disturb the status quo; they are "one of the boys," full of dreams and whiskey. As "whores," they would never be allowed into the bar, because, perhaps, their sexual nature would be too disturbing to the inmates. The play even hints at the outcome of such honesty when Hickey confronts them with the "truth" about themselves and their relationship with Rocky. They become angry, and Rocky, the bartender, must admit that he is in fact a pimp. Under these conditions, the women begin to act as "whores," and Rocky begins hitting and verbally abusing them, like a pimp.

More surprisingly still, Cora, at one point speaks, not as a "tart" but as a "whore," a woman who fulfills male desires for a price. At this point, she is a disturbance, "live and in person." During Hickey's story, which includes a description of his time with a prostitute, she interjects the whore's side of the story. Hickey says that he went to whores and often told them the dirty jokes he could never tell his wife, Evelyn. From Hickey's perspective, the women like the jokes. But Cora responds differently, "with a dull, weary bitterness. 'Yes, all the lousy jokes I've had to listen to and pretend was funny'" (236).
These interruptions create the "gaps" in both Hickey's monologue and the play's overall representation of prostitutes as "tarts." For during these moments, Cora is not "one of the boys." As a matter of fact, she may even hate "the boys." Here, she appears as she is—a whore who must masquerade in the way men expect her to behave in order to satisfy a man and earn her living. The inhabitants of the bar ignore Cora's brief interjections, and by the end of the play, she returns to her "normal" behavior, willing, receptive, with no real desires of her own, except of course her pipe dream of the farm. In the end, all three prostitutes and Rocky are relieved when Hickey leaves; they can re-establish their pipe dreams.

The off-stage women are not so easily silenced. The men appear to control these females by casting them into categories. When Harry, for example, indicates that his wife, Bessie, kept the tarts out of the bar, he implies that Bessie and the whores are mutually exclusive. They are two distinct kinds of women; whores and wives neither get along nor do they belong in the same room together. As the play progresses, however, many of the absent females violate this "rule," thereby creating problems for the men who see females dualistically. Furthermore, because the character of Evelyn Hickman meets the expectations of a Madonna and because she attains diabolic stature while playing this womanly role, the play demonstrates that a Madonna can be just as manipulative and destructive as any whore.
Bessie Hope is one of the first absent women to be discussed in the play, and through her, the play demonstrates the positive rewards of "icing" the female characters. Because she has been dead—through natural causes—for nearly twenty years, Harry has been able to use her as an excuse for his twenty-year hiatus from the world. We first meet Harry waking up, irritably scolding his brother-in-law, Mosher, and McGloin for allowing him to sleep in a chair "like a bum." The two men defend themselves by invoking Bessie, saying that they could not have allowed Harry to sleep alone, since it was one of those nights "when memory brought poor old Bessie back to you" (49). Hope responds with a melodramatic flourish reminiscent of James O'Neill's career, saying,

Yes, that's right, boys. I remember now. I could almost see her in every room just as she used to be—and it's twenty years since she—(His throat and eyes fill up. A suitable sentimental hush falls on the room). (49-50)

By juxtaposing this awakening scene to Harry's retelling of the myth of Bessie, O'Neill quickly establishes the advantages of an absent female—Harry can manipulate his memory of her in order to support his present pipe dreams or, in this case, his present state of sloth. With the pipe dream established, the disoriented Harry can now cope with reality. Almost as quickly as he opens his eyes, he takes on his role as "the grieving husband." If Hope's melodramatic tone is not enough to indicate that his feelings may be less than sincere, Larry humorously concludes the scene, whispering
to Parritt, "Isn't a pipe dream of yesterday a touching thing? By all accounts, Bessie nagged the hell out of him" (50).

Through this brief scene, not only is the importance of illusions and their function in the play established, but the scene also focuses on the important role the absent women play in the perpetuation of these dreams. Later, the interactions between Hickey and Hope yield even more information about Bessie and Hope. Apparently, Bessie did "nag the hell out" of her husband, forcing him to do things he did not want to do, namely staying sober and getting out of the bar. While Bessie was alive, Hope was incomplete—he was not worthwhile unless he performed certain duties. Now that she is gone, Hope feels at ease. After all, he is a grieving widower. With Bessie out of the picture, but with her memory intact, Hope is free to occupy his own "kind of Alaska," his saloon which he has literally never left since her funeral.

The absent Marjorie Tomorrow functions similarly, except that her exploits are not as humorous as those of Bessie Hope. While most of the roomers in the bar remember duping Bessie and enjoyed seeing her short-changed by her own brother, no one laughs at the memory of Marjorie making a cuckold of Jimmy Tomorrow. In Bessie's case, the men took advantage of a nagging woman, while Marjorie's adulterous relationship got the better of a "good" man. While alive, neither woman cooperated; their actions taint or shatter their roles as mirrors. Like Bessie's death, Marjorie's absence revives a mirror, not through another woman but through the memories Jimmy has of Marjorie. Like Harry, Jimmy has a role to play now
that his wife is gone. Instead of playing the "grieving husband," he plays the grieving husband "done wrong." Because Marjorie has been so wicked, and because Jimmy believes himself so innocent, he can drown his sorrows in his glass and see himself completely reflected.

Later Hickey once again exposes a man's pipe dreams and consequently the truth about his relationship with "his" woman. Through his interactions with Jimmy, we learn that Jimmy has manipulated the sequence of the events of his past in order to construct his personal pipe dream. Marjorie did not cause Jimmy to drink; instead, Jimmy's drinking led Marjorie to adultery. By casting his wife into the role of "whore," Jimmy may cast himself into the role of "cuckolded but innocent husband," without accepting any responsibility for Majorie's disappearance.

In both cases, Hickey's arrival shatters Harry's and Jimmy's mirrors, making even the whiskey lose its appeal. At these moments, Bessie and Marjorie speak from their icy regions. Neither woman is exactly what her man wants her to be. Bessie, the "Madonna," nagged the hell out of Harry, and Marjorie, the "whore," was not entirely responsible for the break-up of her marriage. At these moments, the play exposes the limitations of these dual categories. With Hickey's departure, however, Harry and Jimmy encase the feminine once again. They ignore the anxiety she produces, and they continue pursuing their pipe dreams and their myth of wholeness. Both end as they began--afraid to face themselves and their women, they look to their glasses. Even if Harry and Jimmy do not come to new
conclusions concerning their female counterparts, however, the audience may. By seeing the traditional and dual roles of women exposed, as we did with Cora, we may experience the anxiety of the female and, perhaps, change our own attitudes toward women.

Through the character of Evelyn Hickman the play further emphasizes the problems which arise as a result of traditional feminine roles. Evelyn Hickman is the archetypal "good wife," the perfect mirror. She never criticizes Hickey, never stops loving him, and never leaves him. Like the Catholic Church of O'Neill's origins, she offers twenty-four hour forgiveness and bountiful mercy. She even relocates to save Hickey from the gossip of townspeople to save him from feelings of guilt. Unlike Marjorie and Bessie, Evelyn mirrored Hickey when they were together, and she appears to represent "the" woman all the other men would love to possess. She is loving, adoring, loyal, and forgiving. As Hickey's autobiography indicates, however, the quality of Evelyn's mercy was strained: "That's what made it so hard. That's what made me feel like such a rotten skunk--her always forgiving me" (235).

According to Jacques Lacan and his followers, the relationship between the subject and his mirror is always ambivalent. Men may love the complete image the mirror affords, but they also hate it because the "image remains external" (Silverman 158; Lacan, Ecrits 1-7). Though Hickey's relationship with Evelyn functions similarly, the mirror here is not as passive as the mirror in Lacan's formulation. In the case of Evelyn, she plays the role of the mirror perfectly, perhaps to avoid confronting her own
fragmentation. Her own pipe dreams concerning Hickey were overwhelming. The images she upheld and beheld in Hickey were too much for him to bear:

It kept piling up, like I've said. I got so I thought of it all the time. I hated myself more and more, thinking of all the wrong I'd done to the sweetest woman in the world who loved me so much. I'd got so I'd curse myself for a lousy bastard every time I saw myself in the mirror.

(239)

Hickey's mirror-madonna served to accentuate rather than mask his imperfections, paradoxically by presenting him with a perfect image. Evelyn became a saint, completely untainted and whole. Through Hickey's sins, not her own merit, she became better, a martyr by comparison. From her "kind of Alaska," Evelyn tortured Hickey, attaining sadistic pleasure without endangering herself or her position in the household. For years she forgave and thus tormented Hickey. Because she was so merciful, Hickey could not blame her, only himself for the way he felt. As a mirror Evelyn deflected responsibility for her marriage.

Hickey attempted to leave Evelyn frequently, but his fatal attraction persisted. As a result, he constructed a new myth in order to justify his permanent relationship with the diabolic Madonna. His new pipe dream was romantic: he loved Evelyn eternally, completely, no matter how she made him feel. With this new illusion, Hickey could retain his dignity and his autonomy. He remained with Evelyn because of "love," so his existence was not
entirely wasted. But like the pipe dreams Harry and Jimmy cling to concerning their wives, Hickey's delusions regarding Evelyn are also exposed. While Hickey tells his tale, he inadvertently tells too much:

I remember I stood by the bed and suddenly I had to laugh. I couldn't help it, and I know Evelyn would forgive me. I remember I heard myself speaking to her as if it was something I'd always wanted to say to her.

"Well you know what you can to with your pipe dream now you damned bitch!" (241)

Casting women into the role of mirrors may briefly satisfy men, but, as Evelyn's case demonstrates, the price is too high. Evelyn may have enjoyed her role, but she winds up dead, a corpse, the perfect mirror. And Hickey collapses under the pressure of her forgiveness, suffering a long death through her tortuous passive aggression.

In the end, Hickey attempts to shatter himself and his mirror. He succeeds in shattering himself, but Evelyn remains. After his outburst, Hickey immediately retracts his statement: "No! That's a lie! I never said--! Good God, I couldn't have said that! If I did, I'd gone insane! Why I loved Evelyn better than anything in my life!" (242). Like Harry and Jimmy, Hickey also resurrects the female stereotypes and the myth of masculine wholeness. Hickey admits that he must have been insane--fragmented--for a moment in order to retain his pipe dream of love for Evelyn. Now that he is "his old self again," he realizes his error. He is ready to be forgiven once again: "She knows I was insane" (245).
In direct contrast to Evelyn is the fiery political activist, Rosa Parritt, a woman who is not quickly moved to mercy. Unlike the other absent females, Hickey does not actively participate in Rosa’s character development; instead, the exchanges between Larry and her son, Don, create the story of Rosa. This tactic further emphasizes the fact that Don and Hickey are "members of the same lodge" (84). Through these exchanges we learn that Rosa is so committed to the socialist, political "movement" that little else interests or concerns her. As Don Parritt repeats incessantly, she is not just an active member, "Rosa is the movement." Also, she is promiscuous, self-willed, and not at all interested in traditional values. She may "mother," but her maternal instincts are directed toward her political ideals, not toward her son (Manheim 135). She may even be married, not to a man, but to the ideal of "free love." Rosa, then, is a problem for men who perceive women dualistically.

Her son, Don, perceives women in this manner and judges Rosa harshly—she has been a terrible mother. She does not fulfill his expectations, so—in what appears to be a typical response for many of O'Neill's male characters who have been spurned by their mothers—Parritt seeks solace from a whore. Both his mother and the whore, however, disappoint him, and the two become synonymous (Engel 288). Admittedly, Rosa has not led a virtuous life. Judging from what Larry and Parritt say about her, her sexual exploits may rival a prostitute's even though her earnings would not. Parritt may lose a mother, but he gains a role. Like many of the other men, Parritt
justifies his behavior by blaming Rosa. Because she has treated him badly, he seeks revenge, playing the role of the "angry young man."

Guilt, however, accompanies his revenge, so Parritt comes to Larry for penance. Unlike the other male characters, Parritt has a difficult time laying Rosa's memory to rest and subsequently building an illusory edifice on the maternal turf. He cannot stabilize his pipe dream, but like Hickey his stay in the bar brings out his motives for "killing" his mother. When, for example, he first appears in the bar, he denies any knowledge of his mother's informant. Then he confesses, first citing democratic rhetoric, then financial necessities as his motives. And finally, echoing Hickey's speech, he confesses that he did it because he hated Rosa. Consequently, he comes to Larry in order to have both his guilt assuaged and to have his part identified. Now Larry, not Rosa, is Parritt's mirror. More specifically, according to Lacan, Parritt now wants Larry to function as the Father, "which is fundamentally to unite (and not set in opposition) a desire and the Law" (Ecrits, 321).

As Larry repeatedly indicates, he wants nothing to do with Parritt's quest. Towards the end of the play, he strongly states his ambivalent feelings about the task Parritt asks him to complete: "God damn you, stop shoving your rotten soul in my lap" (228). Like many occupants in the bar, Larry runs away from responsibilities and women. But more importantly, one of his fantasies involves Rosa—-he does not care about her anymore. Through her absence he can fool himself that she and the movement mean nothing to his existence.
Parritt's arrival, however, shatters Larry's dreams, since Parritt is a constant reminder of Rosa. Larry no longer has the smooth mirror of her absence to use as an excuse for his present "grandstand" existence: "Alaska" begins to melt. He is asked to play the role of the "Law of the Father" (Lacan, Ecrits 217).

After much badgering from Parritt, as well as the simultaneous confession from Hickey, Larry takes a stand. He no longer sees "all sides of the question." He sees only one answer, and it is akin to Old Testament morality in its simplicity. Because Rosa loved her freedom as much as her life, Parritt's actions have, in effect, killed his mother. In response, Larry gives Parritt his penance by telling him to "Get the hell out of life" (248).

By judging Parritt's actions "wrong," Larry admits his feelings for Rosa and the movement. On the one hand, Larry's act avenges the death of these important parts of his past. On the other, he may offer Parritt the only peace available, considering the crimes he has committed as well as the nature of his existence. Because Parritt continually seeks completion, a sense of wholeness, from external sources--his mother, the whore, and then Larry, Larry's order releases the young man from a lifetime of guilt over his crimes. More importantly, it also indicates that Larry sees only one way to alleviate existential emptiness--death. As he says at the end of the play, he is the "only real convert to death Hickey made here" (258).

At the same time, however, Larry has come to some conclusions concerning his feelings for Rosa. Unlike the other inhabitants who
use their absent women as mirrors, often as excuses for their miserable lives, Larry looks to Rosa and sees her as a woman with flaws, not some idealized version of his life or image. He knows she is promiscuous, and he knows she is also a mother, a Madonna. But he does not love her because she fulfills one of these opposing roles. Admittedly, he prefers that she remain monogamous, but he leaves when she cannot meet his request. He does not force her to conform to his expectations concerning a good heterosexual relationship. Further, after he has gone, he does not use Rosa to excuse his life; instead, he creates a pipe dream around his own detachedness. He no longer cares about Rosa or life; he lives in the "grandstand." She cannot provide him with the image he desires, but rather than constructing a pipe dream around his relationship with her, as Jimmy and Harry do, Larry only looks into his whiskey glass.

By the end of the play, however, Larry acknowledges his feelings and takes some responsibility for these feelings. He sees that Parritt's betrayal of Rosa will result in her death, and he avenges her death. Through his answer to Parritt, Larry does not objectify the absent woman in his life; he defends her right to live as she chooses. Larry, who once boasted that he was doomed to see all sides of a question, must now put those words into action. By admitting his feelings for Rosa and the movement, he admits ambiguity into his relationship to both. Rosa, the whore/activist, is still worthy of his love. She need not win his love by remaining virtuous. Larry loves her anyway. And the movement need not
conform to Larry's own standards in order to be worthy of his respect and admiration. In this way, Larry releases himself from his ideological and moral rigidity. Ironically, though Rosa is physically imprisoned, she is metaphorically released from her "kind of Alaska," as a result of Larry's new awareness concerning the illusory nature of love and concern. Categories dissolve, and to some degree Larry participates in Rosa's position as a woman--"there and not there."

At the opening of the play, Larry is "the only occupant of the room who is not asleep. He stares in front of him, an expression of tired tolerance giving his face the quality of a pitying but weary old priest's" (5). Larry is fully present in this scene; he is the only roofer who is somehow "complete." Body and mind are one. While the other inhabitants sleep, Larry stands guard over the men. In the final scene, however, the roomers are awake and rejoicing--Hickey is gone, so the booze "works" once again. Larry, however, sits off at a table alone, guarding, not men, but his memory of Rosa, perhaps the memory which enables him to attain a sense of himself which does not demand the objectification of women or the masculine myth of autonomy. Larry may be in pain, but he is able to withstand the isolation, the loneliness that so many of the characters wish to avoid, the emptiness which causes men to run to the petit objet a.

The women who do not appear in Eugene O'Neill's The Iceman Cometh are not only important characters in the lives of their men, but they also indicate, by their absence, that the female principle
is missing in the lives of the men. Despite their best attempts, however, the men cannot successfully repress their women. As the play demonstrates, the female persists. For some, like Harry, the persistence is humorous. For the rest, however, the persistence is deadly. In the end, those men who cannot deal with their women amicably, who continue to treat them as other, as a mirror, end up dismally—near dead and full of pipe dreams. As a result of the dramatic action, Larry, however, accepts his feelings for Rosa, as a woman, not an actress playing the roles of traditional wife or mother. Rather than keeping ambiguity at bay by staying in the grandstand, Larry now accepts it and participates in it, for at the end of the play, Larry is "there and not there." He is in the bar, but he does not participate in the celebration. Because his response to this uncertainty remains unanswered, he, by his own participation with the feminine, creates the feminine difference at the end of the play, the gap in the O'Neill narrative.

**Long Day's Journey Into Night**

In *Long Day's Journey Into Night* (1956), Eugene O'Neill presents his audiences with a reassuring setting, much like that of his light-hearted *Ah Wilderness!* (1933): a family happily vacations at their New England summer home. Gone are the skid-row bums, the dingy tables, and the tarts of *The Iceman Cometh*. In their place are the "happily married" Mary and James Tyrone, joking about
domestic topics such as her weight-gain and his snoring. When their adult sons, Jamie and Edmund, arrive, they tell a humorous tale about their poor, Irish tenant, Shaughnessy, who makes a fool out of their wealthy neighbor Harker, a Standard Oil wasp. All seems well, but beneath this familial and secure exterior lurks the same desperation that was present in The Iceman Cometh.

Unlike The Iceman Cometh, a central female character appears on stage, possibly due to O'Neill's own dualistic attitudes towards women--only whores appear in saloons; "nice" women remain at home. The play quickly makes it clear, however, that such distinctions are not entirely accurate, for Mary, a seemingly average New England housewife, is addicted to morphine--an addiction generally associated with whores. Like the absent, female characters in The Iceman Cometh, Mary disrupts traditional, feminine roles. Like Rosa Parritt whose commitment to political activism violates Don's and Larry's expectations, Mary Tyrone also challenges her family's expectations concerning the way in which a mother "should" behave.

The means by which the women disrupt the men's expectations, however, differ between the two plays. Since most of the female characters in The Iceman Cometh have not fulfilled their stereotypical roles, their absence might be a form of punishment. Because they are uncooperative, they are banished to "a kind of Alaska." The play demonstrates, though, that the banishment is unsuccessful--the women may be gone but they are far from forgotten. From their "kind of Alaska," they send arctic air through the saloon. Ironically, it is their inability to meet their
men's expectations--their banishment--which makes them vibrant contributors to the dramatic action in spite of their absence.

In Long Day's Journey Into Night, Mary Tyrone establishes her difference on stage. Unlike the "tarts" in The Iceman Cometh, her appearance, moreover, does not indicate that she is "one of the boys" or her complicity in their traditional expectations of women. Just as Cora creates "gaps" within Hickey's monologue, Mary interrupts the discourse of her male counterparts.

Like Deborah in Harold Pinter's A Kind of Alaska, men may ask Mary to play particular roles, but she does not always play them successfully. In both plays, such casting becomes problematic: gender roles are often impositions, not inherent biological, sociological, or metaphysical "truths." While Pinter's play illustrates one woman's integration into patriarchy, Long Day's Journey Into Night dramatizes one woman's disintegration. In Pinter's play, Deborah awakes and finds herself a "woman," a "fact" which requires lengthy explanation. Deborah acquiesces in the end, but because she has been able to survive for so long in her period of hibernation, it is reasonable to expect that she will survive the sleep imposed upon women by patriarchy. Mary, on the other hand, does not quite acquiesce; she never meets her family's expectations. But neither does she triumph over them by "dancing in narrow spaces" as does Deborah. Like Evelyn Hickman, Mary's "Alaska" allows her the freedom to torture her family, usually by preying upon the men's stereotypical expectations. But unlike Evelyn, Mary gains little pleasure from either this pastime or her
"Alaska." Rather than creating some feminine space within the confines of her home and patriarchy, Mary evaporates, lost in her addiction, an addiction which becomes her revenge upon herself and her family. In the end, the stereotypes remain, but Mary and the family have dissolved.

The play opens with Mary and James on good terms, because, we soon learn, she has been a "good girl." James compliments her, saying "I can't tell you the deep happiness it gives me, darling, to see you as you've been since you came back to us, your dear old self again" (17). Mary is her "old self again," that is, as James would have her behave. Admittedly, this lapse in Mary's addiction benefits her, as well as the family, but she can now perform her required duties as the good wife and mother. She is no longer damaged goods in the sexual economy.

Through her discussion with her servant, Cathleen, it becomes clear that Mary was an object of barter between her father and James. Luce Irigaray, like Fredrick Engels, notes that all women are often subject to such treatment in the patriarchal system. Women do not marry; they are merely traded from one man to another, from their fathers to their husbands (Not One 170-191; Engels 94-146). When Mary and James "fell in love," Mary's father did not object, for he, after all, brought James to the house, thereby implying his choice of mate for his daughter. Whether he did this consciously or not does not matter; Mary understood the implication, and being the dutiful daughter, she wanted what her daddy wanted.
Her mother, however, was not impressed by the choice, and even tried to prevent the marriage. As is often the case in a structure in which women are bartered, females fight over men since the men have the power and their masculine gaze often yields benefits in such a society. According to Mary, her mother not only objected to her marrying an actor, but she was also jealous of her husband’s affection towards Mary. Whatever Mary’s relationship to her father, it is clear that her mother posed problems. And as an active participant on the sexual exchange, Mary did not want her value damaged by a meddling mother. Consequently, Mary ostracized her mother in order to enter the company of men—in effect, Mary "iced over" her mother’s difference and dissidence in much the same way that the men in The Iceman Cometh silence their female counterparts.

As Mary’s later life proves, however, men may gain rewards from this system, but women do not. By participating in the system of sexual trade, Mary gains only a husband, not a voice, and she, too, is "iced over" by her male counterparts’ traditional expectations. Her addiction is her only means of expression, and it transmits an angry, destructive, and twisted message. Denied verbal forms of communication, the linguistic symbol of power in the male world, Mary resorts to using her body as a means of communication in much the same way that the female hysterics of the nineteenth century expressed their frustrations. Like those patients, Mary’s illness disrupts the sexual economy, for by maiming herself she maims or disgraces her current "owner."
Mary's addiction is also the means by which she destroys herself and her family in revenge. Her morphine returns her to the past, a time when she was "true" to herself:

Mary has betrayed all her hopes and dreams. Even her marriage is a betrayal, since she longed to be a nun, wholly dedicated to her namesake, the Blessed Virgin. . . . she dreams only of the past . . . (Brustein 353)

To some extent this version of Mary's past is as illusory and absurd as Cora's dreams of becoming a dairy farmer in The Iceman Cometh.

According to James, Mary was worldly, even a coquette at this time in her life. The play confirms this assessment because not only does Mary retain some of those flirtatious qualities, but she herself verifies James's perspective on this time in her life when she recounts her conversations with one of her favorite nuns:

I had a talk with Mother Elizabeth. She is so sweet and good. A saint on earth. I love her dearly. It may be sinful of me but I love her better than I love my own mother. . . . I told her I wanted to be a nun. . . . I said I knew, surely as I knew that I was kneeling there, that the Blessed Virgin had smiled and blessed me with her consent. But Mother Elizabeth told me I must be more sure. She said if I was so sure, then I wouldn't mind putting myself to a test by going home after I graduated, and living as others lived, going out to parties and dances and enjoying myself and then if after a year or two
I still felt sure, I could come back to see her and we
would talk it over again. (175)
The past does not contain a pure and virginal Mary Tyrone. Instead,
we see a young girl in the sexual market place. On the one hand,
she wishes to remain in the convent, possibly due to her fear of her
own sexual feelings. But on the other hand, she is fascinated by
the attentions of "the world" and later James Tyrone.

More importantly, however, is the fact that Mary cannot have
both the convent and the family. In a world which offers limited
roles for women, Mary must make a choice. The patriarchal system
does not permit multiple roles, particularly multiple sexual roles.
Since Mary is both religious and sexual, she never feels quite "at
home" in either role. In this way, her repeated references to her
lack of a "home" indicate more than the discomfort of a travelling
actor's wife. Mary wants the role of both the Madonna and whore,
roles which are mutually exclusive in this world. Her memories of
her commitment to the Virgin Mary, however, indicate that Mary is
anxious to remove herself from her masculine family in order to gain
"a kind of Alaska," a home to escape to in order to avoid
responsibilities. Ironically, both her drug addiction and her faith
serve as a means of attaining this goal, since in both instances
Mary becomes hidden from the family. The addiction makes her
emotionally unavailable, and her faith makes her one with the
angels, not men. As a religious, morphine addict in the New England
summer home, Mary perversely fulfills some of the characteristics of
both Madonna and whore.
Mary's fascination with the Virgin Mary, as well as her own revisions of her past, mimics the behavior of many of the men in The Iceman Cometh. Like them, Mary uses an absent woman to justify her present illusions. She chooses the Catholic Virgin Mary for her mirror. In Catholic tradition, this female figure functions similarly to Evelyn Hickman--always making forgiveness available. Mary will not face the Virgin Mary because she herself is not pure or without error, but at the same time, Mary uses her unworthiness to continue her addiction and despair. In much the same way that the men in The Iceman Cometh concoct their illusions, Mary manipulates her version of the past and her image of the Madonna in order to create an image of herself which permits her to play the role of victim.

Similarly, Mary uses the absent maid Bridget and the on-stage Cathleen to reflect her own desires and image of herself. When the men are late for dinner, and she is angry, she vents her anger through Bridget. The absent cook, not Mary, is upset because the men are tardy (51). And when it is clear that Mary is taking morphine again, the second scene of the second act opens with her noting, "It's no use finding fault with Bridget. She doesn't listen. I can't threaten her, or she'd threaten to leave. And she does do her best at times. It's too bad they seem to be just the times you're sure to be late, James" (71-72). According to Egil Tornqvist, Bridget is actually another aspect of Mary's personality: "never appearing but always... lurking in the background, she comes to personify the reckless, destructive impulse
within Mary, which finally 'kills' her men" (240). Whether Mary
"kills" her men is debatable, but her affinity with the absent
woman, the woman whose presence is felt but never seen is apparent.
Both Bridget and the Virgin Mary have what Mary wants--they are both
hidden but their presence is felt. In this way, they can
participate in the household, perhaps torturing the men, without
getting caught or sacrificing themselves completely.

While Bridget functions as Mary's alter-ego, Cathleen functions
as Mary's on-stage mirror, playing a role Mary herself has refused.
Unlike James and Jamie who turn to Edmund for comfort and
confession, Mary chooses another woman during her reveries.
Cathleen occasionally confronts Mary concerning the truth of her
tale--her pipe dreams about Catholicism, for example--but overall
Cathleen appear to enjoy listening and drinking with Mary.

The female servant is the perfect mirror, sometimes
interrupting, sometimes taking another drink, but always agreeable:
Cathleen is, in essence, the conventional comic servant of
the nineteenth-century theatre... She has not sufficient
intrinsic interest to intrude on our impression of the
family's isolation and, by the same token, can serve as
the mirror in which the public face of each is reflected.
In her eye, the sons are carefree men about town, Tyrone a
good husband and generous gentleman, Mary a considerate
mistress and loving mother. The audience is made
conscious of the contrast between ordered image and
confused reality. (Chothia 175)
Cathleen need not fulfill the role of either mother or whore in order to function as a mirror; her status as a servant is restraint enough. This status, moreover, is another means of representing the female, in this case not as an object of contemplation or manipulation, but as an object of ridicule.

Because playing the role of mirror brings so few benefits, it is understandable that Mary resists such casting. This resistance, however, creates the female difference in the play which ruptures the masculine discourse and expectation. Rather than focusing on the desires of her male counterparts, Mary looks for her own reflection elsewhere, an action which generally characterizes the men. Like the men in The Iceman Cometh, Mary searches for a female mirror upon which to base her own pipe dream. And like those male-dreamers, Mary fiercely guards her illusions. In many ways, because Mary played the masculine game too well, by her participation in the sexual market, she expected masculine benefits: a mirror of her own and a home, an "origin" to secure her own existence. Since she cannot have this security, she tries, quietly but surely, to destroy and torture the family. Like Evelyn, Mary uses her "kind of Alaska" in order to destroy men, as well as their expectations.

By the end of the play, illusion enshrouds Mary. She is shattered glass, searching for something to make her feel complete:

What is it I'm looking for? I know it's something I lost . . . . Something I need terribly. I remember when I had
it I was never lonely nor afraid. I can't have lost it forever, I would die if I thought that. Because there would be no hope. (172-3)

Here Mary articulates the fragmented nature of her existence, but like many characters, rather than facing it, she looks elsewhere for reassurance. For her, it is often her past and the Virgin Mary. Her illusions, her addiction, and her view of the past constitute her "kind of Alaska." And from this region, she torments her husband and sons by denying them access to her on any level other than as an object of contemplation. She succumbs to the role of the feminine in the extreme, transforming herself into the "Virgin Mary," the ice woman, the mirror. She is removed, enshrined, empowered, and untouchable.

Initially, the men look to Mary for reassurance, but because she, too, looks to a mother the familial relationships become an endless hall of mothers, beginning with Mary's own mother, moving to James's mother, and ending with the Virgin. With cynical sentimentality Jamie aptly describes the male-female relationships in this family: "What is a man without a good woman's love? A God-damned hollow shell" (158). Because Mary is the only "good woman" on stage, many of the men try to force her to love them; but when she refuses them, they look elsewhere for comfort. They look for something to fill that hollow shell.

Like the rest of the family, including Mary herself, James Tyrone blames all his domestic ills upon Mary's morphine addiction. The causes for the addiction are infinite--the doctor, Edmund's
birth, or whatever excuse is handy. In this household, blame functions like the pipe dreams in *The Iceman Cometh*—both offer the characters numerous opportunities to avoid facing themselves and their fragmented nature. With either the pipe dreams or the blame, everything appears whole or "as it should be."

The past and blame become the characters' mistresses while Mary is indisposed, for they function as substitute mirrors, even for Mary. In the past, particularly James Tyrone's version, he finds many excuses for his present behavior. Since his own father abandoned him and his family, for example, James claims he learned miserliness at home—after all, he had to support the entire family. Like Mary, James need not face his inadequacies when retaining this version of his personal history.

As was the case for the inhabitants of Harry Hope's saloon, however, mirrors shatter, not through Hickey, but through James's confession to Edmund. During this scene, he, like the bar flies, realizes the foolishness of his actions and perceptions. Through the course of his story about Edwin Booth, Tyrone admits to himself and Edmund that he bartered his acting career for financial security. According to James, Booth told him that his performance of Othello was even better than Booth's own performances. Rather than pursuing a Shakespearean career, however, Tyrone opted for financial security by purchasing rights to a play which guaranteed his success. Tyrone concludes his reverie, asking, "What the hell was it I wanted to buy, I wonder, that was worth—Well, no matter. It's a late day for regrets. (He glances vaguely at his cards.) My
play isn't it?" (150). The pun on the word "play" emphasizes James's ownership of his big "money-maker." But it also indicates that though James has come close to a realization about himself, he cannot face that revelation. Instead, he turns to the "play," the cards, and lady luck.

Another "lady" in James's life is his mother. His father left his mother, leaving her "a stranger in a strange land." (147). Tyrone's words are an apt description for the status of women in a patriarchal society, as well as the status of his immigrant mother. James takes over the family and quickly establishes himself as "the provider." He even remembers one Christmas when his mother acquired enough money to treat everyone to Christmas presents (148). James finishes his story with a Dickensian flourish--a tribute to his mother: "A fine, brave, sweet woman. There never was a braver or finer" (148).

Whether or not this "fine, brave, sweet woman" had anything to do with her husband's departure from the United States and later his death, especially since there were rumors of suicide, is difficult to say. But it is clear that James indulges his memories here. Like Harry in *The Iceman Cometh*, James idealizes his past and the women at that time. It is no wonder that he cannot cope with his wife, a woman who is frail and weak, not the pillar of strength he believes his mother to have been. James uses his past as a mistress, reassuring himself that at some point in time he was true to himself, whole and complete, even though he is currently suffering difficulties. The maternal memory serves as a suitable
substitute while Mary moves "above and beyond" the family. For unlike Mary, this mirror is still intact. Further, James can manipulate his memories, but he cannot control Mary. She is the archetypal object of desire, always promising, never fulfilling.

Instead of finding a metaphorical mistress, the son, Jamie resorts to a real whore while his mother injects morphine. Like Don Parritt, he does not see much difference between mother and whore. As he tells Edmund, "Never forget the first time I got wise. Caught her in the act with a hypo. Christ, I'd never dreamed before that any women but whores took dope!" (163). Because Mary repeatedly tells the family that she has betrayed her true desires—to become a nun—in order to satisfy the needs of the family, she, too, prostitutes herself, like the women Jamie knows. When Mary is unavailable, then, Jamie turns to the prostitute, Fat Violet. He was "ready for a weep on any old womanly bosom" (159). According to Egil Tornqvist, both his mother and the whore, moreover, "hope to be loved despite their deformities, Violet despite her fatness, Mary despite her deficiencies as a wife and mother" (239). While Tornqvist may see the similarities as finally positive, Luce Irigaray argues that the phallocentric system erases all difference in order to control or deactivate the feminine principle. The male subject will end up unable to distinguish wife from mother, mother from wife. Because it has neither "truth" nor "copies," nothing of its "own," this (so-called) female sexuality, this woman's sex/organ will blind anyone taken up in its
question. Therefore the gaze—and the theory, the theoria-
must be protected by being resolved into a phallomorphic
representation, into phallic categories. (Speculum 80)

While Jamie is unable to distinguish between mother and whores, what is more important, is that he cannot make the distinction between himself and his mother. And though female sexuality may have "nothing of its own," nothing to copy, Mary Tyrone possesses her drug addiction. Through his own addiction to alcohol and familial abuse, Jamie does an excellent job of mimicing his mother. As a youngster, he tried to gain his mother's attention in abominable ways, but these antics only alienated him further from his mother, perhaps because the two of them were so similar. As an unsupervised young boy, for example, he infects his baby brother, Eugene, with the measles. So Mary holds herself and him responsible for the death of the child, furthering Jamie's inability to distinguish his actions from those of his mother. As an adult, he continues to see himself in terms of his mother. He tells Edmund that if Mary could have "beaten the game," he could have, too (162). In this way, Jamie is probably the family member most damaged by Mary's addiction, for when she self-destructs, he self-

He desperately wants a mother, and even at the time of the play, when he is thirty years old, he still looks for the lost breast. Mary's presence, then, accentuates Jamie's feelings of inadequacy. Travis Bogard argues that "there is no vision of beatitude for Jamie...his need is always beside him in Mary, but
he cannot reach her. Like Tantalus, he has no refuge from desire. His is the howl of a soul lost in hell" (431). This howl, however, is applicable to all the characters in the play, for all search but cannot find the lost breast. Admittedly, Jamie's response to Mary may be one of the most compelling and destructive, but Edmund's choices are typical and less violent responses to the maternal void.

Like Jamie, Edmund responds to Mary's condition by seeking another mirror, but unlike most of the other men he does not look to a whore. Instead, he looks to the great symbolic mother, the sea. Through the sea he looses and finds himself; he has an experience akin to a mystical vision: "for a second you see—and seeing the secret are the secret. For a second there is meaning! Then the hand lets the veil fall and you are alone, lost in the fog again, and you stumble on toward nowhere, for no good reason!" (153). Like his mother and his two male counterparts, Edmund experiences fragmentation, too: "As it is, I will always be a stranger who never feels at home, who does not really want and is not really wanted, who can never belong, who must always be a little in love with death" (153-54).

Though he denies that he is a poet, Edmund finds solace in the word as well as the sea. And like a good literary critic, Edmund rejoices over the fact that he has found "meaning" during his maritime vision. Edmund, however, attempts to take the word away from his mother throughout the play. When Mary chatters during one of her reveries, he orders her to stop talking. Admittedly, he also orders Tyrone to keep quiet once, but he continually tells Mary to
remain silent. By the end of the play, Edmund makes one final attempt both to quiet her and to make contact with Mary. He tells her he has consumption. For a moment she hesitates, but only for a moment and she continues in the past: "the quiet ending of the play is not a conclusion but another relentless beginning" (Chothia 184).

Edmund cannot touch Mary, for she has retreated into the fog which he so brilliantly described earlier. This fog, her addiction, is not so much her "kind of Alaska," but her response to stereotypical expectations placed upon women, her response to the "kind of Alaska" women must inhabit. Like many of the women in The Iceman Cometh, Mary retreats to her own world when pressured to behave in stereotypical ways. And like these women, Mary gains a tremendous amount of power over her men, but her morphine addiction offers her even more. At the end of the play, she finally thinks she attains what she desired all along, adoration from her family. The male Tyrones, of course, stare as a result of terror, not reverence. Consequently, Mary has little incentive to return. When she does, the men watch her suspiciously, ignore her completely, or expect her to make everything complete, "all better."

Mary's addiction may indicate a form of revolution, a way to disturb the patriarchy, her only means of communicating, of making it clear to the family that she will not serve as Cathleen and Fat Violet serve. But in the end, Mary succumbs--she is the mirror, the walking glass, and a ghost of her former self. Her appearance, the extreme "Alaska," is terrifying. Like Evelyn, Mary now represents the perfect mirror--cool, detached, diabolic, and terrifying.
Rather than establishing some life behind and beyond this mirror, Mary, like Evelyn, is all ice. In the end, there is little left of feminine difference, for in one way or another, nothing is left, only the roles, only the shattered glass.

_A Moon for the Misbegotten_

While casting women in stereotypical roles ruins a family in _Long Day's Journey Into Night_, it promises salvation in _A Moon for the Misbegotten_. In his final play, O'Neill creates, for the first and last time in his career, a "wholly admirable central character"--Josie Hogan (Raleigh 235). She is the perfect O'Neill woman: strong, clear-headed, motherly, and asexual. In order to attain this status, however, Josie has had to banish her sexual desire for Jamie Tyrone. Ironically, Josie must be frigid in order to avoid "the kind of Alaska" O'Neill's other women occupy. As the play demonstrates, Josie's sacrifice makes salvation attainable for herself and Jamie Tyrone. She becomes "the" Madonna, a pure and compassionate woman, who grants Jamie the maternal forgiveness he has been searching for all his life. By banishing her sexuality and personal wishes, Josie creates a fruitful "kind of Alaska." Unlike the destructive and barren "Alaskas" of Evelyn and Mary, Josie's "Alaska" is an oasis in the male wasteland.

Many would argue that O'Neill's presentation of Josie is a pipe dream. For Luce Irigaray, all woman must "sacrifice" as Josie "sacrificed" as a result of their inscription into phallocentric
discourse. Because woman are the object of desire, they are not only denied desire, but even the question of female desire defies representation. The famous Freudian question, "what does woman want?" can never be articulated, never answered. According to Jacques Lacan, the happy conclusion of female desire, orgasm or jouissance does not exist and [which] signifies nothing. There is a jouissance proper to her and of which she herself may know nothing, except that she experiences it—that much she does know. She knows it of course when it happens. It does not happen to all of them. (Feminine Sexuality 145)

Given this framework, Josie becomes an allegorical "Everywoman," with her "sacrifice" paralleling the sacrifice all women make in a phallocentric system. O'Neill's play, however, is much more than a reenactment of this feminine denial. Unlike Lacan and Iragaray, O'Neill represents the "sacrifice" as a sign of hope. While the psychoanalytic critics argue that the denial only suppresses women, keeping the phallocentric machinery in order, O'Neill's play illustrates that Josie's renouncement is not only conscious but it creates positive results in the lives of Jamie and Josie.

Admittedly, O'Neill may be a victim of phallocentric logic. As a male he must justify the feminine sacrifice. But the play accentuates and recognizes Josie's desire. Female desire is presented, and Jamie's inability to fulfill that desire emphasizes his, not Josie's, weakness. The female subject desires, but the male is incapable of accepting feminine sexuality. Further, rather
than blaming the phallocentric system for Josie's frustrations, Jamie Tyrone bears much of the responsibility for thwarting Josie's sexual expression.

Since the play is a sequel to *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the setting is nearly the same. The only difference, of course, is that instead of being staged in the Tyrone family home, the play takes place outdoors, in front of the Hogans' home. The house, though connected to the Tyrone estate, is by no means in good condition. As in *The Iceman Cometh*, O'Neill apparently takes pains to deflate our expectations of setting. He notes, that the Hogan house is not "to speak mildly, a fine example of New England architecture. . .It has been moved to its present sight and looks it" (xi). Like its inhabitants, the house is a poor immigrant, too. Jamie Tyrone, however, is more comfortable here than in his own home. The scene in which Phil Hogan gets the better of his wealthy neighbor (the Harder story now replaces the Harker story which appeared in *Long Day's Journey Into Night*) functions as a means of exposition and contrast: we learn that Jamie's land is for sale and we learn that Jamie's sense of humor is more like the Hogan's than his own family home.

At the heart of this alternative family is Josie Hogan, a foul-mouthed, heavy, healthy, and earthy female. At the beginning of the play, she is even "birthing" her younger brother, literally kicking him out of the nest and enjoying every second of the process. She appears to be a rough whore with a golden heart. She will not admit or accept her maternal characteristics; they embarrass her. She
would rather be known as a whore than a nurturing, unmarried woman. As the play progresses, we learn that her whorish ways are a pretense. Unlike Mary Tyrone who is a mother with a whorish habit, Josie is a "mother" who disguises herself as a whore.

Josie's misrepresentation of herself is her "pipe dream," and like so many other O'Neill characters, she, too, must face her personal illusions. Unlike her predecessors, however, Josie not only survives when her dreams are exposed, she triumphs. Her evening with Jamie, her "dark night of the soul," forces her to admit to herself, Jamie, and the audience that she is not only still a virgin but also a gentle, vulnerable woman. This admission makes her the perfect mirror for Jamie or any man. Though Robert Heilman does not note any change in Josie, his description of her role as reflector is apt, if not a bit derogatory:

Josie is Earth Mother as Virgin Mary, the harlot as madonna. Somehow being sustained by her all but converts Tyrone's final descent into a triumph. What is more, she is that rare creature of the romantic male imagination who may give herself to many but whom the individual male envisions as faithful to himself alone—a distant rural unschooled cousin of the Cleopatra who, a cut-glass reflector of the self, turns the plain light of self-knowing into the prismatic luster of self-love. (110)

Even her appearance changes throughout the night, for at the beginning of the play, the descriptions of her are negative: "she is
so oversize for a woman that she is almost a freak" (1). At the night wears on, she becomes more beautiful, not merely due to Jamie's attentions, but because of her own personal discoveries. 5

Sexual desire denied, the mirror now untainted, Josie miraculously communicates with the dead Mary Tyrone. According to Jamie, both are "simple and kind and pure of heart" (98). Both are now one; both now occupy "a kind of Alaska." As a result, when Josie forgives, she is certain that Mary also absolves Jamie: "I forgive you... As she forgives, do you hear, me! As she loves and understands and forgives" (99). As in the relationship between Abbie and Eben in O'Neill's earlier play, Desire Under the Elms (1924), Jamie needs a woman to put his mother's memory to rest. The couples may be happy for a while, but death generally intervenes in some way or another. Though the mother's influence may now be put aside, its duration has generally done irreparable or extensive damage. Unlike many other O'Neill women, Josie offers compassion rather than condemnation, but even she, the great, Irish Madonna, cannot save Jamie's life.

Like many of O'Neill's men, Jamie perceives women dualistically, as mothers or whores. He is, moreover, probably the best example of a character who believes in this perspective, since he cannot even admit the term "wife" into his psycho-linguistic system. Because Josie is such a character, neither mother nor whore, but a woman who would love to love Jamie, and because his treatment of her is so bad, it is clear that he cannot accept her love, or anyone else's, because he is locked into his prejudices
concerning life and women. In the end his "binary blindness" creates a "kind of a coffin," Jamie's own "kind of Alaska."

Like Larry Slade in The Iceman Cometh, Jamie Tyrone is one of the few male characters in O'Neill who consistently manifests the feminine quality of "being there and not there." Jamie is often physically present but either drunk or in some sort of self-destructive reverie. Throughout the play, however, it is clear that Jamie is not making contact with the type of feminine oasis Josie seems to contact. Rather than discovering solace, he torments himself with his memories of Mary and her death. He can state unequivocally that he hated his father, but Mary continues to manipulate him from her cold, "Alaskan" coffin.

He feels like he killed her because he has started drinking again. To make matters worse, he must take the maternal corpse home on a train, a corpse that metaphorically follows him throughout the rest of his life. As he tells Josie, "She was in her coffin in the baggage car. No matter how drunk I got, I couldn't forget that for a minute. I found I couldn't stay alone in the drawing room for a minute. I became haunted. I was going crazy" (96). He turns to a prostitute, "a blonde pig" (97), because, "unable to feel anything for the dead mother, Jim concluded that he too had 'died,' the inference being that he could not survive the loss of maternal love. In the prostitute he seeks at once a mother substitute and revenge on the mother for deserting him" (Tornqvist 245).
His relationship with the blonde, however, does not help Jamie "lay" his mother to rest. Because the prostitute still deals in desire, her function as a mirror is faulty. Jamie cannot perceive of himself as somehow "whole" or complete. But even when he meets a perfect mirror in the character of Josie, he cannot remain with her, since he only sees women as either mothers or whores, not wives or friends. Accustomed to associating sex with whores, he cannot express his love towards Josie physically. When he tries, he immediately launches into his "whore-behavior." After Josie offers him her bed, for example, he says,

Sure thing Kiddo. What the hell else do you suppose I came for? I've been kidding myself. (He steps up beside her and puts his arm around her and presses his body to hers) You're the goods, Kid. I've wanted you all along. Love, nuts! I'll show you what love is. I know what you want, Bright Eyes. (She [Josie] is staring at him now with a lock of frightened horror. He kisses her roughly) Come on, Baby Doll, let's hit the hay. (89)

For Jamie, sex means the woman is a whore, no matter who that woman is. Distinctions dissolve, and in the end these monolithic conclusions concerning women destroy Jamie. Because of these stereotypic expectations, Jamie cannot see that the love Josie offers him is natural. For Jamie, sex is as perverted, diseased, and as meaningless as the whores he has slept with his entire life.
Michael Hinden argues that Tyrone’s inability to sleep with Josie is a sign of transcendence. Vile, physical love is transformed into a good, holy and pure religious experience. He notes that “Josie’s early sexual interest is transcended, and for Jin she understands that she unites maternal and religious needs” (245). Be that as it may, Josie’s real desires go without attention. Faced with the choice of roles, Madonna or whore, Josie opts for the maternal. Unlike Evelyn Hickman and Mary Tyrone, who use their roles to inflict pain, Josie nurtures, perhaps because she is actually offered the choice.

After Jamie challenges her on her own pipe dreams concerning her "whorish ways," he and Josie fight. He is about to leave, but Josie makes her choice to help him at the cost of her own desire:

Come here to me, you great fool, and stop your silly blather. There’s nothing to hate you for. There’s nothing to forgive. Sure, I was only trying to give you happiness, because I love you. I’m sorry I was so stupid and didn’t see--But I see now, and you’ll find I have all the love you need. (She gives him a hug and kisses him. There is passion in her kiss but it is a tender, protective maternal passion, which he responds to with an instant grateful yielding.) . . . Forgive my selfishness, thinking only of myself. Sure if there’s one thing I owe you tonight, after all my lying and scheming, it’s to give you the love you need, and it’ll be my pride and joy--(Forcing a trembling echo of her playful tone)
It's easy enough, too, for I have all kinds of love for you—and maybe this is the greatest of all—because it costs so much. (91-92)

Just as Josie "births" her brother in the opening scene, Josie gives birth at the end of the play. As she tells her father, a miracle has occurred, "a virgin bears a dead child in the night, and the dawn finds her still a virgin" (103). Through her denial of desire, Josie not only becomes Jamie's angel of mercy, but she has also gained tremendous self-awareness and poetic power. For the first time, a female is rewarded for her participation in patriarchy, reaping benefits greater than "her man's" admiration.

In the end, the play raises her to the level of female myth, a woman to be revered and honored, for she has forgiven Jamie; she has faced the abyss and survived. John Henry Raleigh likens her to a Celtic warrior woman, "who is the spiritual vehicle who conveys the soul of the dead to rebirth in a later generation" (235). This mythic interpretation of a female character, however, does not necessarily permit her access to the male world, any more than her role as the whore did. Both roles remove women from the world—one by elevating, the other by debasing women. If given the choice, though, the transcendental representation is a refreshing change. In A Moon for the Misbegotten, the mother who destroyed herself and her sons is still present, but she is calmed by yet another female, an earthy angel of mercy. In the end, Josie may remain with her father—perhaps O'Neill's own wish for his daughter—but she has attained some sense of personal dignity and strength.
Unlike the women in *The Iceman Cometh* who haunt their men from their imprisonment behind the glass, unlike the women like Evelyn and Mary Tyrone in *Long Day's Journey Into Night* who use the mirror to torture their men, Josie looks into the mirror, sees her needs and the needs of Jamie. She then chooses to help him by playing the role of the Madonna, a role which offers her the ability to remain present in the male world. Consequently, unlike the other women, Josie is the most fully "present" female character in the O'Neill canon: she need not hide her feminine side by refusing to play the role of mother or whore. Instead, she uses the role of the Madonna to find love and an expression of her feminine nature. Admittedly, she must play by the rules of the patriarchy, but she is no longer the comical "whore." She is the ideal O'Neill woman, a woman who offers a glimmer of hope in the masculine wasteland.
CHAPTER II

THINGS THAT TICK IN THE NIGHT: Women in Pinter’s The Homecoming, No Man’s Land, and A Kind of Alaska

The feminine "Alaska" in Eugene O’Neill’s works are predominantly places of refuge for women in a hostile male world. The place for the feminine is for the most part a second-class existence. The female "Alaska’s" in Harold Pinter’s plays, on the other hand, are respites in the masculine wasteland, and many male characters long to inhabit their female counterparts’ "kind of Alaska." In other words, while many of O’Neill’s women flee, Pinter’s women serve as an oasis in the wasteland the men have made. In the O’Neill plays, there is no place for women, unless they are either mothers or whores. For the men, deviations are intolerable. They pursue women with binary ardor, hoping to create the mirror which will make them feel self-reliant once more. In their search, however, they shatter that which they wish to locate—their female mirrors. In the process of forcing women into categories, they break their female counterparts, thereby losing their own reflection.
Pinter also presents women as inhabiting some "kind of Alaska," as being "there but not there." But this "Alaska" is not merely a "second choice" to the preferable male world. The "Alaska" is not the "ladies' auxiliary" to the male club; instead, it is an indication that belongs and is possible in that patriarchy.

This difference between the two playwrights' representation of femininity is "reflected" in their attitudes towards mirrors. Unlike O’Neill who habitually checked his appearance in order to confirm his existence, Pinter claims that mirrors actually disturb rather than reassure his connection with reality:

I had--I have--nothing to say about myself, directly. I wouldn't know where to begin. Particularly since I often look at myself in the mirror and say "Who the hell is that?" (qtd. in Hollis 13)

In many of his plays, Pinter's women function in a similar way--rather than shattering under the pressure of the traditional expectations held by the male characters, Pinter's women revel in the roles, often playing the part of both mother and whore simultaneously. The Homecoming's Ruth is particularly adept, becoming a perfect mirror which reflects almost too well or too brightly. In a word, she may succeed because "she is all things to all people" (Hollis 106). Rather than resisting or succumbing to male expectations as Mary Tyrone does, Ruth fulfills these fantasies, surprisingly all at once. Unlike Josie Hogan, in A Moon for the Misbegotten, Ruth does not make a choice between the role of Madonna and the role of whore. In this way, the play offers a
solution to the male dualism, the traditional expectations placed on women, not by emphasizing their destructive nature, but instead by presenting the men with the mother and whore combined in one woman. Not surprisingly, the men have tremendous difficulties when these characteristics are embodied in the remarkable Ruth.¹

Despite Ruth's ability to meet the often conflicting expectations of men, she triumphs in the end. To some extent she wins because she is a good actress, for she has the ability to fulfill many roles simultaneously, without ever actually becoming her role. Paradoxically, she retains her independence by meeting male expectations, by playing the roles very well. Ruth is "greater than the sum of her parts." Because she plays so many roles so well, her presence creates anxiety in the men who perceive women dualistically, like her husband Teddy who compartmentalizes everyone. Because she is the one who violates classification, those who wish to classify her become befuddled.

Like the men in O'Neill's plays, Pinter's men often look to a woman to function as their one and only personal "missing link," fulfilling traditional roles and reflecting their image perfectly. A woman like Ruth, however, initially overwhelsms such men, and many like Teddy or Hirst in No Man's Land can never overcome the anxiety produced by such a female. Others, however, do, and once they do, they begin to see the female character as embodying something more than their male world has to offer, an alternative to the masculine wasteland, a dry and dead "kind of Alaska."
Hirst describes this characteristic as that peculiarly female part that "all women keep in reserve for a rainy day" (127). In Pinter's plays, this female "moreness" is something beyond words, something ecstatic. It is jouissance, the inarticulate female power or potential for pleasure many women do not realize they possess (Lacan, Feminine Sexuality 145). Ruth, however, is in touch with her "moreness." 

What is equally important in this play, moreover, is that the men are initially frightened or threatened by this "extra." At the end of The Homecoming, however, the men have not only come to terms with this principle of feminine greatness, they even consider marketing this excess pleasure. Lacan, who is cynical concerning the outcome of relationships between the sexes citing that men are to blame, notes that there are men who revere female excess:

There are men who are just as good as women. It does happen. And who therefore feel just as good. Despite, I won't say their phallus, despite what encumbers them on that score, they get the idea that there must be a jouissance which goes beyond. That is what we call a mystic. (Feminine Sexuality 147)

Admittedly, Max, Joey, and Lenny are far from becoming famous mystics like Thomas Merton or John of the Cross. But they do value what Ruth has to offer, unlike Teddy who must run for fear of becoming too involved.

The "kind of Alaska" many of Pinter's women inhabit is an oasis for all, a response to the rocky world of America or even the house
into which Ruth first enters. More importantly, this oasis does not demand the restructuring of the entire human race, gender, or language in order to succeed. There is no need for feminist utopias in which men are not even permitted entrance. Instead, Pinter’s female oasis is built upon the rocks of stereotypic and traditional roles, rocks that no one can honestly avoid, even those who merely toss the rocks into the sea of feminist idealism.³ Finally, then, Pinter’s women may also function as mirrors, but rather than reassuring male completeness, his females function like the mirror in a telescope, a mirror which indicates—but does not completely define or demand—another vision of the world.

The Homecoming

Despite the fact that The Homecoming seems to revolve around a young man's return to his native land and his family, the dearth of critical work devotes its attention to his wife, Ruth, who also returns to her native land.⁴ As a matter of fact, Ruth is so enigmatic that she causes as much dissension among the critics as she does among Teddy's family. Though every critic offers an original interpretation of this fascinating female, two opposing groups emerge: some see her as a vile effrontery to woman- and mother-hood, while others see her as a remarkably wholesome—a "whole" person and then "some."⁵

In both the play and the literary world, Ruth makes a "difference." For a moment, at least, she throws many off guard,
thereby creating anxiety in the men over her femininity. The men in
the play are astounded by this real woman, a woman who is both
mother and whore, fantasy and flesh. And the extent to which the
critics disagree about Ruth would either astound or entertain even
the most firm believer in the security of meaning and
signification.

In many ways, both the critics and the characters attempt to
cut signification short by keeping Ruth and the text quiet. The
quest for such security is characteristic of the well-made play, the
form Pinter violates here in The Homecoming. Critic, Austin
Quigley, makes the distinction between the Pinter format and the
structure of the well-made play:

Explanatory coherence in a Pinter play is thus something
different from that of the well-made play. It is
something to be generated by the characters and imposed by
them on the action, and its imposition frequently involves
desperate competition among a variety of characters, each
seeking to impose on events and situations self-enhancing
explanations. (Other Worlds 225)

Quigley, however, overlooks the importance of gender in his
formulations. Like the male characters in The Iceman Cometh, the
men in Pinter's play attain their strong sense of self, their "self-
enhancement," by imposing traditional, social expectations upon the
female characters. Furthermore, Pinter's plays do not blindly
support these expectations or this subjective view of reality,
though the characters may endorse both. The plays, in fact,
accentuate and critique their characters' tendencies to impose rather than read reality, particularly in the area of gender differences.

In *The Homecoming*, for example, the imposition of traditional values upon a female character is undercut in several ways. First, Ruth violates the stereotypic feminine divisions held by the other male characters. Quite unexpectedly, she is neither mother nor whore. Second, because she has access to both roles, she often uses one role or the other in order to achieve her own ends, often "reading" a man to discover his point of weakness. And thirdly, if Ruth is threatening, the world without women is no better; she is, after all, much more interesting than Teddy who leaves England to return to his own world of men, the American desert.

Unlike any of O'Neill's women, Ruth, then, triumphs by manipulating male expectations, rather than separating herself completely from the world of men. Ruth's "Alaska" allows her to remain true to herself, and yet function in the male world. As the play progresses, this quality becomes more and more valuable: since many of the men cannot accept themselves, they look to Ruth, whose strength is now clear, for sustenance. They, too, want to inhabit "a Kind of Alaska."

This method of representing female difference, as well as the battle of the sexes, appeared early in Pinter's works. In one of his poems, entitled "The Error of Alarm" (1956), the great, female "error" is
yielding despite her recognition of the "killing"
masculine conception of her identity as merely that
through which to solidify his own. She should not be
"alarmed" at this situation between the sexes, submitting
to his control out of her own fear, but should confront
it, and should refuse to "die." (Hudgins 107)

Similarly, Ruth confronts Teddy when she refuses to return to
America. Unlike Mary Tyrone or even Josie, who sacrifice some part
of themselves in order to gain some benefits on the paternal sexual
market place, Ruth protects herself by taking control of that market
place at the end of the play. She remains true to her needs and her
feminine difference, despite the male characters' attempts to make
her "more of the same." Through Ruth, the dramatic world receives a
grown-up Mary Tyrone, a woman who will not mutilate or manipulate
herself for the patriarchy, a woman who is neither in "error" nor
"alarmed."

Though O'Neill's and Pinter's females may inhabit their
"Alaska's" differently, both playwrights consistently choose
domestic settings for many of their dramas. When describing
Pinter's preference for such settings, R. F. Storch could very well
be detailing O'Neill's penchant for the familial:
In spite of the clever dislocation of common sense, Pinter's plays affect us because they are about the middle-class family, both as sheltering home longed for and dreamed of, and as many-tentacled monster strangling its victim. It does not, after all, surprise us that there is more menace and irrationality in this dramatic material than in any other. (136)

At the heart of this ambivalent setting there is usually a woman. Further, in both Pinter's *The Homecoming* and O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, there is a lone woman in the midst of a group of men. At this point the similarities diminish: while O'Neill's work illustrates the effects of the men on a woman, Pinter's play demonstrates the effects of the woman on a group of men. For some, the only woman who could survive in such an atmosphere would be a whore or a mother with a whorish habit, a woman who

performs no single social role, she is what each new man wishes to make of her. She is available to experience, and she is an available experience. She is eternally "between trains," she is known in passing and as something passing. In fact, she is simply unknown. Existentially speaking, we are all life's whores to the degree that we are in motion and have not arbitrarily codified and thereby stilled ourselves. (Kerr 36)

Admittedly, the whores in *The Iceman Cometh* generally fulfill male expectations in this manner, asking questions only about money
and the nature of their requests. But Ruth violates rather than passively fulfills male expectations, even in the area of sexual desire. When, for example, she is with Joey in the bedroom for hours, she does not go "the whole hog." Instead of fulfilling Joey sexually, she educates him on the depth of desire. Converted, Joey claims that he needn’t go "the whole hog" to be satisfied with Ruth. Rather than complying to male urges, Ruth educates the men on the ways of women.

Like *The Iceman Cometh* and Pinter’s later play *No Man’s Land*, *The Homecoming* opens with the men without women. Unlike *The Iceman Cometh* in which men protect the pipe dreams of the other male characters, however, Pinter’s men mercilessly harass each other. With sardonic vigor, they deflate rather than inflate one another’s egos. The play opens with an adult version of the children’s game, "rock-paper-scissors": Max, who carries a stick, looks for the scissors, while Lenny reads his paper. Under the rules of the game, Max, who possesses two out of the three ingredients to the game, would easily beat Lenny.

Pinter’s work, however, "plays" the game differently, for it is clear that Lenny has all the power in this relationship, despite Max’s "macho" accessories. Like Harry Hope and the barflies in O’Neill’s *The Iceman Cometh*, Max chatters while Lenny remains oblivious. Suddenly Max begins to reminisce about Jesse, his wife and Lenny’s mother:
Mind you, she wasn't such a bad woman. Even though it made me sick just to look at her rotten stinking face, she wasn't such a bad bitch. I gave her the best bleeding years of my life anyway. (9)

This hostile tirade humorously springs from an apparently innocent monologue, a speech most of us might expect to end with a tale of friendship and marital bliss. The monologue, however, violates these expectations, and it gets our attention, as well as Lenny's response: "Plug it, will you, you stupid sod, I'm trying to read the paper"(9). Max's words finally reach Lenny, breaking through the barrier of the newspaper, notably his words about women. Max replies with further hostility: "Listen! I'll chop your spine off, you talk to me like that! You understand? Talking to your lousy filthy father like that!" (9). Ironically, Max invokes the paternal label, "father," to coax some respect from Lenny. But as he gives, so he takes away, by paradoxically, making the term meaningless—as impotent as his "fags"—by referring to himself as a "lousy filthy father."

This opening not only indicates that we are in a Pinter, not an O'Neill, play, but it also indicates that we are not in the safe and womb-like environment of Harry Hope's saloon. Illusions may be fostered here, but hostility rather than passive complicity keeps them alive. John Lahr notes that one of the themes of The Homecoming is this odd relationship between reality and illusion (xv). But while O'Neill rails against this "odd couple," Pinter
celebrates and ridicules the affair between reality and illusion, particularly personal illusions.

Unlike Harry Hope, for example, Max does not use the memory of Jesse to inflate his own sense of self-worth. Instead, he uses the maternal memory as another stick with which to beat his sons. The tactic works, for Lenny reacts. Humorously, the scene parallels that of a typical tirade between a husband and wife—the man reads the newspaper, while the woman attempts to establish communication and gain some attention. Like many dissatisfied wives, Maggie in Cat on a Hot Tin Roof (1955), for instance, Max resorts to outlandish behavior to gain attention.

This scene establishes the means by which the men relate to each other and to women, as well as illustrating Max’s position of surrogate female to this household of men. Like the inhabitants of Harry Hope’s saloon, who function as mirrors to their male counterparts, Max plays the female in this household. In the O’Neill play, the pseudo-females perpetuate pipe dreams; they keep everyone happy and alive. Since everyone upholds the dream, no one has to leave; their needs are completely satisfied through illusion.

Pinter, on the other hand, demonstrates the difficulties associated with the pseudo-female role through Max. Rather than looking to others or a whiskey glass for comfort, Max upholds his personal illusions in the same way he controls his family—through violence, by carrying a big stick. His goal, however, is the same as that of the dreamers in Harry Hope’s: he, too, wants attention
and existential reassurance. Once he has Lenny’s attention, Max brags about his career as a horseman:

You only read their names in the papers. But I’ve stroked their manes, I’ve held them, I’ve calmed them down before a big race. . . . .I always had the smell of a good horse. I could smell him. And not only the colts but the fillies. Because the fillies are more highly strung than the colts, they’re more unreliable, did you know that? No, what do you know? Nothing. But I was always able to tell a good filly by one particular trick. I’d look her in the eye. . . . .I could tell whether she was a stayer or not. It was a gift. I had a gift. (10)

Max behaves like a woman who has exchanged a career for a life at home: he fantasizes about his past and subsequently uses those dreams to manipulate his family in the way, say, Mary Tyrone manipulates her men with her pipe dreams of convent life.

More importantly, however, Max argues that reading about horses is not as valuable as experiencing horses. Like, Ruth who later reminds Lenny and Teddy that lips may be just as, if not more important, than words, Max, too, seems to be more comfortable with experiential rather than intellectual knowledge. In addition to having stroked the horses’ manes, Max may also have more experience with women than Lenny, a man who only reads about horses, a man who may not have the "gift." Lenny’s hostile response confirms this suspicion. Because Max hints that he has "a way" with the fillies, he exchanges his female role for a masculine one. In order to
retaliates or "castrate" Max, Lenny now insults him on his performance as a cook, a traditionally female role--"You're a dog cook. Honest" (11).

With this insult, Lenny not only deactivates Max as a man, but also as a woman—-even as a female, a weaker version of the male, Max is a failure. Lenny proceeds to harass him further, feigning fear concerning a beating from Max. Lenny may impose the stereotype because he cannot tangle with his father as a man. He must make him a woman in order to insure his triumph in the battle.

This oscillation between the assumption of male and female roles for Max, however, persists throughout the play, not just when Max wants to abuse his sons. Sam, his brother, for example, has a job "outside of the home," unlike Max which prompts further conflict. When Sam brags about his ability to handle clients, perhaps in the same way Max handled horses, Max attacks Sam by saying, "It's funny you never got married, isn't it? A man with all your gifts" (14). Max is caught in a double bind by assuming the responsibilities of the home:

In this role Max oscillates between emotional security and vulnerability. On the one hand, he boasts of the primacy of man's abilities as a homemaker, but on the other, he manifests a recurring need to justify himself in terms of achievements in the world outside the home" (Quigley, Pinter Problem 180)

And though Quigley does not notice it, Max's position is that of a traditional housewife and mother whose contributions to the home are
ignored by both her family and the patriarchy. Like the traditional housewife and mother, Max often resorts to verbal abuse, manipulation, and guilt in order to gain any recognition or perverse psychological gratification.

A man in this role appears off-balance, perhaps satiric, while a woman in this role would appear typical or "normal." Max may play the female, but he still carries a big stick. He retains his youthful vigor and literally deflates Joey, a boxer, with one punch. Whether this victory tells us more about Joey's future as a boxer or Max's virility is difficult to say, but Max does win this round. We are left with the image of a wizened old man decked his son, as well as Max's sound advice to Joey on the rules of boxing and the home: "What you've got to do is you've got to learn how to defend yourself, and you've got to learn how to attack" (17).

Unlike many other women, Max has some choice concerning his roles, for it appears that he can quickly disassociate himself from the female role. As he tells Joey and Sam when they are hungry, "Who do you think I am, your mother? Eh? Honest. They walk in here every time of the day and night like bloody animals. Go and find yourself a mother" (16). Ironically, this tirade is typical of overworked, resentful mothers who often refer to their children in the third person, despite their obvious presence. Max may try to leave the role, but he cannot break away completely; some influences remain.
Max's own history may be similar to his current situation; both he and his father performed wifely duties. To Sam, he even indicates that only he has all the rights to his father's affections:

Our father? I remember him. Don't worry. You kid yourself. He used to come over to me and look down at me. My old man did. He'd bend right over me, then he'd pick me up. I was only that big. Then he'd dandle me. Give me the bottle. Wipe me clean. Give me a smile. Pat me on the bum. Pass me around, pass me from hand to hand. Toss me up in the air. Catch me coming down. I remember my father.

Later, we learn that Max's mother was bedridden at this time, so his father had to fill in as the mother. Judging from this description, Max's father treated his sons more like footballs than babies. While Max probably did not enjoy this treatment, he still treats his sons in the same way. Instead of tossing them like footballs, however, he hits them like baseballs. Further, he retains this paternal memory and uses it during a power play with Sam who does not "remember" the father. This use of the paternal, the phallus, gives Max the sense of completeness he desires.

Up until Ruth's arrival, then, this family functions without a woman. Jessie's memory is used only in the context of abuse, and the memories of the paternal figures vacillate between feminine and masculine roles. Almost in spite of himself, however, Max has become a surrogate mother--a man with a withered stick. Like most
women, Max, then, becomes defined in terms of what he does not have, that is, as a "not-man."

In many ways, Teddy returns to see his mother Max, to see the mirror that "dangled" him and gave him his complete sense of self. Even though Max probably abused Teddy, the need to return home is strong. Like many men, Teddy yearns to find an "origin," a center for his life. He yearns for the center of phallocentricism. As he tells Ruth, "There was a wall, across there... with a door. We knocked it down... years ago... to make an open living area. The structure wasn't affected, you see. My mother was dead" (21). On the one hand, the structure is not affected because Max has always played the role of the mother, since Jessie, for some reason, could not. On the other hand, the structure is affected, and Teddy cannot see that without the wall, that smooth, mirror-like surface, he cannot gain autonomy.

The reasons for Max's takeover as parent are not altogether clear. When Sam blurts out that he not only took Jesse for rides in his car, but he also drove the car while Mac "had Jesse" in the back of the cab, it is clear that Jesse may have been unable to take care of the family for one reason or another. Despite her absence, she remains a powerful force in the family and play.

Rolf Fjelde hints that the reason for her absence as a mother was that she, like Max's own family, was diseased. Like James Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night (1956), Max also had to take care of his entire family and brothers. He "had to read books! I had to study the disease, so that I could cope with an emergency at
every stage" (47). Fjelde notes that Jessie’s multiple nature, her inability to be either mother or whore in some way causes the disease:

Since Jessie is absent, and her exposition is made both meager and ambiguous, we can never know exactly what her character was, except that the contagion spreads—in all but Joey, the only one who neither shares not needs the ritual cigar—from her dual and unreconcilable roles of the good wife and mother and deceiving slutbitch. (102)

In many ways, Fjelde is victim of the dualism so many male characters in the plays of O’Neill and Pinter struggle to impose upon their females. He makes a typical response to female difference—he labels Jesse diseased, perhaps insane, not because she has been institutionalized or even bedridden, as Max’s mother had, but because she violates the mother-whore classification. She is crazy or diseased because she does not live up to his expectations of what a female character should be. Furthermore, he does not take the context of the comments into account—Max and the family may use maternal memories as did the men in The Iceman Cometh: to make themselves look better. Because it is Max who mentions his mother’s illness and his father’s "dandling," it is altogether possible that any mental illness would come from his side of the family.

The disease Jessie embodies and Ruth brings with her when she enters the house is their "kind of Alaska"; it is their femininity which defies classification, violates the male rules. It is their
ex-cess which the men label as "diseased." Both women--Ruth by
demonstration and Jessie by implication--do what the men do not
expect. They do not fulfill traditional roles, yet they do not
exactly violate them either. Instead, they both turn "male
categories against men" (Postlewait 210).

Ruth's inability to mirror Teddy may even prompt him to return
to England. Apparently, she made him feel "whole" and "complete" at
one time, for he makes numerous allusions to the fact that she is
the perfect mate:

She's a great help to me over there. She's a wonderful
wife and mother. She's a very popular woman. She's got
lots of friends. It's a great life, at the University. .
.you know. . . .it's a good life. We've got a lovely house.
. . we've got all . . . we've got everything we want. It's
a very stimulating environment. (50)

Later, Teddy tries to coax Ruth back home by promising her that she
can help him with his work: "You can help me with my lectures when
we get back. I'd love that" (55).

Judging from these indications, Ruth has been the dutiful wife
and mother, the perfect suburban mirror for years. Until recently
that is, for as Teddy indicates, Ruth "had a good week" in Venice,
implying that she has not been herself for a while. Like the men in
Long Day's Journey Into Night, Teddy classifies women as
"themselves" when they mirror his desires. When women or female
characters do not cooperate in the usual manner, they are classified
as "diseased."
At their arrival, it is clear that things are not going well for the American, married couple. Teddy is overprotective, worrying about Ruth's weariness. And when she decides to go for a walk, to leave him temporarily, he panics, "half turns from the window, stands, suddenly chews his knuckles" (24). Ruth leaves with the key to the house, while Teddy and Lenny meet for the first time in years. They appear to have never parted and proceed to discuss mundane family matters and a "tick" that needs to be stifled.

With Teddy off to bed, Ruth enters the masculine world alone, except perhaps with the aid of Jessie's ghost. Lenny greets Ruth civilly, and begins discussing the "tick." He notes that it could be the clock as Teddy suggested, but he now doubts whether the clock is indeed the cause:

I mean there are lots of things that tick in the night, don't you find that? All sorts of objects, which, in the day, you wouldn't call anything else but commonplace. They give you no trouble. But in the night any given one of a number of them is liable to start letting out a bit of a tick. Whereas you look at these objects in the day and they're just commonplace. They're as quiet as mice during the daytime. (28)

This "tick" is an appropriate metaphor for Ruth's position in the household and the means by which the feminine "Alaska" produces anxiety. Female difference in this play, Ruth's "kind of Alaska," does not sound an alarm, but it is loud enough or noticeable enough to irritate. Lenny, of course, does not realize how much trouble
she may cause. And at this point in the play, he may only imply that she "wind his clock."

Lenny's observations concerning their dress indicate that Ruth is already causing a disturbance; she is fully clothed, and he is only partially dressed. Pinter reverses the usual male-female business in this way. Anyone who has seen a passionate Hollywood love scene knows that the man is rarely undressed before the woman.

Almost as if to counteract this imbalance of power, Lenny launches into one of his wonderful tales of sex and violence from his repertoire of sadistic, slut stories. His first tale concerns an incident with a diseased whore who gives him trouble and whom he subsequently beats and considers killing: "But... in the end I thought... aah, why go to all the bother... you know, getting rid of the corpse and all that, getting yourself in a state of tension. So I just gave her another belt in the nose and a couple of turns of the boot and sort of left it at that" (31). To this bed-time story, Ruth merely asks, "How did you know she was diseased?" (31).

According to numerous critics, Ruth quickly establishes her power, for rather than expressing horror at Lenny's machismo, Ruth castrates him with a commonplace query. Admittedly, Ruth is in control here, but, more important, is Lenny's response:

How did I know?

Pause

I decided she was. (31)
Like Teddy and many other males in and out of fiction, Lenny decides when a female is diseased. Just as Teddy decided Ruth was sick and just as Rolf Fjelde decided Jessie and Ruth were ill, Lenny has the power of labelling females "suitable" or "unsuitable." Despite his odd fairy tales, Lenny is like the other men in the play and perhaps the audience. Ruth’s question, then, is apt, since she has been labelled "diseased" herself by her "normal" husband, Teddy. Furthermore, her question establishes the fact that Lenny is just like the other men, particularly her husband. Lenny, however, may be better than the rest, since his misogyny and his attempts to frighten are overt, not couched in compassion.

With the next tale, Ruth overcomes Lenny by using his birth name:

Ruth’s final masterstroke—think-acting her way into one unassailable position—is to call Lenny "Leonard," as his dead mother used to, thereby asserting her dominance on the most immediate level and at the same time setting up resonances which continue to vibrate in the memory all through the play. (Taylor 65)

Whether or not this is Ruth’s decisive moment in the family is difficult to say, but she violates most of Lenny’s expectations regarding women at this point—she neither shrieks at nor runs away from his stories, but instead moves closer to her brother-in-law.

Ruth then offers water to Lenny, which becomes a threat, not a thirst-quencher. Both Ruth and the water become disturbing rather than reassuring images, thereby violating the usual expectations
regarding both women and water. Sources of comfort become unsettling because they come too close, and they are uncontrolled at this time:

LENNY: Just give me the glass.

RUTH: If you take the glass . . . I’ll take you. (34)

Lenny retreats. Ruth has not behaved as expected. And when she drains the glass, Ruth indicates that if he will not fulfill her, she will fulfill herself. Once again she defies the traditional stereotyping, gaining desire and its fruition in the patriarchy.

By taking the glass into herself, Ruth refuses to be a mirror; instead, she digests the liquid looking-glass. Whatever her relationship to the myth of autonomy, this scene makes it clear that she will not reflect, for she leaves behind an empty glass. Since Lenny follows her lead, draining his own glass after her departure, there may be hope for him, since he, too, has taken the mirror within, rather than allowing it to remain outside of himself. With Ruth’s

exultant draining of the glass of water, Ruth asserts her own full-bodied sexuality in the face of his impotence, although Lenny’s draining of his own glass of water after she exits suggests the possibility of his redemption through Ruth from that condition. (Burkman, Godot 134)

If Lenny has learned about women’s roles from his father, they would necessarily be dualistic, for Max himself oscillates between viewing women as either mothers or whores, which is particularly evident in his memories of Jessie. Lenny’s own experience with
women is minimal, so he relies on his father's interpretations to replace his own lack of experience. Now that Lenny meets a "real" woman, the categories do not work, but rather than dismissing Ruth or deciding she is diseased, he is fascinated by this "real" woman, a female who is neither simply earth-mother nor simply whore.

Joey responds to Ruth with more child-like awe, and in the end, it appears that Ruth pities him more than the rest, perhaps because he understands that "you can be happy . . . and not go the whole hog" (68). Joey is the man in the house who understands the limitations of the traditional feminine roles. The other characters, particularly Max, need some education. One lesson occurs when Max tells an idealized version of his past. Much like James Tyrone, Max creates his own version of a Dickensian-Christmas tale. In this story, Max entered into "negotiations with a top-class group of butchers and continental connections," and though the deal is just as illusory as Max's memories, he has faith in this business deal, at this time in his life. He feels hopeful, and he tells Jesse that he thinks "our ship has come home": "Then I gave her a drop of cherry brandy. I remember the boys came down, in their pajamas, all their hair shining, their faces pink, it was before they started shaving, and they knelt down at our feet, Jesse's and mine. I tell you it was like Christmas" (46).

Ruth dismisses his story by using the same tactics she used with Lenny; she resorts to the commonplace: "What happened to the group of butchers?" she asks. Ruth realizes that the family's ship has never "come home," perhaps until now. And her focus on the
reality of the situation challenges Max's tendency to idealize himself and Jesse. With a real woman around, female fantasies become more complicated, almost unattainable. But like Lenny, Max has an entire volume of tales at his disposal, so he launches into yet another, more scathing story.

Almost as if to "out-mother" Ruth, he tells another tale in which he rescues the entire family by taking care of not just his own children but his wife and brother as well: "A crippled family, three bastard sons, a slutbitch of a wife--don't talk to me about the pain of childbirth--I suffered pain, I've still got the pangs" (47). Angered by Ruth's emphasis on the reality of the past, Max must defame females and simultaneously become one in order to reassure himself that he is, ironically, a "real man." In the end, however, Max realizes the futility of his anger and his attempts at becoming a woman. In the end, he, too, must face his fragmentation, and he, too, looks to Ruth for some reassurance.

Teddy is one of the only men in the house who does not participate in or appreciate the female difference. As a matter of fact, Teddy does not get caught up with anyone. He is completely detached. Even his passion, academia, extends no further than "his province." When the entire family turns to Ruth, tries to touch and understand her, Teddy renounces them and his own opportunity to make human contact: "You're just objects. You just...move about. I can observe it. I can see what you do. It's the same as I do. But I won't be lost in it. You won't me being... I won't be lost in it" (62).
Like the child who cannot differentiate between himself and his mother, Teddy fears the same end as an adult, if he participates in Ruth's world even momentarily. If he meets Ruth on her terms, he will lose his security; he will have to face his fragmentation and deny his autonomy. Notably, the American culture Teddy wishes to return to is characterized by this ideology of self-reliance.

While Teddy cannot participate in Ruth's world, she has participated in his cosmos for years, and judging from her description, it is a desolate wasteland. She describes America as "all rock. And sand. It stretches . . . so far. . . everywhere you look. And there's lots of insects there" (53). Consequently, when Lenny asks her if she would like her drink on the rocks, she may be reminded of her time with Teddy in America: "Rocks? What do you know about rocks?" (61). Admittedly, she is also questioning Lenny's prowess. By playing the "whore," Lenny backs off, leaving her alone.

There are rocks here in London, but as Lenny tells her, "they're frozen stiff in the fridge" (61). On that note, Ruth drinks, perhaps toasting the fact that those are the only rocks she wants to come in contact with at this time, perhaps challenging Lenny to bring them out of the deep-freeze. Ruth's own "Alaska," that feminine part of her, has enabled her to survive the dessert, but she cannot continue living in that fashion. She may be able to live in Teddy's world, momentarily, but upon entering the London flat, a world in which men often play at being women and in which a woman, Jessie, still haunts the rooms, Ruth realizes that she has
come home: "Ruth is ready for anything. She has always been in training for this moment" (Aronson, 83). 8

Ruth’s ability to remain with Teddy for this length of time has made her strong, not merely a survivor, so the men in the family look to her as an oasis in their London wasteland:

Ruth’s speech on the movement of her leg and her lips is crucial to the action and meaning of the play. Through it she is not only calling attention to herself but offering herself to the family as something of special and mysterious value (Burkman, Godot 138)

Before Ruth’s arrival, the men have sought comfort from females by imposing strict roles upon their female counterparts. Looking for a mirror, Teddy, for example, cannot believe that Ruth, "a mother," would leave her children. Ruth challenges these roles, by fulfilling and violating these sexist codes of behavior.

The gifts Ruth offers as a result of her ability to play a number of roles are numerous. When, for instance, she focuses the attention of Lenny and Teddy on her lips, not the words which move through them, she may be offering one gift to them gratis: a recognition or an understanding that life involves words and lips, not one or the other, or more importantly, not one over the other. In many ways, Ruth embodies both the world of Teddy—the intellect—and the darker forces of the universe as represented through Jesse:

As Ruth exits under the arch that commemorates the conclusion of Jessie’s control of the family, she does so with a new female control... In her efforts to
establish that control, she has exhibited characteristics that make it clear that she, like Lenny, is not circumscribed by the roles assigned to her in the family structure to which she currently belongs. (Quigley, Pinter Problem 197)

Though the extent to which Ruth consciously courts this control is debatable, her persistent violation of the traditional division of female roles gives Ruth the power to take care of her own needs and desires.

For both the audience and the family, such a woman is rare, even an oddity. And her emphasis on the "law of the body" is as much a surprise to those around her as the appearance of D.H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover (1957) was to its readers.

Rather than gaining her power in the male economy by meeting male needs perfectly, Ruth gains power because she is different, because she experiences jouissance and knows she does. The men misread this difference as promiscuity, so they label her a "whore," a "Spanish Jackie." Ruth, however, is not an obedient, but costly, whore; instead, she is a demanding and costly woman who enjoys her own pleasure. She gives her orders at the end, agreeing to stay only if she gets certain things, like a flat of her own and new clothes. Most of the men want her around, so they agree to her terms.

Teddy, however, will not "be lost in it," so he leaves to return to his children, yet another family of men. Sam is passed out on the floor because he has just confessed that the great wife and mother Jesse committed adultery. Humorously, this confession
harms him more than it does the rest of the family. This image, Sam's deflated body paralleling his deflated dreams of Jesse, is an accurate metaphor for the changes the other male characters go through as a result of Ruth's presence. Like Hickey in The Iceman Cometh, Ruth brings a new message to the family, the law of the body. But unlike Hickey, she is not a harbinger of death. Instead, she offers the men salvation, perhaps because she teaches not just the law of the body, but the law of the female body.

With a real woman around, fantasies concerning females must be put aside. Joey cannot tell a lewd story, even though Lenny tries to help, and Max oscillates between denying his age and asserting his virility, until the very end. In the final tableau, Ruth is clearly comfortable with her body and her position in the family. She has taken over Max's position as "house-mother," for she now occupies his chair. She occupies her "kind of Alaska" which permits her to be happy with herself, not tormented and separated from the world or herself, as is Mary Tyrone. She has ingested the mirror, both refused to become it and used it against the men, but all the while, she remains true to herself, a bit detached but definitely "present." The men cluster around her for some aid, some sustenance. They hope to gain entrance into the world of feminine excess, but Ruth cannot function as the Madonna-savior, as Josie did in A Moon for the Misbegotten. She can only "be" Ruth, and that may be an inspiration and a curse for the men in the family: through her well-being, she taunts the men to attempt to achieve the same sense of satisfaction.
Ruth may offer redemption, but she will not merely make the men feel good about themselves. She will not perpetuate the myth of masculine autonomy by playing the mirror for the men. Her life with Teddy has taught her that the "dutiful wife" persona leads nowhere, neither for the man nor woman. Ruth’s redemption, then, stems from her own example. The men may be rejuvenated through Ruth’s example, but it is finally up to them. Unlike Hickey who asks the men in the bar to do as he says, not as he does, Ruth requires that they do as she does, silently: they must relinquish their need for a mirror, face their fragmentation, and begin to trust the law of the female body.

In the end, Joey complies, for he faces his fragmentation by learning the complicated nature of desire; sexual pleasure is more than going "the whole hog." There are variations on women and desire. Lenny may or may not be a "convert," but he is still closer to accepting his own limitations than his brother Teddy who leaves the house completely. In the end, all the men on stage, however, surround Ruth. She is a woman without the stereotypic baggage, and she looks much better than the world of female stereotypes, the world of rocks, ice, and mirrors.

The horror at the end of the play is not so much that Ruth remains in this house of men, but that she forces Max to face himself—she will not kiss him; she will not, like a whore, satisfy him. Instead, she sits in her chair, stroking Joey’s head, rewarding the one man who enjoys her as she is. Max, however, must
face the fact that he is old, that Ruth will remain, but she will not "be adaptable."

**No Man's Land**

With *No Man's Land* (1975), Pinter presents one of the most desolate, male wastelands we have seen so far. The England which appeared as a haven from the rocky American desert in *The Homecoming* is now just as barren, clearly no longer a refuge. Once again, the rocks may be stored securely in the refrigerator, iced and frozen, but because there is no Ruth in this home, there is little possibility for refreshment. As the play progresses, it becomes clear that the men are also frozen and impotent, their own "rocks" iced. As in *The Iceman Cometh*, the absence of women in this play and their memories often function as mirrors to the male egos. But unlike the male characters in *The Iceman Cometh*, Pinter's men use the absent women to destroy rather than uphold the fantasies of their counterparts. Like the men in *The Homecoming*, these males use women as weapons of torture; they do not use feminine memories to reassure or soothe each others' fragile egos.

There is hope, however, through the character of Spooner. Like, Max, he functions as a female force in this play, but rather than embodying the negative aspects of the female as does Max, Spooner offers new life to the dying Hirst, just as Ruth offers refreshment to the men in *The Homecoming*. In the end, Hirst cannot accept the salvation Spooner offers, so he "dies," living a life
without change. By presenting such a desperate picture of a world without women, as well as the disastrous results of Hirst's inability to accept any contact with the feminine, the play illustrates the disastrous consequences of unchecked patriarchy or rampant masculinity. Ironically, then, when women are isolated and sent to "a kind of Alaska," what remains is a world of men, but it is so unfit for human life that it becomes a "no man's land."

The play opens in a well-kept and wealthy home, but the center of this play, as in The Iceman Cometh, is the bar or liquor cabinet. Despite the wealth, these characters appear to rely upon alcohol as much as the inhabitants of Harry's Hope's saloon rely on their second-rate booze. In both "cases" the booze functions as a mirror when the women will not.

In contrast, the men in The Homecoming initially do not have any whiskey on hand; drinks are reserved for special occasions. They do not need the alcohol--the surrogate mirror or mother--because even though there is no woman in the house, the men have Max and the memory of Jesse which is enough to satisfy them until Ruth's arrival. When Ruth decides to stay in the home, however, liquor appears, and the celebration of her, not Teddy's, homecoming begins. The different uses of alcohol in both plays, then, indicates some correlation between the appearance of women and the amount of alcohol used. For while the men in The Homecoming use it to celebrate the arrival of a woman, the men in The Iceman Cometh and No Man's Land drink continuously, numb to change and self-examination. In this play, as in O'Neill's, alcohol is a means to
salve the wounds of fragmentation, perpetuating a myth of autonomy, again through the aid of a mirror, liquid glass.

The play emphasizes the importance of alcohol and refreshment, by opening with Spooner toasting Hirst's health. With this proclamation, the play hints at Spooner's position as a medicine man. He tells Hirst,

There are some people who appear to be strong, whose idea of what strength consists of is persuasive, but who inhabit the idea and not the fact. What they possess is not strength but expertise. They have nurtured and maintain what is in fact a calculated posture. Half the time it works. It takes a man of intelligence and perception to stick a needle through that posture and discern the essential flabbiness of the stance. I am such a man. (78)

Like Hickey and Ruth, Spooner promises something special, some "extra" trait which the other men do not possess. Like Hickey, he sells a bill of goods to his newly-acquired patron. But his quest or his goal—to prick the essential hypocrisy of the seemingly strong—is akin to Ruth's admonition to Lenny and Teddy to remember that the "fact" that her lips move may be more important than the "ideas" or words that move through these lips. Furthermore, Spooner reechoes Ruth's sentiments when he recounts an incident regarding a Hungarian emigre: "It was not what he said but possibly the way he sat which has remained with me all my life and has, I am quite sure, made me what I am" (87). Like Ruth, Spooner's means of redemption
involves the experiential, not analytical or intellectual, considerations.

At the same time, however, one of Spooner's other pet projects includes the salvation of the English language, a task Hirst has spent his life refining. It appears that Spooner is full of contradictions. Like a true woman, a true chameleon, who must survive somehow in a world which does not permit his existence, Spooner often shifts his perspectives. In order to establish himself in this home, he often appears like an anxious, but homely, girl waiting to be chosen by a dashing and wealthy male. As a result of his own tenuous connection to the world--his residence in "a kind of Alaska," Spooner often manipulates a situation to his best interests. These machinations often lead him to contradict himself logically.

To confirm or partially establish his position as mirror in the home, Spooner warns Hirst that "To show interest in me or, good gracious, anything tending towards a positive liking of me would cause in me a condition of the acutest alarm. Fortunately, the danger is remote" (79). Like Teddy, Spooner here advocates a distanced view of the world, never getting caught up in it all. By setting himself up as that which must be ignored or avoided, Spooner in many ways plays the role of the female, the mirror who must remain flat, unchanging, immovable, and only used for the purpose of ornamentation or reflection. At the same time, however, Spooner is keenly aware of his audience; he knows Hirst is as incapable of human contact as Teddy, at least at this point in time. His
perception of Hirst's detachment is correct, so his comment concerning the remote danger is a well-aimed insult.

Hirst's obliviousness is emphasized by the fact that he invites a man into his home without even knowing his name. Moreover, Spooner's own identity, like a woman's, is inconsequential. After all, he inhabits "a kind of Alaska," not Hirst's world. Like many men in both the drama and the audience, Hirst does not care who or what the mirror is, just as long as there is something to reflect his image, or, in Hirst's case, something to keep his mind off the issue of death.

Also, with Spooner talking, Hirst need not participate; like the audience in many plays, he need only watch. Spooner asks, "Can you imagine the two of us gabbling away like me? It would be intolerable" (81). It would be intolerable for Hirst since Spooner has been doing all the talking. A dialogue, a conversation, would be refreshing at this point.

In the midst of his babbling, however, the content of Spooner's discussion turns toward the feminine--mothers and love. Almost as a result of his contact with the female, Spooner gives birth to a name (88-89). Though Spooner is not female, the feminine principle must operate in his life, for after a discussion of his mother and her "currant buns," he introduces himself.

Whether or not Spooner is Spooner, if he is actually, literally there, or a part of Hirst himself, is difficult to say. He is like the matchseller in Pinter's A Slight Ache (1958) or Anna in Old Times (1971): a character whose literal existence is questionable,
but whose presence is influential and crucial to the action of the play. Spooner's position, however, is finally akin to the position of the women in the other plays discussed thus far—there and not there.

He identifies himself as a friend of the arts, a friend of words and young poets, intellect and emotion, body and mind. There are few divisions, few of the categories which plague many of Pinter's impotent men such as Hirst and Teddy who only operate within the confines of their "province." More importantly, in Spooner's world, his world of art, "women are admitted, some of whom are also poets" (90), unlike Hirst's world of butlers and booze.

Spooners profession of an identity and contact with women seems to inspire Hirst to open up further, to attempt to participate in the conversation, not merely observe or listen. But rather than mentioning a woman at first, Hirst envies the past in which male, not just female, virgins were garlanded at their deaths. Spooner encourages the conversation through an attack, a characteristically masculine means of expressing concern. Like an adolescent boy, Spooner feigns interest, saying sarcastically, "Tell me more. Tell me more about the quaint little perversions of your life and times" (92). Spooner mentions the fact that Hirst must have a wife, but there is no confirmation, except that Hirst implies that the fictional wife who Spooner has so aptly been creating has been given legs only to run away. Spooner challenges Hirst's view of reality, asking important, if not disturbing questions of him:
Was she ever here? Was she ever there, in your cottage?
It is my duty to tell you you have failed to convince. . .
I begin to wonder whether truly accurate and therefore essentially poetic definition means anything to you at all. I begin to wonder whether you do in fact love her, truly caressed her, truly did cradle her, truly did husband her, falsely dreamed or did truly adore her. I have seriously questioned these propositions and find them threadbare. (93)

Soon after this tirade, Hirst literally crawls out of the room. The interrogation has been too much, too close. On one level, Spooner questions his ability as a writer, a tale-teller, but on another, he questions Hirst as a man and human being:

Do forgive my candour. It is not method but madness. So you won’t I hope, object if I take out my prayer beads and my prayer mat and salute what I take to be your impotence? He stands.
I salute. And attend. And saluting and attending am at your service all embracing. Heed me. I am a relevant witness. And could be a friend. (95)

Unfortunately for Hirst, he cannot accept Spooner’s offer at this time. He leaves crawling through the door, taking refuge in "no man’s land," in which nothing changes, moves, or grows old, but "remains. . .forever. . .icy. . .silent" (96). Rather than face change, Hirst retreats to a land in which all is securely under his control.
While he is out, his caretakers, Foster and Briggs return. During Hirst's absence, they now question Spooner, who, in return, offers them his wife and daughters. Whether he actually has such women in his life is doubtful. Through his offer to the caretakes, however, women are represented as objects of barter, but they are also a means of salvation to even Briggs and Foster. Women are one means of leaving "no man's land":

Spooner: At my house in the country. You would receive the warmest of welcomes.

Foster: Who from?

Spooner: My wife. My two daughters.

Foster: Really? Would they like me? What do you think? Would they love me at first sight? (103)

Foster's response is unusual, since males generally objectify women through their sight, focusing on their own image, not the woman's. Because the women are actually absent, Foster uses Spooner as his mirror, ironically in order to prepare him to meet yet another female.

Soon after this offer, Hirst returns, talking a great deal about his dreams of drowning and waterfalls: "What is it? It was the dream, yes. Waterfalls. No, no a lake. Water. Drowning. Not me. Someone else" (106). Like Teddy, Hirst's dream indicates that he, too, fears getting "lost in it," losing control. Unsettled, he calms himself with the illusion of control by looking at his photograph album, a book in which human beings are pressed into
place, the quintessential mirror. Recalling one scene, he says it was "informed" by
a tenderness towards our fellows, perhaps. The sun shone. The girls had lovely hair, dark, sometimes red. Under their dresses their bodies were white. It's all in my album. I'll find it. You'll be struck by the charm of the girls, their grace, the ease with which they sit, pour tea, loll. It's in my album. (106)

Ironically, when Hirst finally begins to speak, to take an active role in the play, he does so by referring to human beings in an album, focusing particularly on the "pressed" women, referring to them just as detachedly as if he were looking at a butterfly collection.

Hirst believes that his "true friends look out at me from my album," but as he asserts this claim, his world begins to evaporate. When he mentions one woman, however, he is overcome and cries out for a bottle just as a child would: "When I stood my shadow fell upon her. She looked up. Give me the bottle. Give me the bottle" (108). Hirst does not crawl out of the room at this time. Instead, he continues to speak and recount his dream, a fantasy of sex and death, drowning and being "done to death."

At this point, Hirst's fears of getting "lost in it" are much more explicit than Teddy's. For while Teddy wants nothing to do with the family's relationship with Ruth, Hirst remembers his dream saying,
There’s a gap in me. I can’t fill it. There’s a flood running through me. I can’t plug it. They’re blotting me out. Who is doing it? I’m suffocating. It’s a muff. A muff, perfumed. (108)

Hirst’s fear is the feminine, losing himself to a muff. The female is not functioning as mirror; instead, it is taking him over, forcing him to let go, to get lost in the water. With such deep-seated fears concerning the female, particularly the sexual nature of his terror, it is difficult to imagine Hirst ever married.

With his strength waning, Hirst invokes decorum: "I remember nothing. I’m sitting in this room. I see you all, every one of you. A sociable gathering. The dispositions are kindly" (108). Etiquette keeps him in control of himself and the situation. This invocation to civility does not work, and once again Hirst falls to the floor.

The feminine is too much for him, too overwhelming. Unlike the absent women in The Iceman Cometh who can be manipulated and somehow controlled, even temporarily, Hirst’s perception of the female is uncontrollable. Spooner makes himself part of this experience by either referring to himself as the feminine principle or, more likely, as a submerged part of Hirst: "You saw me drowning in your dream. But have no fear. I am not drowned" (110). In either case, Spooner tries to make it clear to Hirst that he is not alone, that contact or some human connection is available.
Foster and Briggs, however, intervene, thereby inhibiting Spooner's attempts to reach Hirst. They are there to insure Hirst's detachedness. Foster even threatens Spooner by reminding him that he has entered another realm of operation. It's a world of silk. It's a world of organdie. It's a world of flower arrangements. It's a world of eighteenth century cookery books. It's nothing to do with toffee apples and a packet of crisps. It's milk in the bath. It's the cloth bellpull. It's organization. (111)

It is a world of men, particularly a world of English, aristocratic men. And the organization so many of them love actually inhibits love and human contact. In the end, this world becomes an emblem for the disastrous and perverse effects of patriarchy on men. Spooner, being an outsider, must be educated in this system, just as Deborah in A Kind of Alaska must be educated on the feminine rules of the patriarchal game.

Neither Deborah nor Spooner, however, easily acquiesce. Spooner remains to fight for Hirst's attention. The battle becomes more desperate because Hirst removes himself further from reality, more entangled in his photographic album, a male version of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Yellow Wallpaper (1892). With the opening of Act II Spooner awakens to a breakfast, a meal originally prepared for a financial planner who never arrived. Drinking and fiction are on the menu, items which help Spooner rejuvenate himself:
Spoon: I am a poet.

Pause.

Briggs: I thought poets were young.
Spoon: I am young (He reaches for the bottle.) Can I help you to the glass? (121-22)

With his virility established through the illusion of drink and literature, he attempts to leave the house, but Briggs prohibits his departure.

Hirst reappears, now calling Spooner "Charles." Their conversation turns to the past and women. Hirst assault his guest by telling a story of his sexual escapades with Emily, supposedly the wife of Spooner/Charles. In a story worthy of "Penthouse letters" (an English version, of course) Hirst boasts:

Told her of my yearning. Decided to take the bull by the horns. Proposed that she betray you. Admitted you were a damn fine chap, but pointed out I would be taking nothing that belonged to you, simply that portion of herself all women keep in reserve for a rainy day. Had an infernal job persuading her...Eventually she succumbed. (127)

Being the suave seducer, he fancies that he can see that part women keep hidden. He even brags about his methods; he obtained her favors by plying her "with buttered scones, Wiltshire cream, crumpets, and strawberries" (127). Like Max in The Homecoming, he seems to have the "gift." He continues, and for a moment it appears that he has won the battle, if not the war, by cuckold Spooner/Charles through his narrative.
As a result of this fictional conquest, Hirst appears confident, so he moves on to bigger and better conquests—war. Spooner, however, innocently interrupts, asking, "Do you ever see Stella?" (130). Through a series of questions, Spooner not only returns to the really important subject of sex, but he also twists Hirst's sexual bravado into animal-like perversity:

It is you, sir, who have behaved scandalously. To the fairest of sexes, of which my wife was the fairest representative. It is you who have behaved unnaturally and scandalously, to the woman who was joined to me in God. (135)

Spooners demoralizes Hirst, and Hirst tries to retaliate, but his opponent has the upper hand. Rather than insulting Hirst's morals further, he moves to another, more important topic. He inflicts a deep wound to Hirst through an attack, not on his sexual behavior, but something apparently more intimate, his abilities as a writer:

It [Spooners homage to Wessex] is written in terza rima, a form which, if you will forgive my saying so, you have never been able to master.

Hirst: This is outrageous! Who are you? What are you doing in my house?

He goes to the door and calls.

Denson! A whisky and soda!

He walks about the room.
You are clearly a lout. The Charles Wetherby I knew was a gentleman. I see a figure reduced. I am sorry for you.

Where is the moral ardour that sustained you once? (135-36)

Hirst invokes morals when his literary, not his sexual, performance is put into question. Besides, Spooner/Charles has changed the subject, moving from sexual and military conquests to issues of literature.

More importantly, Hirst’s use of the female is fairly typical. He views women as objects, and his use of Emily is not only for his own pleasure, both in the "experience" (if it indeed occurred) and in the boasting. He uses the story to get the better of another man; the story becomes his weapon. Spooner, however, uses the female in a different way. Instead of challenging Hirst through a duel of sexual-exploit stories (akin to Lenny’s in The Homecoming), Spooner challenges Hirst’s sexual bravado with virtue, a quality which Hirst and Spooner established earlier as ultimately connected to art. Both toast "Through art to virtue" (90). With this connection intact, Spooner criticizes Hirst’s abilities as an artist and moralist.

Consequently, Hirst begins to feel rather than fall. He does not run out of the room or reach for a drink. Admittedly, he reaches for his photo album which may be just another mirror, just another means of escape, but at least he remains standing. He even talks about making contact with the something outside himself, the "good ghost":

If you can face the good ghost. Allow the love of the good ghost. They possess all that emotion...trapped.
Bow to it. It will assuredly never release them, but who knows...what relief...it may give to them...who knows how they may quicken...in their chains, in their glass jars. You think it cruel...to quicken them, when they are fixed, imprisoned? No...Deeply, deeply, they wish to respond to your touch, to your look, and when you smile, their joy...is unbounded. And so I say to you, tender the dead, as you would yourself be tendered, now, in what you would describe as your life. (137)

Though Hirst looks to a mirror, he does not see what other men see; rather than being reassured, Hirst sees the frozen faces in the album, identifying himself as one of their ranks. Even his name rings of death, Hirst and "hearse" (Gabbard 261). Like them, he is also isolated and frozen, but full of life underneath the ice. And as their spokesperson, Hirst cries out for assistance.

Up until now, however, there has been no one to heed his cries. Briggs is not the means to this change, for he responds to the album-inhabitants, saying, "They’re blank, mate, blank. The blank dead" (137). Foster, too, is more interested in his own career and the status quo than he is in helping an old, alcoholic man. By inviting Spooner into his home, Hirst reaches out to another again, perhaps contacting one of his own good ghosts. Unlike Briggs and Foster, however, the new guest "offers himself to Hirst as a savior who will oversee his literary comeback" (Burkman,
"Death and Double" 140). Spooner has enough experience to see Hirst through the difficult times:

   My career, I admit freely, has been chequered. I was one of the golden of my generation. Something happened. I don’t know what it was. Nevertheless I am I and have survived insult and deprivation. I am I. I offer myself not abjectly but with ancient pride. I come to you as a warrior. I shall be happy to serve you as my master.

   (147)

   Unlike many of the other men, Spooner knows who he is—"I am I." And what he is, is a man in touch with his limitations and fragmentation. He offers Hirst hope and salvation in this splintered state. He promises poetry readings, public appearances, and photos. But more importantly, he, like Ruth and Deborah, offers the "law of the body," not the law of words:

   Your face is so seldom seen, your words known to so many, have been so seldom heard, in the absolute authority of your own rendering, that this even would qualify for that rarest of categories: the unique. I beg you to consider seriously the social implications of such an adventure. You would be there in body. It would bring the young to you. (148)

   Admittedly, when Spooner idealizes the unique and the "absolute authority" of Hirst’s poetry reading, the masculine myth of autonomy is expressed in terms of literary closure. That is, Spooner argues that there is only one "true" reading, the "unique," which only
Hirst can present to the world. But Spooner may use this tactic to sway Hirst to come with him through the promise of autonomy he so desperately seeks. In any case, Spooner slows down a bit, by concluding,

But that is by the by, and would in no sense be a condition. Let us content ourselves with the idea of an intimate reading, in a pleasing and conducive environment, let us consider an evening to be remembered, by all who would take part in her. (149)

Spooners choice of the final and feminine pronoun suggests that the feminine is, indeed, the only positive alternative to this male wasteland. It is one of the first times the feminine has appeared positively in the present or even near future sense in this play, and it, like Ruth, seems to indicate an oasis in this male wasteland. This feminine entity is a public reading, a sharing of words. And this communal participation would be a change for Hirst, who hoards words like Scrooge hoarded money. Almost as if to revise the previous and opposing relationship between words and lips, words in this play are not the villains. If used properly, they can be just as beneficial as the moving leg, the lips, and the body which accompany these utterances.

Hirst cannot make the "leap" of faith Spooner requests him to make. He would rather "change the subject for the last time" than face the chaos of uncertainty, a fragmented world, a world with women. With this utterance, his body must follow, and he completely enters his "no man's land," a land stiff and frozen like his album:
snow "will fall forever. Because you've changed the subject. For the last time" (151). Hirst cannot face the law of the body, so he, like many men, closes the subject. In her recent work on the "bodily enigma," Jane Gallop notes that unlike theorizing about books or words, "the theorizing about the body is endless, an eternal reading of the 'body' as authorless text, full of tempting, persuasive significance, but lacking a final guarantee or intended meaning" ("Enigma" 20). Like many of the other men we have seen so far, Hirst cannot face the feminine—this indeterminacy—and so eliminates change. Unlike many of the other men in the play or The Iceman Cometh who look to other men as mirrors when women are not around, Hirst himself becomes the mirror he looked for throughout his life—he becomes the corpse, the frozen form. Consequently, Spooner tells him,

        You are in no man's land. Which never moves, which never changes, which never grows older, but which remains forever, icy and silent. (153)

Hirst, however, is so far gone, so far consumed by the wasteland he has created for himself that he does not even care that he can no longer change the subject. He concludes the play as he began—embalming himself through drink. Unlike The Homecoming which concluded with a Pieta-like image of Ruth and her men, No Man's Land offers an icon for a world without women: the men are frozen in a world without change. Ironically, a world which tried so hard to contain meaning, to hold onto the security of signification, is, finally, meaningless.
While No Man’s Land explores the frigidity of patriarchy, A Kind of Alaska (1981) "explores the complexities and uncertainties of being a woman or rather becoming a woman" (Burkman, Godot 157-158). Unlike Ruth who has participated in patriarchy for years and found a comfortable place for herself in that system, Deborah has been asleep for over twenty years. Her awakening, then, would seem to signal a release, a new period of freedom. But because she fell asleep at sixteen and now awakens at forty-seven, she learns that she is a "woman" and certain rules apply. Hornby, her doctor, admirer, and patriarchal representative, educates her on the rules of femininity. Sacrifices must be made. Her sister and now Hornby’s wife, Pauline, participates in her education, but like many females in patriarchy, her voice does not count. It cannot be heard over the masculine pronouncements. In the end, Deborah remains silent, but this quietness, like the calm before the storm, communicates an eerie critique of Hornby and patriarchy’s project—to silence and contain women. Through this brief on act, Pinter exposes and challenges patriarchy’s treatment of women, its tendency to only allow women conditional admittance.

The play opens with Deborah’s awakening, and to some extent, our own—the audience, who has been in the dark, awakens to a new play. What we see is a lively and girlish woman in her forties, lying on a bed, with a doctor nearby. As Deborah learns about her illness, we do as well. Hornby is also our guide. As a medical
doctor some members of the audience may assume he has more
credibility than others. After all, he is the only one who knows
the whole story: "You [Deborah] have been asleep for a very long
time. You have now woken up. We are here to care for you" (7).

By placing the audience in the same position as Deborah, Pinter
forces the audience to feel as Deborah feels: confused, dependent,
and a bit frightened. Through this tactic, Pinter reproduces the
position of the feminine for the audience, at least momentarily.
Further, A Kind of Alaska usually appears in a collection called
Other Places, a group of plays which takes its audiences to the
places of the "other." In Family Voices, family members "voice"
their feelings for one another, but rarely does anyone listen. All
appear trapped in "a kind of Alaska": the son is away from home;
the father dead; and like many of the O'Neill mothers, this mother
is obsessed with having the son return to her. In the end, he does,
but it is too late:

Voice 2 [the mother]: I'll tell you, what, my darling. I've
given you up as a very bad job. Tell me one last thing. Do
you think the word love means anything?

Voice 1 (the son): I am on my way back to you. I am about to
make the journey back to you. What will you say to me?

Voice 3 (the father): I have so much to say to you. But I am
quite dead. What I have to say to you will never be said. (83)
And in Victoria Station, a dispatcher tries to convince a cabbie to return to the station to complete his evening assignments. The cabbie, however, will not cooperate. He says he is parked outside the Crystal Palace, a building which burned down years ago. He says he has fallen in love, too:

With this girl in the back seat. I think I am going to keep her for the rest of my life. I'm going to stay in this car with her for the rest of my life. I'm going to marry her in this car. We'll die together in this car.

(60)

In the end, the dispatcher leaves his position of safety to search for his lost cabbie. Like us, he enters the "other places."

As A Kind of Alaska progresses, however, the similarities between Deborah and the audience diminish. Deborah clearly fights for her own place, while Hornby and Pauline try to convince her to behave, to function as a mirror. As a result of this distancing, we can see how Hornby tries to educate Deborah in the ways of womanhood.

He continually tells her that she has been asleep, but Deborah defends herself, saying, "Why do you blame me? I was simply obeying the law of the body"(14). Unlike Ruth who can persuade at least one family member, Joey, to adhere to the law of the body, Deborah cannot convince Hornby, just as Ruth cannot convert Teddy. Admittedly, Hornby permits Deborah a bit more latitude than Teddy offers Ruth, but when Deborah begins to get upset, her emotionalism
is quickly condemned. Mirrors must be silent: "Be calm. Don't agitate yourself" (16).

Because Deborah has been the perfect mirror for years—silent, flat, and pretty—Hornby has a difficult time adjusting to this new, walking, talking woman. As a matter of fact, his first words to her are a request to keep quiet and listen to him (7). Deborah keenly senses something is wrong; the imposition of silence feels like a prison to her:

I've obviously committed a criminal offence and am now in prison. I'm quite prepared to face up to the facts. But what offence? I can't imagine what offence it could be. I mean one that would bring . . . such a terrible sentence. (17)

Admittedly, Deborah's explanations for her predicament are often adolescent delusions, but her explanation here may not be that far from the truth. Hornby denies that she is in a prison, and he assures her that she has committed no offense, but by the end of the play, her femininity is her prison. As Hornby explains to her,

You see, you have been nowhere, absent, indifferent. It is we who have suffered.

Pause

You do see that, I'm sure. You were an extremely intelligent young girl. All opinions confirm this. Your mind has not been damaged. It was merely suspended, it took up a temporary habitation . . . in a kind of Alaska. But it was not entirely static, was it? You ventured into
quite remote... utterly foreign territories. You kept
on the move. And I charted your itinerary. Or did my
best to do so. I have never let you go.

Silence.

I have never let you go.

Silence

I have lived with you.

Pause

Your sister Pauline was twelve when you were left for
dead. When she was twenty I married her. She is a
widow. I have lived with you.

Silence.

Hornby establishes his claim on Deborah, his "right" to her and her
affections. Just as he charted her progress as a diseased patient,
he now wants the same control. In both cases, however, his
relationship to Deborah's experiences is indirect, vicarious. Like
many of the other male characters, however, he avoids his own "lack"
of experience, his own fragmentation, by analyzing Deborah's
illness, by using her as a mirror, the means to give his own life
meaning. Unlike Pauline who walks and talks and changes her mind,
Deborah is frozen in her sleep, ready for any fantasy he wishes to
project upon her sleeping form.

Hornby's confession is not meant to be a profession of love;
instead, it is one way to manipulate Deborah into behaving the way
Hornby would like her to behave. Through this tale, Hornby
"charges" Deborah for his services by making her feel indebted to him and guilty for not reacting in the manner he wishes. Deborah feels the icy imposition, the new "kind of Alaska" Hornby would like to sentence her to:

    I want to go home.

    Pause

    I'm cold.

    She takes Pauline's hand. (35)

Pauline, however, cannot help Deborah out, for despite her estranged relationship to Hornby, she listens to him intently, obeying patriarchal laws. Unlike Ruth who inhabits patriarchy on her terms, Pauline does not cause a stir.

    By the end of the play, Deborah looses much of her exuberance and calmly prepares to have a "birthday party," which celebrates her birth into patriarchy. One of the important issues the play raises, however, concerns the quality of life Deborah will have now that she has lost her memory and much of her life. In other awakening stories, life is usually better after the period of rest. In his work on the fairy tale, "Sleeping Beauty," for example, Bruno Bettelheim argues that

    While many fairy tales stress great deeds the heroes must perform to become themselves, "The Sleeping Beauty" emphasizes the long, quiet concentration on oneself that is also needed. During the months before the first menstruation, and often also for some time immediately following it, girls are passive, seem sleepy, and withdraw
into themselves. While no equally noticeable state heralds the coming of sexual maturity in boys, many of them experience a period of lassitude and of turning inward during puberty which equals the female experience. . . . In major life changes such as adolescence, for successful growth opportunities both active and quiescent periods are needed. (225)

Deborah’s quiet period, however, has not been restful. As she tells Pauline and Hornby, it was a hall of mirrors, with a faucet dripping, a kind of torture. She does manage to dance in "narrow spaces," but overall her experience seems painful. Her awakening, moreover, does not appear much better—there is no handsome prince or even a happy family to welcome her into the world. Instead she is told lies and truths, promised a pathetic party, and given numerous rules for behavior. Admittedly, caution is in order, but Hornby’s hesitancy is nearly as stifling as the dripping faucet. Further, as a man who has watched his sleeping beauty for years, he fears the loss of his looking glass.

In Oliver Sacks’s *Awakenings*, which inspired Pinter’s play, the young woman who is the prototype for Deborah does not fare too well either. Like Deborah, Rose R. was a promising, young, intelligent woman when the illness struck her. For forty three years she was trance-like, though she had the ability to speak, unlike Deborah. When she could speak her conversations sounded a lot like Deborah and Hornby’s dialogues. When asked what it was like to think of
nothing, of which she thought a great deal of the time, she described it as follows:

Worlds within worlds within worlds within worlds. Once I get going I can’t possibly stop. It’s like being caught between mirrors, or echoes, or something. Or being caught on a merry-go-round which won’t come to a stop. (69)

Her immediate response to the wonder “cure,” l-dopamine, was similar to Deborah’s—euphoric, adolescent, hopeful. But as the treatment progressed, she lost control, as was often the case with such patients. The drug therapy did not work for her, and she sadly began losing motor control, as well as her mental capacities. Sacks concludes his study in awe of the disease which keeps such a "normal" and lively personality trapped. He even likens her to the fairy tale princess: "She is a Sleeping Beauty whose ‘awakening’ was unbearable to her, and who will never be awakened again" (78-79).

Surprisingly, Pinter is not the only dramatist to demonstrate the ill-effects of this disease. Sam Shepard’s La Turista (1968) is a play which not only moves in reverse chronological order, as does Pinter’s Betrayal (1978), but it also contains a victim of this strange sleeping sickness. In Shepard’s play, however, the victim is a man, and when the doctors threaten to impose social restrictions upon him, he leaves the scene by jumping through a wall. And although the young man in Jean Anouilh’s Traveler Without Luggage (1936) may not have the identical disease that Shepard’s Kent and Pinter’s Deborah have, he has suffered amnesia, and the
entire play revolves around his quest for his identity and the others who try to persuade him to choose the identity they have in mind. In the end, Gaston discovers his family but chooses another, more suitable one for himself.

For Deborah, however, a flight from her feminity is not possible: no matter what her geographical coordinates or her state of consciousness, the position of femininity in patriarchy is a limited one, another "kind of Alaska." Like us, Deborah catches on to the "way of the world" by the end of the play:

You say I have been asleep. You say I am now awake. You say I have not awoken from the dead. You say I was not dreaming then and am not dreaming now. You say I have always been alive and am alive now. You say I am a woman. . . . I think I have the matter in proportion.

Pause

Thank you. (40)

And yet, like Ruth, Deborah may have a chance for some sort of survival in patriarchy. She "danced in narrow spaces" during her sleep, so now she may dance in narrow spaces within patriarchy. Unlike Pauline, who seems to acquiesce to Hornby’s control throughout the play, Deborah disagrees with him, often frustrating his attempts to keep her quiet. While Hornby may be an expert on her illness, she alone has survived it, and while she remains quiet at the end of the play, she does have the last word. It appears that though Deborah must make certain compromises with the law of
the father, she may also be able to establish a place for herself in
the patriarchy and thereby create the feminine anxiety Hornby so
desperately wishes to control. In the end, her silence and her
return to another absent/present means of existence, may or may not
cause discomfort in Hornby, but it definitely should in the audience
members who so early on identified their position with that of
Deborah's.

Many of Pinter's women, like Eugene O'Neill's, retreat from the
world of their male counterparts to "a kind of Alaska." They may
appear on stage, but some part of them is somehow missing. Though
the men gather around Ruth at the end of The Homecoming, looking for
sustenance, she remains aloof, disengaged. The men in No Man's Land
perceive and covet that part of the woman that is kept in reserve
for "a rainy day." And though Deborah in A Kind of Alaska awakens
to a new world, she cannot fully participate in that world; she
politely takes stock of the situation, gives Hornby not consent but
silence, and proceeds to live her life elsewhere--within and outside
of patriarchy.

While O'Neill's females rage against the injustice of the
patriarchal system, trying anyway to gain power through drug use or
manipulation, Pinter's women seem to assess the situation, getting
"the matter in proportion," and then proceed to find a place for
themselves within this world but not of the patriarchy. Unlike
Josie, who settles for the Madonna role in the dualistic world of
O'Neill's Moon for the Misbegotten, Pinter's women may play the
roles and use them to thwart the men's expectations, or they may not
play the roles completely and let the men know that they are not quite there, that there is something better beyond the roles.

The playwrights also present varying male responses to the females, for while O'Neill's men attempt to push the feminine aside by forcing them into the dual categories of mothers and whores, Pinter's men may also force the women into such roles, but they are also aware that there is more to these women. While O'Neill's men fear the difference and would rather have nothing to do with it, Pinter's men are curious and a bit envious. Through their dualism, their inability to permit difference, they create a male wasteland in which nothing changes, and therefore, nothing grows. In a word, the "kind of Alaska" O'Neill's women inhabit is akin to an asylum—a secure place for the female difference the men attempt to avoid.

For Pinter, the "kind of Alaska" is an oasis in the male wasteland. In both cases, however, by placing feminine difference outside of patriarchy, the male characters in the plays experience female anxiety by its very absence.
Chapter 3

"OUT WALKIN' AFTER MIDNIGHT SEARCHIN' FOR ME": Sam Shepard's Women in Buried Child, True West, and A Lie of the Mind

While Harold Pinter's Ruth renounces America as a desert, Sam Shepard's characters revel in the dust. For some readers, he is the great voice of the desert, the playwright of the American West and the American nation. All Shepard audiences have a difficult time explaining the violent energy which characterizes his works. Marsha Norman, a fellow playwright, however, offers another, and perhaps the best, explanation for Shepard's energy:

Shepard the playwright is a desperate genius. In the theater, his voice is piercing and inescapable. His vision is bleak and dry, like the landscape he haunts.

The plays are dark, violent evenings. Babies are buried in the backyard. Brothers are locked in vicious quarrels from the moment of their birth. Brothers and sisters are lovers, and Dad arranged it. There is a wildness in Shepard plays that cannot be tamed, a raging vengeance that destroys everything but the cactus. There
is a cruelty we tend to think of as particularly Western, but is probably, finally, only human. (358)

In Shepard's earlier plays, this violence or wildness overran considerations of characters, as well as cactii. Women, particularly, were absent or conspicuously passive. This lack of characterization or consideration has created as much dispute over Shepard's creative reputation as the violence. Those who admire his work, often embarrassedly admit so, explaining his inadequate characterization of females in terms of his unhappy home life as a child. He may be excused on account of his inexperience. Others say with a shrug—"He writes great plays, not great women, what more could anyone want?! Besides, he's American; he's all we've got."

Like many men from the Old West Shepard loves so much, Shepard's own characters often abandon women or use them as maids only. Love seems impossible. According to Leslie Fiedler, most men from American novels behave in this way: "If marriage dismays the American writers, though his earlier European prototypes assured him it was salvation itself; and if lawless passion unnerves him, though his later European colleagues assure him that it 'justifies all'--this is because both marriage and passion impugn the image of woman as mother, mean the abandonment of childhood" (337). In terms of this argument, the men do not wish to crack the maternal mirror, for with the loss of the mother, they simultaneously lose their own childhood. Fiedler continues his line of reasoning to include the modern, American novel, arguing that men in these works often wish
to remain pre-pubescent at all costs. And many, like Shepard’s men, look to the West as a means of escape.

Those who do disapprove of Shepard overall, frequently criticize his characterization of females, not his violence, his inexperience, or the Western flavor of his plays. In an early critical essay on Shepard, Bonnie Marranca practically threatens Shepard to "shape up or ship out" when it comes to female characterization, saying,

He may be the idol of many a young playwright, but his ideas about women are as old as the frontier days he celebrates. There is not a woman in all his plays whose life is independent of the men around her. If Shepard is ever to become a playwright of great stature his presentation of women will have to undergo a transformation. (111)

Admittedly, Marranca’s admonition is a bit naive, since sexism has never determined a writer’s fame, popularity, or inclusion in the literary canon. But even she, an advocate of Shepard’s works, shares the dismay of many Shepard audiences.

Like the critics of Eugene O’Neill and Harold Pinter, however, many of Shepard’s commentators equate the playwright’s personal attitudes with those of his characters. Further, many cannot distinguish between the ideas presented by a particular character and the ideas of the entire play, which may often be at odds.

Shepard’s plays, like the dramas of Pinter and O’Neill, are often
ironic—they present the mistreatment of women to expose not endorse such behavior.

As in the works of O'Neill and Pinter, the absent-present nature of the female character in Shepard's plays accentuates, rather than cloaks the feminine. Further, like O'Neill and Pinter, Shepard focuses on the family, the breeding ground of gender stereotypes. Indeed, *Curse of the Starving Class* (1976), *Buried Child* (1979), *True West* (1981), and *A Lie of the Mind* (1986) form a quartet of family dramas. Like O'Neill, family life for Shepard is "like all life, violent and contradictory, shaped by long-suppressed forces and dark secrets" (Mottram 132). And like many of the plays by O'Neill and Pinter, Shepard's works investigate "the strategies we cling to so unsuccessfully while the basis for our way of life disintegrates" (Patraka and Siegel 18).

Women, of course, are at the heart of both the family and the disintegration of personal illusions, and they are often, simultaneously, that which the "drowning" cling to, unsuccessfully. As in the works of O'Neill and Pinter, many of the women function as mirrors in Shepard's families, as well, occupying their own "kind of Alaska."

Like those two playwrights, Shepard's own relationship to literal mirrors "reflects" his presentation of the female mirror. At one point in his adult life, Shepard spent "a lot of time staring at himself in the mirror, noticing that the good eye came from his mother, the bad from his father" (Shewey 125). Though the mother-good, father-bad association may not be as apparent in Shepard's
works, the polarization of the sexes persists throughout his works. Further, by judging his mother "good" and desirable, but his father "bad," Shepard recreates the traditional Oedipal structure of desire. He even claims that he remembered his birth and the sense of loneliness which accompanied that moment: "I watched her body. I knew I'd come from her body, but I wasn't sure how. I knew I was away from her body now. Separate... I felt a tremendous panic suddenly" (Shewey 21).

Shepard's technique, his "bizarre" realism which leads, for example, one character in A Lie of the Mind to drop a frozen deer carcass in the middle of his family home, befuddles and annoys critics almost as much as his characterization of women. Both Pinter and Shepard seem to beg the same question concerning "style," "how do we classify them?" Susan Brienza synthesizes Shepard's various methods and devices succinctly: "Overall, Shepard seeks to produce theatre through 'other forms' of music, painting, sculpture, and film. This suggests why his theatre images are so forceful, why his dramatic themes derive from the transmutation of a central image or symbol" (14).

Many readers and critics solve their disappointment with Shepard's version of realism by arguing that the plays are meta-theatrical or even anti-theatrical. Toby Zinman and Gay Gibson Cima, for example, look to innovations in non-dramatic arts to offer explanations for Shepard's technique. According to Zinman, surfaces are the focus for the West Coast painters and the West Coast playwright: Shepard's work creates "an assaulting aesthetic that
demands our visceral engagement in the performance rather than the plot" (424). Cima focuses on the work of Rauschenberg, whose artistic endeavors "combine" "real, usually 'found' objects with his abstract canvases" (67). He persuasively argues that Shepard's dramas operate in a similar fashion—the traditional "kitchen-sink" format combined with the unusual Shepard content. Consequently, the frame remains which "allows the audience the pleasure of its own desire of meaning" (72). Through semiotic means, Shelia Rabillard concludes similarly: Shepard makes the audience "conscious of what is being done to them and of their role in the theatrical event" (63).

This meta-theatrical quality may account for the unrealistic or stereotypic quality many sense in Shepard's characters. Like O'Neill, Shepard relies on realism in his family dramas, with the relationships between characters clearly established. But unlike O'Neill, Shepard often neglects to provide the lengthy exposition characteristic of O'Neill. And this lack creates the "illusion that his characters have no existence prior to their appearance on stage" (18). 3

In this way, the audience does not have a clear idea about character motivation or purpose, as they might in the plays of O'Neill. Shepard's people may look like figures from Medieval morality plays. In Long Day's Journey Into Night, for example, there is no question concerning the Tyrone's unique and tortured past; the question of guilt, however, is the source of conflict which fuels the action of the play. In many of Shepard's works, the
entire question of identity is challenged on the level of surfaces: how do people know who they are when their entire family does not remember them, when there is nothing but the past, when the superficial labels erode? In the end, the surface, the realism, does not assure certainty or security. Consequently, many of the characters, especially the men, look to different roles, different surfaces in order to feel secure. Like the men in The Iceman Cometh, Shepard’s males look to other mirrors for reassurance when the old one cracks. They constantly look to other things outside themselves (petit objet a) for stability.

Paradoxically, this search is endless, so in their quest for certitude, the slippage in characterization prohibits closure. Plays do not end; they merely cease performing for the evening. And characters may not come to any clear and final resolution:

In the same way that individuality keeps shifting, strands in the storyline keep splitting, as Shepard teases his situation into an extraordinary tangle of vagueness and precision, generalization and particularity, combining inconsequential triviality with apocalyptic prophecy, social satire and cultural parody with surrealism and abstraction. (Hayman 172)

Our own need to watch the plays, explain the slippage, and its significance, makes us complicit in this quest for certitude. Like us, Shepard’s characters search for meaning. And like us, they participate in a theatrical event. Because women are so often the means by which men attain even a momentary sense of stability, the
plays force us to assess the female characters, their relationship to us and the male characters.

Buried Child

Buried Child (1979) is similar to O'Neill's Long Day's Journey Into Night and Pinter's The Homecoming: an "outsider" enters an apparently "normal" family, only to discover that the family is in shambles and in desperate need of assistance. In both the Pinter and the Shepard play, the outsider is a woman, Ruth and Shelly, respectively. In O'Neill's play, the audience itself is the outsider, the "gentleman caller" who is introduced to the crazed family. Considering the fact that O'Neill tried to prohibit the production of this play until he was dead twenty-five years, the audience is more accurately labelled "intruder." Carlotta Monterey O'Neill, however, overrode this wish and introduced the world to the Tyrones only three years after his death.

In each play, the female characters' relationship to the males is strained. In O'Neill's play, men witness the disintegration of Mary Tyrone. In Pinter's play, men witness the emergence of the powerful Ruth who finally leaves her arid husband, not for another man, but in order to stay with his brothers and father. In both plays, however, the men expect women to play the role, function as mirrors, keep quiet, and present them with a whole and complete image of themselves. Neither Mary nor Ruth cooperate entirely. Mary crumbles under the morphine addiction, prompting the men to
create other illusions to satisfy their need for fantasy, while
Pinter's Ruth surprises the men by presenting female desire under
the guise of perfect role-playing.

Likewise, the men in Shepard's play expect women to function as
mirrors, but the two female characters finally resist. Like Ruth,
Shelly, the visitor, eventually renounces Vince's American desert by
leaving him and the house completely. Like Mary Tyrone, Halie
retreats into a land of illusion, a land of photographs, in much the
same way that Hirst of No Man's Land looks to his album for his
"solid" and "true" friends. In both cases, the women opt for "a
kind of Alaska" rather than participating in the masculine wasteland
of Dodge, Tilden, Vince, and Bradley.

When the women do not cooperate, the men, like so many others
we have seen, search out other mirrors for themselves, another petit
objet a. Like the men in The Iceman Cometh and No Man's Land,
Shepard's men look to liquor and illusion for comfort. Unlike the
men in Harry's saloon, particularly, these characters are not
content with one illusion of themselves; they try on a number of
roles or personalities in the hopes that they may gain happiness or,
at least, some level of comfort. Further, unlike Max in The
Homecoming and Spooner in No Man's Land, Shepard's men do not often
take on the role of woman. Instead, they try on new roles for men,
vacillating among such personae as successful cowboys, successful
farmers, or successful jerks.

The play itself, moreover, seems to prohibit female
participation—the men seem happy searching through their chest of
toys, looking for just the right role. Though women appear on stage, they appear only for a little while. When they are on, they are often abused or abusive. And when they are gone, it appears that they leave no legacy of femininity, as does Jesse or Mary Tyrone. A "buried child," however, haunts the house in the same way that the the absent women of O'Neill's and Pinter's plays goblinize their dramas. Rather than prohibiting females upon the stage as did O'Neill and Pinter, Shepard's play banishes the offspring of a woman. Through this gruesome exile of the child, the play explores and exposes the men's extreme despair and their response to that despair. As Dodge later confesses in a speech, he was finished with raising a family, so he got rid of the child, as well as the new object of Halie's attention. Because Dodge is so lonely himself, and because his search for fulfillment has been so futile, he cannot allow another to be happy. The child and the part of Hallie which still loves the child, then, are banished to "a kind of Alaska" because the male wasteland cannot accommodate yet another member.

The Pablo Neruda epigraph sets the tone for the drama. Most first-time readers, though, are not aware that the play nearly recreates the poem literally:

While the rain of your fingertips falls,
while the rain of your bones falls,
and your laughter and marrow fall down,
you come flying. (61)

Written at the death of a close friend, the Neruda poem signals reincarnation, despite its grim images of fleshly deterioration:
"Though there is a strong sense of being submerged and buried, of
darkness, blindness, and oppression, the poem conveys an equally
strong positive sense of light and colour, weightlessness and
flight" (Callens 409). Whether or not this positive image of
rebirth remains throughout the play, is difficult to say.

The play also opens with rain. Dodge, the old man of the
family, is "entombed" on the couch, watching television, under a
blanket, and coughing. His wife, Halie, screams to him from the
upstairs room; her voice, not her body, first appears. She is
physically absent but otherwise impossible to ignore. When she
threatens to come down, Dodge is terror-stricken. To his great
relief, she remains upstairs momentarily, but advises him to take a
pill: "Pain is pain. Pure and simple. Suffering is a different
matter. That's entirely different. A pill seems a good as answer
as any" (66). On the one hand, though Halie's voice is strong, her
advice to Dodge, who is clearly in physical pain, indicates that she
is no stranger to suffering and its inevitability. Like many of the
other women we have seen, she is "there and not there," in her "kind
of Alaska" at the beginning of the play, perhaps due to the pain of
living with Dodge and the other men.

In addition, her advice to Dodge concerning medicine, indicates
that she knows how to silence that pain, her own and that of
others. Here, she silences Dodge in order to have her say. She
succeeds, talking incessantly throughout this opening scene. She
remembers her past--she used to go to the horse races with a man who
was a "breeder." They were in Florida and "everything was dancing
with life!" (66). When Dodge asks her questions about her sexual relationships with this man, Halie does not literally answer the question, but it is implied that Halie, like the horses, had been around the track a time or two. At this point in the play, it is difficult to imagine Halie succumbing to anyone, for she has the physical power and the emotional, manipulative skills to unnerve nearly everyone in her family, particularly Dodge.

When she appears, this assessment is confirmed: she is earthy, loud, strong, and sensuous. She is in mourning, however, due to the death of Ansel, her favorite adult son. But because Dodge looks so deathly—and even refers to himself as a corpse—the scene imprints a revised visual impression. Halie attends the funeral of Dodge, her living corpse of a husband. Later during an argument with Dodge, Halie’s words confirm this spectacle: "You sit here day and night, festering away! Decomposing! Smelling up the house with your putrid body!" (76). Dodge, then, is death, an "invisible man," and Halie wants nothing to do with him (68).

Officially, Halie is dressed in mourning because she has appointment with the pastor of their church. She wants to erect a statue commemorating the death of her son Ansel. In this way, Halie does what so many of the other men in this analysis have done, particularly the men in O’Neill. Like those men who grow tired of their mirrors or who shatter them in their attempts to feel good about themselves, Halie searches for a new mirror, a new petit objet a, to satisfy her thwarted desires. In effect, she "dodges" death.
Like Ruth, Halie has somehow attained the opportunity to express female desire. But unlike Ruth, who is comfortable with her femininity and in touch with the jouissance it brings, Halie is still trapped in the masculine mode of desire. In a classic Freudian scenario, Halie "lacks" the phallus (Anatomical Distinctions Between the Sexes). She has had a number of sons, which would ordinarily fulfill her, but they are all somewhat impotent: Ansel is dead; Tilden is brain-damaged; and Bradley lacks a leg. Consequently, she still searches for the phallus and attempts to gain it through the "erection" of a statue in honor of a son, through the help of a "father" of the Church. Halie's desire is permitted because it is the desire for and of the patriarchy. Unlike Ruth, Halie makes no feminine difference, and this is the point of her weakness. She may be physically able, and she may even leave the house, moving away from her husband, but she is still part of the patriarchy, a "good" woman who only wants a penis or a mirror.

Before Halie leaves, however, she takes time to abuse Dodge and Tilden a bit. She does not believe that Tilden has found the corn in the back yard. Dodge defends his son saying, "Things keep happening while you're upstairs, ya know. The world doesn't stop just because you're upstairs. Corn keeps growing. Rain keeps raining" (75). Halie, of course, denies the accusation, arguing that she is in touch, but Dodge's challenge once again indicates that Halie is not as strong as she looks, and he is not as weak as he appears.
With Halie gone, Dodge and Tilden have a tender, father-son discussion, unlike Max and Lenny in Pinter’s The Homecoming. Tilden confesses that he got into trouble in New Mexico because he was so lonely, and warns us and Dodge that "you gotta talk or you'll die" (78). During this time, he even thought he was dead, but in the end, he discovered that he "just lost his voice" (78). In some ways, the men "mother" each other here, at least for a moment. Dodge admonishes Tilden to just "forge ahead," and the two share some whiskey together. After Dodge falls asleep, however, Tilden steals his whiskey, and Bradley, the dreaded barber of Illinois, comes in and butchers Dodge's scalp.

Through this act, it is clear that we are not in Harry Hope's saloon: men do not help each other with their fantasies. But it is not the London flat of Lenny and Max either, for the men here do not abuse each other in the direct and open manner that the men in the Pinter play do. Instead, Shepard's men subvert each other indirectly or covertly, switching roles without telling each other, moving from the roles of good-son to bad-son in an instant. Rather than beating each other up directly as Max, for instance, does with Joey, these men resort to undercover tactics: they secretly steal whiskey or stealthily cut hair.

The house, however, does not remain without a woman for long. Like Teddy in Pinter's The Homecoming, Vince, one of the long lost sons of this family, also comes home bearing a woman, Shelly. At the door, Shelly misbehaves: because of the house’s external appearance, she assumes that Vince's family will behave exactly as
she would expect the families in Norman Rockwell prints to act. After her entrance, however, she realizes her error: the surface does not "match" its contents—corn husks are everywhere, and Dodge does not even remember Vince.

After driving and searching for so long, his family does not remember him; they do not welcome him with open arms. Because Shelly does not cooperate, because she neither takes Vince's quest for his family seriously nor does she comfort him when his own family members do not recognize him, Vince, like Halie, retreats to the upstairs bedroom with the pictures. Here, Vince finds comfort. They do not mirror him. Just as Hirst in Pinter's No Man's Land, however, Vince looks to the photographs which offer the illusion of a secure existence. There are no surprises; there are no gaps. Everyone is where they should be; everyone has a place including Vince.

When he returns downstairs, away from the photos, he becomes frustrated again because the others do not cooperate. Unlike the pictures, they will not provide him with a mirror to confirm his existence; they will not make him feel good about himself. Shelly either ignores him or tries to convince him to leave. Dodge is oblivious. And Tilden, who is Vince's father, notices nothing, but he does bring in another load of vegetables, carrots.

Like us, Shelly is extremely surprised by this family's behavior. Her dismay makes her one of us, "a nice door for the audience" (Coe 155). She is, after all, the only "normal" or non-family member in the house at this time, and her expectations of the
family are perhaps similar to our expectations of the ideal family. Because we have met the family earlier, in Act I, we are more familiar with them and their quirks, perhaps "similar to them" because of dramatic distance, because of our greater knowledge. Unlike Shelly, we have already overcome some of our shock; we are already searching for an explanation for this strange family. But we have not yet discovered a feasible solution, so Shelly becomes Shepard's version of Sherlock Holmes, a detective who will help us find out more.

When Vince returns from his visit with the family memorabilia, a shift occurs in the family relationships. Moved by her own frustration with the situation, Shelly decides to help Tilden clean the carrots: "I'll stay and I'll cut the carrots. An I'll cook the carrots. And I'll do whatever I have to do to survive" (94). Through this carrot incident, Shelly takes the family on its own terms. She does not try to change the family; she just prepares the carrots. In this way, she, like Ruth, takes care of herself, providing herself with some sort of stability, while at the same time creating the potential for sustenance through the carrots. In many ways, she rejects the role of mirror, here, and the men, like the family in The Homecoming, accept her choice.

Like Teddy, Vince cannot accept the family or Shelly under these terms. He is after the mirror, an origin, a past. Even when he leaves, the family does not even give him the benefit of a memory. They persist in denying his existence. In response, Vince
goes off to search for this confirmation under the guise of gaining whiskey, the substance which served as the liquid mirrors for the members of Harry Hope's saloon in O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh* and the men in Pinter's *No Man's Land*.

As soon as he leaves, Tilden admits that Vince may have looked a bit familiar: "I thought I saw a face inside his face" (100). With Vince out of the way, Tilden becomes more talkative; he and Shelly begin to have a "conversation" (101). During this time, he confesses the family's secret about the missing baby, the "little tiny baby" everybody "just stopped looking" for (104). Shelly begins to get nervous, but before she can do much, Bradley enters the house and takes over where Tilden left off.

Like the relationship between Ruth and the men in *The Homecoming*, the men in the family take their turns with Shelly in one way or another. Bradley's behavior is more sexual in nature: he forces Shelly to "just stay put" while he places his hands in her mouth. Though no further physical contact occurs between Bradley and Shelly, it is clear here that Bradley has physically violated Shelly in his own way. But it is also clear that Bradley is impotent. Unlike the relationship between Joey and Ruth in Pinter's play, the relationship between Shelly and Bradley will not lead anywhere, nothing will be gained. There is neither sex nor tenderness between the two.

More than any other character thus far, Bradley is most aware of his lack, his incompleteness. Rather than accepting this fact and moving on, however, Bradley makes everyone else feel their own
lack more acutely. The hand incident, for example, reminds Shelly that she, too, "lacks." She is an empty vessel into which anything may be deposited—the Freudian void, the castrated man. When he cuts Dodge's hair and scalp, he metaphorically mutilates Dodge's "crown." He even takes Shelly, or her attentions, at least, away from Tilden, who runs out of the house soon after Bradley's arrival. Bradley, the archangel of impotence, then, cannot love Shelly in the way Joey loves Ruth.

The next day, however, brings light and fertility. Shelly is exuberant. She makes soup for Dodge who will not eat, but when he asks for "a massage, a little contact," Shelly refuses. Like Ruth at the end of The Homecoming, the old man may ask for the favor, but Shelly does not oblige, perhaps because she feels strong enough to refuse the role of the mirror. More importantly, like Ruth, Shelly begins to take over the house. She has "the feeling that nobody lives here but me" (110). During the night, she has been investigating, looking into the room with the photographs. While the others slept, she cried, and now she asks questions of Dodge.

At first, he is resentful, but he finally blurts out that Halie's the one with "the family album... she's traced it all the way back to the grave" (112). For Halie, like Mary Tyrone, it seems that the "past is the present." But for Dodge, there is nothing, only "a long line of corpses! There's not a living soul behind me! Who's holding me in their memory? Who gives a damn about bones in the ground?" Shelly's question answers that question, "Was Tilden
telling the truth?" (112). Later, when we discover that Tilden is telling the truth, it is clear that he is the only member of the family who cares about the bones in the ground.

Before Dodge has a chance to answer, Halie returns, this time with a new intruder, Father Dewis. Unlike Shelly who tries to do something for this odd family she has just met—even if it is only preparing vegetables—Dewis does little to help. He recites platitudes, drinks whiskey and flirts with Halie. In the end, he is like Pinter’s Teddy, the philosopher-son who cannot discuss any philosophical issue unless it is "within [his] province" (51). When, for example, Father Dewis enters the home, he boasts that he wouldn’t be in the ministry if he "couldn’t face real life" (115). And this admission may be the illusion all members of the clergy share: like many of the inhabitants of Harry Hope’s saloon, Dewis has complete faith in his ability. For a preacher, whose power ordinarily stems from the gods, Dewis is surprisingly self-reliant: he can help this family and solve the problems of real life, if given the opportunity. Through his interactions with the family, however, it is clear that Dewis is no more equipped to handle this family than Tilden. Like Teddy, Dewis remains detached; he cannot, as Teddy says, "be lost in it" (62). Prior to his exit, Father Dewis, echoing Teddy, says, "I don’t know what my position is exactly. This is outside my parish anyway" (126).

While Father Dewis runs, Shelly fights and finds out the truth about the family. Their varying responses, moreover, may be influenced by their differences in gender. Admittedly, it would
appear that Dewis takes the way out many would expect women to take—he runs away from his problems. But in this case Dewis responds much like the alcoholics in Harry Hope's saloon. When the mirror cracks, he runs to a new one. The family he has just met does not "fit" his parish, his jurisdiction. They do not pose problems that Dewis can quickly solve by setting them back on "the straight and narrow" path, and subsequently feel good about himself for handling the situation so well. Because the family does not function as a mirror for Dewis, he disengages himself from their turmoil, and runs upstairs to the photos where all is in order. Shelly, on the other hand, not only remains to face the family-mirror in all its pieces, but she even helps break the glass. Because of her, Dodge tells, talks, and then dies.

Almost sensing the trouble Shelly is about to cause, Halie either ignores or abuses the young intruder. Furthermore, Halie has undergone a transformation while she has been gone, and enters—drunk, flirtatious, clearly a powerful, almost Dionysian force. Dodge and Bradley cower in fear when they hear her coming, while Father Dewis participates in her jokes. She, like Shelly, is what Dodge would call a "hoper," an eternal optimist. She tells Dewis: "We can't not believe in something. We can't stop believing. We just end up dying if we stop. Just end up dead" (118). Throughout the final act, Shelly and Halie vie for power, for a voice. Halie has her "Father," while Shelly has Bradley's artificial leg, as well as the knowledge Tilden shared with her concerning the baby. When provoked, Shelly blurs it out, and suddenly the house ignites with
emotion. Dodge decides to tell all. Bradley intervenes, but Dodge knows that Shelly has some power: "She’s got you leg. (laughs) She’s gonna keep your leg, too. (to Shelly) She wants to hear this. Don’t you?" (124). Dodge may have the "tale," but Shelly has prompted him to share it with her and the others.

Through the course of his telling, we learn that Halie had a baby, when the boys were grown, but she and Dodge had not been sleeping together "for about six years." As a form of revenge, he forces Halie to have it without aid of hospital: "It lived, see. It lived. It wanted to grow up in this family" (124). Dodge, however, does not share these feelings. Though the true father of the baby is subject to much debate (Hart 82-85), the baby’s killer is clear from the beginning. The corpse-like Dodge matter-of-factly confesses to the killing: "I drowned it. Just like the runt of the litter" (124).

At this moment, a new half-drowned son returns; the drunken Vince returns with empty bottles, not to rescue Shelly but to return to the home front. Finally, however, Halie, who has control of the family tree, confirms Vince’s identity. According to her, Vince is not only her grandson, but while he was with the family all was well; he was a guardian angel. His presence offers some reassurance, at least to Halie, so she and Father Dewis ascend the stairs, leaving the rest downstairs. Soon after Halie’s departure and with the story told, Dodge dies and Vince inherits the house.

Now Vince cannot leave; he has his place. When Shelly asks about his whereabouts, Vince, much like Edmund in O’Neill’s Long
Day's Journey, recounts a mystical experience he has had while he was driving. And like Edmund, Vince finds a mirror for himself, when women, family, and other people do not suffice. Like Edmund, he "finds himself," his role and his purpose in life. While he was driving along the road on the rainy night, he tells Shelly,

I could see myself in the windshield. My face. My eyes. I studied my face. Studied everything about it. As though I was looking at another man. As though I could see his whole race behind him. Like a mummy's face. I saw him dead and alive at the same time. In the same breath. In the windshield I watched him breathe as though he was frozen in time. And every breath marked him. Marked him forever without him knowing. And then his face changed. His face became his father's face. Same bones. Same eyes. Same nose. Same breath. And his father's face changed to his Grandfather's face. . . . And it went on like that. Changing. . . Still I recognized the bones underneath. The eyes. The breath. . . . Then it all dissolved. Everything dissolved. (130)

By inheriting the house, Vince's physical situation mirrors his emotional discovery: he is a member of the family, and he is "the same" as his grandfather. Before his crisis with his identity, he would have balked at this discovery, perhaps using everything else as mirror, but when the alternative mirrors fail him, he is ready to take what he can find--his grandfather's position on the couch. In this way, Vince repeats the cycle, and like the faces in the photo
album and the faces in the windshield he, too becomes a corpse. Like Hirst in No Man's Land, Vince cannot make the change. He refers the security of the mirror, the certitude of death, to any situations which would make him question his completeness, his inherent fragmentation. Ironically, only Halie, the keeper of the corpses, recognizes Vince.

Shelly does not share Vince’s enthusiasm for inheriting the land. Like Ruth, Shelly leaves this American nightmare. She cannot mirror the men, and she cannot participate in this deadly cycle. She cannot live in the "kind of Alaska" Halie has lived in all these years up in the bedroom. Unlike Ruth, however, she does not leave any lasting impression on the family, for after her departure, the family continues in the same way it began. Dodge is dead on the floor; Vince is now on the couch; and Halie is still up in the bedroom.

Because Halie is upstairs with the preacher, there may be some chance of renewal at the end of the play. She may be able to spawn a new relationship with this man--she certainly looks better after spending a few hours with this man. Since we have met the preacher, however, and we have seen that he is, in effect, impotent, it is difficult to imagine Father Dewis and Halie spawning a brave, new world. Further, Halie's choice to remain with a "father" of a church, a patriarchal representative, reflects her complete inscription into patriarchal ideology. She cannot leave her men as Shelly finally does. She remains with her photo album.
Though Shelly's departure may not affect the family, it may affect the audience. For unlike the family Ruth meets, Shelly does not meet men who are willing to change, to try a moment in the feminine oasis. This family wants nothing to do with women or change. Shelly leaves the house of death and enters the world of light.

What comes into this house from the bright world is the tiny, decayed corpse. Tilden unearths and returns the baby to Halie. As he mounts the stairs to return the corpse to its mother, Halie comments on her view from the bedroom window—the earth has been renewed, the "sun" is out and everything is growing. Though this conclusion may indicate a rejuvenation of the family, it is difficult to see how the black, decaying, and dead thing Tilden returns to Halie can have a positive effect on her and the family. Rather than returning the baby rejuvenated, Tilden returns the dead child to the "keeper of the corpses," as a matter of course. The cycle of death completes itself: the child belongs to Halie, just as Vince belongs in the house. The earth may be capable of rejuvenation, and Neruda's friend of the play's epigraph may be reincarnated, returning happily home, but this family cannot be saved.

The images of regeneration, moreover, only serve to heighten this family's heinous crimes and their inability to change, to produce. The light and beauty of the newly washed and reproductive earth only serves to accentuate the family's deathly pallor. Since
they are unable to accept the new life that they were once offered, they will only reap as they sow---the dead child corpse.

True West

True West (1981) offers a comic look at domestic life and gender difficulties through the struggles between two brothers, Lee and Austin. The battle is often humorous, since the fight is an adult version of the childhood battles which were waged over nothing, but would never end, at least not until "Mom" intervened. As Edward Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf (1965) also demonstrates, however, when adults play at childhood games, the outcome is frequently disastrous. As in the Albee play, as well as The Iceman Cometh and No Man's Land, while the brothers struggle for identity, issues concerning the distinction between fantasy and reality also appear. Because their identity is so tied up with objects outside of themselves, when they question their existence, the existence of the objects also comes into question and vice versa. Just as the men in The Iceman Cometh, for instance, battle booze, pipe dreams, and the memory of female counterparts in order to "find themselves," so Lee and Austin grapple with the issue of the "real" or "true west." Once they decide which concept of the land is the "best," once they decide not to change the subject, they believe that they will have their roles and the existential certitude they seek.
Because women are not around, as is the case in The Iceman Cometh (1940) and No Man's Land (1975), Lee and Austin look for replacement mirrors; in this case, it is their decision concerning the "true" nature of reality and the West. Like the men in Buried Child, the brothers try on new roles, new methods of machismo, in order to feel like "whole and complete," "real" men. In this play, the men do not choose their roles as randomly as the men did in Buried Child; instead, they trade places, taking on the roles of one another. When this reversal fails, when their search for "reality" or their mirror is not forthcoming, the battle itself becomes the mirror. Because the brothers fear facing their fragmentation so much, they remain attached to each other, even if this attachment is in the form of a death grip. The grip, their anger, and their commitment becomes the mirror by which they feel complete. They would rather die than face their own "kind of Alaska," their fragmented existences, their "lack."

Ironically, their mother, merely called "Mom," has gone to Alaska on a vacation. Unlike the other women discussed thus far, "Mom" literally and figuratively occupies "a kind of Alaska." The play emphasizes this absence by opening with Lee establishing this fact: "So Mom took off for Alaska, huh?" (5). On the one hand, the mention of the mother's absence lets the audience, as well Lee, know that since "Mom" is absent, certain rules do not apply. It is a world of danger, risk, fun, excitement, and adventure; her occupancy in "a kind of Alaska" gives her sons freedom. Just as Hornby need
not take responsibility for his marriage while he is involved with Deborah, Lee and Austin need not take their responsibilities to their mother or her house seriously.

Because "Mom" literally spends time in Alaska, the world of ice and storm reflects her own inability to participate in the world of Austin and Lee, the world of patriarchy. Her generic name, "Mom," also indicates that her own personality, her own identity has been "iced over." More than any other female character, "Mom" is her role. She has chosen one of the socially acceptable positions for women, and she has become that part.

Throughout the play, Lee and Austin refer to her stereotypically; she does typical "mom" jobs; and she reacts, in perfect "mom" fashion, to all the things we have come to expect "moms" to react to, either positively or negatively. From what we learn from Lee and Austin, her plants, her house, and her entire life exude "Mom." Her vacation, alone, may be one of the few actions she performs out of character, something a "mom" would not do. But because this trip gets her out of the house and out of the children's hair, she may be acting like a modern "mom" who knows when to leave her children alone.

"Dad," even with his stereotypic name, however, is different from "Mom." He may be a drunk, and he may have abandoned the family but he still has a personality! Based on a true story about Shepard's own father, the story about "Dad's" missing teeth dominates the play. Like many of the men in The Iceman Cometh, he finds his reflection in a whiskey glass. The sons do not respect
him, but they also do not abandon him. Instead, they search for
him, a quest akin to Vince's search for his heritage in Buried
Child. When they do find him, they take care of him, giving him
money which he promptly squanders on more booze. Later, Lee wants
to give even more money to his father in the form of a trust fund in
order to protect his father from his own alcoholism. Austin has his
reservations, but he finally agrees with Lee, at least momentarily.

For their mother, however, they leave nothing but a mess. They
steal from her and leave her house in a shambles. After all, she is
a "Mom," who will understand, and they are just a "couple of crazy
kids," who do not know any better. At least, these are the roles
they play which justifies their behavior and irresponsibility.
Because we do not see "Mom" until the end of the play, and because
both boys refer to her as a good, kind person, their destruction of
the house appears to have nothing to do with her directly. Unlike
Hickey who murders Evelyn because she has been making him feel
guilty his entire life, Shepard's play does not indict this "Mom" in
this way. She does not appear evil nor manipulative. Her only flaw
is that she is somehow removed or detached from the boys. Like Mary
Tyrone, she has inhabited "a kind of Alaska" for too long. She now
plays the role of the mirror, but her heart is just not in the
part. The boys may sense her emotional distance and rage against
the maternal void. Or they may sense some of her resentment over
her status as a single parent. It is difficult, however, to judge her too harshly, since she does not appear to exhibit any signs of hostility.

Lee and Austin, however, are extremely violent, and they fight, in part due to her absence. There is no mirror available, so they try to make one another a mirror to reflect their own images of their complete existence. Through the two brothers, Shepard is "less celebrating variety than dramatizing narcissism. His implicit image is the mirror" (Bigsby 245). Up until the time they meet in the house, the men have had mirrors at their disposal to reflect their images. Lee, who has been out on the desert, used the flatlands and an occasional female botanist as his looking glasses. Austin, who writes fiction and holds a "mirror up to nature," used his work and his wife. As usual, though, the mirror cracks; the petit objet a is not enough. Like many of Shepard's characters, Lee and Austin come home to find what they have been missing. Like Jamie Tyrone, they, too, search for the lost breast and return to "Mom" for sustenance.

In her absence, however, they discover each other. Though Lee tries to play the cowboy role, he needs an audience, so he starts tormenting Austin about "that art." He confesses that "I did a little art myself once. . . It was ahead of its time" (6). At this point, the audience cannot help but side with Austin, since Lee looks anything but "artsy." He is drunk, unbathed, and looks more like a thief than a creator of art. He continues to cajole Austin, who politely tries to pay him off, as well as get his own work
done. Neither man wants to break out of his comfortable role, but whether each of them realizes it or not, they have had "this date with each other from the beginning." Much like Parritt and Larry in *The Iceman Cometh*, these two must somehow face each other, mirror each other, even though they would rather not. The fact that they are both in their mother's house indicates that their other, "secure" roles have not been working for them very well. They have outgrown their parts. For the moment, however, they do not admit the lack they feel to themselves or to each other.

The struggle between illusion and reality closely parallels the struggle between Austin and Lee. Because Austin is a writer, and Lee wants what his brother has, art and its production become yet another toy the boys argue over. Admittedly, Lee and Austin also fight over material items, as well. The keys to Austin's car, for example, are an important indication of power--the one who possesses the keys usually has the leading edge in the game.

But the relationship between art and reality persists throughout the play. What is the exact nature of art, if any? Placing such an argument in the mouths of men like Lee, a bum, and Austin, a Hollywood hack-writer, is the source of much of the play's humor. Issues which befuddled the great minds of Sir Philip Sydney and Eric Auerbach now puzzle Lee and Austin, two characters who are also wrestling with each other. When, for example, Austin tries to get rid of Lee by mentioning the fact that he must meet a producer on "business," Lee immediately jumps in and says "I thought it was 'Art' you were doin'" (14). The scene ends with Lee boasting of his
artistic endeavor, a story which is both "real commercial" and "true-to-life" (15).

According to Jacques Lacan, the relationship between the mirror and fantasy is an important one in the development of the individual, male subject. At the mirror stage, the subject gains a sense of completeness while simultaneously realizing that he has attained this sense through the help of another entity. At this moment, the subject enters the world of what Lacan calls, the "symbolic," the moment when things can "stand for" another thing, a moment which inaugurates the subject into language and the unconscious. Women are never adequately inscribed, so their relationship to the mirror and language is often limited. As a matter of fact, they are so limited because they are the mirror (Ecrits, 1-7).

In one way, the play demonstrates this process of male inscription. The boys are in their mother's house, without her, and they argue about the distinctions between art and reality, illusion and fantasy, the reflection and the subject being reflected. Without her there, the men have not even the promise of the mirror. The lure of self-reliance the mirror promises, with its promise of irresponsibility, is absent. Like the men in The Iceman Cometh, they look to each other, to their roles.

The final blow both to Austin and Hollywood screenwriters occurs when Lee wins a bet with Saul, a big-time producer. Through this deal, Saul agrees to use Lee's story as a movie script. Much to Austin's surprise, his script has been ousted in favor of Lee's
idea. Saul even suggests that the two brothers work on the script together, now that Austin has some free time. Austin, of course, is noticeably upset—Lee has not only moved in on his territory, he has taken up residence.

After this deal, the fighting between the two brothers is akin to that between Cain and Abel. Both have something more than the story on the line; they have their egos, their reputation, and their roles at stake. Because the story represents their complete sense of self, the two fight over aesthetics in a way Sydney and Auerbach cannot. While they are both writing, the issue of realism in art continually resurfaces: what is the "true west"? Lee, for example, accuses Austin of fearing his story because it is "too real," "too much like real life" (23). Ironically, their storytelling at this point breaks down; they do not continue composing, and Lee decides to leave the house.

Worried about his car and his reputation, Austin tries to dissuade Lee with a threat. Lee calls his bluff, and Austin crumbles, saying he would not harm Lee because they are brothers. Austin, however, knows that this blood tie means nothing:

That don't mean a thing. You go down to the L.A. Police Department there and ask them what kinda' people kill each other the most. What do you think they say? . . . Family people. Brothers. Brothers-in-law. Cousins. American-type family people. They kill each other in the heat
mostly. In the Smog-Alerts. In the Brush Fire Season.
Right about this time a’ year. (23-24)

Austin attempts to defend their relationship saying, "We’re not insane. We’re not driven to acts of violence like that. Not over a dumb movie script" (24). Later, Austin does "go insane" over a script and the recognition Lee manages to get from Saul. Here, the professional writer, Austin, does not seem to know much about "real life." Brothers do indeed kill brothers over seemingly trivial concerns, and it takes the street-wise Lee to educate Austin on this point. Through this process, however, both men educate each other on their respective roles. They are in the process of becoming living mirrors for each other. Rather than looking to women or memories, these two become fascinated by their own image which they see reflected in the eyes of the other.

As they become more alike, the relationship between fantasy and reality diminishes. As audience members, we begin to participate in the disintegration. In Lee’s reality, two men chase each other madly across the desert:

So they take off after each other straight into an endless black prairie. The sun is just comin’ down and they feel the night on their back. What they don’t know is that each one of ’em is afraid, see. Each one separately thinks that he’s the only one that’s afraid. And they keep ridin’ like that straight into the night. Not knowing. And the one who’s chasin’ doesn’t know where the
other one is taking him. And the one who's being chased
doesn't know where he's going. (27)

At the same time that this is a story about two fictional
characters, it is also a story about Lee and Austin who are finally
fictional characters, as well. Like an endless hall of mirrors
these images multiply--fictional characters, who are writing a
fiction about fictional characters, argue about the "true" versus
the "fictional" West. Embedded in this "Chinese box," however, is
the "truth," for Lee and Austin are these men in many ways: fearful
of their fragmentation, they pursue each other without a goal. They
only have the quest; the battle to make them feel complete.

Saul Kimer cannot even tell them apart anymore; he thinks that
they are "the same person" (37). Like the men in No Man's Land and
The Iceman Cometh, when females are not present, when the feminine
mirror is absent, men create other mirrors. Unlike Pinter's play in
which Spooner offers redemption to Hirst, the two brothers here can
only offer each other mutual destruction.

With mother gone, they begin to "reflect." When she does
return, however, she cannot rectify the situation because she cannot
be a mirror; she is "cracked." Unlike Mary Tyrone and the comatose
Deborah, "Mom" has been a mirror for a long time, so her inability
to reflect male desire is not due to her resistance to the process.
Instead, like Evelyn Hickman, she has played the role too well:
while Evelyn manipulates, taking her frustration out on Hickey,
using her position in "a kind of Alaska" to remove blame for her own
behavior, "Mom" only destroys herself, her feelings and emotions.
Through the role alone, not morphine or alcohol, "Mom" numbs herself to her world, to her inferior status in the family and patriarchy.

She tells the boys that she came home, not because she missed them, but because she missed her plants, the outward signs of a home. Both boys look to her for some sort of validation or support, but she is remarkably dazed. Shocked by the state of her house, she cannot help the men who have destroyed her dwelling. She "materializes at the door, an archetype and a parody, a kind of satiric deus ex machina without the will or power to restore order in her world--a mom without a country" (121). Or, a woman in "a kind of Alaska."

Though many object to "Mom," saying she is too stiff, not fully developed, too much like a caricature, she is the perfect woman, the logical conclusion to her participation in Alaska. This land, moreover, is a land of integration, not rejuvenation. When she confuses Picasso with his art, her training in the male world becomes more apparent: "he's not dead. He's visiting the museum. I read it on the bus" (55). As a woman who has been denied full access to the patriarchy, the world of words or the symbolic, all is one and the same to "Mom," particularly if it is written down, sanctified in the letter she has never quite understood. 6

Rather than finding a place for herself in this world or ridiculing it, as Ruth does, "Mom" merely obeys, denying that part of herself which might cause trouble, make a difference. Like her sons, like the patriarchy, she wants to wipe away all difference, filling in all the gaps in an otherwise seamless fabric of
patriarchal reality. All is one to "Mom," and it is, perhaps, this quality which makes her look so odd to us. Like Hirst in No Man's Land, she no longer changes the subject and probably never could. Unlike Ruth, she has given in to the pressures of traditional roles.

The men do not benefit from casting her into the role of "Mom" because she does not even make any distinction between Lee and Austin. Both are the same; neither has the unique, complete personality they so frantically desire. The integrated "Mom" is not good enough, for she does not participate in their fights. She will not arbitrate; she will not reflect. And even while Austin is in the process of killing Lee, she is ineffectual. Austin, who has a telephone cord around Lee's neck, relieves the pressure a bit. Lee is still alive, but "Mom" decides to leave because she cannot stand "this anymore... This is worse than being homeless" (58). Upon her departure, it appears that Austin, not Lee, has won the game by killing Lee. After a few tense moments, Austin loosens the cord, and checks Lee's body. The "corpse" springs up, arms in fighting position. Lee is back and ready to continue the battle. The play ends with the two brothers in a frozen face-off, mirroring each other, destined to repeat themselves in one another. Like the two elderly poets in No Man's Land, Lee and Austin cannot change the subject.
A Lie of the Mind

When Shepard's A Lie of the Mind appeared on off-Broadway in 1986, most audiences and reviewers agreed--the women in the play looked better than any of Shepard's women had ever looked. They had the funniest lines, and they were even independent, after a while and in their own fashion. Linda Hart believes that the play "is contained squarely within the arena of gender conflict, but the origin of the conflict is in the father's relationship with his son" (107). The father, of course, is always problematic for Shepard and his critics, and many believe that all his plays in some way or another stem from the problematic relationship Shepard had with his father, dramatically illustrated in an earlier play, The Rock Garden (1968).

Admittedly, fathers play an important role in the plays of Shepard, but in the end the mothers may be the most important characters. Their absence, Shepard's "lack" of mothers, emphasizes rather than cloaks the maternal void. In this play, however, there are two on-stage mothers, Lorraine and Meg. Further, as is the case with many of Shepard's plays, the men are not portrayed positively. Many of them are like Vince--drunken, wild, half-beast men. Others are like Dodge, ineffectual, corpses. Rarely does a Shepard man evoke feelings of respect or admiration; though all evoke pity:

I think there's something about American violence that to me is very touching... In full force it's very ugly, but there's also something very moving about it, because it
has to do with humiliation. There's some hidden deeply
rooted thing in the Anglo male American that has to do
with inferiority, that has to do with not being a man, and
always, continually having to act out some idea of manhood
that is invariably violent. This sense of failure runs
very deep. . . (qtd in Kakutani 26 H)

For Shepard, men overcome their feeling of "lack," of
fragmentation, through violence, as the brothers do in True West.
In this play, when the women do not cooperate, men resort to
violence, trying to force the mirror to reflect. In this process,
they, like O'Neill's men, shatter the mirror. Their horror and ours
comes with the realization that the men destroy the mirror they
crave. In effect, they try to overcome female difference by force,
but in the end, it only destroys them, for they are left with only
violence to fill the lack, to give them a sense of self-reliance.

As in Buried Child, Shepard opens the play with an epigram:

Something identifies you with the one who leaves you, and
it is your common power to return: thus your greatest
sorrow.

Something separates you from the one who remains with you,
and it is your common slavery to depart: thus your
meagerest rejoicing.

With this quote from Cesar Vallejo, Shepard concisely articulates
the human condition—separate, but with the desire to unite with
something in order to feel complete. This ambivalence or tension
not only persists throughout the play through the conflict of
characters, but it also reflects the play's double or separate structure. The play is literally divided into alternating scenes between Jake's family and Beth's family.

This separation, of course, reflects Beth and Jake's physical separation. But the division also reminds us of the separation of the sexes, and their inability to meet on equal or neutral territory. Although the two lovers and their respective families never come together, Beth and Jake are somehow still united, still connected. The lighting and progression of scenes emphasizes this emotional or psychic union. Because lights often fade on one scene with one family, while simultaneously lighting the other family scene, the play has a symphonic or seamless structure. Beth and Jake, furthermore, are often called into each other's world in the form of memories. Shepard's own persistent call for live music in this production may also indicate that he wishes to enhance this fluid progression.

The play itself opens traditionally, with Jake and Frankie on the telephone. The technique is a bit clumsy and reminiscent of television dramas—and it is difficult to say whether Shepard opens with this familiar "bit" in order to make the audience feel more at ease, or if he just used it because the cliche gets the job of exposition done quickly. In any case, the technique may lead audiences to anticipate similar, television conclusions, and it has lead critics to claim that Shepard panders to the proletariat. In the end, the exposition works, no matter how clumsy, and we learn that two brothers are on the phone and one, Jake, has beaten a woman
so badly that he thinks she is dead. To leave us in suspense, Shepard resorts to another cliche: Jake hangs up the phone before his brother, Frankie, discovers Jake’s whereabouts and Beth’s condition.

Beth’s voice almost overlaps "Frankie’s last line" (4) in the next scene, so it is clear that she is alive, but she is brain-damaged. In this scene, Mike, her brother, comforts her and attempts to tell her "the facts" in much the same way that Hornby comforts and enlightens Deborah in Pinter’s A Kind of Alaska. Like Deborah, Beth has just "awakened"; and like Deborah she still inhabits "a kind of Alaska." She wears bandages, so when she tries to take them off, she asks, "Am I a mummy now?" (4). Frightened by the wrappings of the dead, she demands that Mike send for help:

I’m not dead. You go tell them. Go tell them now. Dig me up. Tell them to dig me up now. I’m not here. They can’t wait for me now. (5)

Mike, of course, tries to ease her fears, informing her that she is in a hospital. She denies his version of reality, saying, "Iza toomb! Iza toomb! You tell them I’m not dead!" (5). Like Deborah’s illness, Beth’s injuries encase her, forcing her to be something other than herself. In Shepard’s version, however, Beth’s entombment, her entry into a sterile and bandaged "kind of Alaska" is a direct result of a man’s mistreatment. Unlike Hornby, who subtly beats Deborah into emotional submission, Jake has literally beaten Beth’s into "shape." Through the physical violence, he tries to reconstruct Beth.
Like Deborah's awakening, Beth's recovery appears to promise some growth, perhaps the possibility of leaving the man who injured her, perhaps a chance to start a new life. Mike certainly has hopes along those lines. As the play progresses, though, life does not appear to be much better for Beth now that she has been released from the hospital. Men, such as Mike and Baylor, still try to control and transform her, making her their own mirror. In addition, Beth plays a part in her own imprisonment, for even though she is released from the hospital tomb, she calls out for the man who "fell her," like a tree (5).

In the next scene, we get Jake's "side of the story," and it appears that Beth's behavior did not "fit" his expectations; she was, indeed, taking on a new "shape" or role, one which would not reflect a complete image of Jake. As he tells Frankie, Beth began working as an actress and she would dress, according to his standards, inappropriately—more like a whore than a wife/mother. Consequently, he begins to draw conclusions:

Woman starts dressin' more and more skimpy every time she goes out. Starts puttin' on more and more smells. Oils. She was always oiling herself before she went out. Every morning. Smell would wake me up. Coconut or Butterscotch or some goddamn thing. Sweet stuff. . . I'd watch her oiling herself while I pretended to be asleep. She was in a dream, the way she did it. Like she was imagining someone else touching her. (8)
From what we have seen of Beth so far, it does not seem possible that she had another lover, for even after Jake has beat her so severely, she remains loyal. Jake's conclusions, then, appear unfounded. Jake misreads Beth; he thinks that a woman would not take care of herself "that way" without another man around. Women only touch themselves or make themselves beautiful for men.

According to Luce Irigaray, it is men who cannot touch themselves or love themselves without the intervention of another person. Women, "on the other hand," are always touching themselves, genital lips always together. Jake cannot entertain such an idea—it does not fit into his binary view of the world of women. If a woman is taking care of her body, she must be a whore, and therefore, have lots of men around. In a world in which women are either mothers or whores, any admission of female desire makes the woman a slut, even if she is your wife. In addition, Beth's moment with herself and her oils in the morning might frighten Jake in another way—Beth does not need a man in the way that Jake needs a woman. In his mind, Beth may be self-sufficient, while he requires a mirror in order to feel at ease or complete.

Later, when Jake goes into greater detail concerning Beth's acting career, his fears of sexual inadequacy, specifically his dependence on a woman for pleasure, become more pronounced. For Jake, acting is pretending, "play":

That's right. Just a play. "Pretend." That's what she said. "Just pretend." I know what they were doing! I know damn well... I know what this acting shit is all
about. They try to "believe" they're the person. Right? Try to believe so hard they're the person that they actually think they become that person... 

FRANKIE: What person?

JAKE: The person! The---wad'ya call it? The---

FRANKIE: Character?

JAKE: Yeah... They start acting that way in real life... You shoulda seen the way she started to walk and talk... Changed her hair everything. Put a wig on. Changed her clothes. Everything changed. She was unrecognizable. I didn't even know who I was with anymore... And you know what she tells me? ... She tells me this is the real world. This acting shit is more real that the real world to her. (9-10)

Given Jake's jealous state, he could interpret Beth's commitment to her character as an admission of infidelity: Beth, who has professed her love to her fellow actor/character, and who has just admitted that the acting is more real than "reality," is, then, "really" having an affair with the man she is working with on this scene. Even without this perverse logic, Jake has seen Beth transform herself right before his eyes. He has seen the mirror "work." For him, she is Beth, a loving, earthy woman. For the screen and this other man, she becomes a seductress. Because Jake needs Beth to mirror his desire only, he looses his identity when she mirrors another man. She has become a whore. Consequently,
Jake must set matters straight, transforming Beth into a woman without desire—a "mummy," a mirror for only one man.

While Jake tries to blame Beth for all the problems in his life and their relationship, Frankie intersperses the dialogue with tales of Jake's previous violent behavior. In this way, the play does not endorse Jake's behavior and his objectification of women. Through Frankie's questions and comments, it is clear that Jake handled many of his problems through violence. By the end of the scene, Jake's blustery personality calms to a small squall—his head aches and he is afraid to be alone—the underlying fear of all the male characters who attempt to transform women into mirrors. Later, Frankie takes him to their mother's home, thereby providing Jake with the original, maternal mirror.

In the next scene, Beth and her brother Mike try to work matters out between them, while they walk around the room. Mike is not as understanding toward Beth as Frankie was toward Jake, and the brother and sister end up arguing. Beth tries to establish her rights to love whomever she wants, despite Mike's threats. Unlike Deborah in Pinter's play, Beth does not quietly thank everyone for their help and then sit quietly. Instead, she screams for Jake, "HEEZ MY HAAAAAAALYYYYYYYYYART!!!(21).

In the next scene, Jake is with his mother, Lorraine, who tries to nurse him back to health. Even though she loves him beyond reason—definitely more than her daughter, Sally—she does not take Jake to a medical doctor or therapist, despite signs of brain injury, as well as mental instability. Instead, she tries to nurse
him back to health with a bowl of cream of broccoli soup. Admittedly, this is not the chicken soup of yesteryear, but Lorraine still behaves like a typical "mom" who can save her son, in spite of the severity of his injuries. Further, Lorraine knows that she can help in a way Beth or any other woman cannot. In a comic way, she sides with Jake when she finds out he may have killed his wife: "Woman who lives with a man like that deserves to be killed. She deserves it" (22). And when Sally threatens to leave if Jake, who needs medical attention badly, comes into the house, Lorraine matter-of-factly states, "Then leave, girl. This is my boy here" (25). Given a choice, then, Lorraine, would take the man, especially if it were her offspring. Like Halie and her relationship to Ansel in Buried Child, Lorraine chooses her son over others in order to gain power, a psuedo-penis.

In the next scene, Beth's mother Meg appears a bit more sympathetic than Lorraine, but her loyalties to her daughter are also strained by her relationship to her husband Baylor. In many ways, Baylor perceives Beth in the same way he would a wounded horse—if she cannot be saved, why waste time? Meg, however, remains with Beth, because as Beth says later to Meg, "You. Mother. You. Always love. Always." (38).

In contrast to this warm reunion, Jake and his mother battle in the next scene—yelling, jumping on the bed, and throwing food around. Talk of the absent father calms Jake and Lorraine. Because Jake no longer has Beth to confirm his identity, he, like Vince in Buried Child looks to the past for this existential reassurance.
The sign of his father's ashes in an urn quiets him completely. Initially it appears that his father holds some special significance for Jake, perhaps as an inspiration, perhaps as a fond memory, but as the lights go down on this act, Jake is left puffing into the box, and the scene concludes on a haze of blue ash.

The relationship between Jake and his father is competitive in the classic Freudian sense. With the father out of the way, Jake has control of the mother. But through this scene and its conclusion, the play demonstrates that Jake does not really want Lorraine. In this struggle, women are meaningless; they are only objects of barter or objects of masculine abuse. All that matters is which man wins, not what is won. And by blowing on his father's cremated remains—blue ashes—at the end, Jake makes it clear that he has the last laugh.

In Beth's home, all looks safe and warm. Meg even offers her a choice between boots and slippers to keep her feet warm. Beth, however, chooses neither. She decides to let her feet go naked, "as though she does not wish to be categorized or locked into a particular role" (De Rose 72). Like Ruth, Beth is neither mother nor whore. Beth's resistance to such categorizing causes further tension in the family, particularly among the men. While Pinter's Deborah had no defense, not even bits of memories to call her own, Beth somehow draws on her past strength to fight for her rights. When, for example, Mike fantasizes about Jake's return, Beth warns him not to make "war. You make an enemy. In me! In me!... You
think you know... You have a feeling I'm you! I'm not you!"

With this show of strength and awareness, Beth shatters the mirror Mike searches for. She resists the "icing over." He can no longer play the "savior of his sister." Now, he must look elsewhere for reflection and solace, and one of the ways in which he achieves this completeness is through hunting in the snow—his "kind of Alaska." Without a woman, Mike becomes more and more like an animal, disintegrating into a sadistic killer. He even brings in a deer corpse in order to "show" his father he can do it--he can kill and be alone.

Like Jake, Mike's attitude toward the women and the other mirrors in his life are all intricately tied to the reassurance that he would really like from his father. In Lacanian terms, all men strive for the Phallus, the signifier of absolute existence, perfection or completion. Lacan explains the "meaning of the Phallus" via Freud's Oedipal structure:

The demand for love can only suffer from a desire whose signifier is alien to it. If the desire of the mother is the phallus, then the child wishes to be the phallus so as to satisfy this desire. Thus the division immanent to desire already makes itself felt in the desire of the Other, since it stops the subject from being satisfied with presenting to the Other anything real it might have which corresponds to this phallus—what he has been worth no more than what he does not have as far as his demand
for love is concerned, which requires that he be the phallus. . . . this test of the desire of the Other is not decisive in the sense that the subject learns from it whether or not he has a real phallus, but inasmuch as he learns that the mother does not. . . . It is here that the conjunction is signed between desire, in so far as the phallic signifier is its mark, and the threat or the nostalgia of lack-in-having. It is, of course, the law introduced into this sequence by the father which will decide its future. (Feminine Sexuality 83)

Sensing the desire for the phallus by the mother, who in the Lacanian and Freudian scenario "lacks" or is castrated, the child wishes to be the Phallus, that which will satisfy the mother. And yet, the child cannot be the Phallus, cannot be the Other, so the desire to satisfy the mother as the Other is impossible. According to Lacan, this moment in development is important to the subject, not because the subject realizes his inadequacy or potency, but more important, learns that the mother is castrated--she does not have the phallus. And it is at this point that desire and lack-in-having are conjoined. All men wish to be the phallic signifier, that which is complete and whole. When that is not available, they look to women whose own desire for the phallus reassures the male that if he is not, indeed, the phallic signifier, at least he has a penis. In Mike's case, he tries to gain his father's attention by pretending to be this phallic signifier, by playing the macho-huntsman.
Through this role, he hopes to prove to Baylor that he is indeed a threat, that he does "desire" Meg.

Baylor, however, does not seem to even notice this struggle. After all, he has Meg, what more does he need to prove? He even brings in better game—the half-alive Frankie whom he has accidentally shot in the leg. Judging from the play’s description, Frankie’s wound is not serious, so no one calls a doctor. Curiously, all the characters in the play are conspicuously distrustful of doctors, for despite the severity of many illnesses, the medical men are never called in to help.

Now that Frankie is here, Mike can be replaced. Like so many Shepard characters, personalities mean nothing when there are roles to be fulfilled. Because Mike causes trouble, the wounded Frankie will do just as well as the "son." But because he is new to the family, he needs a little training, so Baylor uses the opportunity to train Beth to wait on men, while instructing Frankie on the fine art of command. Despite Meg’s pleas to the contrary, Baylor forces Beth to help Frankie. In the end, Baylor is very pleased with himself:

There now. See that? Now she’s got the experience of helping somebody else out. And you woulda robbed her a’ that see? You wanna just keep on lettin’ her believe that she’s never gonna pull outa this thing. (54)
Like Hornby in *A Kind of Alaska*, Baylor often manipulates his women through guilt. Without his help, he tells Meg, Beth will be a cripple all her life. He, of course, has the perfect tactics to make her a perfect woman.

The play, however, does not endorse his views. Like Beth, he, too, is crippled, and Beth is one of the few people to admit to his disfunction. Like Cassandra, Beth's own injury has made her prophetic or honest, at least. When she introduces Frankie to the family, her assessments ring true:

This--This is my father. He's given up love. Love is dead for him. My mother is dead for him. Things live for him to be killed. Only death counts for him. Nothing else. (57)

Baylor is not only a cripple; he is emotionally dead.

Beth then tends to Frankie, and during their discussions, it becomes clear that her family has a history of brain-damaged women. Beth's grandmother, for instance, apparently had a lobotomy, at least that is Beth's version of the story. Interestingly, she confuses herself with that grandmother, taking on the scar of her ancestor. As she tells Frankie, she has a scar

Like my old Mom. Old. My Grand Mom. They cut her. Disappeared. They don't say her name now. She's gone. Vanish. (She makes a "whooshing" sound like wind.) My Father sent her someplace. Had her gone. (74)
Because Beth's family has a long history of silencing its women, her attraction to Jake was perhaps fueled by this past. With Jake's "assistance," she, too, could be reshaped and perfected, made better for the patriarchy.

And Beth actually does undergo a transformation, but it does not end in her silence. She wants to love Frankie in a new way, maybe even in a feminist way. She enjoys the masquerade: "pretending fills. Not empty. Other. Ordinary. Is not good. Empty. Ordinary is empty. Now, I'm like a man" (57). Her feminine difference "iced over" and blotted out, Beth can become a man. She wears Baylor's shirt, and she is filled, so she casts Frankie into the role of the woman. Frankie, of course, resists, not only due to the problematic sexual politics but also due to the fact that he is in Beth's house with her family nearby. Beth is not dissuaded; she nearly rapes him:

You fight but all the time you want my smell. You want my shirt in your mouth. You dream of it. Always. You want me on your face. (76)

Frankie manages to "save himself" and Beth amends her opinion of Frankie:


Like Ruth's relationship with Joey, Beth, too wants a gentle man, a woman-man. Through her role as a man, through this reshaping, Beth discovers an alternative relationship between the sexes, one in
which the divisions are blurred, one which is within, but not
imprisoned by, patriarchal dualism. Ironically, while a blizzard
rages outside, inside the Alaskan ice of sexual difference melts.
Beth need not be a man, denying her femininity, in order to feel
complete; instead, she can be a manly woman and Mike can be her
woman-man.

To further emphasize the need for a gentle man, Mike appears--
the epitome of an un-gentle man, and he brings along a dead and
frozen deer. He tosses the corpse on the floor, and begins
badgering Frankie and Beth. According to Beth, it is Mike who has
taken her brain, not Jake, a brain her father told him to take from
her (78). With Mike dragging in a carcass, it is not difficult to
imagine him taking a human brain.

Despite the blizzard, however, there is enough food--deer
abound. Like the corn and carrots in Buried Child, there is, in
some sense, renewal here. Mike, the animal-man, is apparently the
only one who partakes of the bounty. His role as the great
provider, however, is useless, since no one eats the deer-meat or
appreciates his efforts. Without the home, and especially without
the home he would like it to be, Mike returns to the frozen world
which offers security through its stagnation. Out there in the
Alaska-like weather, Mike has an identity.

Jake, too, leaves his home and heads out to find Beth. Since
Lorraine has taken all his clothes, he wears only the American flag
he found. Theatrically, this tactic works, presenting an image or
icon of the American male and his absurd behavior. The play forces
us to look at Jake, not as a unique man, but as a stereotype. In this way, Jake is destined to the confines of a stereotype in the same way he attempted to limit and categorize Beth. With the flag wrapped around him, Jake begins to lose his individuality, the self he tried so hard to retain by placing Beth into the role of a mirror.

When Lorraine discovers that Jake has left, she is upset, angry and disappointed. Sally, who knew about his departure, receives the brunt of her mother’s wrath. Lorraine cannot understand why everyone wants to make Jake a criminal. Sally, then, begins to explain, focusing on the night which her father, Lorraine’s husband, died. Before she begins, however, she questions Lorraine concerning the relationship between herself and her ex-husband. Sally, who still has strong feelings for her father, wonders why Lorraine did not try to help her ex-husband. Lorraine responds pragmatically: "You can’t save the doomed! You make a stab at it. You make the slightest little try and you’re doomed yourself" (66).

Despite her strong sense of self-preservation, Lorraine also has feelings for this man, a man who is "in" her inescapably. This fantasy about her love for her husband and the persistence of love is Lorraine’s pipe dream which Sally dispels through her tale concerning the death of her father. Lorraine has never heard this version of the story before, and Sally tells it in order to have her mother face the truth about Jake, as well as—for the first time in her life—acquire some attention from Lorraine.
According to Sally, Jake was out to murder his alcoholic father by playing a drinking game. Though his father had years of practice, Jake was the younger man. Both men were out for blood, though, and waged the battle in gruesome, oedipal style: "There was a meanness that started to come outs both of them like these hidden snakes. A terrible meanness that was like—murder almost. It was murder" (92). Jake’s father, however, looses:

Dad couldn’t even walk anymore. He couldn’t stand. His knees were all bloody. Jake knew that all he had to do was push him over the edge. Just a few more drinks... I saw it happen. I saw him splattered all over the road like some lost piece of livestock. He was trying to run down the middle of the highway. He was trying to beat his own son to the border. He didn’t even know what country he was in anymore! Jake murdered him! And he never even looked back. He was already sitting in some bar down the road ordering the next round of drinks. He never even got up when he heard the sirens. (94-95)

Lorraine, who has believed the best of her son, of course, does not believe Sally’s version, and accuses Sally of the murder.

Moments later, however, Lorraine sees the lies, sees the "Alaska" she has inhabited for all these years:

I know one thing for sure. All these airplanes have gotta' go... All the junk in this house that they left behind for me to save. It's all goin'. We'll make a big bonfire. They never wanted it anyway. They had no
intention of ever comin' back here to pick it up. That was just a dream of theirs. It never meant a thing to them. They dreamed it up just to keep me on the hook. Can't believe I fell for it all those years. (96)

Through Sally's story, Lorraine begins to see that she has reshaped herself to meet male expectations; she has lived up to the lie and participated in her own confinement. Through her daughter's narrative, however, she comes to the realization that she has some worth without "her men." Almost as a means of atonement, a ritual of forgiveness of herself, Lorraine wishes for "the wind. One a' them fierce, hot, dry winds that come from the deep out in the desert and rip the trees apart. You know, those winds that wipe everything clean and leaves the sky without a cloud. Pure blue. Pure blue, pure, pure blue" (97). Rather than looking for her son, Lorraine looks for purification.

Almost simultaneously, the other household beings change. Like Lorraine, Meg reassess her relationship with Baylor through her daughter's intervention. Beth's condition disintegrates, while Baylor ignores the situation and the strain it puts upon Meg. During an argument between Meg and Baylor, he uses "Old Mom" to humiliate Meg. Like the Tyrone family, Baylor and Meg use the past as a weapon. Baylor still feels resentful of Meg's mother. He says, "You're mother was a basket case." And Meg responds, "She was a female" (77). As a female, the woman was a non-man, outside of Baylor's world, irrational, a "basket case."
During this discussion, Meg develops a theory concerning gender relations, and Baylor's resistance to the theory proves her correct. Meg's "system" prohibits the myth of "the same," a myth in which both men and women are exactly alike. According to her theory, "the female one needs--the other," while the "male one goes off by himself. Leaves. He needs something else. But he doesn't know what it is. He doesn't really know what he needs. So he ends up dead. By himself" (105). On the one hand, Meg's philosophy is somewhat romantic--people need people: the women know it, but the men do not. On the other, Meg articulates the Lacanian theory of "lack": men persistently run away from it, trying to fill the void in any way they can, so long as they do not admit they need something outside of themselves to make them feel complete, while at the same time despising the fact that they do have needs.

Women, however, know that they are missing something, that they are, to borrow Freud's phrase, "castrated." Through the course of the play, and through the presence of their daughters, both Meg and Lorraine come to terms with this lack, and both decide they have nothing left to lose, so they begin to confront their men. Meg, for example, refuses to rub Baylor's feet or bring him the blanket. Admittedly, minute, this is Meg's revolution. Loosing Baylor is nothing compared to the "kind of Alaska" she has been living in all these years. Like Lorraine, she was hooked, deceived by the lie, but she now decides to shatter the glass.
Baylor, who has spent the entire play bossing everyone around, cannot take care of himself. Like so many men, he is helpless, so he turns to Frankie, a "wounded man" in the hopes that Frankie will function as a substitute mirror. Unlike the men in The Iceman Cometh, however, Frankie will not comply—he has to protect himself. While the men despair over the situation, the women seem content, determined to start a new life. Beth, for instance, tells Frankie that when they are married, "we'll be in a whole new world" (84). And Meg closes the scene on a springtime fantasy, even though the house is in "a kind of Alaska" due to the blizzard:

> I think it would be wonderful up on the high meadow. We could invite the whole family. We could even have a picnic up there. Cake and lemonade. We could have music. We haven't had a real wedding in so long (84).

Apparently, there is a truce in the battle of the sexes. Women have taken charge, and the snowstorm may encase the masculine in a way that the men have encased the feminine for so long. Because the women have grown accustomed to this treatment, they are not entirely confined. They have their imagination. Like Deborah in Pinter's play, they "dance in narrow spaces."

Lorraine and Sally take control of their lives, too. Perhaps for the first time in a Shepard play, two women work together peacefully. Like Ruth of Pinter's The Homecoming, they renounce the American desert for Ireland. While they burn a bonfire, Lorraine decides to burn down the entire house. Home and family now mean
nothing to her, so she burns the props which accompanied her old role. Lorraine has had enough.

Though this action ends, the scene does not, and for the first time in the play the two families meet structurally. While Lorraine and Sally prepare to leave, we return to Mike and Jake. Mike's treatment of Jake is as bad as Jake's treatment of Beth probably was: he treats Jake like a packhorse or dog, training him to apologize to Beth. Beth, of course, does not care any longer, so Mike and Jake are finally left with each other. Both men are banished to a masculine "kind of Alaska," literally a region of snow and wild beasts--"a no man's land." They are not permitted into the home any longer.

While Beth, Mike, and Jake fight, Baylor humorously intervenes. Somehow he manages to take the gun away from Mike and the flag which Jake wore. Baylor is not as upset by the threats of violence as he is the disrespect shown to the flag. While Beth makes her final choice, Baylor and Meg fold the flag together. This relationship, then, becomes the symbolic solution to the battle of the sexes. Rather than resorting to mutual cruelty, burning down the house, or inhabiting "a kind of Alaska," Baylor and Meg at least work together for this moment.

When they finish folding the flag, Baylor kisses Meg, for the first time "in twenty years," and proceeds upstairs. He appears willing to change, and Meg's revolution seems to have helped rather than hindered their relationship. While she is alone, however, Meg moves to the front porch where she sees a fire, the fire Sally and
Lorraine built, and says, "Looks like a fire in the snow. How could that be?" (95). Unlike Ruth who uses the "snow," uses her Alaskan distance and the stereotypes of the men to make a place of her own, to protect her own desires, Lorraine and Sally, at least, want nothing more to do with masculine expectations. They burn down the house rather than live under masculine expectations. Whether a fire will finally solve their problems or incinerate gender stereotypes is difficult to imagine. Like Meg and Beth, the audience remains "at home" in "a kind of Alaska," waiting and watching on the porch.

Unlike many of the women in O'Neill and Pinter, Shepard's women tend to remove themselves completely from difficult situations. Shelly, for instance, leaves the house of Buried Child, as does "Mom" in True West, and Sally and Lorraine literally burn down the their home. All, in some way, search for another response to patriarchy, but we never see any new way quite clearly drawn. Unlike Mary Tyrone, who responds to the dual expectations placed upon her by herself and her family through drugs, or Pinter's Ruth, who manages to remain true to herself within patriarchy, Shepard's women rarely make it to this stage--they leave instead. The few who do remain respond like O'Neill's women through some sort of fantasy life--Halie's photo album, for instance.

With Meg and Beth, however, Shepard seems to come to an answer which does not require that the women leave the house burning. Instead, both have set their limits with the men, establishing their needs and desires: Beth wants a woman-man, and Meg wants Baylor to stop bossing her around. Both find power within patriarchy, and
both begin to produce female anxiety in their male counterparts. Overall, however, many of Shepard's women do not produce the anxiety of feminine difference in their male counterparts, though they may produce it in the members of the audience. The men appear content to continue killing each other, while the women leave or nurture each other in some way. With the stereotypes of gender relations established, Shepard creates a picture which may, finally, help us reconsider such sexual stereotypes.
CONCLUSION

Be not too tame neither; but let your own discretion be your tutor. Suit the action to the word, the word to the action; with this special observance, that you o'erstep not the modesty of nature: for anything so overdone is from the purpose of playing, whose end, both at the first and now, was and is, to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature; to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.

---Shakespeare's Hamlet

For most women in the plays of Eugene O'Neill, Harold Pinter, and Sam Shepard, the metaphor, "a kind of Alaska," is, finally, a kind of prohibition. Throughout many of the plays, women, or more precisely their characteristically feminine qualities are threatening to and therefore devalued by the men in the plays. Women are only supposed to behave as either mothers or whores—two roles which most of the men feel comfortable about because the roles offer them the opportunity to perceive themselves as complete and total men.

The roles cast women into the role of mirror, which not only satisfies masculine desires but also prohibits the expression of the feminine. The feminine must be controlled because it reminds many
of the male characters that human beings are never "full or complete." They may be completely separate or in the process of becoming, but never "there"--there is always something missing. There is always lack.

When the feminine is not cast in glass, the role of mirror, it is a constant reminder of this inherent lack within the patriarchal system. This female threat appears in two forms. Because women are "castrated," they remind the patriarchy of this lack, the void which threatens patriarchy, both figuratively and literally. But because women seem to also possess an excess, the jouissance of Pinter's Ruth and Deborah, for example, they also remind patriarchy that in spite of its attempts, the feminine cannot fully be controlled or "iced over." There will always be some anxiety over the feminine, often by virtue of its absence.

By controlling the feminine, however, there is a moment of satisfaction, a moment in which the mirror does genuinely reflect. For most of the playwrights, though, this brief comfort for the male is not good enough to justify the oppression of the female. As a matter of fact, the very transitory nature of this existential security may lead O'Neill, Pinter, and Shepard to represent the negative effects of casting the female into a stereotypic role. With the exception of A Moon for the Misbegotten, all the plays demonstrate the shortcomings of placing women into the role of the mirror. The other plays demonstrate that by forcing females to
behave in a stereotypical way, men may gain momentary peace and security, but in the end, they pay a high price for their oppression.

In O'Neill's *The Iceman Cometh*, the men are trapped, ironically, in a womb-like bar, drinking, because they hope to avoid the female influence. In *Long Day's Journey Into Night*, the health of an entire family hinges upon a woman who cannot stand the pressures of the mirror, the stereotypic expectations placed upon her by the men. In the end, the males' desire for the maternal mirror crushes that mirror, and they are left with only shattered glass and guilt.

In Pinter's *No Man's Land*, life without women is especially arid and full of despair. Without the feminine difference, the play demonstrates that all that remains is form, a frightening scaffolding or skull of human existence. With Ruth in *The Homecoming*, life is full through her ability to play by the patriarchal rules but she also retains her own female dignity and difference. Deborah in *A Kind of Alaska* may not fare as well as Ruth, but we do see her coming to terms with the patriarchal rules of silence and submission.

The family in Shepard's *Buried Child* will not even permit the offspring of a woman to live, particularly a child by an illicit affair, "outside the father's house." Like *The Iceman Cometh* and *No Man's Land*, *True West* offers a grim, but humorous picture of a world without women—men may bond, but they leave a mess of the house and their lives. *A Lie of the Mind* may indicate that love and family is
indeed, "a lie of the mind," for at the end of the play all the women seem to look elsewhere for answers concerning the gender conflicts, while the men merely continue, confused and helpless. Further, though two women appear to be leaving patriarchal ground altogether by burning the house and heading for the hills of Ireland, the play ends with one woman waiting on the porch, listlessly looking at the fire burning the snow. There is really no escape, only momentary lapses in the battle.

With A Moon for the Misbegotten, however, woman-as-Madonna is endorsed by the play through the character of Josie. With her help, Jamie Tyrone is forgiven his sins in a way Evelyn could never forgive Hickey. What redeems this play from the depths of sexism, however, is that through this sacrifice Josie learns about herself and her life. Though a woman in patriarchy can never entirely escape its influence—she cannot create a completely feminine world without any patriarchal residue—Josie appears to make her choice to help Jamie freely, or as freely as she possibly can under the circumstances. Like Ruth, Josie chooses to use the stereotypes for the benefit of herself and others. In the end, however, Josie, unlike Ruth, must sacrifice her sexual desire in order to participate in patriarchy, thereby becoming a Madonna in the O'Neill canon and the play. Through Jamie, however, the play demonstrates the disastrous consequences of a dualistic impression of women, for Jamie is truly doomed once he refuses the love that Josie has to offer, something that neither his mother nor his whores have ever offered him—sex and love.
In many ways, the male urge to control the feminine is similar to Clov's penchant for order in Beckett's *Endgame* (1957): "I love order. It's my dream. A world where all would be silent and still and each thing in its last place, under the last dust...I'm doing my best to create a little order" (57). By attempting to control the feminine, many male characters attempt to create a little order in their worlds. With this security, however, comes stagnation and entombment for both the males and the females.

Many of the women do create an impression; they stir up the dust of the male wasteland. Even if they are not physically present or even if they do succumb to the roles, they leave a powerful impression. They make a "difference."

For some readers and those interested in social change, this difference is not enough. The women do not do enough to separate themselves from the patriarchy and its influence. For these readers, women are only women and social change is only social change when an adversarial relationship is established. Such oppositions, male versus female or mother versus whore, for example, are characteristic of patriarchal discourse, a discourse which divides in order to create a hierarchy, in order to oppress and conquer. The opposition, whether feminist or not, phallicizes.

In more practical terms, once the opposition is established, the dominant term, here the patriarchy, may dismiss the feminine as "reactionary" or "whorish." It will refuse to engage in the feminine difference at all. By disturbing the expectations of the
men in these plays so subtly, the female characters remain in contact with the men, even when they are absent, thereby producing feminine anxiety much longer and perhaps more fully.

From "a kind of Alaska," the women in these plays bring about change without completely resurrecting the binary opposition so characteristic of the patriarchal language structure. Like the sub-atomic particles, these women may leave a trace, but they are never actually seen; their songs of discontent may be heard, "sound familiar" or strangely seductive, but they are never actually recorded. Like the furies, they may hound us after the play is over, but we never really see these strange female pursuers. They may, to recall Clov's wishes, kick up a little dust.

The absent women in The Iceman Cometh and No Man's Land make more noise, more complaints, and more challenges to their men than do the women who actually appear on stage. Though Josie in A Moon for the Misbegotten finally succumbs to her Madonna status, Jamie's own problems with women haunt us just as his mother haunted him in the train-car carrying her coffin. Deborah's awakening in A Kind of Alaska is even more frightening when, at the end of the play we realize that Deborah may be awake but she will never be entirely free. And at the end of Buried Child the play reminds us of what happens to women's offspring, offspring that do not conform to the usual patrilineal standards. Mary Tyrone in Long Day's Journey Into Night and "Mom" in True West illustrate the demise of women in the system; women who cannot make an adjustment do not remain entirely intact. Their mental and emotional absence creates an
eerie atmosphere when their bodies appear on stage. Pinter's Ruth and the women at the end of The Lie of the Mind make more conscious decisions to tear the fabric of patriarchy: Ruth, by permitting herself the luxury of female desire and playing the men's games, and Shepard's women who literally burn down the cite of their oppression—the family house.

Though all the women create a certain amount of female anxiety either in their male counterparts or their audiences, each playwright represents the female differently. All represent women as occupying "a kind of Alaska," all represent them as somehow absent and present, and all to a great degree choose to set their females in the home or some equally domestic setting. The "kind of Alaska" the women inhabit, however, differs from playwright to playwright, and finally reflects each author's overall representation of women.

Eugene O'Neill, for instance, represents the female "kind of Alaska" negatively. Women run from patriarchy because there is no place for them within the phallocentric society. The only way in which they can save themselves is through their escape. Most of his men only want women to behave as either mothers or whores; they only want mirrors, often solely maternal mirrors. Many of his male characters will only settle for women who will take the place of their mothers. These men, then, often force the women in their lives to play this role. Their female counterparts either crumble under this pressure or they manipulate the role in order to torture
the men. Only Josie, an Irish earth-mother, can withstand the pressure, deny her own desire, and play the role happily.

The other women retreat to "a kind of Alaska" which in the O'Neill plays looks like "a kind of asylum." Here they gain protection from the males in order to recover from the battles between the sexes, as is the case with Mary Tyrone and Josie to some extent, or they retreat in order to torment the men from a more guarded position, as is the case with Evelyn Hickman. The feminine is then presented by what it lacks, not what it is trying to save by its retreat. In other words, O'Neill dramatizes the results of casting women into the role of mirror. For the women, O'Neill paints a dismal picture: when women are cast in these roles they wind up as manipulative or drugged wretches.

All the men in O'Neill's plays who try to force women to function in these roles are also doomed in some way or another. Those like Larry in The Iceman Cometh who choose to experience the feminine, both its lack and its excess, gain a better understanding of themselves and their world. They are not whole and complete; they are not self-reliant. But, in the end, it does not matter. They experience the feminine, and in some way, they are released, free, and offered the opportunity for change.

The feminine "kind of Alaska" in Pinter's plays, however, is much more positive. It is almost as if Pinter takes up where O'Neill left off, depicting a world in which men like Jamie Tyrone or the inhabitants of Harry Hope's had ruled for years—a world in which the patriarchy is clearly a wasteland. While O'Neill's men
tried to fix the mirror, thereby deactivating female anxiety, in Pinter’s plays the mirror is in tact, but there is something going on behind the glass. The men, who have lived on the glassy side of the mirror, their own "Alaska," now do not work at establishing the mirror; instead, they want something "more," the excess Pinter’s females possess.

The female offers salvation to the men in Pinter’s plays. Rather than demonstrating the terrible things men do to women in order to get them to behave, Pinter’s plays contrast the depths of masculine despair with the persistent exuberance of the female. The women in his plays have something more, so their "Alaska" is an oasis in the masculine wasteland. The female is represented in a positive manner. The anxiety, then, stems from the fact that the feminine is flourishing while the masculine languishes. It is now she that "has" and he that "lacks."

Because so many of Sam Shepard’s plays explore the nature of surfaces, the nature of stereotypes, the representation of women in his plays often looks like the very stereotypes O’Neill and Pinter are trying to expose as limited and finally detrimental to both sexes. Through this experimentation with stereotypes, however, Shepard’s plays dramatize the limitations of feminine roles. Through his plays, the restrictions of such gender roles are presented.

Shepard’s women, unlike Pinter’s women, do not establish a world within patriarchy. Shepard’s women’s "kind of Alaska" is often, as it was for "Mom" in True West, literally Alaska.
Furthermore, Shepard’s plays succeed in presenting the feminine favorably, not by virtue of the feminine but by virtue of the masculine. Much like O’Neill, who depicts the negative results of stereotyping women, Shepard’s dramas document the results of chauvinism, violence and sexism. The feminine, though stilted or stereotyped, looks better than anything many of Shepard’s men offer. That is, the stereotypes of feminine behavior still look more appealing than the stereotypes of masculine machismo.

In response to the masculine violence, many of Shepard’s women leave. They are tired of the mirror, since they get so few benefits from playing such a role. Shepard’s contributions to the Wim Wenders film Paris, Texas (1984) offers some insight into the problem the mirror causes in gender relationships. In the film, the male and female protagonists discuss their relationship problems through a mirror. She can only see herself, while he can see her and himself. In the end, it does not matter who has the benefit of the greatest amount of vision; the mirror itself finally separates them from seeing each other clearly. Unable to remain with her without the mirror, the man heads for the desert, Shepard’s mirror for the American cowboy.

In his final play, however, it appears that Shepard is consciously pursuing questions concerning the battle of the sexes, often using his play as a philosophical and emotional sounding board for his ideas concerning male-female relationships. Here, the women do offer an alternative to the masculine wasteland or female escapism. Through Beth’s relationship with Frankie, a relationship
characterized by androgyny or a mixture of the gender roles, Shepard hints at a solution to the male-female dilemma. Rather portraying the men as escapist, who run to the desert when they cannot find a suitable mirror, or portraying the women as "corralled," Shepard, in his latest play, A Lie of the Mind, suggests that men be a little more like women and women behave a little more like men. Whether this suggestion, finally, a "lie of the mind" is difficult to say, for Shepard leaves us and the two women who choose to remain at home on the porch waiting for an answer. This ambiguity, however, creates anxiety over the feminine.

Though all three authors represent females differently, most of the women inhabit some "kind of Alaska." There is always something missing from the depiction of these women, something not quite right. This uncertainty, this "play" of signification, creates the female difference in the plays. And it is through this feminine difference, this questioning, subjection, or aggression, that the plays turn the feminine mirrors inside-out.

With female anxiety present, the mirror does not entirely shatter, nor does it exactly refuse to reflect. Instead, the mirror is turned upon the audience in order to challenge the spectators to examine the complacency of the complete sense of self. Rather than catering to social pressures or stereotypes, all three authors use the stereotypes to examine and explore their limitations, often demonstrating the restrictions these gender roles place on men, women, and their relationships to one another. Rather than endorsing the patriarchal mode of female representation, O'Neill,
Pinter, and Shepard explore its origins and its drawbacks. And their plays often suggest that such gender relations are in need of reevaluation.

Through drama, the mirror no longer reassures; it reevaluates female objectification. The mirror which for so long imprisoned the woman now offers a means of liberation. By mimicking behavior, the female mirror can represent patriarchy in all its limitations and sadistic variations. Drama, then, might be considered a truly female mode of representation.
Notes

Introduction

1 See Fredrick C. Wilkins, ed., O'Neill's Women, for a sampling of articles devoted to O'Neill's women, as well as Andreach who argues that "O'Neill's females bring with them, not Christ but death—final death with no resurrection—or despair, the death of hope" (113). Harold Pinter's Ruth in The Homecoming continues to entice the critics as much as she entices the men in the play, but she is also prone to be judged by these critics as either a mother or whore. Thomas Adler argues that all of Pinter's women need weak or "accommodating" men in order to be happy. Also, see Lahr's Casebook, particularly the essays by Bernard Dukore (109-16) and Augusta Walker (117-22). Anita Osherow discusses the mother-whore dualism in Pinter, but finally concludes that "Pinter seems interested in painting up the duality" (428). Florence Falk admires Shepard but recognizes his limitations regarding female representation: in his plays "the cowboy is the reigning male; consequently, any female is, perforce, marginalized" (Dreams 91). Bonnie Marranca challenges Shepard to overcome his dated
presentation of women: "he may be the idol of many a young playwright, but his ideas about women are as old as the frontier days he celebrates" *(Playwrights, 111).*

Though Jacques Derrida defies definitions by consciously writing in an oblique manner, he does focus on phallocentrism in *Writing and Difference*, particularly in the two essays, "Force and Signification" (3-30) and "Structure, Sign, and Play" (278-94). Also and at great length, *Of Grammatology*. Translator Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's introduction is also enlightening. One of the "consequences" of phallocentrism, which no one can ever actually escape, is the closure of representation which truncates the "play" of meaning: "To think the closure of representation is thus to think the cruel powers of death and play which permit presence to be born to itself, and pleasurably consume itself, in its deferral. To think the closure of representation is to think the tragic: not as the representation of fate, but as the fate of representation. Its gratuitous and baseless necessity. And it is to think why it is fatal that, in its closure, representation continues" *(Writing and Difference, 250).* Further, though phallocentric thought is limited, there can be no utopia in which the limitations do not exist. Rather, "there are thus two interpretations of interpretation, of structure, of sign, of play. The one seeks to decipher, dreams of deciphering a truth or an origin which escapes the play and the order of the sign, and which lives the necessity of interpretation as an exile. The other, which is no longer turned toward the origin, affirms play and tries to pass beyond man and
humanism, the name of man being the name of that being who, throughout the history of metaphysics or of ontotheology— in other words, throughout his entire history— has dreamed of full presence" (Writing and Difference, 292). In much the same way, there may be no "pure woman," no perfect representation of the female, but there may be glimpses of her "playing."

Lacan's formulations on language are best developed in Ecrits particularly the essay, "The agency of the letter in the unconscious or Reason since Freud" (146-78). In this essay, Lacan not only sets the French linguist Ferdinand Saussure "right," but he also argues for the importance of language, the linguistic unit, in Freudian psychology, especially its effects on the formation of the human subject: "Of course, as it is said, the letter killeth while the spirit giveth life. We can't help but agree, having had to pay homage elsewhere to a noble victim of error of seeking the spirit in the letter; but we should also like to know how the spirit could live without the letter. Even so the pretensions of the spirit would remain unassailable if the letter had not shown us that it produces all the effects of truth in man without involving the spirit at all" (158). See also Lacan and Narration, edited by Robert Conn Davis.

3 Fredrick Engels notes that not only is marriage "a conjugal partnership of leaden boredom," but that "monogamy arose from the concentration of considerable wealth in the hands of a single individual—a man—and from the need to bequeath wealth to the children of that man and no other. For this purpose, the monogamy
of the woman was required, not that of the man" (138). By
controlling female sexuality, males gain control of private property—
via inheritance—as well as control of women. Luce Iragaray
examines "Women on the Market," and, in effect, extends the
masculine ownership of property to include language (Not One, 170-
191).

4 Kaja Silverman also notes the similarities between Lacan and
Plato's Aristophanes (152).

5 Kaja Silverman not only offers an extensive overview of
Freud, Lacan, and Derrida, as well as several film theorists, but
she also posits a brief feminist critique of Lacan's formulations
concerning the supremacy of the Phallus (126-193). In particular
she notes,

In Seminaire Livre XX, Lacan indicates his belief that the
female subject neither succumbs to as complete an alienation
from the real, nor enjoys as full an association with the
symbolic as the male. She thus has a privileged relation to
the symbolic [the world of language]

... In other words, because both male and female sexuality are
defined in relation to the phallus, and because the symbolic
order provides a positive representation of male sexuality, but
a negative one of female sexuality (female sexuality as non-
phallus), the later is censored rather than repressed. (186-87)
Even with his radical re-reading of Freud, Lacan subscribes to Freud's fallacy concerning women: females are somehow ill-equipped to function in the world of men. For Freud, the super-ego in women was not as rigidly formed. In his essay, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" Freud notes that women's super-ego is never so inexorable, so impersonal, so independent of its emotional origins as we require it to be in men. Character traits which critics of every epoch have brought up against women--that they show less sense of justice than men, that they are less ready to submit to the great necessities of life, that they are more influenced in their judgements by feelings of affection or hostility--all these would be amply accounted for by the modification in the formation of their super-ego. (193)

As Silverman argues, under Lacanian terminology, women are not adequately admitted into the symbolic realm.

6 For a fascinating but oblique "explanation" of the Other and its relationship to the petit objet a, see "Of the Gaze as Objet Petit A" in Lacan's Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis, 67-119.

7 In the light of Lacan's theories, Hornby's behavior is typical. For while frigidity is "relatively well tolerated in women" due to her inherent separation from herself within a phallocentric system, such behavior in males is anathema:
If it is the case that the man manages to satisfy his demand for love in his relationship to the woman to the extent that the signifier of the phallus constitutes her precisely as giving in love what she does not have—conversely, his own desire for the phallus [the signifier for the Other, that which "satisfies"] will throw up its signifier in the form of a persistent divergence towards "another woman" who can signify this phallus under various guises, whether as virgin or prostitute. The result is the centrifugal tendency of the genital drive in the sexual life of the man which makes impotence much harder for him to bear. (Feminine Sexuality, 84-85)

8 For Lacan, the Law of the Father is the Phallus which is the signifier for the Other. In many ways, this law functions like Freud's super-ego. In Lacan's framework, however, the subject not only enters society but also the symbolic world, the world of language. See "The Signification of the Phallus" in Écrits, 281-91. Or another translation, "The Meaning of the Phallus" in Feminine Sexuality, 74-85.

Chapter 1
Eugene O'Neill

1 Bogard, 414-15. Michael Manheim concurs, noting that the entire play may be "about the possibilities of human kinship in the face of enervating twentieth century nihilism" (196).
See Luce Irigaray's *Speculum*. In her first chapter entitled "The Blind Spot in an Old Dream of Symmetry," she not only analyzes the dream of symmetry in terms of Freudian psychology, but she also outlines a means for overcoming this mis-reading in both Freud and other Western philosophers.

Geraldine Fitzgerald, who played Mary Tyrone in a 1971 Broadway production, not only notes that the addiction was characteristic to whores, but also investigated Mary's response to the drug: Mary "was a woman who suffered what is called in medical slang a 'cat' reaction to morphine (so-called because only women and cats have this atypical response), which would make her overactive and excitable rather than drowsy" (291).

See Freud's *Dora* and Breuer's *Anna O.*, two compelling case histories. Dianne Hunter uses the Anna O. history to illustrate the means by which hysterics "spoke" with their bodies:

Hysteria expresses in the language of the body what psychoanalysis says in words. Both psychoanalysis and hysteria subvert the reigning cultural order by exploding its linguistic conventions and decomposing its facade of orderly conduct (114).

Hunter also provides some interesting documentation concerning the fate of Bertha Pappenheim, alias Anna O., once she left treatment. Among other things, she translated Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* into German.
Michael Manheim disagrees, arguing that Josie looks better because we see her through Jamie's eyes. Admittedly, the two must interact in order for any change, but Manheim devalues Josie and places too much weight on Jamie's power and his ability to elicit sympathy from the audience when he argues that Jamie breathes life into Josie (207-08). In a more cynical way, audiences may see the play through Jamie because the play forces them to take the position of Jamie--tortured, guilty, and in need of the sustenance only a woman like Josie can provide.

Chapter 2
Harold Pinter

In her Pilgrim at Tinker Creek, an autobiography which emphasizes nature and mysticism, Annie Dillard devotes an entire chapter to "seeing." During this discussion, she notes that kayak sickness among the Eskimos is caused by too much light and a "special terror results." In many ways, this illness parallels the male responses to Ruth. Dillard quotes an expert on the mirror-blindness, Peter Freuchen, notes that Greenland Eskimos are particularly prone to this illness:
The Greenland fjords are peculiar for the spells of completely quiet weather, when there is not enough wind to blow out a match and the water is like a sheet of glass. The kayak hunter must sit in his boat without stirring a finger so as not to scare the shy seal away. . . . The sun, low in the sky, sends a glare into his eyes, and the landscape around moves into the realm of the unreal. The reflex from the mirror-like water hypnotizes him, he seems to be unable to move, and all of a sudden it is as if he were floating in a bottomless void, sinking, sinking, and sinking. . . Horror-stricken, he tries to stir, to cry out, but he cannot, he is completely paralyzed and he just falls and falls (23).

Though none of the men in this play or any of O'Neill's becomes completely paralyzed in this fashion, the female mirror does hold a power of its own, a power of which Ruth seems to be aware. In the end, while Teddy runs from the mirror, the others remain, enamored with its reflection.

2 In recent years, this term, *jouissance* has become increasingly popular among literary critics. In addition to Lacan, Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes also use the term to indicate or describe the experience of reading or signification. See Barthes' *The Pleasure of the Text* and Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology*. 
3 Here I am referring to the issue of feminine writing, *écriture feminine*, as well as other feminist utopian theories or fictional works such as Monique Wittig's *The Lesbian Body* or Sally Miller Gearhart's *The Wanderground* (1979). In both the fictional and theoretical works, the assumption that patriarchy can be avoided or overcome in language, social structure, and personal relationships is a bit naive. Though change is possible, it does not occur without a struggle, and even then, women have been known to mimic the structure of patriarchy, even when they are only among "enlightened" women. In terms of language, Jane Gallop offers a persuasive discussion concerning the inherent, phallocentric nature of language: "Any discourse phallicizes, but somehow it is in the possibility of a dialogue between two heterogeneous discourses that the 'impossible dialectic between two terms' might be found" (*Daughter's Seduction* 125).

4 James Hollis argues that the play is "finally about the business of coming home. The business of coming home is part of the collective, that is, archetypal experience, of man" (108). And of woman's, since Ruth, too, comes home, usurping Teddy's position, but fulfilling the gap made by Jesse.

5 Arthur Ganz, for example, argues that Ruth's decision to remain in London is a step down for her: "Although Ruth... escapes from what is to her the aridity of her life as a conventional mother and academic wife, she must accept the degradation of her role as prostitute to satisfy her thirst for the passionate vitality she finds with her adoptive family" (161).
Ganz, of course, does not even consider the idea that perhaps Pinter may be juxtaposing the position of mother and whore in order to demonstrate that the difference between the two is merely a construct with which to prohibit the feminine’s participation in patriarchal discourse. Bert O. States also believes that Ruth is repulsive (186). While Gabbard, Burkman, and others see her positively, Austin Quigley has one of the most puzzling readings of Ruth, because he does not exactly condemn or condone her, but takes a surprising middle-of-the-road position through middle class values. His explanation of Ruth’s decision to remain in London, for example, focuses on economics:

For too long Ruth has had to submerge her professional abilities in the demands of her role as wife and mother in the American home. Her professional expertise has been subordinated to the need for Teddy to pursue his. Now the situation is reversed, and it is Teddy’s professional abilities, not Ruth’s that are redundant here. Ruth, a model for the body, is dominant in an environment that has no use for the man with a model mind (Problem 218).

In order to set Ruth straight, Quigley, it seems, would proscribe career counseling.

Peter Hall describes the atmosphere of The Homecoming in even stronger terms: "It is a sterile world from which women have been excluded; the set has to mirror that" (11). It is difficult to say whether the men have actually prohibited females from entering the house, as the men in The Iceman Cometh, or if there are no women
because the men have wasted away so long that they cannot get out, even if they wish to escape. Further, Max has taken on the feminine role, so the men may believe they no longer need women.

7 Gabbard says "Ruth is a match for any man even Lenny. She challenges his threats to her authority and emerges the victor--mistress of the family" (185). And James Hollis notes, "Lenny's dalliance with Ruth reveals him in turn to be erotic but impotent. As a procurer, he leads a vicarious existence, feeding on the vitality of others. Ruth tumbles to his game and offers him a combination of herself and water, psychological amalgam of the erotic and maternal elements" (100). In effect, Ruth, as mirror, turns towards Lenny.

8 Steven Aronson concludes his thought, saying that Ruth will cling to this moment "culpable but utterly innocent at heart, to one man after another all of whom will betray her" (83). Rather than condemning Ruth as a "slut-bitch," Aronson attempts to rescue her by making her a victim of the fate of the men around her--once again giving the power to the males.

9 In this work, a woman looses touch with a suffocating, phallocentric reality, escaping into the world of the yellow wallpaper, away from the world of her husband.

10 According to Martin Esslin, the "absurd" is characterized similarly: in absurd drama, "the world is seen as a hall of reflecting mirrors, and reality merges imperceptibly into fantasy" (289).
Chapter 3

Sam Shepard

1 Ronald Hayman, for example, argues that Shepard has attained the highest level of mastery in drama——he has reached the level of poet: Shepard has "the best claim of any writer since Beckett and Genet... to being a poet of the theatre" (163). Despite Hayman's generic biases, the comparisons are still flattering. Bonnie Marranca, apparently in praise, describes his work as "freaked-out Edward Hopper on an Andy Warhol silkscreen" (Playwrights 83). Tucker Orbison and Jack Gelber see Shepard and his work more mythically: his work and his own relationship to that work takes on an almost religious significance. Shepard the "high priest" of the Old West condemns the Modern West for its hypocrisy, emptiness, and superficial material wealth. And the desert "is a condition of the soul, a life-giving place where God can take up residence" (Orbison, 509).

2 Though Linda Hart coins this phrase (65), prior to the publication of A Lie of the Mind (1987), many critics referred to the following three plays as a domestic trilogy: Buried Child, Curse of the Starving Class, and True West. Ruby Cohn, for example, says that Shepard himself "speaks of them [the three earlier plays] as a 'family trilogy'"(183).
3 Linda Hart notes that this technique occurs "noticeably" in the earlier plays, but it seems to appear in these later family dramas as well (18). The families appear out of "nowhere." We may learn about several of their interrelationships, perhaps even the city they are in or were from, but overall, many of the specifics concerning their lives are never revealed, perhaps to make them seem "average," nothing special. Hart's own lengthy discussion concerning the interrelationships of the family in Buried Child, particularly the father of the buried child, indicate that the uncertainty continues even in these later plays (75-87).

4 According to Ron Mottram, Alaska is a frontier which often symbolizes, in Shepard's work, "that contradiction of the civilized and the savage that exists on the personal level within the individual and on the social level within the family and the nation" (136). This assessment may or may not be true in the case of this play, but it is interesting that it is "Mom," not the desert-snake Lee or the writer and well-established Austin, who investigates this savage or untamed land. In Inner Landscapes (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1984), Mottram focuses on Alaska as an escape for the male characters, especially the son, Wesley, in Curse of the Starving Class, who announces that he is going to Alaska because it is still a frontier (136). In both cases, the characters make a choice about leaving and entering Alaska. And in both cases, the physical and literal Alaska functions almost as a symbol for their state of mind and their emotional states.
Richard Gilman argues that True West and Pinter's The Homecoming are similar because of the rivalry between the two brothers (xxvii). While Lenny and Teddy fight over certain rights in the house, the play focuses on other family power struggles in play in addition to those of the two brothers. Interestingly, Gilman does not explain the relationship between Ruth and "Mom," a relationship his argument implies but never articulates.

William Kleb sees the confusion in a more positive way: "Picasso is alive and his name becomes, in effect, a kind of emblem of artistic achievement and the integration of intellect and imagination" (122). Given "Mom's" character, however, it appears that she is blinded by the ice she has been encased within for all these years. Since she is not an entirely admirable character, Shepard may also ridicule those readers and critics who cannot discern the artist's life from his art. Further, patriarchy functions on the perpetuation of sameness. Those who do not conform, who are not white and male are oppressed.

David De Rose in his critique of the play in Theatre 17 (1986), harshly accuses Shepard of "selling out," and even pandering to his audiences. In his words, with this play, Shepard "appears to self-consciously court mainstream audiences for the first time in his career" (69). In addition to overreaction, De Rose seems to assume a simplistic assumption in his evaluation of drama: the more
bizarre, the less understandable, the better the play. Any knowledge of an audience, it seems, would result in a thorough condemnation from De Rose.

Igararay argues that "woman's autoeroticism is very different from man's. In order to touch himself, man needs an instrument: his hand, a woman's body, language . . . And this self-caressing requires at least a minimum of activity. As for woman, she touches herself in and of herself without any need for mediation, and before there is any way to distinguish activity from passivity. Woman '.touches herself' all the time, and moreover no one can forbid her to do so, for her genitals are formed of two lips in continuous contact. Thus within herself, she is already two—but not divisible into one(s)—that caress each other" (New York: Cornell UP, 24).

What is even more telling in Jake's version of the story is that Beth does not even need the mediation of the mirror—she is touching herself with her hand, but she need not watch. In terms of Luce Irigaray, Jake witnesses the mirror moving herself, taking care of herself, and this act provokes him to anger and hostility. Unlike him, she may enjoy herself.
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